



The Quiet Decade: In the Aftermath of the Second Lebanon War, 2006-2016

Udi Dekel, Gabi Siboni, and Omer Einav,
Editors

Memorandum
167

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Preface

The Second Lebanon War broke out on July 12, 2006, without either Israel or Hezbollah intending this escalation. However, the abduction of IDF soldiers that day by a Hezbollah cell created a new reality in the north that prompted Israel to embark on a military operation, which ultimately became a war. The course of the war and its outcomes strongly affected subsequent internal and external Israeli, Lebanese, and regional processes.

Hindsight provides an opportunity to examine the war and its ramifications from a broader and more balanced perspective than is possible in the heat of the moment. Studying the past and learning its lessons allow a better understanding of the subsequent decade, shed light on the current state of Israel's northern sector, and contribute to an assessment of possible future scenarios.

For Israel, the Second Lebanon War was a milestone in several ways. It was the first war in which Israel was exposed to the massive use of high trajectory fire directed at its civilian population. The method, which Hamas adopted in Israel's three confrontations in the Gaza Strip since late 2008, forced the IDF to control the high trajectory fire and the consequent damage to the military and civilian front, making that goal a key component of its efforts. The central role played by the civilian front in the fighting brought some new critical issues to the fore, with the protection of national infrastructures, the level of national resilience, and the functional continuity of critical systems and the Israeli economy as a whole understood to be basic components of any future campaign.

The eve of the Second Lebanon War caught the IDF at a low level of preparedness and with a new operational doctrine that was not widely understood or assimilated by the fighting forces. After six years in which the IDF devoted its effort and attention primarily to fighting terrorism in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip, the army suddenly found itself in a new situation in Lebanon, which forced it, for the first time since the 1982 Lebanon War, to adapt and adjust rapidly to fighting a war in which it had

to combine ground maneuver with standoff fire. The Second Lebanon War compelled the IDF to reexamine its force buildup and operational doctrine, improve the army's basic skills, refresh the way in which the reserves are used, and give new thought to emergency storehouses.

Another aspect that was unique to the war was its exposure by the media. New technologies allowed the media to cover the war and provide public access to the events in near real time. There was round the clock coverage from the battlefield, often facilitated by the soldiers themselves. The depiction of the events in the media played a large role in the war of consciousness waged alongside the kinetic war. That depiction – the images of the war and the public's perception of the war that was crafted – often eclipsed the actual war. Today, a decade later, it is most illuminating to study how the media dealt with the events and their results, and to see if there have been any changes in how the media has portrayed the war since 2006.

The war was a milestone for Hezbollah as well. In the years leading up to 2006, it coasted on its popularity as the organization that managed to eject the IDF from southern Lebanon. During the war it scaled new heights, establishing itself as a military outfit with some features normally reserved for regular armies, capable of fighting the army usually considered the strongest in the Middle East over an extended period of time. However, Hezbollah's image as the protector of Lebanon was shattered as a result of the vast damage the war inflicted on the country. Furthermore, the war increased Iranian supervision of the organization, as Tehran was less than thrilled that an early "stray shot" led to the erosion of the strategic weapon Iran had given Hezbollah. The purpose of that weapon was to deter Israel and prevent it from attacking Iran's nuclear project while Iran was engaged in construction of the capabilities that would earn it regional hegemony.

In the decade since the war, Israel, Lebanon, and the Middle East overall have experienced dramatic events. Israel's confrontations with Hamas in the Gaza Strip often diverted attention away from the northern sector, even though it continues to represent a significant threat, especially given the fact that Hezbollah is Iran's front line in the latter's struggle against Israel. At the same time, the social protest movement that erupted in 2011 affected the security agenda and the resources allocated to the Israeli defense establishment to tackle the nation's security challenges.

Lebanon too experienced significant changes, both internal and external, especially the violent clashes in the country in 2008 and the dysfunctional nature of the Lebanese state in recent years. But it seems that the event with

the greatest impact is the civil war in Syria, with its vast flood of refugees, terrorism in both the urban and rural areas, Hezbollah's intervention to help Bashar Assad in the civil war, and the effect on Lebanon. As the war in Syria drags on, and as Hezbollah has managed to prevent it from trickling across the border into Lebanon, the organization's status has risen once again and its image as the protector of Lebanon has been restored.

It would therefore seem that Israel's northern arena has changed greatly. The Syrian civil war has resulted in fluctuating power balances and even a role reversal: the Golan Heights, which was Israel's calmest border over four decades, has become a highly volatile hive of activity on the other side of the fence, whereas southern Lebanon, which was a battlefield for several decades, has been calm since 2006 with a balance of deterrence that is hardly ever violated. The Second Lebanon War played a central role in creating the current equation between Israel and Hezbollah (and its allies), where the mutual desire is to prevent extensive escalation.

The starting assumption of many Israelis is that the countdown to the Third Lebanon War has already begun. The fact that Hezbollah is arming itself for a future war is indisputable. The organization is fine-tuning its capabilities and gaining combat experience on the battlefields of Syria. In parallel, the IDF of today is not the IDF of 2006, and a new war is liable to inflict on Lebanon much more extensive and intensive damage than it suffered in the Second Lebanon War. Therefore, the challenge facing Israel's decision makers is neither the number of missiles in Hezbollah's munitions stores, nor the need to repair the IDF's tarnished image and somehow make up for the widespread sense that an opportunity was missed. Rather, the challenge is to prevent another widespread confrontation, reduce Hezbollah's force construction, and build the capabilities needed to severely damage the organization when the opportunity presents itself.

The essays chosen for this compilation address topics that were previously explored. At this juncture, however, and using varied perspectives, they attempt to paint a deep and inclusive picture of the Second Lebanon War, its outcomes, and its ramifications. More than one decade later, studying the war and learning its lessons are critical for the State of Israel and its national security.

PRELUDE

The Road to the Second Lebanon War, 2000-2006: Strategic Changes in Lebanon, the Middle East, and the International Theater

Reuven Erlich

Background

On the night of May 23, 2000, the IDF withdrew from the security zone in southern Lebanon. The move received international legitimacy under UN Security Council Resolution 425, which was adopted in 1978 following Operation Litani and called for an IDF withdrawal from Lebanon. IDF forces deployed south of the international border along the Blue Line that was delineated by a team of UN cartographers. Thus came to an end an 18-year presence and intensive IDF activity in Lebanon. A new situation emerged along the Israeli-Lebanese border that enabled residents of northern Israel to return to normal life.

The ensuing six years preceding the Second Lebanon War featured dramatic changes in the internal Lebanese theater. Syria's standing in Lebanon declined following the death of Hafez al-Assad in June 2000 and the rise to power of his inexperienced son Bashar. The death of Assad Sr. undermined the Syrian order imposed on Lebanon following the 1989 Taif Agreement, which ended the Lebanese civil war. The Christian opposition to the Syrian order was invigorated, and was joined by members of the Druze community, led by Walid Jumblatt, and Sunni Muslims, led by Rafiq al-Hariri. Against this alliance were Syria, Iran, and Hezbollah, which regarded themselves as the axis of resistance to the West and Israel, and sought to impose their ideas and agenda on Lebanon.

The IDF withdrawal to the international border and the international legitimacy it received undermined the internal Lebanese justification for Hezbollah's existence as an organization with a military infrastructure, and ran contrary to the image it sought to create for itself as the "defender of Lebanon." The main argument used by Hezbollah to justify its operations against Israel on Mt. Dov after the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon was the liberation of Shab'a Farms. Another argument used by the organization in favor of kidnapping IDF soldiers was its demand for the release of Lebanese prisoners held in Israel (and a third argument, of marginal importance, was the demand for the return of seven Shiite villages in Israeli territory to Lebanese sovereignty). These arguments did not constitute a viable substitute for the legitimacy enjoyed by the organization when Israel was present on Lebanese soil. Rather, they aroused criticism among the anti-Syrian alliance, namely, that Hezbollah was the only organization allowed to retain its military infrastructure in the country since the Taif Agreement, in contrast to the other militias, which were forced to disarm.

Significant changes in the regional and international theaters also had the effect of weakening Syria's position in Lebanon. The September 11, 2001 terror attacks led to the United States invasion of Iraq and President Bush's classification of Syria as part of the "axis of evil." Consequently, and given the growing unrest in Lebanon, international pressure for the disarming of Hezbollah and the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon increased. This was reflected in the diplomatic initiative by the United States and France aimed at the removal of Syrian forces from Lebanon, which was part of a plan to disrupt the Syrian order that had tightened its grip following the IDF withdrawal. The American-French initiative culminated in UN Security Council Resolution 1559 of September 2, 2004, which called for the withdrawal of all non-Lebanese forces from Lebanon and the disarming of all the militias in the country. The international pressure, combined with the protest that erupted in Lebanon following the murder of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in February 2005 (responsibility was ascribed to Syria), forced Bashar al-Assad to withdraw the Syrian army from Lebanon in April 2005. Five years after the IDF left the country, the Syrian military presence there also came to an end – the very presence that made possible the growth and consolidation of Hezbollah. A new era in Lebanon began.

Israeli Policy in Lebanon, 2000-2006

For 18 years (1982-2000), Lebanon was a primary issue in Israeli policy. The political and military echelons in Israel were heavily occupied by the challenges posed by the Lebanese theater, led by the efforts to achieve a political agreement with Lebanon and the fighting against Hezbollah. During the First Lebanon War, massive IDF forces were present in the country, in support of the political and military campaign waged by the Israeli government. This policy failed, and came to an end in 1985 with the withdrawal of the IDF from most of Lebanon without any agreement and with the establishment of the security zone. During the IDF redeployment in the security zone, limited IDF forces took an active part in the fighting, with support from the South Lebanon Army (SLA). Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip, where the IDF engaged in routine security missions, were a secondary theater of action.

During the six years preceding the Second Lebanon War, a fundamental change occurred in Israeli priorities. The focus of the political leadership and the IDF shifted to the Palestinian terrorist campaign (the second intifada) that broke out in October 2000, less than five months after the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon. In tandem, the IDF conducted regular security activity along the Israeli-Lebanese border with a defensive approach, taking great care not to open a second front that would require allocation of resources and a diversion of attention. The campaign against the second intifada required putting most regular IDF forces into Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip, and sometimes also calling up reservists. It reached a peak in Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, and concluded with Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip (2005).

Ariel Sharon was Prime Minister in the five years leading up to the Second Lebanon War (2001-2006). During his term as Minister of Defense in the second Begin cabinet, Sharon was the principal mover behind Operation Peace for the Galilee, which became the First Lebanon War. Nevertheless, during his term as Prime Minister, he showed extremely limited interest in the Lebanese theater. He was far more cautious and restrained than he was two decades prior, and invested most of his efforts in the second intifada, which he regarded as a war for all intents and purposes.¹ The Israeli response to Hezbollah's sporadic military activity was accordingly restrained, despite the international legitimacy gained by Israel with its full withdrawal from

Lebanon and the legitimacy in Israeli popular opinion for much stronger responses.

Israel's restraint was already evident when Hezbollah kidnapped and killed three IDF soldiers on a routine patrol on Mt. Dov on October 7, 2000. Israel's moderate response to the kidnapping with an attack against tactical Hezbollah targets in the area of the event damaged Israeli deterrence credibility. Hezbollah was thereby encouraged to initiate shooting incidents in the Mt. Dov theater from time to time, which killed or wounded a number of IDF soldiers.² Israel also had no significant response to the penetration into the western Galilee by a squad of Palestinian terrorists under Hezbollah auspices in 2002, and Israel refrained from any substantive response to the indirect aid given by Hezbollah to the Palestinian terrorist organizations during the second intifada.

Hezbollah took advantage of Israel's focus on the second intifada to build an extensive military infrastructure in Lebanon with aid from Syria and Iran, and without any significant interference from Israel.³ This infrastructure, which included a large scale rocket system, was used successfully against Israel in the Second Lebanon War.

Israel's policy toward Lebanon since the IDF withdrawal was referred to by the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee as a "containment strategy." It was well described in a report by the Committee following the Second Lebanon War. The chapter dealing with IDF deployment on the northern front on the eve of the war stated:

The containment strategy formulated and applied on the northern front following the withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 was designed to shape a pattern of deterrent relations that would prevent escalation on the northern front, in the realization that a local event (such as the kidnapping of a soldier) could quickly develop into a conflict with strategic consequences that does not necessarily serve Israel's interests. As part of the containment policy, the Ministry of Defense was instructed to act in a way that would not cause a conflagration in the theater. Wherever Hezbollah acted openly against Israel in one way or another, and an Israeli response was required, limited action was taken (usually including counter fire) that did not bring about general escalation... This policy had a logical basis, among other

reasons due to the wish to avoid opening another front when the IDF was mostly busy fighting terrorism and had not trained properly, and the wish to avoid a major military confrontation under conditions that were politically and economically inferior for Israel. In practice, however, this policy also dealt the army a severe blow on the tactical level. The order of battle on the northern border was thinned out, and the army's patrols did not penetrate as far. Operational activity along the line and beyond it was very limited, the deployment of technological equipment in the border area was not completed, and intelligence gathering was weakened. The operational routine on the border corresponded to the guiding political and strategic ambience, which remained in effect until the kidnapping: containment and keeping the front quiet.⁴

The Policy of Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah

In the six years preceding the Second Lebanon War, Hezbollah became more important for Iran and its ally, Syria. Hezbollah, which from Iran's perspective had proved its worth as a reliable organization with military capabilities during its years of warfare against the IDF, was perceived as serving Iran's regional interests, and as its "long arm" against Israel. The strengthening of this "arm" was especially important, given the progress in Iran's nuclear program and the development of its missile deployment, which increased the tension between Tehran and Jerusalem.

Hezbollah also became more important for Syria as a preferred proxy organization precisely because the Syrian order in Lebanon declined. In the era following the withdrawal of the Syrian forces from Lebanon, the Bashar al-Assad regime regarded Hezbollah as an important tool for safeguarding Syria's interests there, in place of the traditional tools it had used in the years of its involvement in Lebanon, which were made possible by the local presence of the Syrian intelligence mechanisms and the Syrian army.

During the period following the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah faced a difficult dilemma. The withdrawal made the organization appear triumphant, and increased its prestige and status as the "defender of Lebanon." At the same time, however, the international legitimacy attained by the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon detracted from the internal Lebanese legitimacy

for Hezbollah's continued military action against Israel and its existence as an armed organization. Iran and Hezbollah therefore chose a new multi-faceted policy: regular military activity with a lower profile, but without an absolute halt; a strong emphasis on political activity in the internal Lebanese theater, but without neglecting military activity; and indirect aid to Palestinian terrorist cells in order to fan the flames of the second intifada, while refraining from intensive military activity along the Lebanese border. This policy prevented the situation from deteriorating, and gave Hezbollah a breathing space for strengthening its military and political power in Lebanon.

The new policy required adaptations and changes in Hezbollah's policy on terrorist attacks. Intensive military operations gave way to sporadic attacks, mainly on Mt. Dov. Hezbollah also carried out kidnappings of soldiers, or tried to, from time to time. Israel's restrained response to the kidnapping of soldiers on Mt. Dov in 2000 was followed by an unsuccessful kidnapping attempt in Ghajar in November 2005. The next kidnapping on July 12, 2006 took place when Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was in office, and drew a radically different Israeli response that took Hezbollah by surprise.

In the political sphere, during the period between the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon and the Second Lebanon War, Hezbollah increased the number of its representatives in the Lebanese parliament and deepened its political influence in Lebanon. It joined the Shiite Amal organization in 2005, and the two organizations held coalition negotiations with Prime Minister-elect Fouad Siniora, a Sunni Muslim. The government formed in July 2005 contained five Shiite ministers, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Hezbollah co-founder Muhammad Fneish was appointed Minister of Energy in a measure designed to signal the organization's desire to bolster its involvement in Lebanese politics.⁵

Construction of Hezbollah's Military Infrastructure

The IDF withdrawal from Lebanon and the substantial drop in the volume of military activity enabled Hezbollah, for the first time since it was founded in 1982, to be eased of the burden of constant fighting and focus most of its efforts on building its military force in the areas under its control. Hezbollah filled a security and governmental vacuum created in the area, especially when the Lebanese army and central government, which were to have entered southern Lebanon and established Lebanese sovereignty there, refrained from doing so for fear of an armed conflict with Hezbollah, and due to pressure

from its sponsors. Hezbollah was thus able to build centers of power in southern Lebanon and other Shiite areas, where it in effect replaced the sovereign Lebanese government and built a military infrastructure.

Hezbollah's improved military infrastructure was built with Iranian and Syrian assistance. Aid consisted of a massive supply of weapons (including large quantities of advanced rockets and anti-tank missiles), financial aid, and political backing, which enabled Hezbollah to deal successfully with its opponents in the internal Lebanese theater. The improved infrastructure built during this period turned Hezbollah from a terrorist and guerilla organization into an organization with quasi-state military capabilities, which in certain aspects (its missile deployment, for example) exceeded the military capabilities of regular armies. This infrastructure included three levels: offensive, defensive, and logistical.

Until the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War, the offensive array was based on a large store of rockets, estimated at over 20,000, of various ranges, including long range rockets capable of reaching Haifa and even further south. Most of the rockets were concentrated in Hezbollah's operational core in southern Lebanon, and most were stored in special warehouses dispersed in towns and villages in the area. This offensive set-up was designed to give Hezbollah the ability to conduct a prolonged campaign against Israel and to cause extensive damage to the civilian population, as indeed occurred in the Second Lebanon War.

Hezbollah's defensive set-up was based on the military infrastructure built by the organization in the area south of the Litani River and in Nabatieh. These areas have a Shiite majority, and Hezbollah strengthened Shiite control there after the IDF withdrew from Lebanon. The defensive set-up was designed to enable the organization to conduct guerilla warfare effectively in a scenario in which the IDF enters Lebanon, using advanced anti-tank missiles, engineering forces, and high quality infantry. The defensive set-up was based on Hezbollah's extensive deployment in Shiite towns and villages south of the Litani River, and on implacable warfare waged from within population centers. As a supplement to the military set-up among population centers, Hezbollah also built strongholds in open territory ("nature reserves"), but these played a secondary role in the organization's defensive concept.

The logistics set-up included many storehouses dispersed throughout Lebanon, especially in the south, for weapons designed to enable Hezbollah to conduct protracted warfare against Israel. In effect, Hezbollah built a state

within a state for itself, while using Lebanese state infrastructure, headed by transportation and communications, for its struggle against Israel.

Hezbollah's Aid to the Palestinian Terrorist Organizations

In the years of the second intifada leading up to the Second Lebanon War, Hezbollah gave assistance to the terrorist organizations operating in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip. This aid was part of a comprehensive Iranian policy designed to augment the quantity and quality of terrorist operations against Israeli civilians, and to improve their operational capabilities. This aid included direction, financing, smuggling weapons, training, and technological know-how. While doing this, Iran and Hezbollah tried to disguise the source of the aid and avoid being dragged into a direct confrontation with Israel.

During 2001-2006, the number of Palestinian terrorist cells grew every year, mostly in Judea and Samaria, with a few in the Gaza Strip, and received aid and guidance from Hezbollah. The most prominent cells belonged to the Fatah al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. Generally during the second intifada Hezbollah provided indirect assistance to the Palestinian terrorist organizations, but in at least one case there was direct Hezbollah involvement in a terrorist attack on Israeli territory. On March 12, 2002, at the height of the intifada, Hezbollah enabled two Palestinian terrorists to penetrate into the western Galilee. The two terrorists fired light weapons at Israeli vehicles traveling in the vicinity of Kibbutz Matzuva, killing five civilians and one soldier. In order to conceal its involvement, Hezbollah used Palestinian terrorists, and refrained from explicitly taking responsibility for the attack. As part of its policy of restraint on the Lebanese border, Israel refrained from a significant response in this case as well.

Hezbollah was also involved in the Iranian attempt to smuggle a large quantity of arms for Yasir Arafat on the *Karine A*, which the Israeli navy intercepted in the Red Sea in the early morning hours of January 3, 2002. From the Iranian perspective, the advanced weapons sent on the ship were designed as a force multiplier for the terrorist organizations, which would enable them to step up the second intifada that was underway. Interrogation of the *Karine A* crew revealed that Hezbollah operatives had been involved in buying the ship and training the crew.

The volume of Hezbollah's aid to cells in Judea and Samaria fell substantially at the end of the second intifada, and the focus of its aid and that of Iran to the Palestinian terrorist organizations shifted to the Gaza Strip.

This was particularly true of the period following the Israel withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the seizure of power by Hamas, which turned the area into a locus of terrorism against Israel. Hamas and the other terrorist organizations, which built their military infrastructure in the Gaza Strip during the period following the Israeli withdrawal, regarded Hezbollah as a model for emulation. It is quite possible that for its part, Hezbollah saw Hamas's success in kidnapping IDF soldier Gilad Shalit on the Gaza Strip border in June 2006 as a reason for increasing its determination to renew the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers.

Epilogue

In 2006, the year of the Second Lebanon War, significant political changes took place in Israel, along with changes in foreign policy challenges. On January 4, 2006, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a severe stroke and was replaced by his deputy, Ehud Olmert. Following an election campaign in March 2006, Olmert was sworn in as Prime Minister of Israel. The challenges facing the new Prime Minister changed substantially: the second intifada ended, and Israel's focus of attention shifted to the Gaza Strip, where Hamas had consolidated its rule. The Lebanese theater, on the other hand, was still considered a secondary theater of activity by the political and military echelons.

On July 12, 2006, at 9:00 AM, a Hezbollah force attacked two IDF patrol vehicles traveling from Zar'it to Shtula in the course of a routine mission. The attack killed three soldiers, three were wounded, and two others, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, were kidnapped by Hezbollah. That same night, the Israeli cabinet, following a two-hour meeting, unanimously decided to embark on what became the Second Lebanon War. In its report on the events of the war, published in January 2008, the Winograd Commission wrote, "The government did not want war, did not intend to start one, and did not know that it was starting one. Only on March 25, 2007 did the government decide to call the military campaign in the summer of 2006 a 'war.' Nevertheless, that was the meaning of the decision of July 12."⁶

Indeed, Israel did not intend to start a war in the Lebanese theater, nor did Hezbollah plan one. Essentially, the Second Lebanon War was a result of the ongoing erosion in Israel's deterrence, which motivated Hezbollah to carry out a provocative kidnapping operation, under the erroneous assumption that it would not necessarily lead to escalation. Hezbollah did not take into

account that it faced a new Prime Minister, whose behavioral patterns were still unfamiliar to the organization, and in a period following the end of the second intifada, when Israel had greater military and political freedom of action in the Lebanese theater. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah even admitted after the war that had he correctly evaluated Israel's response, the organization would not have carried out the kidnapping of the soldiers.

The Second Lebanon War lasted 34 days, and its results were far reaching. Even though the way it was conducted drew strong criticism from the Israeli public and the Winograd Commission Report, it brought about a prolonged and unprecedented lull on the Israeli-Lebanese border, a lull that still continues one decade later. The war also restored, albeit only partially, the Israeli deterrence that had eroded in 2000-2006. On the other hand, this did not prevent the rebuilding of Hezbollah's military infrastructure: the organization's military capabilities by 2016 were much greater than those it had in 2006.

From a historical perspective, it can be seen that the Second Lebanon War was a kind of supplementary action to the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000. This supplementary measure, however, had weak points, which may also contain the seeds of the next conflict.

Notes

- 1 David Landau, *Arik: The Life of Ariel Sharon* (Tel Aviv: Kinneret Zmora-Bitan Dvir, 2005), pp. 292-97. Landau writes that off-the-record statements were made by the Olmert government, formed two months before the Second Lebanon War, about the Lebanon trauma allegedly suffered by Sharon (Ibid., pp. 408-9). I believe that the need to deal with the second intifada, not the "Lebanese trauma," accounted for the restraint in Israeli policy toward Lebanon during Ariel Sharon's term as Prime Minister. At the same time, it is reasonable to assume that personally, Sharon, who had been burned in the Lebanese theater, drew the necessary conclusions about the limitations on the use of force in Lebanon.
- 2 More than 30 shooting incidents were recorded in the Mt. Dov sector between October 2000 and the summer of 2006, in which a number of IDF soldiers were killed with no significant Israel response. See Tomer Naveh, "The Deterrent Relationship Between Israel and Hezbollah between 1982 and 2006," Master's thesis at Tel Aviv University, October 2007. The study is posted on the website of the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center in the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center.
- 3 Imad Mughniyeh, military deputy of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, was a key figure in building the upgraded military infrastructure during the period before the Second Lebanon War, and in operating it during the war. Mughniyeh was killed in

2008, two years after the Second Lebanon War, when his car exploded in Damascus. The foreign media attributed the killing to Israel.

- 4 Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Report on Conclusions Drawn from the Second Lebanon War, December 2007, p. 65.
- 5 Yitzhak Nakash, *On the Road to Power: Shi'ites in the Modern Arab World* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2008), pp. 154-55.
- 6 Winograd Commission, Final Report: Volume 1 (January 2008), p. 33.

THE SECOND LEBANON WAR

The Second Lebanon War: The Limits of Strategic Thinking

Udi Dekel

Background

Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000 without coordinating the conditions for evacuating the security zone in South Lebanon with the Lebanese government. However, it did coordinate its withdrawal with the United Nations: representatives of the UN secretary general drew the so-called Blue Line as the demarcation line between Israel and Lebanon (the agreement of both nations would have been necessary to establish a permanent border). On this basis, the UN approved the declaration that Israel was withdrawing from all of Lebanon, except for the northern part of the village of Ghajar.

Hezbollah exploited the IDF's hasty exit and the subsequent vacuum in southern Lebanon to take several significant steps. It cultivated a narrative of victory, "proven" by the fact that Israel had failed to confront the organization's acts of resistance successfully and was vanquished. It seized control of the areas evacuated by Israel, entrenching the organization and making the organization into the de facto ruler, while continuing acts of provocation against Israel. Hezbollah strengthened its influence on the Lebanese political system, including participation in elections and the government. On the military level, the organization built its military strength with Syrian and Iranian support, and inter alia was outfitted with mid range (up to 250 km) surface-to-surface missiles and surface-to-surface rockets, advanced and portable anti-tank and anti-air missile systems, UAVs for intelligence gathering and attacks, and surface-to-sea missiles. It constructed underground

infrastructures for launches, concealment, and intelligence and command and control systems. Hezbollah reorganized its strategic model, basing efforts on the firepower capabilities of a regular army combined with a modus operandi of guerrilla warfare, and reorganized the command and control structure. Finally, it provided direct and indirect help to Palestinian terrorist organizations in planning, financing, and arming terrorist attacks.

In tandem with infrastructure work of force buildup and political positioning in Lebanon, Hezbollah continued with terrorist acts, culminating with the abduction of three Israeli soldiers in the Mount Dov sector in October 2000 (early in the second Palestinian intifada) and later, with several (failed) attempts at abductions of soldiers from the border area in 2005-2006.

In September 2004, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1559, which determined that all Syrian forces were required to withdraw from Lebanon and Lebanese militias would be disarmed. It also called for expanding the Lebanese government's responsibility and control of the southern part of the country. After the resolution was adopted, two formative events occurred in the Lebanese arena: the murder of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri (February 2005), and the Cedar Revolution (April 2005), which ended Syria's military presence in Lebanon.

This was the background to the events of July 12, 2006, when Hezbollah launched a surprise attack on an IDF patrol along the Lebanese border inside Israeli territory, abducted two soldiers, murdered three, and injured three others. The abduction, less than three weeks after IDF soldier Gilad Shalit was abducted along Israel's border with the Gaza Strip, was assisted by surface-to-surface missile fire toward northern Israel. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah assumed Israel's reaction would be mild, given that the IDF's attention was focused on the Gaza Strip, that there had been no significant Israeli response to the 2000 abductions or the attempted abductions in 2005-2006. This assumption was likewise grounded in Hezbollah's – as well as Nasrallah's own – self-confidence in an ability to predict Israeli reactions to any event.¹

The Strategic Objective

During the second intifada and the urgent need to fight Palestinian terrorism, Israel chose not to be dragged into a situation in which it would have to be engaged in two arenas – the Palestinian and the northern – and estimated it would be able to contain events vis-à-vis Hezbollah. At the same time,

Israel watched with rising concern as the organization built up its military strength and raised its level of self-confidence. Hezbollah controlled southern Lebanon and provoked the IDF almost daily, while interfering with the routine of civilian life near the border and intensifying its attempts to abduct soldiers, both as a bargaining chip and as a way of humiliating Israel.² After the IDF managed to overcome Palestinian terrorism with Operation Defensive Shield and Israel understood that it was necessary to put an end to Hezbollah's ongoing provocations, it turned its attention to the northern front. With the July 2006 abduction on the Israeli-Lebanese border soon after the abduction of Gilad Shalit on the Israeli-Gaza Strip border, Israel felt it could remain passive no longer. The government, in consultation with the military leadership, decided that it was time for a determined reaction.

The military response to the abduction was almost automatic. There was no strategic situation assessment beforehand, nor were there discussions or decisions on what Israel wanted to achieve.³ At the government meeting on the day of the abduction, the decision was made to go to war without defining the action as "war," and without making a necessary clarification about the war's aims or the risks involved in attaining them or an evaluation of the consequences of forceful military response.

Had the government proceeded correctly, it would have analyzed two main options based on its definition of the strategic problem. The first option stemmed from defining the strategic problem as the erosion of deterrence, evident in Hezbollah's willingness to strike at Israel again. Based on this analysis, it would be necessary to restore deterrence. To attain such an objective, what was needed was a powerful retaliatory strike at Lebanon for several days built on assault capabilities and firepower, especially of the air force, in order to exact a heavy toll of Hezbollah and inflict damage on Lebanon itself as the responsible actor for what was happening in and from its territory and therefore forced to pay for the protection it was giving a terrorist organization. An Israeli response of this order would not have been enough to bring the captives back home and reverse the threat Hezbollah posed, but it would have stood a chance of restoring Israel's deterrence by forcing the other side to pay a price and causing it to desist from further attacks.

The second option stemmed from defining the strategic problem as Hezbollah itself, a powerful military organization with increasing strength and a dominant player in the northern arena, capable of harming Israeli

civilians any time it so desired. The force Hezbollah amassed had gradually changed the balance of power with Israel as well as the organization's political considerations, and resulted in the loss of Israel's deterrence. Therefore, what was needed was a strategic objective that would fundamentally change the situation and the balance of power. The way to do so would be to substantially undermine Hezbollah's capabilities, especially those that could damage Israel with high trajectory weapons, and push the organization's forces away from the Israeli border. The realization of this strategic objective would have meant the use of a great deal of power and ground maneuvers deep in Lebanese territory, at least to the Litani line (south of which Hezbollah had many assets), with an ORBAT of three to four divisions. Such a ground offensive would have lasted at least six weeks, and by its nature, would have meant a high price and major risks, including the loss of life and the possibility of long term entanglement on Lebanese soil. These facts would have had to be assessed and weighted before making a decision.

But the government discussion did not include an in-depth analysis of the various options and their ramifications. It merely ended with a decision to instruct the IDF to start aerial strikes as a response to the abduction. The assumption was that at some later point, decisions would be taken in response to developments. In another cabinet discussion, the IDF presented the government with a proposal for a strategic objective and end state designed to change the state of affairs in a fundamental fashion. The end state described the desired reality at the end of the confrontation: Hezbollah removed from the Israeli-Lebanese border; significant damage to the organization's capabilities (especially its mid and long range surface-to-surface missile and rockets systems); damage to Hezbollah's standing in Lebanon and its image in the Arab world; restored Israeli deterrence against the organization and other regional players; improved conditions for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559 with regard to the deployment of the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon, the disarming of the militias, and the enforcement of the responsibility of the sovereign Lebanese government; increased international involvement in Lebanon and the implementation of Security Council resolutions; and the creation of the conditions needed to bring the abducted soldiers home and prevent future abductions.

The rationale behind setting such far-reaching goals was the drive to bring about a change in the strategic situation that had developed on the Israeli-Lebanese border in the six years since Israel withdrew from the security

zone. The proposal was approved in the cabinet, but the key component in its realization – ground maneuvers deep into southern Lebanese territory – was postponed in the government meeting. The main reason was the concern among the political and military echelons that Israel would suffer numerous casualties, which according to estimates could have been 300-500 soldiers.⁴ Thus, a gap was formed between the strategic objective and the military outline designed to attain that objective.

The strategic concept that in practice was applied in the Second Lebanon War focused on: damaging Hezbollah's capabilities, primarily destroying its mid and long range launch systems, made possible thanks to precise strike capabilities based on high quality intelligence; causing severe damage to components of Hezbollah's other military capabilities (other launch capabilities, targeted assassinations of senior personnel, command centers, previously identified logistical centers and warehouses, infrastructures and fortifications near the border, and civilian infrastructures serving the organization's war systems); strengthening Israel's deterrence by determined, powerful aerial attacks; damaging Hezbollah's image as "Lebanon's defender" and stressing its being the cause of massive damage to the country; carrying out special operations in the rear of Hezbollah's strategic alignments; intercepting and foiling arms shipments from Iran and Syria and through Syria to Hezbollah; establishing a naval siege and no-fly zone to prevent aid from reaching Hezbollah; and stressing the responsibility of the Lebanese government for what was happening in the country.

The strategic objective and strategic concept were formulated during the fighting. They were not accompanied by an ordered situation assessment on definition of the problem and objective, or judgment on the best way to use force to achieve that objective. Even after some far-reaching goals were defined, the high command and the government did not officially declare a shift to the state of war. On the contrary, the government imposed limits on the IDF's use of force; in particular, it banned direct, intentional damage to Lebanese state infrastructures (because of Prime Minister Olmert's commitment to President Bush, designed to allow the United States a sphere of political action in order to reach a political settlement).

In tandem with the military efforts, a mechanism was put into place to allow humanitarian relief to the Lebanese population not involved in the fighting. Political moves vis-à-vis the Lebanese government were made with US mediation, aimed at enforcing the government's state responsibility

and sovereignty in the south to the Israeli border; and with the international community, aimed at imposing an embargo of arms shipments not designated for Lebanon's official army.

The war developed in three stages that could be delineated only retroactively, as they occurred without prior planning and in response to developments, and in light of the fact that throughout the period of fighting, Hezbollah managed continuously to launch surface-to-surface rockets at Israel (a total of 400 mid range rockets and 3,500 short range rockets⁵).

- a. In the first stage, lasting eight days, the IDF concentrated on neutralizing Hezbollah's strategic capabilities by attacking its long range surface-to-surface rockets and missiles, destroying the organization's command and control center in the Dahiya neighborhood of Beirut, and preventing shipments of arms and other support from Syria and Iran.
- b. In the second stage, which lasted approximately three weeks, the focus was on deepening the operational achievements and pushing Hezbollah from the border with Israel, while continuing to hunt down the organization's various rocket systems.
- c. In the third stage, the IDF maintained and ramped up its pressure on Hezbollah. A ground offensive into southern Lebanon, up to the Litani River line, was launched with the aim of destroying the organization's infrastructures in the region, pushing its operational units far from the border, suppressing the short range surface-to-surface rocket fire, and creating the conditions for promoting Israeli interests during the Security Council's decision making, according to the parameters proposed by the United States. The political echelon ordered a ground maneuver deep into Lebanon about 24 hours before the anticipated Security Council decision, apparently based on an understanding that the decision, which would end the fighting, would ensure that the IDF was not dragged into a prolonged ground offensive in Lebanon.

The description of the three stages indicates that the second stage was prolonged and failed to increase the pressure on Hezbollah, thereby also failing to create the appropriate exit conditions. In fact, Israel encountered problems in formulating an exit strategy and a mechanism to end the campaign, while waiting for the Security Council decision as the political clock was ticking exhaustingly slowly. Indeed, this pattern recurred in the conflicts with Hamas, when Israel tried to shorten the duration of the campaign but at the same time found it difficult to pick the right time and method to do

so, while at the same time striving to maximize the military achievement for political ends.

It was essential to undertake an extended situation assessment, from the beginning of the confrontation with Hezbollah, to indicate the optimal time to end the fighting when the approach to the use of force had realized its potential and most of the political objectives were met. The realization of aerial attacks and the standoff fire effort was one week into the fighting once Hezbollah's strategic launch systems were severely damaged and the organization's nerve center in Dahiya destroyed. In addition, in this period of time, Hezbollah's leadership was still in something of a state of shock because of the power of the Israeli response, the loss of the organization's strategic capabilities, and the legitimacy that Israel's campaign was granted in the international arena and even in the Arab world. Nasrallah said outright that he would be willing to end the fighting after a week, especially because his primary success – the abduction of the soldiers – came even before the fighting started. For these reasons, the IDF's Strategic Branch in the Planning Directorate recommended an end to the fighting after the first week. But the recommendation was rejected both by the senior military echelon and by the political echelon.⁶

The Gaps between the Strategic Objectives and the Execution

Because it is hard to judge the achievement of a war while it is underway, in many cases – especially in deterrence operations – there is a sense that it is worth continuing the fighting in order to enhance the military achievements and leverage them into political gain. This was true of the Second Lebanon War, in which Hezbollah's evolving situation, the balance of achievements, and the break-even point of the trends were incorrectly weighted. Israel's lingering presence allowed Hezbollah to overcome its initial shock, adapt to the IDF's framework of action, and amass successes by continuing to launch surface-to-surface rockets and demonstrating the IDF's inability to paralyze the organization's launch systems. Thus it unfolded that Hezbollah continued to inflict casualties deep in Israel as well as on the front.

A confrontation between the State of Israel and a sub-state entity such as Hezbollah reflects a fundamental asymmetry: a terrorist organization, free of state responsibility, hides within the civilian population and uses it as human shields and even cannon-fodder for propaganda purposes – and then directs its activity to attack Israeli civilians. Another dimension of the

asymmetry is the war's objectives: for Hezbollah, the fact that it did not surrender to Israel was seen as a victory, while for Israel an end state in which it had not decisively bested a terrorist organization was seen as a defeat. This was accentuated by the fact that Israel has an open, critical system that exposed the holes in the decision making process; the harm done to civilians, soldiers, and the civilian front; the flaws in the IDF's readiness; and the late and clumsy deployment of the ground offensive. In the absence of a clear victory for Israel, the fuzzy picture of the war's outcomes that Hezbollah presented to the Lebanese public allowed the organization and its leader to declare "a divine victory," whereas the Israeli side was shrouded in internal criticism, debriefing committees, and commissions of inquiry on the subject of the failure. Only as years passed did Hezbollah gradually admit to the mistakes it had made and the price it paid (the project to reconstruct the ruins concluded only seven years later), and in practice has avoided resuming proactive attacks on Israel from the Lebanese border (in part because of the circumstances that developed in Syria).

What were Israel's failures in its prosecution of the war? First, there was no understanding that the quick Israeli response in heavily damaging Hezbollah's strategic capabilities would lead to a war, and no state of war was ever declared. Avoiding the designation of a military operation as "war" also stemmed from psychological blocks and political barriers, because a declaration of war creates high expectations. For this reason, many political and military systems, including the civilian front, did not shift into emergency mode. The decision to call up the reserves came late, and once it came, progressed in halfhearted fashion (slowly, slowly). Moreover, the forces called up were not appropriately prepared during the stage before the ground offensive, despite the fact that it started only about a month after the war broke out. Likewise, there was little willingness to take risks in the use of force, as required in a state of war.

Second, the IDF, which for several years had concentrated on the ongoing conflict in the Palestinian arena, had reduced readiness in the northern sector and had not prepared for a high intensity confrontation with Hezbollah. It assumed – erroneously – that the operational experience it had accrued in fighting Palestinian terrorism had trained it sufficiently to face Hezbollah. The damage to IDF readiness was made evident in the state of the emergency warehouses of the reserve divisions and in the command and control capabilities of the division command centers, which had lost their combat fitness.

Third, the IDF did not have an appropriate response to the continued short range rocket launches and to Hezbollah's underground infrastructures where the launchers were concealed and protected, so that even the unique achievement of paralyzing Hezbollah's strategic launch systems and destroying 90 percent of the mid range rocket launchers was cancelled out because of the inability to suppress the short range rocket launchers.

Fourth, on the eve of the war, the General Staff approved an updated IDF concept and mode of operations, but the army still had many reservations and therefore it was not assimilated within the forces on the ground. Consequently, there was confusion at the General Staff level and among the field commanders regarding the doctrine about the deployment of forces.

What the IDF Should Have Learned from the Second Lebanon War

An asymmetrical confrontation is not manifested only in the deployment of force but also in a war's objectives. In the Second Lebanon War, the sub-state enemy defined survival as victory – the very fact that it was not defeated by the IDF (manifested primarily in its ability to continue launching surface-to-surface rockets at Israel's rear). By contrast, the advance of Israel's political goals required Israel to present clear facts on the ground that the enemy would not be able to manipulate to its own advantage. The way to attain this goal was to cause it extreme damage, sometimes by means of a ground offensive deep into enemy territory, and significantly reduce its ability to damage Israel's civilian and strategic rear.

The IDF must be ready to engage in a wide range of different confrontations. The response to one type of conflict is not necessarily appropriate in another. The capabilities and skills acquired in the limited, ongoing conflict in the Palestinian arena did not provide the fitness and readiness needed for a military confrontation with an enemy such as Hezbollah, which was equipped with advanced military systems and extensive long range launch capabilities capable of reaching every part of Israel. This required the application of greater force against the organization.

It is important to undertake a comprehensive situation assessment before, at the start of, and during a confrontation to examine the strategic problem that lies beyond any particular security incident, to formulate the political directives and the strategic objective, to formulate the strategic concept needed to realize that objective, to examine several military-political options

on the basis of the political goals, and to undertake an in-depth analysis of the implications and ramifications of the option selected before it is put into action.

Another layer is the political campaign, in which it is impossible to attain meaningful results without clear successes on the battlefield. For a political campaign to succeed, five fundamental components are needed:

- a. International legitimacy, i.e., guaranteeing that Israel is not blamed for starting the war.
- b. Clear success on the battlefield, i.e., a victory that translates into Israel's ability to force its ceasefire conditions on the enemy.
- c. Full exhaustion of the regional and international potential to promote Israel's political goals.
- d. Full coordination with the United States about the war's goals and the ways to attain them, which also requires consideration of US interests.
- e. Careful attention to avoid war crimes while reducing collateral damage and, to the extent possible, prevention of harm to non-combatants on the enemy's side.

A positive point that should be adopted from the Second Lebanon War is the integration of military, political, legal, and humanitarian efforts, coordinated and synchronized by the chief of staff of the Prime Minister's Bureau. The interdisciplinary approach is critical given contemporary conflicts. Much more needs to be done to develop and refine it.⁷

Conclusion

Despite Israel's problematic decisions and flaws in preparedness and use of force in the Second Lebanon War, the realization of the gaps in force between Israel and Hezbollah left the Lebanese organization badly bruised and forced it to change its modus operandi and strategic conduct vis-à-vis Israel. In the years after the war, Hezbollah was drawn into the Syrian civil war, leaving Israel's northern border calm for the decade that followed.

The most important lesson is not to embark on a military campaign to fix the outcomes and image of the previous one. It is necessary to examine every military campaign in light of its own particular and changing strategic context, and to steer the use of force according to the strategic goals set by the Israeli government. One must not allow the sour sense of regret of non-realization of the potential for rendering a more severe blow to Hezbollah in the Second Lebanon War to affect the strategic objective of the next military

campaign against the organization. In the current strategic situation, it is highly probable that such a campaign is unnecessary.

Notes

- 1 Gideon Alon, Assaf Oni, Aluf Benn, and Yoav Stern, "Nasrallah: We Wouldn't have Abducted the Two Soldiers had we Known it Would Lead to War," *Haaretz*, August 26, 2006, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1131753>.
- 2 Evidence for Hezbollah's mood may be found in the so-called spider web speech Nasrallah gave on May 26, 2000, "Sayyed Speech in Full on 26 May 2000 – Resistance and Liberation Day," *al-Maaref Islamic Net*, May 21, 2013, <http://english.almaaref.org/essaydetails.php?eid=3886&cid=286>.
- 3 For more on this topic, see Giora Eiland, "The Second Lebanon War: Lessons on the Strategic Level," *Military and Strategic Affairs* 1, no. 2 (2009): 9-24, <http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/MASA%20-%201.2.pdf>.
- 4 Isaac Ben-Israel, "The First Missile War," position paper, Harold Hartog School of Government and Policy, Tel Aviv University, May 2007, pp. 12-25.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ofer Shelah and Yoav Limor, *Captives in Lebanon* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot-Hemed Books, 2007), pp. 17-23.
- 7 Udi Dekel and Omer Einav, "Revising the National Security Concept: The Need for a Strategy of Multidisciplinary Impact," *INSS Insight*, No. 733, August 16, 2015, <http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/No.%20733%20-%20Udi%20and%20Omer%20for%20web772343072.pdf>.

The Second Lebanon War: A White House Perspective

Elliott Abrams

The outbreak of war in July 2006 was as surprising for the United States as it was for Israel. In addition to the significance for Israel, the results were important for the Bush administration, as they changed the American view of the Israeli-Palestinian situation and destroyed the relationship between Prime Minister Olmert and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Consider the background as we in the administration saw it. In the summer of 2005, Ariel Sharon completed the disengagement from Gaza and thereafter established a new party, Kadima, to give him the political space that he lacked inside Likud to address Palestinian matters. President Bush, always an admirer of leaders who undertook bold moves, strongly supported Sharon in disengaging from Gaza and in forming a new party. After Sharon's second stroke, Olmert became prime minister and Kadima's candidate, and ran on a "convergence" platform (*hitkansut*), applying some of the logic of the Gaza disengagement to Judea and Samaria. He won 29 seats in the late March 2006 elections, a good showing, and formed a coalition that would allow him to govern and move forward with his plans. His initial meetings with Bush were excellent, and it seemed to us that Israel had a determined new leader who might change Israeli-Palestinian relations significantly.

Then came the war in Lebanon. At the outset, we did not second-guess Olmert's decision for war. Like most of the European and Arab states, we assumed the war would be well-managed and the IDF would hurt Hezbollah, severely and quickly. The damage to Hezbollah would be beneficial to all of

us. It would weaken Hezbollah internally and strengthen the new government in Lebanon under Fouad Siniora, which the United States supported; it would weaken the influence of Iran; it would strengthen Israel; and after a quick victory, Olmert would be even better positioned to move forward on the Palestinian front, either through negotiations or through unilateral actions.

When the war began our position was very close to that of Israel: return of the kidnapped soldiers and no return to the status quo ante. Hezbollah should lose and be seen to lose – a position the Arabs took as well, and behind closed doors, many Arab diplomats put their hopes in the IDF. We in the White House opposed a quick ceasefire, because we wanted the IDF to pound Hezbollah and because a quick ceasefire would mean no change in the underlying situation, with Hezbollah in control of South Lebanon. Thus it was that on July 19, 2006, Secretary Rice publicly rejected calls for an immediate ceasefire, and at the Rome conference of foreign ministers on July 26 she resisted the tearful presentation of Siniora and pressure from every other participant for such a ceasefire. When before the meeting we met with the host, Italian Foreign Minister Massimo d'Alema, she told him flatly that the United States would block any declaration calling for an immediate ceasefire and Israeli withdrawal.

What we had in mind was some enforcement of UN Security Council Resolution 1559, which called for disarming non-governmental militias (such as Hezbollah) and enforcing Lebanese government sovereignty throughout Lebanon. We thought a new and strong international presence, perhaps a NATO force, would be useful, along with a border police force with foreign participation, to guard the Lebanese-Syrian border and prevent the smuggling of Syrian weapons to Hezbollah.

But after two weeks of war, new realities began to surface. The IDF was not decimating Hezbollah, as just about everyone had expected. The fact that combat continued meant that there was, inevitably, some damage to the infrastructure and collateral damage to civilian life. Hezbollah did a masterful job at propaganda that falsely multiplied the scale of damage, and in this it was greatly aided by Siniora and his government.

All of this meant that the isolation of the United States grew – as did the ensuing pressure. From my perspective, this did not affect President Bush much, but it did matter to Secretary Rice, who dealt personally with the conflict every day. The Arab governments grew nervous, because their “street” was watching *al-Jazeera* depict the total destruction of Lebanon.

This was a lie, but a powerful one. Typically, the Europeans wrung their hands – and that was all they did or even thought about doing. Our discussions of the international force that would replace or supplement UNIFIL went nowhere. We had thought of German participation in a border police force, and the Germans were well situated to supply training, personnel, and money for it. The only problem was that they absolutely refused. Also central to the problem of an enhanced international presence was that Siniora would not demand it; he was apparently afraid of Hezbollah, and of appearing to compromise Lebanese sovereignty by bringing back foreign troops just a year after Syrian troops had finally left. Either he did not see that these foreign forces would help him maintain sovereignty against Hezbollah, or he was simply too scared to speak about anything but Israeli “war crimes.”

So by week three, American resolve was dissipating. There would be no great Israeli victory; we had no allies in holding out for something better than the status quo ante; Siniora was acting essentially as Hezbollah’s advocate; and to Rice, Israeli policy seemed lost, to the point that she began to lose confidence in Olmert and in the IDF. When we met with Olmert, he would say, “I need ten more days” to inflict qualitative damage on Hezbollah. When we would meet or speak five days later, he would say, “I need ten more days” all over again. But there was little evidence, or at least none we saw, that in fact significantly more damage would be done to Hezbollah if Olmert got a bit more time. This was critical, because it undermined the logic of resisting all the international pressure and continuing the war.

Rice had another major concern: Siniora and the government of Lebanon, which we had endorsed after the Cedar Revolution of 2005 and the Lebanese elections that year as an example of the growth of Arab democracy. Lebanon had a government, under Hariri’s Future Movement, that received US aid, and Rice feared this war would destroy it. (Before the war, I too had liked and respected Siniora, a technocrat who seemed honest and competent. During the war, I came to see him as a narrow nationalist whose fear of Hezbollah and hatred for Israel were his leading motivations.) Rice’s concern with Siniora’s survival led her even to accept his position on Shab’a Farms. When he first raised it, Rice had told him that it was a ridiculous demand; the United Nations had certified that Israel had withdrawn from all Lebanese territory in 2000, meaning that it viewed Shab’a as part of the Syrian Golan, and not part of Lebanon. But Siniora hammered away at this, perhaps because it was easier for him to discuss Shab’a for hours on end than to discuss the

war that Hezbollah had brought upon his country. A few weeks into the war, Rice was telling Olmert and Livni that any UN resolution ending the conflict had to mention Shab'a – a position they rightly rejected.

By week three we could begin to see that despite the talk about “no return to the status quo ante,” that was the most likely outcome. What, after all, would change? There would be no big and powerful international force in Lebanon; there were no volunteers. Israel would obviously damage Hezbollah, but it was not at all clear that this damage would be fatal for the organization militarily or politically. In fact, the longer the war went on and the longer Hezbollah survived Israel's attack, the greater its popularity and legend might grow.

So Rice put together a set of ideas about a ceasefire that would at least appear to meet our goals and Israel's. Those principles from UN Security Council Resolution 1559 about Lebanese national sovereignty, the disarmament of militias, and Lebanese Armed Forces dominance in South Lebanon would all be adopted, even if many of us thought these were mere words. By late July, Olmert and Siniora were on board, and Rice would visit Jerusalem, Beirut, Jerusalem again, and then fly to New York to present her achievement to the Security Council. It would adopt a resolution containing the key provisions, and the fighting would end.

But then came Qana. On the night of July 29-30, 2006, an Israeli strike on a building in South Lebanon killed dozens of civilians. This was bad enough, and a reminder that such things can always happen in war. Worse yet, the accounts Israel presented to us changed hour by hour, deepening Rice's distrust in Olmert and the IDF. Moreover, the timing was particularly problematic: she was going to Beirut to get Siniora's agreement to principles Olmert had accepted, and would soon be in the Security Council to end the war, where her triumph would be celebrated. For the Bush administration, bogged down in a losing war in Iraq and with low popularity ratings, this would be a major achievement.

Yet suddenly, all was overturned. Rice called Siniora on the morning of July 30, and he said she could not come to Beirut. He then made a speech calling Israel's leaders “war criminals” and referring to “Israeli massacres,” rhetoric that had its impact in the Arab world and Europe. So we – Secretary Rice's group – went home, after a most unpleasant meeting with Olmert. He agreed to a 48-hour ceasefire but did not see what Rice saw: the handwriting was on the wall, and this war had to end, fast. Oddly enough, at this meeting

Olmert asked for ten more days and Rice said that was impossible; we would be in the Security Council in two or three days. In the end, Olmert got the ten days and more because the final Security Council resolution did not come until August 11, and Israel did not accept it and stop fighting until August 13.

Actually, the United States and France presented a solid resolution draft on August 4, but it was too favorable to Israel to pass: for example, it did not call for an immediate Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. The draft we presented on August 8 reflected Arab League pressure, France's wilting under that pressure, and activity by Qatar, a Security Council member that year. Resolution 1701 was adopted on August 11, and it had some good language about essential changes on the ground: full control of Lebanon by the Lebanese government and armed forces, disarmament of all militias, no supply of arms to anyone but the armed forces, and a much stronger UNIFIL. But none of this, of course, came to fruition: Hezbollah became larger and better armed, the Lebanese government and armed forces are weaker in the South, and though UNIFIL was enlarged, it remained unable and unwilling to challenge Hezbollah.

Why was more not achieved? Israel could not win at the United Nations, nor could the United States earn for Israel what Israel itself had not achieved on the battlefield. It had not crushed Hezbollah, and having failed to achieve its military goals it could not achieve its diplomatic goals.

When this became evident to Israel, Olmert suffered political damage from which he never recovered. For Rice, this had important implications in the Israeli-Palestinian context. The United States policy on the Palestinians in 2004-2005 was to back Sharon and disengagement from Gaza. When Olmert came to power in 2006, our policy became backing Olmert and convergence. But in the four months between Olmert's election victory in March and the outbreak of war in July, the Prime Minister was not able to do much. Now, we thought, he never would be. Convergence died in Lebanon. In this sense there is a direct line from Qana to Annapolis: from the moment when Rice concluded that she could not rely on Israeli power and acumen, to the diplomatic process that she engineered to try for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

Rice came to believe that she, and not Israel, would need to lead. As Eliot Cohen, her counselor at the State Department put it to me later, "The Lebanon war was a traumatic experience. It colored a lot of things thereafter...and there were a couple of elements to it. One was her own sense of having

extended herself to defend the Israelis as they bumbled along in Lebanon. Another was a profound sense of Israeli incompetence at managing their own security affairs. And a third element was a personal distrust of Olmert – quite different from her view of Sharon.” In her eyes, the Olmert approach to the Palestinians was now dead. There was a vacuum, and she planned to fill it. This is how the Annapolis conference was born.

Flying home from Israel on July 30, after the Qana disaster, she was already planning. It seemed to her that given the Iraq war and the Lebanon war, “people are lost now in the Middle East and we need to act.” She was thinking big, about comprehensive agreements that would include Israel, the Palestinians, and perhaps Syria, and a big international gathering hosted by President Bush. Recalling Clinton’s error at Camp David, where his effort had no Arab support, she contemplated replacing the Middle East Quartet with Arab states and involving them early. A week later, on August 6, we met at her Watergate apartment to discuss her new ideas. She had already discussed them with James Baker and Brent Scowcroft, asking how they had organized the Madrid Conference of 1991. She had had her assistants at the State Department draw up plans to put a US National Guard division in the West Bank, to keep the peace when the IDF withdrew. She began to espouse the old State Department Arabist line that our relations with the Arab states require movement on the Israeli-Palestinian front, especially now during the war in Iraq.

This struck me as unrealistic in the extreme, but in judging her diplomatic approach, we should remember that in a way it was supported by Olmert. As early as August, days after the Lebanon war ended, Olmert was commencing an approach to Syria via the Turks. Moreover, he did not give up his Palestinian effort and indeed pushed it forward; throughout 2007 and 2008 he told Bush that a deal with the Palestinians was realistic and possible, and that he was determined to achieve it. Critics may say that with corruption allegations arising and with his time in office likely shortened by perceptions of defeat in Lebanon, Olmert wanted to move fast. Whatever the personal motivation related to police investigations, surely the loss of popularity due to Lebanon affected his push for a Palestinian deal – and the way he spoke about it with Rice and Bush. The tension with Rice continued, and after the war in Lebanon I do not recall one good, pleasant meeting between them. But they were both sending Bush the same message: we should try for a peace deal while Bush was President, and it was possible by the end of 2008. Whenever I told Bush

it seemed impossible to me, given the distance between the parties and the weakness of the Palestinian leadership, he would respond that Olmert felt differently and was optimistic.

Perhaps for Israel, the Annapolis process actually did no harm in that it took up the diplomatic space from the summer of 2006 to the end of the Bush administration in January 2009, and thereby protected Israel from facing additional pressures in the form of new plans, European efforts, and the like. Sharon had told Bush that he decided to move in Gaza partly because a vacuum created after Arafat pushed Abbas aside in the summer of 2003 had led to all sorts of plans he disliked, from the “Geneva Initiative” to the Ayalon-Nusseibeh “People’s Choice” plan. Annapolis kept that from happening. But the damage to Israel’s diplomatic standing in the region did not begin to be repaired until September 2007, more than a year after the war, when the Syrian nuclear reactor at al-Kibar was bombed. Looking back at the internal debates in the White House about what to do when the reactor was discovered, I was at first surprised by Bush’s decision that the United States would not bomb the reactor. But in retrospect he may have believed that this task should be left to Israel, because if Israel acted that would be a giant step toward rebuilding the confidence in Israeli strength – its own confidence, and that of Arab neighbors – that the Jewish state requires to survive in the Middle East.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE WAR FOR ISRAEL

The IDF: Implementing Lessons Learned from the Second Lebanon War

Gabi Siboni

The nature of IDF combat in the security zone in southern Lebanon imposed many restraints on the regular army's ground forces and their ability to operate in a way reflecting the IDF's traditional doctrine of combined ground warfare. The reasons for these limitations are beyond the scope of this article; suffice it to mention the anachronistic activity in the security zone and the trouble the IDF encountered in executing attacks on short notice and with rushed battle procedures.

The retreat from southern Lebanon and the war on Palestinian terrorism in 2000-2005 forced the IDF to make far reaching changes in its operational concept and in the forces' operational freedom on the ground. The IDF and the other security forces succeeded in defeating suicide terrorism through a process of learning and change fraught with operational failures and tenacious fighting.¹ The focus on fighting terrorism and the consequent changes in the army took a steep toll, manifested in a sharp decline of IDF preparedness to operate in a widespread confrontation that would involve the use of large formations and many corps, as required in combined arms warfare. The scope of resources allocated to maintain combined combat fitness dropped precipitously.² Commander training and unit exercises were all but suspended. Concomitantly, a fundamental conceptual gap developed: the model for fighting domestic terrorism was based mainly on policing geared at foiling attacks with help from the other security agencies. This approach did not

provide a sufficient knowledge base for widespread, combined fighting, for example, in Lebanon.

It therefore comes as no surprise that the 2006 campaign in Lebanon caught the IDF with a compromised ability to fight Hezbollah. Subsequent debriefings and investigations found more than a few flaws both in the IDF's force buildup and in its operation, requiring a profound process of reconstruction. In tandem, the IDF improved its understanding of the hallmarks of the threat posed by both Hezbollah to the country's north and Hamas and other organizations to the south.

The process of learning lessons from the Second Lebanon War continues. This essay deals with the central components of this process, including the IDF's model of command and control, maneuver and firepower, operations far behind enemy lines, and special operations.

Command and Control

In April 2006, then-Chief of Staff Dan Halutz issued a binding document on the IDF's operations concept: this followed years in which IDF officers debated the optimal ways of confronting the nation's changing threats.³ In and of themselves these thought processes were a welcome development, but their contents and the confused way they were absorbed by the army had far reaching consequences, manifested in part by the lack of a common language in the Second Lebanon War. The report of the Winograd Commission, charged with investigating the war, stated that, "[The concept of operations] was insufficiently clear. There were fundamental gaps in the basic infrastructure and flaws in the IDF document's contents, language, and the extent of its assimilation in the IDF...Furthermore, the document did not include a translation or lexicon that would have rendered its instructions in more common language, and some of its principles were very general. At the same time, there were also [other] concepts and understandings... There was no real connection – at least with regard to the Lebanon sector – between the new doctrine of operations and its translation into binding operative terms in operational commands."⁴

Since the Second Lebanon War, several attempts were made to formulate a current operational concept for the IDF, but these did not evolve into a working document. Only in August 2015, a little over nine years after the war, was a new conceptual document issued – *The IDF Strategy*. The new paper defines several principles: the IDF's concept of force deployment, its

command and control model, and principles of force buildup. The principles described effectively regulate the IDF concept of operations and, as the document says, “serve as a guiding compass” for the use and buildup of force.⁵ The document’s simplicity and clarity, its assimilation in the army, and the fact that it was issued to the public reflect a desire to learn from past mistakes and confront the internal and external criticism of the 2006 document.

Before the Second Lebanon War, the IDF’s operations approach dealt with the division of authority within the general command, and the Chief of Staff’s approach to command and control on the use of force vis-à-vis the principal commands.⁶ It also defined the concept of “campaign” as what went beyond tactical fighting, based on the idea that the Operational Theory Research Institute (currently the Dado Center for Interdisciplinary Military Studies) introduced to the IDF.⁷ At the core of the concept was the “campaign arena” (the geographical commands) integrating all of the IDF’s fighting efforts against all the enemy’s efforts in the same arena. As a result, during the Second Lebanon War, tensions emerged between the commanders of the arenas of the “campaign,” on the one hand, and the command of the war arena (the General Command), on the other, as to who was the commander of the “campaign” in the northern arena. This tension remained in place for several years thereafter.⁸

As a lesson from this state of affairs, the chapter about command and control in *The IDF Strategy* states that “The Chief of the General Staff commands all the IDF’s campaigns and determines all efforts and missions assigned to the Principal Commands. He sets up the strategic and operational concepts to attain the missions of the Principal Commands and their interactions.”⁹ In fact, the document determines that there are no longer any IDF campaign commanders except the Chief of the General Staff, and the permanent command and control structure is retained at the general command. The importance of this statement should not be underestimated, as this aims at arresting a long period of confusion on the subject among the senior officers of the IDF.

Defining the military base state is a very important issue when it comes to command and control. One of the main problems in the Second Lebanon War was that there was no definition of war as a base state and there was continued reliance on processes associated with routine security conduct. A glaring example was the continued ritual of operations and sorties that

was (and remains) a hallmark of routine. The lesson of this failure has since been learned, and the IDF has defined three base states: routine, emergency, and war. It is the Chief of Staff's duty to declare at every given point in time the base state from which a series of concrete actions must be derived, such as the high command HQ shifting to "war time," and so on.

Maneuver and Firepower

One of the most important lessons to emerge from the debriefings after the Second Lebanon War relates to the IDF's preparedness and fitness to launch a combined arms battle of large scope. The 2006 war revealed difficulties, lack of professionalism, and a low level of effectiveness of unprecedented scope in armored forces and infantry multi-corps combinations and in the use of artillery fire. Furthermore, the combination between air and ground forces was flawed and marked by an inability to provide air cover close to the ground forces within relevant timeframes.

An example of the ineffectiveness of the use of the ground forces in the Second Lebanon War was the action by the Pillar of Fire division.¹⁰ The Winograd Commission devoted a short chapter to this division in its report: "The division was called up on August 4 and on the same day received an order from the command to seize control of the al-Hiyam area... Even after the plans had been approved... the division commander decided to postpone the execution of the order by 24 hours... because of the forces' unpreparedness... On Friday, August 11, the division prepared for a second attack... The forces were not ready for the fighting, the attack was postponed, and in the end was not carried out. This was the end of the fighting for the formation. Its missions were not fulfilled."¹¹ The last comment was particularly scathing given the fact that the ground forces had been on hold for an extended period before the decision was made to insert ground forces into Lebanon and because the model of preparing to enter the fighting and learning the lessons of other units failed to achieve its purpose.

The lessons of the Second Lebanon War thus compelled the IDF to repair the state of fitness of its ground forces and commanders. It did this by organizing ORBAT for combat, reestablishing two corps in the north, and investing in advanced weapon systems (including the Mark 4 Merkava tank, the Namer – an armored personnel carrier based on the Merkava tank chassis, fortification systems, and fire control). In the years after the war, the IDF paid particular attention to training and improving the fitness of ground forces,

including the reserve units. The conceptual “compass” focused on improving basic capabilities, representing the core of the IDF strength. Concurrently, the IDF stressed the building of ground forces’ accurate and independent fire capabilities and made particular efforts to improve coordination between aerial firepower and ground forces to provide close assistance. After years in which effort was diverted from building strength on the ground in favor of aerial firepower and intelligence capabilities (to generate targets), it seems that the IDF began to reverse the trend. The publication of *The IDF Strategy* is further evidence: the document attributes great importance to ground maneuvers as part of any comprehensive response. This is supposed to be based on “attack capabilities on several concurrent fronts by means of immediate ground maneuvers that must be rapid, deadly, durable and flexible, i.e., moveable between arenas and fronts.” Such capability should appear in tandem with “effective use of fire, powerful and high-quality, precise, multi-dimensional, in all arenas of war.”¹²

For most of the fighting in the Second Lebanon War, emphasis was placed on operational-level fire, based on the assumption that this alone could generate the desired effect.¹³ This approach, which went hand in hand with the conceptual developments in the IDF at the time, was manifested in the operational concept of 2006, which stated: “The change in the function of fire from an auxiliary component to the main component in attaining a decision...reduces the need...[for] extensive ground maneuvers far behind enemy lines...mass seizure of enemy territory...[and] the need to conquer large tracts of land. Identifying the aerial space (on the ground and from a standoff position)...while reducing the friction vis-à-vis the asymmetry of components developed by the enemy.”¹⁴

This aspect of operational-level fire was analyzed by the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee report on the lessons of the Second Lebanon War. The committee’s analysis explained the phenomenon whereby concepts such as the fire campaign and the “effects” approach gained currency as a byproduct of technological advances. The committee noted that the core of the approach developed by the IDF in those years was based on the conclusion that it was possible to achieve strategic aims using volleys of precision fire, making the need for multi-friction maneuvering into enemy territory redundant. According to the committee report, the Second Lebanon War proved that the approach was only theoretical and could not provide the desired outcome for the State of Israel in its conflict with Hezbollah.¹⁵ Yet

despite the committee's assertion, systemic power was effective in destroying Hezbollah's strategic ground-to-ground missile and rocket systems and its main stronghold in the Dahiya neighborhood of Beirut in the Second Lebanon War.

To a large extent, the IDF continued to rely on operational-level firepower as a dominant factor even after that war, including the three rounds of fighting in the Gaza Strip that have occurred since then, leaving the balance between operational-level fire and ground maneuvers as one of the army's most significant challenges. Moreover, the process of assimilating maneuvers is presumably only in its early stages, and much more effort will have to be made to bring it back to its vital place in the IDF toolbox. The lack of significant maneuvering in the last several campaigns stemmed from several other reasons, including: concern about having to control territories of adjacent states or entities far into the future; concern about a subsequent campaign to retain densely populated areas and the costs of having to deal with civilian resistance and terrorism; and a political echelon worried about an image of failure and another "flight" after the unilateral withdrawals from southern Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. These reasons are of marginal importance in face of the assertion in *The IDF Strategy* that maneuvering is the core competency of the army and that it is necessary to place particular emphasis on the ability to put it into practice as soon as a war erupts, while continuing varied force buildup and prioritizing the IDF's strike divisions among all the army's components.¹⁶

Operations Deep behind Enemy Lines and Special Operations

Operating deep behind enemy lines and using special operations are also critical components in the toolbox of an operational commander.¹⁷ In the Second Lebanon War, the special ops took place primarily in the war arena and were local initiatives that developed into operations rather than the result of orderly planning ahead of time. Special operations in the Northern Command arena was of very low scope due to the lack of prior planning. Such preparation requires preparing units, drafting an existing bank of possible operations, training, creating operational models, and training commanders on the units' capabilities to carry out such operations that are high risk activities.

In this context, two major lessons were assimilated by the IDF: the establishment of a command center for operations deep behind enemy

lines, and the establishment of a commando brigade. As early as 2007, the Northern Command organized a command center for special ops and operations behind enemy lines. The command center has participated in all Northern Command and General Staff exercises held since then, and has been integrated into command-wide operational planning. The process of assimilating this lesson in the General Command took longer. Only four years later, in 2011, did then-Chief of the General Staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz decide to set up a Depth Command subordinate to the Chief of General Staff and operated by the General Command. The Depth Command was charged with developing the knowledge to carry out special ops and to develop significant maneuvering capabilities deep behind enemy lines. Since then, the Command has worked to develop operational capabilities for special ops, including operational plans, training and exercises, and the construction of a system of command and control and combat assistance for such operations. At the same time, the Depth Command is working to develop maneuver capabilities deep behind enemy lines (by ground incursion, aerial flanking, or naval flanking). The Command holds various exercises to develop command and control fitness for operations deep in enemy territory and the fitness of the different units allocated to it to carry out the mission.

The IDF Strategy provides further expression to the force buildup required for better assimilation of these lessons: “Build up the capability to parachute or fly infantry forces to raid enemy centers of gravity...the ability to conduct deep, extensive special operations shall be built up, [with] planning and exercising special operations in the war and the operational arenas, executing ‘operations of opportunity,’ buildup of a pre-prepared special operations ‘bank,’ [and] standardization of special measures means of warfare and doctrine (common language) among all Special Forces, to conduct special operations with large Orders of Battle.”¹⁸ The establishment of the Commando Brigade in 2015 was another component in the assimilation of the lessons of the Second Lebanon War.

Conclusion

The series of in-depth debriefings and investigations in the IDF after the Second Lebanon War, the Winograd Commission report on the war, and the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee report on the lessons of the war revealed many failures in the IDF’s performance in the 2006 war. Despite these failures, the IDF managed to inflict a heavy blow on

Hezbollah, which is perhaps the reason for the long period of calm on the Lebanese front since then.

Learning and assimilating the lessons of the war is a multi-year process, especially for an organization as large and bureaucratic as the IDF. Since the war, the IDF has undergone – and continues to undergo – a gradual process involving far reaching changes: a simplification of its command and control concept; a decision that command and control processes be unified in all IDF Command HQ;¹⁹ and the understanding that the Chief of General Staff is the only campaign commander in the army. The most important test will be the realization of these changes in practice.

Fighting in Judea and Samaria in 2000-2005 caused a slowdown in IDF ground forces buildup – forces meant to be deployed in a combined arms battle of scenarios involving widespread confrontations. The functioning of the ground forces in the Second Lebanon War was a direct result of their performance during the years of the second intifada. Today, the traditional maneuver is returning to its rightful place in a slow process and is again viewed as a central IDF tool alongside operational-level fire. The IDF has established command centers to deploy special ops and carry out missions deep in enemy territory, and has even founded a commando brigade. All of these can improve maneuvering action and the deployment of special ops in a war.

The debate about the necessity of the maneuver likewise touches on conceptual aspects linked to the growing difficulty to attain a decision in the classical sense of the word against non-state players. Current players are assimilated into their civilian surroundings and present a difficulty in identifying centers of gravity and weakness against which it is possible to act rapidly and effectively. Therefore, there is an urgent need to formulate an integrated response to attain a rapid decision against the enemy and eliminate its physical capabilities. It can be done by conquering land, destroying infrastructures and forces, and eliminating immediate threats, while shifting most of the fighting to enemy territory and using concurrent, multi-dimensional force that combines immediate, aggressive maneuvers with accurate systemic firepower.

The Second Lebanon War broke out despite the fact that neither side wanted it. In recent years, the IDF has developed the understanding that postponing the next round of fighting is one of the IDF's major objectives. The means the IDF uses to attain that goal is “the campaign between wars,”

whose objectives are enhancing the gains of the previous campaign, preserving and increasing deterrence, weakening the enemy and reducing its force construction, creating better starting conditions for the next war, improving the legitimacy for Israeli action, and denying the legitimacy for the enemy's action.

There is one major area in which no significant change has been made: the addiction to technology. This process has continued in the army for many years, especially in the decade since the Second Lebanon War. Israel's military industry provides technologies of the very highest level, but these alone cannot generate sufficient operational results. The key problem of the IDF in this context is not the lack of means or the lack of development of new means, but asking and answering the question of how to use existing means. The dependence on technology resulted in superficial processes of thought, strategy, and operational planning, and in damage to development of operational models and a doctrine of warfare. Officer training at the hand of the very best IDF commanding officers and the appointment of promising commanders to staff positions in the suitable army branches can go a long way toward rectifying this situation.

The publication of *The IDF Strategy* is an important step in the right direction. The document attests to the fact that a key lesson has been learned by the army, namely: the need for clear, simple basic documents that help create a common language for the IDF and its commanders on the one hand, and the public at large on the other, in which to discuss the ways of confronting the threats facing the State of Israel.

Notes

- 1 Gabi Siboni, "Defeating Suicide Terrorism in Judea and Samaria, 2002-2005," *Military and Strategic Affairs* 2, no. 2 (2010): 113-24, [http://www.inss.org.il/uploadimages/Import/\(FILE\)1298360394.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/uploadimages/Import/(FILE)1298360394.pdf).
- 2 Combined arms combat is the ability to utilize all ground capabilities effectively and optimally in any given mission. This includes armored, infantry, engineering, fire (aerial and ground), intelligence, and logistic capabilities, as well as operations behind enemy lines and special ops.
- 3 Dov Tamari and Meir Khalifi, "The IDF's Model of Operations," *Maarachot* No. 423, February 2009.
- 4 *The Commission Investigating the Events of the 2006 Lebanon Campaign, the Winograd Commission, Final Report*, Vol. 1, p. 321.

- 5 *The IDF Strategy*, 2015. An English translation is available at <https://www.idfblog.com/2015/11/23/idf-strategy/>.
- 6 The main command centers for use of force in the IDF are all the command centers subordinate to the Chief of Staff. Today, the IDF has nine command centers: the command centers of the three geographical commands, and the home front, air force, navy, logistics, depth, and telecommunications command centers. Once the cyber corps is established, there will be a tenth command center.
- 7 Gabi Siboni, "The Military Campaign in Lebanon," in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, eds. Meir Elran and Shlomo Brom (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2007), pp. 61-76.
- 8 This tension did not ease even after Operation Protective Edge and was, for example, manifested in the question of who was the commander in charge of Home Front Command activities in Beer Sheva during the operation.
- 9 *The IDF Strategy*.
- 10 Full disclosure: in the Second Lebanon War, the author of this essay served as the chief of staff of the Pillar of Fire division.
- 11 *The Commission Investigating the Events of the 2006 Lebanon Campaign, the Winograd Commission, Final Report*, Vol. 1, p. 320.
- 12 *The IDF Strategy*.
- 13 Especially stopping high trajectory fire on the country's civilian centers.
- 14 *The General Staff's Model for IDF Operations*, Eked, April 2006, first edition, p. 64 (the quotation is from *The Commission Investigating the Events of the 2006 Lebanon Campaign, the Winograd Commission, Final Report*, Vol. 1, pp. 272-73).
- 15 Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Report on Conclusions Drawn from the Second Lebanon War, December 2007.
- 16 *The IDF Strategy*.
- 17 Special ops are defined as missions carried out by a small force (compared to the other forces deployed in the campaign) designed to support the main action. By definition, a special operation is not designed to attain the main goal of the campaign in which it is used.
- 18 *The IDF Strategy*.
- 19 *The IDF Strategy*.

Israel's Emergency Preparedness a Decade after the Second Lebanon War

Alex Altshuler, Shmuel Even, Meir Elran, and Yonatan Shaham

Many have called the Second Lebanon War a turning point for the Israel's emergency management system in general and missile and rocket defense in particular. In 2006, Israel was not adequately prepared for the attacks by Hezbollah rockets. It appears that more than a failure of command, the event revealed a conceptual and strategic failure, reflecting the insufficient weight given by the security and civilian leadership in Israel's national security doctrine to the missile and rocket threat against the population. Since 2006, the main thrust of efforts by the emergency management agencies in Israel has consisted of preparations for diverse scenarios of missile and rocket attacks. Thus occurred a significant improvement in Israel's emergency preparedness for these scenarios. In addition, Israel's emergency management system is making preparations for terror attacks, cyber attacks, and for natural disasters. The difficult and multi-dimensional emergency management mission requires ongoing cooperation between all the stakeholders involved, comprehensive strategic planning, structural flexibility, thorough drilling for various scenarios, and conceptual and operational comprehensive preparedness, given the unexpected and dynamic nature of emergencies and disasters.

The Nature of Security-Related Emergency Situations since the Second Lebanon War

Israel's civilian front has been challenged steadily in the decade since 2006, primarily by three rounds of warfare in the Gaza Strip (Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009, Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012, and Operation Protective Edge in 2014). In all of these cases, as in the Second Lebanon War, barrages of rockets and missiles were launched against civilian population centers at a fairly steady rate of 100-130 rockets and mortar shells a day. These attacks caused low-to-medium levels of damage to people and property in comparison with previous wars.¹ The two latter rounds involved use of the Iron Dome system, which dramatically reduced the potential damage and enhanced the sense of security among the general public. At the same time, in terms of disruption of daily life, the intervals between rounds of warfare against Hamas have become shorter and the duration of the fighting has become longer, reaching a peak of 51 days – and 60 days for the areas bordering the Gaza Strip – in Operation Protective Edge.

Various types of terrorist attacks have continued intermittently over the past decade. Since 2015, Israel has been subjected to a new wave of terrorism, mainly – but not exclusively – in Jerusalem and the West Bank. These attacks have featured stabbings, car-rammings, and shootings by individuals or terrorists operating in pairs. This wave of violence, which was not predicted in advance, highlights the importance of simultaneous comprehensive multi-disciplinary planning for various possible scenarios, marked by flexibility and innovation, toward a broad range of scenarios by the agencies responsible for emergency management in Israel.²

Structural and Inter-Organizational Characteristics of Israel's Emergency Management System

Following the Second Lebanon War, it became clear, in part due to the State Comptroller's Report,³ that a substantive change in Israel's emergency management organizational structure was necessary. The lack of integration between all the stakeholders operating on the home front – government ministries, security agencies, local authorities, and civilian non-governmental organizations – was particularly glaring, and thus the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) was founded in 2007 within the Ministry of Defense. It was designed to be a coordinating and integrative government agency for emergency management matters. Two years later, the Emergency

Economy Authority, a veteran emergency management agency established in 1955, became part of NEMA, making the latter an executive agency, not merely a coordinating one. The entire measure involved a complex internal and long term organizational change. In 2011, however, primarily as a result of political considerations, a new government ministry was established – the Ministry of Home Front Defense, which swallowed up NEMA. A series of ongoing clashes ensued, peaking with the question of the command affiliation between the Ministry of Home Front Defense, the Ministry of Defense, and the IDF Home Front Command, and causing delays and disruptions in the performance of the agencies involved.

Frequent structural changes during these years that were not part of a defined strategic process were accompanied by an increase in the resources allocated to home front defense, but without the necessary systematic synchronization. One prominent indication for this was reflected in a series of discussions in the first quarter of 2014 in the Subcommittee for the Examination of Home Front Preparedness, a subcommittee of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee,⁴ when it emerged that the various government entities agreed about almost nothing, and there were fundamental disputes about the most basic questions of authority, responsibility, hierarchy, and priorities.

On June 1, 2014, the Israeli government eliminated the Ministry of Home Front Defense, and made the Minister of Defense responsible for all preparations for emergencies. The Ministries of Defense and Internal Security were instructed to engage in discussions on the division of authority and responsibility between them.⁵ Until 2017, this critical process was not fully completed. In particular, no detailed arrangement of overlapping and complementary areas between the Home Front Command and the Israel Police was reached. Important progress was achieved, however, in the form of an arrangement of this type between NEMA and the Home Front Command.

Economic and Infrastructure Aspects

The Second Lebanon War came as a significant surprise for the Israeli economy and Israeli society. The report by the Winograd Commission of Inquiry into the Events of Military Engagement in Lebanon 2006 gives the impression that the policymakers were dragged into a war by the kidnapping event without taking into account the poor state of preparedness for war in the civilian front and the army. The report stated, “A protracted war that Israel initiated ended without Israel achieving a military victory... rocket

fire against the home front continued all through the war until the very last moment, and ended only due to the ceasefire. The fabric of life in the area under the rocket threat was severely disrupted, and a large number of residents – including a small, but significant, number of local authorities personnel, whose job it was to step in and deal with the situation – abandoned their homes.”⁶

Despite this harsh assessment and the great damage caused in northern Israel, the Second Lebanon War did not have a major effect on the Israeli economy as a whole, as highlighted by the capital market indices and GDP figures, for example. The capital market indices dropped precipitously during the first two days after the outbreak of war, but the decline quickly came to a halt, and the indices even rose (figure 1). It appears that in the Israeli economy and among the global business community, the prevailing opinion was that the event would be limited in time and scope, due to the IDF’s advantage over Hezbollah in the balance of forces, and that the event would not affect the future of the economy.

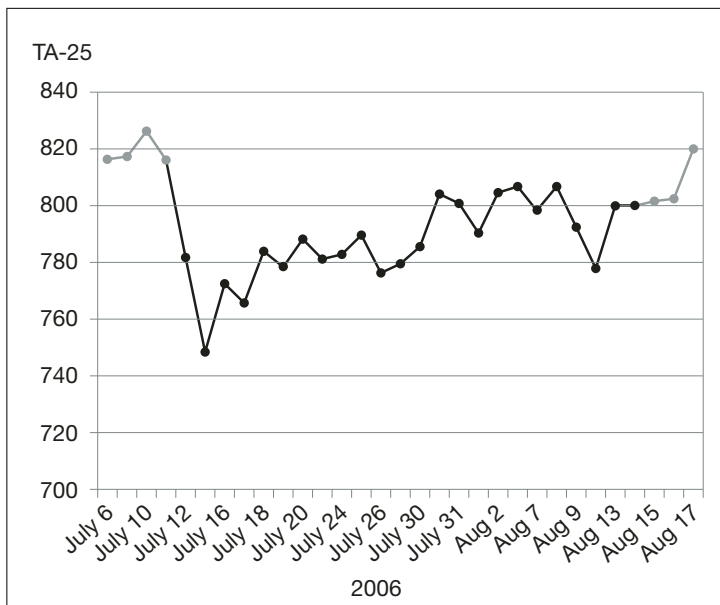


Figure 1. Tel Aviv 25 Index during the Second Lebanon War (July 12-August 14, 2006)

Source: Tel Aviv Stock Exchange website⁷

In retrospect, Israel's GDP figures show that other than a slowdown in the growth rate during the period of the war (the third quarter of 2006), the war had no great macroeconomic effect (figure 2), although it is clear that certain sectors (notably tourism) were hit hard. A similar picture emerges in the conflicts in the Gaza Strip.

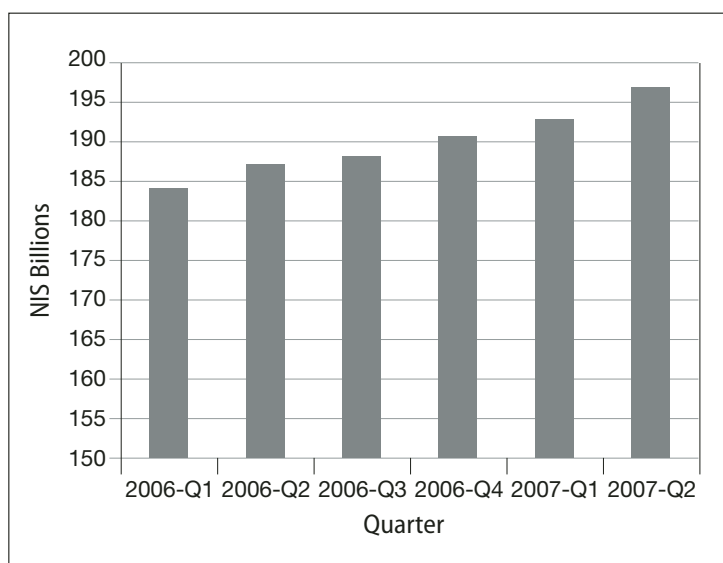


Figure 2. Quarterly Gross Domestic Product from late 2005 until mid-2007 (fixed prices – 2010)

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics database (February 2016)

With respect to defense spending, the budget supplement granted to the Ministry of Defense to pay for the expenses incurred in the Second Lebanon War totaled NIS 8.2 billion, compared with NIS 2.45 billion in Operation Pillar of Defense and NIS 7 billion in Operation Protective Edge.⁸ These sums are considerable, but it appears that the Israeli economy met these expenses relatively easily.

There are a number of reasons for the limited damage experienced by the Israeli economy in the Second Lebanon War and the subsequent campaigns in the south (mainly Operation Protective Edge): (a) The threat was limited in force and confined to a given area. The events were focused in either the northern or southern part of the country, with most of the population in Israel successfully maintaining a daily routine. Note that at the outset of the Second Lebanon War, the IDF destroyed Hezbollah's long range surface-to-surface

missiles, so that activity in central and southern Israel was not exposed to rocket fire. The situation in Operation Protective Edge was similar, with no serious disruption of daily routine in central Israel. (b) The resources allocated to these campaigns and the direct and indirect damages were not great, compared with past wars. For example, mobilizations of reservists were gradual and limited in scope, and did not cause major personnel shortages in the economy. Some economic activity that did not take place during the fighting was merely postponed until after it ended. (c) Critical infrastructure was not damaged during these campaigns.

This will not necessarily be the case in the future, however. According to the revised scenarios, the economic damage that Israel may suffer in a large scale war is liable to be far greater than the damage in the Second Lebanon War and Operation Protective Edge. If so, the economic damage in a future conflict could persist for years.

In addition to IDF bases (home to the air force's airfields), strategically important national infrastructure facilities are expected to constitute a target for enemy weapons. Sensitive sites include Ben Gurion Airport (where operations were temporarily disrupted during Operation Protective Edge); Haifa, Ashdod, and Eilat ports; electricity production and distribution facilities; the natural gas system; oil refineries and storage facilities for hazardous materials in Haifa Bay; and others. What is common to all of these is that severe damage to them could severely disrupt the supply of essential services, and repairing them and restoring them to regular performance is liable to take a long time. For example, the IDF and the Ministry of Defense are taking steps to protect the natural gas facilities against threats of terrorism and enemy fire; enemy fire was already directed against these facilities in the past.⁹ Because the majority of electricity is currently produced from gas, which is projected to account for 70 percent of electricity production in the future, the significance of damage to the flow of natural gas is obvious, as is the need to retain the capability to produce electricity from other energy sources in case gas supplies are disrupted. It is essential to diversify sources, plan for redundancy in sources and elements of the system, and maintain dual capacities at least in the power stations. At the same time, the plans to lay an additional gas pipeline should be expedited.¹⁰

In view of these threats, a home front defense concept that treats all national infrastructure in an integrative manner, based on an analysis of priorities, is needed.

The Current Threat and Military and Civilian Preparedness

Given the changes in the nature of the threat since the Second Lebanon War, in 2015 the IDF and the Ministry of Defense drafted a revised reference scenario for the home front. The revised scenario is fully compatible with the *IDF Strategy* document from August 2015, and was approved by a ministerial committee for home front affairs headed by the Prime Minister and the national security cabinet.¹¹ This scenario focuses on missile and rocket fire aimed at population centers in Israel, with the northern area considered the most threatened. Beyond this scenario and the various terrorist threats, Israel is preparing for additional threats, such as a cyber attack and penetration on land or underground.

The main implications of the revised scenario for the civilian front are the following:

- a. In the complete scenario, the Home Front Command will call up 50,000 reservists in order to provide varied and appropriate services to civilians in the areas under attack.
- b. In view of the threat, it will be necessary to have priorities when operating the active defense system. For example, operation of the Iron Dome system will give priority to the most critical sites for the functioning of the Israeli economy in order to shorten the duration of the fighting and reduce the economic damage. The working assumption is that in times of conflict, the correct course is to create an optimal emergency routine that will make it possible to reduce the afflicted areas and limit the closure of systems to the greatest possible extent.
- c. In the area of civil defense, as of 2016, 27 percent of Israelis had no available solutions for shelter, which highlights the dependence on active defense systems. At the same time, the working assumption continues to be that for most of the imminent threats, even partially reinforced shelters (such as stairwells and temporary shelters) provide reasonable minimum protection.
- d. NEMA and the IDF have drawn up plans for the orderly evacuation of civilians, but these were not carried out even during Operation Protective Edge, despite the need, as reflected in self-evacuation by a large proportion of the families in the frontline communities bordering the Gaza Strip. Until now, the government has decided not to order a large scale evacuation of civilians under threat, probably for political, psychological, and budgetary reasons. Following Operation Protective Edge, senior sources in the

Northern and Southern Commands stated that in the next war, it will be necessary to evacuate civilians, to distance them from the line of fire.¹² The impression is that the approach of the professional echelons in the Ministry of Defense to the evacuation of civilians in wartime changed following Operation Protective Edge, and that the Home Front Command and NEMA are preparing for the orderly evacuation of civilians under special circumstances in those areas where it is impossible to maintain an emergency routine and functional continuity in an emergency.

In general, Israel has come a long way, especially in the technological aspects of active defense and alerts for specific locations. The ongoing development and refinement of the Iron Dome system is a clear indication of this. This success has saved lives, contributed to the political echelon's flexibility in action, given the attacked public security, and prevented substantial economic damage. The investment in the Iron Dome system, proven worthwhile, should be judiciously expanded to provide a response to the range of needs. The incorporation of the David's Sling system in the air force's operational order of battle will add a significant new dimension to active defense, particularly with respect to long range rockets and those capable of precise strikes against critical civilian and military facilities.¹³ The Iron Beam system, designed to intercept mortar shells and short range rockets flying below the threshold of Iron Dome's interception capability, is also an important development.¹⁴ Completion of this system's development and operational deployment will be a great relief to residents of the Gaza Strip border communities, who have been suffering from short range tactical bombardments since 2000. The impressive advance in the technological and operational sphere of active defense has highlighted the need to develop a comprehensive and integrative concept of active defense that optimizes the coordination between the various defense systems. In this context, in 2015 IDF Aerial Defense Commander Brig. Gen. Zvi Haimovich proposed a comprehensive and important model.¹⁵ In his proposal, he asserted that there should be "a switch from a concept of multi-layer defense (based on the division of the skies into several distinct layers and several types of weapon systems) to a concept of integrative defense, in which all the threats from high trajectory weapons on all fronts are handled through a single interception management center, and the ballistic system is handled in integrated and concentrated fashion, thereby optimizing the use of detection and interception resources."

Another important aspect likely to help maintain performance continuity in emergency situations concerns the warning systems for missiles and rockets, which enable civilians to enter the reinforced security room in the short time available. The Home Front Command has made great efforts in recent years to make warnings more specific, and to increase the number of warning areas. Indeed, the number of warning areas in northern Israel has multiplied. All these measures are important. They are not costly, but their contribution to public resilience is significant.

In the civilian-social sphere, given the diverse threats that Israel regularly faces, the development of resilience (usually defined as the ability to prepare, cope with, and recover when faced with emergency situations) at the various levels – neighborhood, community, residential community, and national – is extremely important. The meaning of resilience is reflected during and after an emergency, both in the initial response and in short term and long term recovery. The level of resilience is likely to affect how the situation is handled, the conceptual understanding of the situation, and the effectiveness with which it is met. In general, all the parties – the government, the third sector (mainly the Israel Trauma Coalition), and the local authorities – did, and are doing, valuable work in developing and preserving social resilience, especially in the communities bordering the Gaza Strip. In the other areas, however, plans for bolstering resilience and enhancing the ability to cope with emergencies are undertaken in haphazard and limited fashion. The number of regional resilience centers for all of Israel is no more than seven, with mostly of them currently in the western Negev.¹⁶ The Home Front held several courses for instructing volunteers in rescue and evacuation, as well as programs for developing resilience in various communities, including in the Bedouin society, but none of this was in the framework of a national strategic plan. As of the time of this writing, contacts were underway to develop a comprehensive plan for strengthening resilience at the national level, with priorities and a multi-year plan for bolstering social resilience. It is important that these plans be carried out – and sustained in the long term.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Israel has advanced a great deal since the Second Lebanon War in its preparations for war-caused and other types of large scale disasters. This is reflected inter alia in impressive technological developments in missile defense, allocation of resources on a larger scale, greater public attention, and a more

receptive attitude toward programs for strengthening community resilience. The great strides required to close the gap in home front preparedness, however, have not yet taken place, both because the security threats to the home front have grown significantly in quality and quantity, and because the processes for organizing home front security are implemented too slowly. A substantial gap has thus emerged between the potential threats and the existing response to threats of security scenarios, and an even wider gap with respect to other scenarios, such as a major earthquake.

The main recommendations for bridging the gaps and the strategic advancement of emergency preparedness in Israel include:

- a. Essential measures to improve the situation, including formulation of a comprehensive concept and preparation of a budgeted integrative master plan for defending and running the home front, based on a variety of scenarios and risks (conventional and nonconventional weapons, mass terrorist attacks, natural disasters, epidemics, and so on).
- b. Completion of the development of an organizational emergency management apparatus in Israel, while establishing the authority and responsibility of all the parties involved in the state emergency set-up. This includes a solution for improving integration and inter-organizational coordination between the home front agencies and specifying the party responsible for integration. It is recommended that responsibility and authority frameworks be anchored in a revised home front defense law.
- c. Improved capability of every government ministry – separately and collectively – to do its part is an essential condition for resilience in emergency situations. An integrative perspective and the existence of a central mechanism will not fulfill this need unless every ministry assigns a high priority to planning for meeting its responsibility in emergency situations. For example, continued development of military capabilities for the defense of the home front and the population near the border and deep within Israel is taken for granted. The same is true about the need for the Ministry of Health to improve the health system's capabilities for dealing with mass casualties, and the need for the economic and social ministries to operate the economy and improve the provision of services to civilians, while maintaining law and order, including difficult integrative tasks, such as large scale evacuation of civilians and care for them in other areas.

- d. Enhanced integration of civilian non-governmental organizations in preparations and activity during and following the emergencies, and promotion of inter-sector cooperation between the governmental sector, the local authorities, the business sector, and civilian social organizations. The inclusion of non-governmental groups in coordination with the local authorities is likely to facilitate a significant increase in the outputs of the emergency systems at little added cost.
- e. Development and application of comprehensive concepts and up-to-date multi-year strategic plans for cooperation between organizations and sectors, resilience, and the various social aspects of preparation for emergencies. These plans will ensure a multi-year comprehensive response for strengthening social resilience at a national, regional, and local level. It is recommended to increase gradually the number of resilience centers throughout Israel, and to ensure their standards and governmental budget in the long term.
- f. Development of a population evacuation option as one of the legitimate strategic tools in emergency situations. In pursuance of the activity at NEMA and the Home Front Command, concrete and budgeted decisions should be taken on plans for evacuating the population under the revised scenarios. This will ensure a solution for the residents in areas in which functional continuity cannot be maintained in an emergency, or for groups with special needs, and will reduce casualties in an emergency.

Notes

- 1 Ten soldiers and three civilians were killed in Operation Cast Lead, and 317 soldiers and 183 civilians were wounded. Two soldiers and four civilians were killed in Operation Pillar of Defense, and 240 were wounded. Seventy-two people, including 67 soldiers, were killed in Operation Protective Edge, and 2,271 wounded, including 837 civilians.
- 2 For example, see H. B. Leonard and A. M. Howitt, "Acting in Time against Disasters: A Comprehensive Risk Management Framework," in *Learning from Catastrophes: Strategies for Reaction and Response*, eds. H. Kunreuther & M. Useem (Upper Saddle River: Wharton School Publishing, 2009), pp. 18-41.
- 3 State Comptroller, "Deployment and Functioning of the Home Front in the Second Lebanon War," July 2017.
- 4 In-depth discussions with the participation of administrative personnel involved in the matter took place in the Subcommittee for the Examination of Home Front Readiness of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on February 27, 2014

- and March 13, 2014, http://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/committees/ForeignAffairs/News/Pages/pr_270214.aspx.
- 5 Government Decisions Nos. 1661 and 1662, dated June 1, 2014, <http://www.pmo.gov.il/Secretary/GovDecisions/2014/Pages/dec1661.aspx>, <http://www.pmo.gov.il/Secretary/GovDecisions/2014/Pages/dec1662.aspx>.
 - 6 Report by the Commission of Inquiry into the Events of Military Engagement in Lebanon 2006 (Winograd Commission), January 2008.
 - 7 Tel Aviv Stock Exchange website, <http://www.tase.co.il/Heb/Pages/Homepage.aspx>.
 - 8 Ministry of Finance, Main Points of the State Budget, October 2015, p. 112.
 - 9 Heddy Cohen, "Netanyahu Revealed a Classified Document, Charging: 'Supply of Gas is an Existential Need,'" *Globes*, August 12, 2015, <http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1001086689>.
 - 10 Dan Weinstock and Meir Elran, *Securing the Electrical System in Israel: Proposing a Grand Strategy*, Memorandum No. 165 (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, June 2017).
 - 11 Gili Cohen, "Home Front Command Scenario for a Future Conflict with Hezbollah: Hundreds or Thousands of Missiles Every Day," *Haaretz*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.2604451>.
 - 12 Yohai Ofer, "Missiles from Dan to Eilat: A Scenario for the Next War," *NRG*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/686/842.html>.
 - 13 Yohai Ofer, "Joining Iron Dome: David's Sling System is Operational," *NRG*, April 1, 2015, <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/687/018.html>.
 - 14 Amir Buhbut, "Laser System for Intercepting Especially Short Range Rockets," *Walla! News*, January 19, 2014, <http://news.walla.co.il/item/2713120>.
 - 15 Zvika Haimovich, "The Defensive Element Revolution – From a Separatist Approach to an Integrative Concept," *Maarachot* 463 (2015):18-25, <http://maarachot.idf.il/PDF/FILES/9/113759.pdf>.
 - 16 For the resilience centers, see the Israel Trauma Coalition website, <http://www.israeltraumacoalition.org/?CategoryID=196>.

“Did We Win or Lose?”: Media Discourse in Israel about the Second Lebanon War, 2006-2016

Zipi Israeli

The Second Lebanon War is anchored in Israel’s collective memory as a military failure. The media played a significant role in this war, and there were those who claimed that the media had a large part in painting the war as a failure. Over time, political-security discourse has come to understand that the ten years of quiet on the northern border indicate more favorable outcomes of the war than the impressions formed in August 2006. Accordingly, it is important to assess the role of the media in shaping the discourse on the war over the past decade.

Each war has its own story that is woven before, during, and after the war. As the years pass, the stories, heroes, ethos, and myths change. Most studies of collective memory focus on the question of how societies build their past from the vantage point of the present, and how a group’s past is shaped by its current interests and politics.¹ Addressing the questions regarding memories of war in Israel is likely to be significant, as the memory of past wars often shapes future wars.

The development of mass media revolutionized the manner in which we perceive memory. The right to tell the story of the past, which was once reserved for politicians, soldiers, academics, and elites, has entered the public domain, and mass media has been an important arena in shaping collective memory. The media assumes a central role in defining images and shaping the way the public pictures events, and serves as an arena for the interpretation

of events and the creation of worldviews.² So too, the media has a special role in shaping the memory of wars.³ However, research literature primarily addresses media coverage of the wars during the fighting (particularly if the wars are relatively short), and not the memory shaped over time.

This article addresses the shaping of perceptions of the war: it will attempt to assess the contributions of media discourse surrounding the Second Lebanon War since the end of the war in 2006 until 2016, including the elements that influenced this discourse, its characteristics, and its implications. It will differentiate between the media's two approaches to the question of the war's success or failure – the substantive aspect and the operational aspect. The substantive view seeks to define the purpose and political goals declared by the government and determine whether they were achieved by the end of the war; the operational view addresses the IDF's management of the war and execution of its missions.

Given the long period of time under review in this essay, media coverage was assessed on a daily level during July and August each year, and during additional security events on the northern border.⁴ The article focuses particularly on the period after the publication of the Winograd report in January 2008. It includes analysis of qualitative content of all the media items that addressed the topic, both on the news-information level and on the publicist level, in the primary Israeli media outlets during the period under review: *Yediot Ahronot*, *Ynet*, *Israel Hayom*,⁵ and *Channel 2*.

Background: The Second Lebanon War and the Israeli Media

Research literature has thoroughly addressed the manner of media coverage of the Second Lebanon War.⁶ The media filled its primary role during the war, with each side attempting to use the media to influence its opponent's perception.⁷ During the war, the two poles of public political discourse criticized the media. The more common approach maintained that the media undermined the security of the state, along with the morale of the public and the soldiers, to the point of endangering the lives of the soldiers. There were those who claimed that the media was responsible for incorrect perceptions of the outcomes of the war and the general pessimism in Israeli society following the war.⁸ A second and less widespread approach pointed to the lack of criticism against the establishment by the media, and its presentation of the glass as "half full." Discussions on this matter led the Israel Press

Council to establish a committee to discuss setting special ethical rules for the media during times of war.

At the heart of the matter, the contradiction between the two approaches can be reconciled in the study's findings, which demonstrate that both are grounded in fact: when the war broke out, the media united around the country's leadership and supported the war. Barring a few exceptions, Israel's main media outlets covered the war in an uncritical manner that seemed almost mobilized for the cause. They created an environment of complete support and justification for the war, and suppressed any question marks. However, as the war continued and the number of casualties rose, as the rocket and missile attacks on communities in northern Israel continued, and as the reservists' criticism surfaced steadily after the war, media criticism also increased. It began to focus on the message that "the war was just and correct, but the decision makers did not manage it well, and therefore we lost." In other words, the criticism was about the conduct of the war and not about its justification or very occurrence; this was a nearly full consensus among the media.⁹ Even during the ground operation at the end of the war, voices of commentators who opposed the operation were almost unheard, as opposed to the long list of journalists who supported it, as if they "pushed" the country to battle.¹⁰

Another focus of criticism was the coverage of the home front. As of the third week of fighting, the image and representation of the strong home front dissolved. Instead, a critical media discourse began that reflected the crisis of the home front.¹¹ The apparent conclusion is that even when criticism was raised on this issue, it was criticism of the home front's lack of readiness and on the failures of home front conduct, rather than on the essence of the war and whether or not it justified the price paid by the home front.¹² From this perspective, Israeli media coverage of the Second Lebanon War coincides with the representative pattern of media coverage of military and security matters in the first decade of the 21st century in Western democracies in general, and in Israel in particular. The discourse became more complex, and included coverage that was supportive of the military and government, even as it was critical in many ways.¹³

The negative criticism in the media about the conduct of the war continued during the period immediately following the war, which saw an abundance of academic committees and conferences about the war (the Winograd Commission, which published an interim and a final report; the

State Comptroller of Israel, who published a report about the war; IDF inquiries; and media committees of the Israel Press Council). All of these led to the war filling a central role in the media during the year after it ended. Israel was portrayed as having lost the war, or at least as having missed opportunities for victory and as having achieved nothing. The coverage primarily addressed operational aspects of the war's conduct, inadequate preparation by the IDF, and criticism of specific decision makers in both political and military positions.¹⁴

As the years passed, the Second Lebanon War gradually disappeared from the media agenda, and coverage was pushed to the margins of the news. The war was barely present in the media agenda, even in the context of related events, such as the return of the bodies of the kidnapped soldiers (Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev) in 2008, and during the isolated incidents along the northern border over the years. Even coverage on the anniversaries of the war decreased as the years passed, and tended to drift away from analysis of the war's outcomes in favor of individual stories of bereaved families.

Perceptions of the War's Outcomes in the Test of Time

From time to time over the years, certain attitudes appeared in the discourse and shaped the collective memory of the Second Lebanon War. The media continued its criticism of the IDF's professionalism during the war, particularly of its commanders, in part by quoting Hezbollah leaders, especially Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah. Thus, for example, Nasrallah was quoted in 2007-2008: "Israel's military intelligence failed in the war,"¹⁵ and "Israel did not achieve any of its goals in the war."¹⁶ This message was also conveyed by quoting senior defense establishment figures, who felt there were flaws in the IDF's performance during the war. For example, Maj. Gen. Moshe Kaplinsky was quoted in 2009 as saying, "The Lebanon mistake – commanders stayed at their plasmas [computer screens]."¹⁷ At various times, the headlines of articles also gave expression to this line of thinking: "Video demonstrates the failures,"¹⁸ and "Towards the complete rehabilitation [of the IDF] from the severe low point revealed in the Second Lebanon War."¹⁹ At a later stage, less unequivocal quotations could be found, such as the Deputy Chief of Staff's quote in 2013: "Eisenkot: maybe we didn't meet expectations, but it is now clear that Hezbollah lost the war... there might have been failures,

but we were victorious...that is clear now.” In other words, in retrospect, the failures in the army’s operation turned into success in the long term.²⁰

As the years went by, the media did not discuss the essence of the war or whether it was justified. An unusual article was published in 2009, in which then-GOC Northern Command Gadi Eisenkot emphasized: “The goal was just, and ended an intolerable reality in the North.”²¹ This article was the exception that proves the rule, as alongside it few articles were published that referred to the war as unjustified.²² The discourse surrounding the long term results of the war heralded the quiet that developed on the northern border over time as a measure of the war’s success. That is, the quiet in the north proved that the war was justified, and perhaps is the best proof that the war was no great failure, as it was framed immediately when it ended. To this end, IDF sources were quoted in 2012 as saying that “the next campaign will be harder...every day of quiet that we have succeeded in attaining is a great achievement,”²³ as well as, “the IDF is wrapping up the most stable six years that we have had in this sector since the beginning of the 70s. This is reflected in the tourism and quiet that the residents of the north have been enjoying.”²⁴ An article analyzing the situation explained that “Military Intelligence estimates that the next war won’t break out this summer, and perhaps will be postponed for a longer period of time. This is primarily because the Second Lebanon War, despite all its debacles, succeeded in achieving stable deterrence, which has been holding for four years. This deterrence might only be postponing the next war, but this too is no small achievement from our perspective.”²⁵ Another article stated that this was “a strange war, since it was mismanaged and exposed serious flaws in the IDF’s preparedness and readiness, but the strategic result of the Second Lebanon War can be considered a partial success...As a result of this deterrence, Hezbollah has not taken action against us for five years, and the border with Lebanon is quiet most of the year.”²⁶

Some analysts compared Operation Protective Edge (2014) to the Second Lebanon War, while emphasizing the following argument: “The Second Lebanon War taught us all that the results of war are measured over time, and it is not possible to conclude immediately whether it was a success or failure. Only over time can we learn whether quiet was achieved and the war succeeded, or not.”²⁷ A common indicator that the media used to support this approach was the fact that Nasrallah is in hiding, as evidence of Hezbollah’s defeat: “Nasrallah, it’s fair to say, ended the war weak, really weak. Since

the end of the war, the Secretary General of Hezbollah has been living in underground tunnels in Beirut, and hasn't seen the light of day for fear of Israel assassinating him.²⁸

Notably, public opinion polls over the years have shown a similar picture of the public's analysis of the war compared to the media's analysis. During the war and immediately after it, the public criticized the handling of the war, and this criticism was directed at decision makers. Mixed feelings were expressed about the outcomes of the war, both immediately after it ended and a few years later. For example, in 2007 some 50 percent of those surveyed claimed that neither of the sides had won the war; 23 percent believed that Israel had won, and 26 percent maintained that Hezbollah had won. In contrast, on a fundamental level, both during the war and immediately after it, and as the years went by, the majority of the public (60-67 percent) supported the decision to go to war and thought that it was justified under the circumstances.²⁹

From the Second to the Third Lebanon War

Beginning in 2009, the media discourse went from discussing the Second Lebanon War to using it as a theoretical basis for the emergence of the "Third Lebanon War." The nature of media coverage became deterministic, conveying the message that it is only a "matter of time" until the next war breaks out. The third Lebanon war is presented as a *fait accompli*, and the focus is on the nature of the expected confrontation. For example, it was noted in 2011-2012 that "the third Lebanon war will look different,"³⁰ and that "their [Hezbollah's] intelligence gathering on IDF forces is part of their preparations for the third Lebanon war."³¹ The dominant pattern was a war of words, centered on the balance of power and mutual deterrence between the two players in the next war: IDF vs. Hezbollah. Coverage dealt with the question of "who is stronger," and emphasized Hezbollah's strength and capabilities, while the IDF's strength and capabilities were more marginal. The media gave center stage to Hezbollah's leaders, especially to Nasrallah. The many quotes from his speeches grabbed the main headlines and stood at the center of in-depth articles that aimed to analyze them, especially surrounding anniversaries of the war. The mood between the lines highlighted Hezbollah as a strong and formidable enemy that must be taken seriously. Belligerent quotes perceived as threatening Israel demonstrate a typical pattern of coverage. For example, from 2008-2010: "If Israel attacks – it

will be more thoroughly defeated... if the result of the July war was defeat for Israel, it will suffer an even greater defeat the next time it attacks,”³² or, “The enemy’s home front will suffer concentrated barrages of missiles... the organization learned the lessons and understandings about the new Israeli mentality.”³³

An important element in the discourse was the highlighting of Israeli fear, and terms such as “warning,” “worry,” “panic,” “concern,” and “fear” were used often. For example, the following appeared in the media: “An alarming reminder – three years since the Second Lebanon War... concerns in Israel: the threat is greater than ever,”³⁴ as well as “Concerns: after the deal, Hezbollah will return to its old ways.”³⁵ Another article bore the title “Deceptive calm in the north: ‘it can all end in an instant,’”³⁶ and a different one stated, “The next Lebanon war will be different. Six years since the beginning of the Second Lebanon War, the IDF looks north with worry: Hezbollah is gathering intelligence on the fence.”³⁷

Media discourse on the IDF’s preparedness proceeded differently than the discourse surrounding Hezbollah. The IDF’s activity was presented as defensive, and usually did not reach the main headlines, except in response to declarations or figures showing Hezbollah’s strength. The media presented the IDF’s process of learning lessons and improving its capabilities, and in most cases noted that the army is much better trained and equipped than it was on the eve of the Second Lebanon War: “Hezbollah has become much stronger, but it will find that it is up against a much better trained and equipped army than it met in the Second Lebanon War.”³⁸ The IDF’s intelligence information regarding Hezbollah’s deployment and capabilities was also presented by the media: “Four years later, the IDF presents: this is how Hezbollah is deployed.”³⁹ Little by little, the feeling of security was built up, as can be clearly seen in the words of a senior officer who was quoted in 2011 as saying, “We can take them, even without leaving a doubt like we did in 2006.”⁴⁰

A complementary aspect to this type of thinking can be seen in the handling of psychological warfare, by indirectly sending messages to Hezbollah surrounding the anniversary of the war, such as messages regarding new Israeli technological capabilities. For example, coverage of a training exercise by the soldiers of Shahaf – the IDF Combat Intelligence unit – in which they simulated closely tracking the activities of Hezbollah, received the headline: “Hezbollah acts: the Israeli Shahaf unit watches.” The article

quoted the unit commander in 2009, who said of Hezbollah's fighters that "they're not resting on their laurels...but we are preparing a target list, and when the time comes, we'll know how to strike."⁴¹ Another article from 2012, with the headline "Nasrallah, the ground intelligence monitors will keep an eye on you," reported that the IDF would soon put into operation a detection system based on integrating the existing systems.⁴² Reminders of Israel's technological strength are sometimes made indirectly, for example surrounding the anniversary of the war: "The Iron Dome system succeeds in intercepting targets...something to be proud of,"⁴³ as well as "The Arrow simulates intercepting a Shahab-3 missile under real conditions,"⁴⁴ or "The Trophy protection system for tanks: trials completed successfully,"⁴⁵ and "After years of activity: the Tamuz anti-tank missile is revealed."⁴⁶

Finally, it is important to note that Hezbollah's threats are quoted more extensively than quotes from the Israeli side, and there are only a few quotes of Israel making threats. One appeared in 2008, in an article that began with a report on the defense establishment, in which many warned of Hezbollah's increased strength. Only further on, after a description of the threat, does the article mention that "there are also those in the IDF who emphasize Israel's increased strength...top Armored Corps officer: Hezbollah won't be able to stop us...Hezbollah is in for a surprise with our level of preparedness, our ability to take them on."⁴⁷

Conclusion

In considering memory, the importance of the immediate effect is well known, and in the case of war – how the war is remembered immediately after it ends. Sometimes, this memory solidifies and leaves an indelible imprint. The immediate effect of the Second Lebanon War in media discourse was seemingly that of military failure in the handling of the war and the conduct of the IDF. And indeed, in the period following the end of the war, the predominant narrative was that Israel ended the war without any military achievement. It appears that the passage of time has softened some of these aspects, and today the picture seems less severe.

Naturally, as the years go by, there has been a significant decline in the media's discussion of the Second Lebanon War and its implications. In many senses, the very lack of discussion of the war has enhanced the feeling of quiet in the north. When the war nonetheless appeared on the media's agenda, the discourse focused on issues of the use of force and less on the

strategic outcomes of the war. Significant political matters connected to the outcomes of the Second Lebanon War were rarely discussed in the media, and when they were, they were marginalized (for example, the political aspects of Security Council Resolution 1701: distancing Hezbollah outposts from the border, expanded deployment of UNIFIL, marking the Blue Line with Lebanon, international legitimacy for Israel's attacking weapons transfers to Hezbollah, and more).

As the years passed, the dominant media discourse maintained that in retrospect, the war was slightly more successful than appeared during and immediately after it. The findings indicate that the discourse on the Second Lebanon War, or perhaps on every war, is the discourse of an ongoing and changing process. It seems that the passage of time may enable a more substantive and professional discourse with a wider scope, as has been proven in the past.

The memory of past wars in the media occurs via the present, and at the same time the media interprets the future based on memory of the past. Media discourse on the Second Lebanon War ranges between the war that was and the war that will be. To a large extent, memory shapes the face of future wars, and the Second Lebanon War shapes the face of the Third Lebanon War, whenever that may be.

The dominant discourse that arises from the research on the next Lebanon war is thought provoking. On the one hand, it can be argued that the media acts responsibly when it discusses the army's readiness for the next war, and in mentally preparing the public for it. On the other hand, it is possible that in the media's deterministic presentation of the next war as a *fait accompli*, it shapes reality, like a self-fulfilling prophecy. This also applies to downplaying the IDF's strength, which may have practical implications, if we take into account that Hezbollah, or other enemies of Israel, keep track of the discourse and are aware of its trends.

In conclusion, the criticism of the Second Lebanon War that has appeared in the media over the years focuses on the effectiveness of the military's performance in that war. The media has not examined to what extent the military campaign achieved the goals and aims determined by the military and the government, and there is almost no substantive criticism of the military's assumptions, the principles of the military doctrine, or the validity of conceptions of military victory in the current era of conflicts.

Notes

- 1 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980); Michael Schudson, "The Objectivity Norm in American Journalism," *Journalism* 2, no. 2 (2001): 149-70.
- 2 Motti Neiger, Oren Meyers, and Eyal Zandberg, "Songs to Remember: Popular Culture, Collective Memory and the Radio Broadcasts on Israel's Memorial Day for the Holocaust and the Heroism," *Megamot* 46, no. 1-2 (2002): 254-80.
- 3 Oren Meyers, "Still Photographs, Dynamic Memories: An Analysis of the Visual Presentation of Israel's History in Commemorative Newspaper Supplements," *Communication Review* 5, no. 3 (2002): 177-205.
- 4 For example, surrounding the assassination of Imad Mughniyeh; the assassination of Samir Kuntar; the assassination in Quneitra of Imad Mughniyeh's son Jihad in 2015; the incident in which two IDF soldiers were killed and 7 injured by Hezbollah terrorists who fired an anti-tank missile at a non-armored vehicle on Har Dov in January 2015, and more.
- 5 *Israel Hayom* began publication in 2007.
- 6 For example, a special edition published by *the Seventh Eye* dedicated to the media and the war (edition 64, September 2006); in addition, a series of publications of the Rothschild-Caesarea School of Communications, Tel Aviv University (5 volumes), and many academic articles published in Israeli and international journals.
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Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in Asymmetric Warfare: Maintaining the Advantage of the State Actor

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The 2006 Second Lebanon War represents a turning point in the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs).¹ This was the first war in history that recorded more unmanned flight hours than manned fighter aircraft flight hours, and that featured sustained UAV use without breaks in situational awareness. Since that war, Israel has continued to develop and absorb additional UAVs, and has used them extensively in operations over the last decade. At the same time, Hezbollah too – which failed in its few attempts to attack Israel with explosives-laden UAVs during the Second Lebanon War – has expanded its UAV fleet in the past ten years.

This article will survey the processes that have taken place in the field of UAVs over the decade since the Second Lebanon War, and recommend particular preparations in this regard for a future potential war pitting Israel against Hezbollah. The main question at hand is whether in a future campaign Israel will retain the UAV advantage over Hezbollah that it enjoyed in 2006.

The UAV in the Second Lebanon War Aerial Campaign

The Second Lebanon War marks a seminal moment in UAV combat and a new role for the UAV in asymmetric warfare. This change was evident with both of the warring parties, yet as in other technological fields, the margin of asymmetry between the sides was maintained.

The overall number of Israel's UAV flight hours during the Second Lebanon War was approximately 16,000.² Experts estimate that on average, there

were some 21 UAVs in the air at any given time.³ This makes the Second Lebanon War the war with the most extensive UAV use by Israel up to that point,⁴ and the first war in history that featured sustained UAV use over the combat zone from beginning to end.⁵

During the war the IDF employed a number of UAV models, including the Hermes 450 and Searcher.⁶ These UAVs were operated by the Israel Air Force (IAF) as part of their aerial forces, while the Israeli ground forces used tactical drones. The UAVs played a major role in several of the conflict's important aerial missions, including the Launcher Hunt mission, which involved a capability developed by the IAF for destroying from the air mobile targets that can change location with short time frames. This mission included UAVs continuously patrolling the airspace above ground-to-ground missile and rocket launching areas in Lebanon, and made use of diverse types of sensors to discover the missile launchers before or after launch and enable their destruction by precision weaponry. This method of operation led to the destruction of more than ninety mobile launchers and another thirty launch tubes during the war.⁷

Hezbollah also employed UAVs in this conflict; these were shot down by Israeli fighter jets. According to declassified data, Hezbollah launched four UAVs toward Israel, apparently Iranian models designed for both intelligence gathering and attack that were refitted to meet Hezbollah needs. According to reports, these UAVs were loaded with explosives, and the timing of their launch indicates night operation capabilities.⁸ To deal with this new threat, the IAF had to make adjustments to its radar capabilities to enable them to identify relatively small aircraft flying slowly at low altitudes.⁹

Advantages of UAVs in Asymmetric Warfare versus a Sub-State Actor

Like other 21st century asymmetric conflicts, the Second Lebanon War demonstrated that combat forces with advanced and optimal technology for facing a conventional enemy may be vulnerable to an asymmetric attack aimed at neutralizing the "stronger" side's technological advantages while mirroring it in political problems that overshadow its military advantages.¹⁰ A central challenge of a conflict such as the Second Lebanon War (or similarly, the various rounds of fighting between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, or between the United States and sub-state actors in Iraq and Afghanistan)

is for the state actor to cope with a political situation that makes it difficult for democracies to fight and imposes several constraints, including:

- a. Ensuring that every effort is made to reduce harm to civilians and avoid collateral damage.
- b. Producing convincing evidence that such efforts are in fact made.
- c. Producing evidence as close as possible to real time in order to refute false charges made by the enemy regarding civilian casualties and disproportionate use of force.¹¹

In conflicts between democracies and sub-state enemies, clear facts must be established in the field with the objective of undermining the enemy's ability to manipulate and claim achievements, if only the fact that it has not been defeated by the strong side.

Extensive use of UAVs inter alia enables achievement of military and political goals within the above constraints: UAVs have capabilities that allow for increased situational awareness, which aids in improved command of territory through intelligence superiority; improves the ability to implement a policy distinguishing between combatants and noncombatants; enhances capabilities for precise attacks, thus reducing collateral damage; and provides greater ability to broadcast up-to-date information in real time, including for public relations and media purposes. Overall, UAVs assist in maintaining legitimacy for the state to continue acting against the enemy. In addition, they help reduce physical risk to the party operating them, and help overcome some of the barriers facing operators of manned combat vehicles. Together this represents the added value of UAV use, beyond the crucial tactical roles such vehicles play in combat itself.

Development of UAV Use, 2006-2012

UAVs are just one of a variety of airborne measures used by the IAF, and an air force is just one of the necessary layers for fighting against a sub-state organization. Since the Second Lebanon War, the IAF has equipped itself with a number of advanced UAV models: the Heron (2007),¹² Heron TP (2010),¹³ and Hermes 900 (2014).¹⁴ These aircraft enable the execution of unmanned intelligence gathering and tracking missions and at times replace the use of manned aircraft. Furthermore, since the Second Lebanon War, the IAF has amassed extensive combat experience with such aircraft, mainly through the various rounds of fighting in the Gaza Strip.

The growth in development, procurement, and use of UAVs by technologically advanced militaries such as the IDF has been accompanied by a similar (though slower) trend among other parties: the number of countries using UAVs has grown, and at the same time, a revolution is underway in UAV production, which no longer is limited to defense industries. This revolution has led to a state of affairs in which many countries and commercial firms have begun to manufacture and sell UAVs to nearly anyone who wants, including various sub-state actors. These vehicles are generally less sophisticated than the advanced military aircraft, but easier to operate, cheaper, and freely available. Researchers estimate that within less than a decade, any country will be able to purchase and use relatively advanced UAVs with attack capabilities – a capacity available today to only a small number of countries.¹⁵

This trend affects not only countries; it also enables non-state actors or militaries to acquire and use UAVs. Such actors include commercial firms, sub-state organizations (including terror organizations), and even private individuals.¹⁶ This phenomenon may have an impact on the challenges facing the IDF in future combat against Hezbollah, especially in light of the fact that the organization relies on Iranian military technologies, while likewise operating as a terror organization that purchases simple “shelf technologies” that are refitted for military purposes.

Historically speaking, technology is a prominent example of the power superiority of states over the sub-state organizations they confront. Over the last few decades, technology has helped countries such as Israel and the United States remain one step ahead of their enemies, even though over these years sub-state organizations have assembled technologies more advanced than the daggers and submachine guns that were once their default options. One of the most outstanding expressions of this trend over the last decade is the use of UAVs by such organizations, with Hezbollah the leader in this field. This can be attributed to the fact that Hezbollah is a proxy of a powerful country (Iran) that takes pains to equip it with military technologies, whether Iranian-made or otherwise.¹⁷

Hezbollah operates an array of some 200 UAVs that were supplied by Iran, and employs them for a range of purposes. While in the Second Lebanon War and the following years the organization used explosives-laden UAVs to attempt to carry out terror attacks against Israel, in 2014 it was revealed that Hezbollah also operates a fleet of UAVs for intelligence

gathering purposes. This capability, for example, enabled the organization to prevent a terror attack by Salafi jihadist elements against Hezbollah targets in Lebanon. Hezbollah also made use of UAVs in assisting the forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in fighting against Syrian rebel organizations.¹⁸

Unclassified publications do not allow for assessment of whether Iran equipped Hezbollah with attack UAVs, but a video published on the internet shows an attack against al-Qaeda fighters apparently carried out by a UAV, with the operation attributed to Hezbollah.¹⁹ This joins reports of a designated UAV landing pad set up by Hezbollah in territory under its control.²⁰ All of this clearly indicates the organization's intention, and even perhaps capability, of using military-type UAVs in any future military conflict with Israel.

The commercial UAV industry has become an additional significant element alongside the aircraft produced in defense contexts. Commercial UAVs sell at a broad range of prices, and can be employed for a wide variety of improvised purposes. Their use has become a trend over the last three years in armed sub-state organizations, and thus any attempt to predict future use of commercial UAVs by Hezbollah must first consider the overall trend as expressed in other organizations, such as the Islamic State. In this context, there are reports of the arming of small UAVs, which cost just tens of dollars, by organizations that use them as precise aerial weaponry.²¹ These UAVs are armed primarily with explosives, but a situation may arise where they would be armed with chemical substances, becoming a more highly accurate weapon than those that such organizations possessed in the past (although not necessarily weapons with greater durability or survivability).

Syrian rebel organizations use drones that cost approximately \$1000 in order to gather intelligence from the air.²² The image broadcast by such drones is transmitted to a control terminal (console) that operates the aircraft, or to a cell phone or other smart device, enabling ground forces to plan an attack in the best possible way. Although such aircraft have low intelligence gathering capabilities and reliability in comparison with micro-tactical UAVs produced by defense industries, they nonetheless add air power to organizations that in the past had no such intelligence gathering capabilities whatsoever. In early 2016, in the wake of remarks by the leaders of Great Britain and the United States, there was growing awareness of the possibility that sub-state organizations may use drones in order to spread radioactive materials above a Western city, as in a "dirty bomb."²³

UAVs as a Challenge for Israel in a Future War with Hezbollah

Global events of the last decade indicate that asymmetric warfare will continue to challenge the most powerful military powers. These powers currently possess military technologies that include advanced capabilities regarding precision, diversity of use, prolonged operating time, and most important, reduction of risk to combat forces. UAVs will be one of the prominent weapons assisting military powers in coping with the asymmetric challenge. In essence, it is hard to imagine how one can fight sub-state actors – who think nothing of civilian casualties (on either side of the conflict) – without relying on UAV platforms. This form of combat becomes especially complex against the backdrop of the unprecedented rise of humanitarian discourse in the West. With media that report and broadcast in real time, the public is exposed immediately to the ravages of war. From this perspective, the continual technological development in Israel will serve it well in any future war against Hezbollah, as it has also served it well, relatively speaking, in the various rounds of combat with Hamas in the Gaza Strip over the last decade.

To a certain extent the technological asymmetry between Israel and Hezbollah has been maintained since 2006. Nevertheless, Hezbollah is becoming more and more of a military organization that is equipped with advanced weapon systems such as both military and commercial UAVs, as well as other modern innovations such as missiles with advanced navigation systems. However, the main asymmetry between Israel and Hezbollah stems from the manner of fighting, and from “the asymmetry of norms, rules, and morality, which one side abides by and the other side does not, while firing exclusively at civilians without consideration as to military necessity, proportionality, or distinction between combatants and non-combatants.”²⁴ This working assumption must also be considered in reference to Hezbollah’s acquisition of systems that may seem amateur, but with certain modes of operation may create a significant effect – both physical and psychological.

The IAF has made adjustments in its detection systems to be able – with air defense systems and aircraft – to identify and intercept UAVs.²⁵ The question is whether the IAF will continue to be able to meet a greater quantitative threat of this nature when it is used simultaneously with extensive rocket fire. A separate question relates to the capability of dealing with the various missions that Hezbollah can carry out using UAVs. In such cases, even relatively simple use of UAVs, if not disrupted, can assist the organization in improving the precision of its fire – by using UAVs to transmit information

to other weapon systems. Moreover, presumably the IAF air defense systems and fighter planes would be ineffective modes of A2/AD (anti-access/area denial) for small drones or commercial UAVs. Such UAVs and drones would need to be dealt with using suitable measures, with the assistance of ground or naval forces.

It appears that even if Hezbollah's UAV threat continues to grow and eventually gives it capabilities that it did not have in the past, this would not be a threat that cannot be coped with. Nevertheless, such a threat is a challenge that must be understood in order to better prepare the various forces fighting the challenge. Good preparation may significantly reduce the success of the other side, and even its motivation to use such measures.

Modes of Response

Aerial Responses

The challenges facing the IDF regarding UAVs should be divided into two groups. The first group includes challenges through cyber attacks, including hacking, manipulating, jamming, or blocking through electronic and other means that may be directed against the IDF's UAVs. There are, for example, reports of British and American hacking and spying against Israeli UAVs.²⁶ Similarly, Israel must take into account the lessons learned by Hezbollah in its ongoing learning process, grounded in its own experiences and in lessons learned by other sub-state actors that must deal with UAV warfare, such as al-Qaeda.

It can be assumed that in future warfare with Hezbollah, the organization will attempt (as it did in previous rounds of fighting) to camouflage its actions and hide as much as possible, and to significantly reduce the use of cellular devices and other electronic components that may reveal location and allow for collection of intelligence regarding the organization and its plans for attack. Moreover, it is reasonable to presume that Hezbollah will continue using civilians as human shields, and perhaps even increase their use in this manner, which would require more data collection hours and more "surgical" attacks. Also the possibility that the IAF may need to operate in Lebanon without absolute air superiority – in light of a concern that Hezbollah and other elements are equipped with advanced air defense systems²⁷ – may require Israel to make more extensive use of UAVs.

Air Defense

The second set of challenges has prompted the IAF to make adjustments in the radars of its various air defense systems to enable the early detection and interception of UAVs. Notwithstanding the success thus far in this field, the enemy may use various technological means to attempt to fool these systems. In the balance of power between Israeli and Hezbollah forces, a single success by Hezbollah in this area may hold major significance as far as psychological impact on Israeli citizens, even if its actual combat significance is miniscule.

Also to be taken seriously are Hezbollah's threats of attacking strategic targets, such as the ammonia storage facilities in Haifa or gas drilling rigs at sea.²⁸ Any strike of these targets by a UAV armed with explosives may be catastrophic, and thus special attention must be directed at defending them. Such defense may require special input from the IAF. In addition, the IAF, with the weapons at its disposal and despite its responsibility to defend Israel's airspace, may have a hard time coping with some of the UAVs, particularly those that are especially small, such as commercial drones, which cannot be expected to be shot down by fighter planes. These small drones are a threat requiring a response from ground or naval forces. Moreover, the low signature of such aircraft does not allow for detection by standard radar, and their low flight altitudes do not allow for interception by missiles.

Ground and Naval Challenges

The use of small drones or other small aircraft gives sub-state organizations air capabilities (even if primitive relative to those of a regular military with an air force), which expand their spectrum of combat methods. This is due in part to the ability to gather intelligence in real time and transmit it to trailing forces, which until just a few years ago was a capability held only by advanced countries. Thus, for example, a combination of drones and 3G phones may be a challenge that ground forces should anticipate.

Despite the fact that this new threat is perceived by some as an amateur threat that can apparently be dealt with through simple means, it still demands comprehensive preparation employing a variety of measures: early warning measures, cyber warfare, and employment of kinetic measures such as smokescreens or anti-aircraft fire. It seems that as civilian use of UAVs and drones increases, so do the solutions allowing their more precise identification and interception. Therefore, equipping ground and naval forces with solutions

of this type should be considered.²⁹ In light of its technological superiority over Hezbollah, Israel would presumably be capable of seeking solutions that are not necessarily kinetic to deal with the challenge of small drones. A technological solution allowing for remote commandeering of a hostile drone and a controlled landing is to be preferred for regions where there are civilians or even soldiers, for that matter.

Regarding the threat to naval vessels,³⁰ attention should be paid to a growing trend of various militaries that are outfitting its vessels and forces, both naval and ground, with systems for identifying and shooting down UAVs to prevent UAV attacks (especially suicide UAV attacks). American aircraft carriers that are now armed with laser cannons for this purpose are a prominent example.³¹ Regarding the Israeli military, IAF readiness should be examined, as well as the readiness of the naval vessels themselves for defending against Hezbollah UAVs that may come from land or sea in order to gather information regarding the vessel or to attack it.

Conclusion

The Second Lebanon War was a turning point in the use of UAVs in asymmetric warfare between state and sub-state actors. IDF UAVs were in continuous, sustained flight over the combat theater, and assisted in missions of intelligence gathering, hunting of ground-to-ground missiles/rockets and launching teams, targeting of valuable Hezbollah targets, and assistance to ground forces with intelligence and “road clearing.”

Since the Second Lebanon War, the IDF has continued to develop its capabilities in this realm and use them in combat situations, especially against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The IDF developed advanced methods of controlling territory from the air through employment of improved intelligence capabilities. In large part, these capabilities are based on UAV platforms that enable prolonged flight time over enemy territory, and specifically over Hezbollah launching zones. Hezbollah, too, has greatly developed its UAV capabilities, and as a state-supported sub-state organization enjoys the best of both worlds: the use of military-grade UAVs as well as commercial UAVs that can be purchased at low cost in the free market.

In light of the current state of affairs, the IDF should bear in mind two major issues: first, Hezbollah is aware that UAV operation is one of Israel’s advantages, and thus will make efforts to disrupt their use or limit their success; second, Hezbollah has equipped itself with a large number of UAVs

and may use them in a variety of ways for various purposes in future combat against Israel, whether independently or with the sponsorship of Iran.

Israel must recognize the threat, especially its less obvious aspects such as the threat posed by use of small commercial UAVs, and analyze and prepare for potential extreme scenarios, using its air, ground, and naval forces. The goal is to reduce as much as possible the chances of Hezbollah attaining a significant achievement, even if only psychological, with such aircraft. A psychological achievement can be meaningful for Hezbollah, which has in the past manipulated the concept of victory. Beside such preparation, it is recommended that IDF technological personnel study the capabilities latent in cheap, civilian UAVs, and identify the vulnerabilities that will enable coping with such aircraft through employment of Israel's technological superiority. The continued development, manufacture, and use of advanced UAVs, as well as preparations for dealing with the enemy UAV threat, will be the best possible expression of Israeli technological superiority in this field, and help maintain its relative advantage over Hezbollah, as well as over other enemies in the region.

Notes

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IMPLICATIONS OF THE WAR FOR LEBANON

A Decade of Decisions: Lebanon and Syria, from the Second Lebanon War to the Syrian Civil War

Eyal Zisser

The Syrian-Lebanese sphere of the past decade has been marked by two wars: the Second Lebanon War between Israel and Hezbollah in the summer of 2006; and the Syrian civil war, which started in March 2011 and has no end in sight. The two wars represent significant milestones as well as formative experiences for both Lebanon and Syria, and their impact will be felt for many years to come.

When it ended, the Second Lebanon War was seen as the finest hour of Hezbollah and, even more so, of Bashar Assad, who appropriated the Shiite organization's achievements in its confrontation with Israel without firing a single shot. By contrast, the Syrian civil war has been a crisis for Hezbollah within and outside of Lebanon, but more than anything it has resulted in an existential crisis for the Syrian President: on more than one occasion in the first five years of the civil war, it seemed that Bashar Assad's fate was sealed and that his days at the helm of the regime were numbered. But neither war was simply about the personal fate of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah or Syrian President Assad, but was rather about the fate – or, more precisely, the existence – of Lebanon and Syria as state entities.

Seemingly, the two wars were events that revolved around two separate, parallel axes: the first turned on the relationship between Israel and Hezbollah-Syria, with Iran hovering in the background, while the second was the result of an essentially domestic crisis with socioeconomic roots that erupted in Syria and crossed over into Lebanon. But in fact, the two events are

linked, certainly in terms of their geostrategic significance. Both wars are manifestations of the inherent weakness of state players in the region, i.e., the Arab states of the Middle East. These states have been weakened and in some cases have all but disappeared, leaving in their wake a vacuum filled by semi-state organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas. These organizations have themselves been dragged into confrontations, whether external (against Israel in the case of the Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006) or internal (in the case of the Syrian civil war raging since the spring of 2011). At the same time, the Second Lebanon War and the Syrian civil war and their outcomes reflect the fact that the Arab-Israeli conflict no longer occupies center stage, and demonstrates the inability of leaders and states in the Arab world to translate their achievements in the conflict against Israel into domestic currency for use with their audiences at home because of the internal challenges they face.

An even more important fact is that these two events are a blatant demonstration of Iran's penetration into the Levant as part of its drive to attain regional hegemony. This ambition is attended by Iran's willingness to generate friction with Israel and even an indirect conflict with it (as proven by the Second Lebanon War), as well as friction over Syria with the Sunni Arab world, including Turkey. In fact, the Second Lebanon War and the Syrian civil war have strengthened Iran's presence in the region, even if the wars have taken a steep toll of Hassan Nasrallah and Bashar Assad, Tehran's local clients. The situation presents Israel with a dilemma as to the right response to the challenge generated by Iran.

The Second Lebanon War: The First Israeli-Iranian War

Once the Second Lebanon War was over, Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah wasted no time in describing it as a historic, "divine" victory over Israel. According to Nasrallah, the war was a turning point in the Arab-Israeli struggle, which from then on would continue under the banner of Arab victories that would bring about the end of Israel.¹ Bashar Assad, Nasrallah's ally, rushed to appropriate the victory that he claimed Hezbollah had won against Israel. He also hinted that Syria might adopt the organization's path – armed resistance, or *al-muqawama* – and apply it along the Golan Heights, where until then Syria had been careful to maintain peace and quiet, in order to force Israel to return it.²

Others, both in Israel and especially in the Arab world, chose to view the Second Lebanon War not as another round of Arab-Israeli fighting – the sixth – but as the first war between Israel and Iran. They contended that this time Hezbollah was fighting Tehran’s war as Tehran’s proxy and in Tehran’s service, rather than as a Lebanese or even an Arab element.³ Evidence of this approach could be found in the willingness of many Lebanese, even Shiites, to oppose Hezbollah during the war itself, albeit not publicly, as indicated by documents of the United States embassy in Beirut later exposed by WikiLeaks.⁴ Other evidence is the quiet support of Israel by many Arab states, especially the Gulf states, in its struggle against Hezbollah and Iran.

Nasrallah, Assad, and Iran: Whose Victory?

Hezbollah’s main achievement in the Second Lebanon War was its ability to survive the Israeli onslaught and continue to rain down missiles on Israel until the very last day. The organization thus managed to exploit the gap between the Israeli government’s rhetoric, which had promised the organization’s complete annihilation, and the country’s inability to realize so far-reaching and patently unrealistic a goal (certainly given Israel’s reluctance to launch a ground offensive inside Lebanese territory). After the end of the fighting, Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt said the war had given Hezbollah undisputed preeminence inside Lebanon, because if Israel had failed in its attempt to strike at the organization, one could not expect any of the organization’s Lebanese enemies to do so.⁵

Bashar Assad’s great achievement after the Second Lebanon War was his emergence from the isolation and embargo the United States had imposed on him before the war broke out. In the period preceding the war, Assad was targeted by the George W. Bush administration for not having aligned himself on the right side in the “war on terrorism” declared by the United States after 9/11, and for his defiant posture against the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Syrian President paid the price for his policy in Lebanon: the United States used the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in February 2005 to force Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon, thereby bringing Syria’s long rule in Lebanon to a close.

After the Second Lebanon War, many in Israel latched onto the belief, perhaps illusion, that Bashar Assad would no longer be the source of all troubles in the region and could even serve as a partner in resolving them. This belief-cum-illusion was based on the assumption that Assad could

serve as a positive, restraining influence vis-à-vis Hezbollah and Iran, which had become the main threat to Israel and the moderate Arab states in the region, and that it was therefore necessary to try to win him over. Another assumption was that severing Syria from the allegiance with Iran and Hezbollah could significantly weaken Tehran's hold on the Levant and reduce its ability to rebuild Hezbollah's military power. However, since the Second Lebanon War, Hezbollah has in practice actually grown in strength: its missile arsenal increased from 12,000-18,000 to about 100,000 in the decade after the war, and some of these missiles have ranges that cover all of Israel with far greater levels of accuracy and destructive power than any that served the organization in 2006.⁶

Against this background, it is no surprise that as early as 2008, then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert reached out to the Syrian regime in an attempt to reach a peace agreement with Damascus that would dissolve "the axis of evil" – the partnership among Syria, Iran, and Hezbollah.⁷ Even in Washington in the post-George W. Bush era, President Barack Obama hurried to thaw relations with the Syrian President. In the end, Israel's peace overtures to Syria failed to generate an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement because of the gap between the sides regarding Damascus's demand that Israel withdraw to the banks of the Sea of Galilee. US relations with Syria also remained frozen.

The Second Lebanon War represented a meaningful change in the internal balance of power within the axis of evil, although the start of this change began before the war. In this three-way alliance, Iran began to set the tone and lead the way, turning Hassan Nasrallah into the most significant local power in the axis and Bashar Assad into the junior, almost tag-along partner among the three parties.

Until Assad's ascent to power in June 2000, Syria had been the entity that set the tone in everything having to do with Lebanon, including Iran's presence there. Syria had a military presence in Lebanon and controlled the country with an iron fist, while more than once exerting a moderating influence on Hezbollah. Moreover, all the political powers in Lebanon subordinated themselves to Damascus and even conducted their communications with Hezbollah through Syria. When Bashar Assad became President, it seemed that the young leader fell captive to the charms of Hezbollah's leader and especially the charms of Hezbollah's triumphs against Israel (in particular the organization's success in prompting a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000). After Syria was compelled to remove its forces from

Lebanon in the spring of 2005, Hezbollah finally crawled out from under Syria's shadow, and together with Iran, became the entity that helped Assad withstand the United States pressure on him. The Second Lebanon War intensified this trend, increasing the personal, political, and even military dependence of the Syrian President on Iran and Hezbollah.⁸

The outbreak of the Syrian civil war in March 2011 was a direct continuation of this trend and brought it to a head. Given the threat to his regime, Bashar Assad was forced to call on Hezbollah and later the Iranian Revolutionary Guards for help. Hezbollah first entered the fighting in Syria in April 2013 in the town of Qusayr, in the western part of the country north of Lebanon, and has since then been sent to fight elsewhere throughout the country. Iranian Revolutionary Guards joined the fighting in September 2015.⁹ The arrival of the Iranian troops came in tandem with the appearance of Russian fighter jets in Syria, sent to help Assad in his war against the rebels. The Syrian President's ability to survive as head of the regime and even turn the tables on his enemies has therefore been greatly – perhaps decisively – dependent on Iran and Hezbollah's willingness to come to his aid.

One of the manifestations of the reversal in status in the triangle of relations with Syria was the attempt of Iran and Hezbollah to entrench themselves on the Golan Heights front and from there build a base of activity against Israel. This was their way of trying to turn the Golan Heights into a playground for attacking Israel, which would have obviated their need to operate against Israel from along the Israeli-Lebanese border. Iran and Hezbollah were afraid that any attack from Lebanon would trigger a harsh Israeli response, including attacks aimed at the Shiite population in southern Lebanon. And, in fact, Hezbollah has been careful to preserve the calm along the Israeli-Lebanese border since the Second Lebanon War.

Israel has worked hard against Iranian and Hezbollah attempts to acquire a hold on the Golan Heights, as evidenced by the assassination of Hezbollah commander Jihad Mughniyeh and a group of combatants in January 2015 near Quneitra, an operation attributed to Israel, and the December 2015 killing in Damascus of the released prisoner Samir Kuntar, who was sent by Hezbollah to recruit the Druze of the Syrian Golan Heights to operate against Israel, another operation attributed to Israel.¹⁰ These assassinations resulted in Hezbollah's reaction in the Har Dov (Shab'a Farms) region, in the triangle between Israel, Syria, and Lebanon. After the killing of Mughniyeh, Hezbollah attacked an Israeli patrol in that sector, killing two soldiers.¹¹

In practice, since Iran and Hezbollah's power and status have grown stronger in Syria, the Golan Heights front – in fact, Syria in general – has become a playground against Israel as far as Hassan Nasrallah and Qassem Suleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards, are concerned. This state of affairs replaced the situation that had prevailed during the rule of Hafez Assed, Bashar's father, who since the end of the Yom Kippur War had turned all of Lebanon into his playground against Israel.

The Sunni-Shiite Rift

Iran's desire for regional hegemony and the formation of a sphere of influence from Tehran, through Baghdad and Damascus, to Beirut has aroused tensions in its relations with the Arab world as well as Turkey. These tensions deepened the abyss created by the worsening Sunni-Shiite rift that has characterized the Middle East in recent years and has found varied expressions: in Iraq, which became a state controlled by a Shiite majority that marginalizes the Sunni minority, formerly the ruling element in Iraq; in Hezbollah's desire for hegemony in Lebanon at the expense of the Sunnis; in the Sunni-Shiite tension in the Gulf and Yemen; and, finally, in the Sunni struggle to topple the regime of Bashar Assad, a member of the Alawite group supported by Iran and Hezbollah.

All of these have made what was once a contained, restrained, political, and ideological rivalry into a violent, at times murderous confrontation between Sunnis and Shiites throughout the region. One side in the conflict is Iran, accompanied by local allies in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. The other side includes the Sunni Arab states and Turkey, alongside Salafist Islamic groups some of which – such as the rebel groups in Syria – are supported or even controlled by various Arab states while others are affiliated proxies of al-Qaeda, e.g., Jabhat a-Nusra (Jabhat Fateh a-Sham, in its new incarnation) and the Islamic State, which have emerged as particularly vicious toward Shiites in general as well as other minority groups, whether Islamic or not (such as Alawites, Druze, Yazidis, and various Christian groups).¹²

Iran's decision in the spring of 2013 to send Hezbollah into battle alongside Bashar Assad in Syria prompted the attempt by anti-regime rebel groups to exact their revenge of the Shiites in Lebanon with a series of terrorist attacks and missile fire against Shiite concentrations in Beirut and the Bekaa Valley, killing dozens and injuring hundreds. This in turn made Hezbollah deepen its involvement in the Syrian campaign even more, while

placing particular emphasis on the Syrian-Lebanese border areas, such as the Qalamoun Mountains and the northern Bekaa region.¹³ Hezbollah's growing involvement in Syria has resulted in the deaths of some one thousand of the organization's fighters. One factor behind the death toll is the radicalization of Salafist organizations operating in Syria, which view any Shiite as an enemy deserving death. Even though the killing of Hezbollah personnel has aroused dissatisfaction among Shiites in Lebanon, the radical nature and extreme cruelty of the Salafist organizations toward Shiites and their representatives in Syria have in practice left the Lebanese Shiites with no choice but to take cover behind Hezbollah.¹⁴

Syria and Lebanon: Between Washington and Moscow

An important player absent from the Middle East arena in the first decade of this century and now returning with much fanfare is Russia. Moscow has exploited the weakened status of the United States in the region, which began already during George W. Bush's term in office, given the deadlocked US involvement in Iraq and the failure of the US policy on Syria and Lebanon. The policy was meant to weaken Bashar Assad and perhaps even topple him, as well as strengthen the Lebanese anti-Hezbollah factions headed by Sa'ad a-Din al-Hariri, the country's Sunni leader. Barack Obama first tried to curry favor with the region's inhabitants and leaders with soft, conciliatory messages and promises of a clean slate in relations between the United States and the Arab world. But once this proved futile and the region was caught up in the Arab Spring, Obama gave up on his vision and sought to distance himself from the region and reduce US involvement to a minimum.

This US weakness allowed Russian President Vladimir Putin to return to the Middle East and fill the vacuum. The arena in which Putin chose to make his first move was Syria, and to attain this goal Putin was willing to cooperate, if only tactically, with Iran and with Hezbollah. In September 2015, Russia announced its military involvement in Syria. In practice, this cooperation included Russian protection and patronage of Iranian and Hezbollah activity in Syria, which from their perspectives provided them with clear advantages: regional and international legitimacy, and – on the immediate bilateral level – Russian arms supplies to Iran, and Russia looking the other way when these arms reached Hezbollah hands (conversely, Russia has turned a blind eye to Israel's activities countering Iranian and Syrian arms shipments to Hezbollah). The confluence of Iranian and Russian interests, in

which Hezbollah is a behind-the-scenes partner, has not succeeded in hiding the inherent tensions and basic disagreements between the two sides as to the future of Syria: will it be a state under Iranian influence or be beholden to Russia's hegemony?

From the External to the Internal Arena

Hezbollah's success in billing the Second Lebanon War a victory has not helped the organization very much at home: neither within the Shiite community, which was unhappy with the price it had to pay for the war, nor with the other players in the intra-Lebanese arena, which may have been impressed with Hezbollah's ability to survive Israel's blows, but were determined to stand steadfast against the challenge posed by the organization. In the Lebanese parliamentary elections in June 2009, the March 14 camp, led by the Sunni Hariri family, and its Druze and Christian partners managed to win a majority against the Shiite Hezbollah-Amal camp and their Maronite allies, led by General Michel Aoun.¹⁵ At the same time, the international investigation into the murder of Rafiq al-Hariri has resulted in an indictment against some senior Hezbollah personnel. While the organization has irately rejected the accusations against it and has refused to extradite the people involved, it has also avoided upsetting the balance in the Lebanese arena, because the Lebanese government, of which Hezbollah is a member, contributes to the financing of the international committee of inquiry into Hariri's murder and the International Court, which is trying, in absentia, the Hezbollah operatives involved.¹⁶

Hezbollah has been forced to continue fighting for hegemony in the intra-Lebanese arena while adopting some political flexibility and patience, even the willingness to act in consensus with coalition governments, as long as these serve the organization's goals. For example, Hezbollah has been a member of most of the governments in Lebanon formed since the Second Lebanon War, but when it felt threatened it reacted with force: in May 2008, after government decisions harmed its interests, Hezbollah seized control of west Beirut until achieving the Doha agreement that gave it a way out of the deadlock that had persisted among the power centers in Lebanon.¹⁷

In Syria, Assad failed to translate his successes on the international stage – his projected image as someone who defied Israel and the United States and managed to extricate himself, unharmed and without having made any ideological concessions, from the isolation imposed by George W. Bush –

into cementing support or guaranteeing his status in Syrian public opinion, especially in the Sunni sector in Syria's rural and peripheral regions. This sector, suffering from a profound economic crisis because of droughts and a government policy that sought to promote economic openness at its expense, was responsible for starting the wave of anti-Assad protests in March 2011, which later developed into the Syrian revolution and then the Syrian civil war that has raged in the country ever since.¹⁸

Conclusion

In the summer of 2006, Hassan Nasrallah predicted that the Second Lebanon War would become a historic landmark and the countdown to the end of the State of Israel. With the same breath, Nasrallah sought to make the war into a milestone on Hezbollah's road to hegemony in Lebanon. In practice, he failed. The Second Lebanon War did not break apart the camp of Hezbollah opponents in Lebanon, and it also turned the spotlight on the organization's Shiite identity, its connections to Iran, its dependence on Tehran, and its obeisance to Iranian dictates. Moreover, the Second Lebanon War may be seen as a preview, albeit indirect, of the revolution happening in Syria, a revolution aimed not only against Bashar Assad but also against his ally, Hezbollah.

Notes

- 1 See Hassan Nasrallah's speech on September 22, 2006, "Remarks by Said Nasrallah in Honor of the August 2006 Victory," *al-Alkat al-A'alamiya*, <http://www.mediarelations-lb.org/article.php?id=3684&cid=164#.Vr-GwU0UFDw>.
- 2 Eyal Zisser, "Israel and Syria after the Second Lebanon War (2006-2009): Between the Drums of War and the Bells of Peace," in *Security and Political Challenges in the Test of Reality: Israel Between the Arab World and the International Arena*, eds. Michael M. Lasker and Yitzhak Ronen (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2013), pp. 563-82; for Bashar Assad's speech to the Arab Journalists' Conference in Damascus shortly after the end of the Second Lebanon War, see SANA (Syrian National News Agency), August 15, 2006, <http://www.rtv.gov.sy/index.php?d=100349>.
- 3 Mamoun Effendi, "Is the Conflict still Arab-Israeli?" *al-Arabiya*, August 7, 2006; *al-Arabiya*, August 11, 2014, <http://goo.gl/M3ESuzl>.
- 4 For US embassy cables from Beirut during and after the Second Lebanon War as these appear on the WikiLeaks website, see <https://wikileaks.org/-Leaks-.html>.

- 5 “Jumblatt Expresses Concern about Hizbollah’s Preparations for New War,” *al-Arabiya*, January 25, 2008, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/01/25/44694.html>.
- 6 See, e.g., statement made by former head of Israel’s Military Intelligence Maj. Gen. Aviv Kokhavi in Shahar Hai, “Accurate and Deadly: 170,000 Missiles Threaten,” *Ynet*, January 29, 2014, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4482538,00.html>.
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- 8 For general background on the topic, see Meir Elran and Shlomo Brom, eds., *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2007), [http://www.inss.org.il/uploadimages/Import/\(FILE\)1285063319.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/uploadimages/Import/(FILE)1285063319.pdf).
- 9 “Thousands of Iranian Soldiers in Syria,” *Israel Hayom*, October 15, 2015, <http://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/321097>.
- 10 Yoav Zeitun and Roi Kais, “Jihad Muhgnyieh Planned Attacks on the Golan Heights,” *Ynet*, January 19, 2015, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4616461,00.html>; Roi Kais, “Hezbollah: Samir Kuntar, who Murdered the Haran Family, Eliminated in Israeli Attack in Damascus,” *Ynet*, December 20, 2015, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4741487,00.html>.
- 11 Yoav Zeitun, “Incident in the North: Two Soldiers Killed on Northern Border,” *Ynet*, January 29, 2015, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4620371,00.html>.
- 12 Eyal Zisser, “The Islamic State Kingdom in Syria,” in *The Islamic State: How Viable Is It?* eds. Yoram Schweitzer and Omer Einav (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies), pp. 125-31.
- 13 Jacky Khoury, “At Least 43 Dead and Dozens Injured in Double Attack in Southern Beirut; ISIS Assumes Responsibility,” *Haaretz*, November 12, 2015, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/world/middle-east/1.2775299>.
- 14 Robert Rabil, *Salafism in Lebanon: From Apoliticism to Transnational Jihadism* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014).
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- 17 Robert F. Worth and Nada Bakrimay, “Deal for Lebanese Factions Leaves Hezbollah Stronger,” *New York Times*, May 22, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/22/world/middleeast/22lebanon.html?_r=0.
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The Lebanese Political Arena, 2006-2016: A Turbulent Decade

Benedetta Berti

Lebanon is no stranger to conflict. Due to a unique mixture of weak political institutions, internal sectarian political divisions, and deep and often aggressive foreign intervention, the small Mediterranean country has time and time again oscillated between war and peace, stability and chaos.

The past decade (or more precisely, decade plus) has been especially complex. It began with the shocking and highly disruptive political assassination in February 2005 of twice-Prime Minister, industrial magnate, and all-around post-war political superstar Rafiq al-Hariri. In a sense, the country is still coping with the legacy of that single, devastating event, even though much has happened since, including a war with Israel in the summer of 2006 that brought direct devastation on Lebanon, and more recently, the destabilizing effect of the 6-year old civil conflict in Syria. Yet the roots of Lebanon's current political crisis can be traced back to that formative event.

The most obvious lasting repercussion is the country's political polarization. The period following the Hariri assassination ushered in the Independence Intifada (or Cedar Revolution), the broad civil and political cycle of protest that put an end to the Syrian military presence in Lebanon. With the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in April 2005, the post-civil war years of Syrian "tutelage" finally ended, seemingly leaving the political forces behind the revolution free to pursue a new, post-Syrian domestic and foreign policy agenda. In reality, the same political coalition that had supported the Independence Intifada did attempt to stir Lebanon in this new direction;

but only to find that the Syrian legacy in the country went far deeper than its military presence. Similarly, the new “revolutionary” forces soon discovered that any effort to alter the country’s political outlook significantly would encounter deep and entrenched resistance. In the end, rather than a radical reshuffling of the political game, Lebanon settled for an uneasy balance between pro- and anti-Damascus sentiments.¹

In this context, the Cedar Revolution and its aftermath saw the rise of two largely antagonistic political blocs, the March 14 revolutionary forces and the March 8 resistance camp. For the past decade the former has been a favorite of the West, backed by Saudi Arabia and led by al-Hariri’s son Saad, head of the *Tayyar al-Mustaqbal* (Future Movement), a political party that largely represents Lebanon’s Sunni community. The resistance camp, on the other hand, is led by Hezbollah and supported by Iran and Syria, and (for the most part) speaks for the country’s Shiites. With the Lebanese Maronite Christian community more or less evenly divided across the two political camps, March 14 and March 8 quickly became more than just an expression of sectarian politics: they reflected rooted and divergent political, sectarian, and geostrategic interests. Indeed, in the midst of the deep change Lebanon has experienced in the past decade, what has been constant is this profoundly ingrained domestic polarization. Over the past few years, the Syrian civil war has only worsened this dynamic by further entrenching the deep animosity, mutual distrust, and sheer parochialism of both political camps. Since the Independence Intifada, the inability of March 14 and March 8 to work together has led to a series of political crises and domestic strife, and ultimately, to deep political paralysis.

The country’s inability to pick a successor to President Michel Suleiman after his official term expired in May 2014 spoke volumes.² Suleiman himself was only elected as a consensus candidate through the Qatar-brokered May 2008 Doha Agreement and following intense Saudi-Syrian behind the scenes mediation. That agreement ended a crippling eighteen months of political paralysis and prevented the sectarian-political gap between the March 8 and March 14 camps from escalating into a long term armed confrontation. This in turn demonstrates how the March 8-March 14 divide antedates the Syrian civil war.³

At the same time, there is no doubt that the Syrian conflict only exacerbated this trend, increasing the enmity between the camps as well as between their regional backers, and thus further lowering the chances of grand bargaining

and political compromise. As a result, for over two years, the Lebanese parliament attempted more than thirty times to elect a successor to Suleiman, but to no avail.⁴ What is more, the political paralysis went well beyond the presidential succession; it prevented the country from attending to business in literally every realm, from garbage collection to gas exploration. The impasse also delayed important political and economic reforms, including the revision of the country's electoral system, putting the democratic system on virtual hold.⁵

The fact that this deep political rivalry has by and large not spiraled into an open armed confrontation between the different sectarian and political factions is perhaps the only silver lining in this story. The lack of intense armed strife is, however, more a testament to the country's collective determination to prevent another civil war than a reflection of internal reconciliation within Lebanese society, which remains highly divided.

Beyond the political polarization shaping the Lebanese political and social arena, much has indeed happened not only between March 14 and March 8, but also within each camp. For the March 14 forces, the post-2005 revolutionary momentum has largely dissipated. This can be seen in two separate but related trends: the rise in disagreements among political allies within the March 14 camp, and the political decline of Saad Hariri as a coalition leader and political representative of Lebanon's Sunni community. Overall, the March 14 political alliance weakened in the years following the Independence Intifada, with its performance marred by a combination of internal quarrels and at times shaky leadership. More recently, strife between political partners resurfaced in connection to the troubled presidential elections. March 14 had jointly backed the nomination of Dr. Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces, to succeed Suleiman, against the March 8 candidacy of Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun.⁶ Yet by early 2016, the March 14 vote split de facto following Saad Hariri's somewhat surprising nomination of Damascus-friendly Sleiman Frangieh as a "consensus candidate" to end the presidential rift. Ironically, Hariri's move did not lead to filling the presidential vacuum, but it did manage to facilitate the dialogue between mortal enemies Geagea and Aoun.⁷ The two rival Christian leaders agreed that they hated the idea of being politically sidelined by Hariri even more than they disliked each other, and struck an agreement, with Geagea withdrawing his candidacy and backing Aoun's presidential aspirations.

The disagreement has not just punctured the March 14 coalition further, but has also revealed the declining influence of Saad Hariri over his own political allies, a trend reflected by the rise of criticism within his own community. In the past decade, and especially since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, Saad Hariri's leadership has been questioned within both March 14 and the Lebanese Sunni community, which *inter alia* has criticized his inability to stand up to Hezbollah and Bashar al-Assad.⁸ The fact that the political leader has spent a good part of the past decade in self-imposed exile outside of Lebanon has not enhanced his domestic popularity and legitimacy. More recently, it seems that even the historic foreign backer of the Hariri family, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is losing its patience with its traditional protégé.

Increasingly frustrated by its regional losses to Iran, notably in Syria and Yemen, Saudi Arabia has tried to exert its influence in Lebanon, forcing the Lebanese government to pick between Tehran and Riyadh. In early 2016, this led the Kingdom to officially halt both a \$3 billion military aid package to the Lebanese Armed Forces as well as a separate \$1 billion earmarked for the Lebanese security sector at large, a measure taken in tandem with the advice to Saudi citizens to refrain from traveling to Lebanon (a policy also implemented by Bahrain and the UAE). In addition, Saudi Arabia invested in putting pressure on Iran's strongest ally in Lebanon, Hezbollah, leading to both a Gulf Cooperation Council and an Arab League designation of the group as a terrorist organization. Ironically, the greatest casualty of this policy is likely not to be Hezbollah, but rather Saudi Arabia's Lebanese allies. The recent Saudi moves cast Hariri and his party as especially weak and isolated, unable to help the Kingdom meet its objective of weakening Hezbollah domestically.⁹

When the growing disagreements within the March 14 camp, the leadership crisis, and the weakening regional backing are all taken into account, it is hard to avoid the sense that the post-2005 revolutionary momentum has largely dissolved and, along with it, much of the political leverage of the March 14 camp.

In tandem, the March 8 camp soldiers on, and overall, the Hezbollah-led coalition seems to be less shaky than its March 14 counterpart. This is particularly the case following the Russian intervention in Syria and the temporary consolidation of the Bashar al-Assad regime. At the same time, much has changed within the resistance camp in the past decade. Most

notably, Hezbollah has undergone a rapid and deep set of strategic changes in the post-2006 years. At the political level, the group has had to balance its identity as the national resistance with its growing role and involvement in the Syrian civil war, where the Lebanese party gradually became a crucial force multiplier for the Assad regime as well as a key element of its combat strategy.

Within Lebanon, this active involvement sparked vitriolic attacks against the Lebanese Shiite organization by the March 14 parties, led by Tayyar al-Mustaqbal, and worsened the March 8 standing at the national and regional level.¹⁰ To respond to the criticism that Hezbollah can no longer claim to be a national Lebanese resistance movement, and should instead be considered a sectarian militia and an Iranian proxy, the Lebanese party has been investing in a political campaign to defend itself and its record. For example, the group has stressed its role as a political and military movement engaged on two fronts; fighting against the Israeli enemy as well as protecting Lebanon against the rising takfiri threat.¹¹ Naturally, this argument has not been accepted by Hezbollah's political foes.

Furthermore, Hezbollah's Syrian campaigns made it vulnerable to attacks from Salafi jihadist organizations directly or indirectly affiliated with jihadist groups in Syria.¹² Yet it would be incorrect to assume that criticism at the national level and the series of high profile attacks against Hezbollah by Salafi jihadist groups has radically altered Hezbollah's historically solid relationship with the Lebanese Shiite community at large. Indeed, if anything, the rise of Salafi jihadist groups in Lebanon, along with the cross border activities of both the Islamic State and al-Nusra, have made the security pact between Hezbollah and the broader Shiite community even more relevant. This is not to say that the prolonged involvement in the Syrian civil war has not brought any criticism within the larger Lebanese Shiite community. There have been voices doubting Hezbollah's rationale for being in Syria, protesting the high casualty toll, questioning the relatively subdued approach by Hezbollah to its Syrian martyrs, and pointing to evidence of malpractice and corruption within the group. Yet for the time being these are not mainstream voices, and the Shiite community largely continues to back Hezbollah as well as its Syrian involvement.

Beyond polarization and political reshuffling, the Syrian civil war is shaping Lebanon's future in far deeper ways. Lebanon's political, economic, and social prospects have already been indirectly shaped by the Syrian war.

With over one million refugees from Syria, the consequences of the war are tangible at every level: from the impact on the already overstretched public infrastructure, to the social and economic challenges related to the short term assistance and long term integration of the refugee population. In a country where the political system is shaped by sectarian dynamics, the challenge of long term citizenship rights and integration of the refugee population is an especially thorny and complex subject – as the history of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon painfully demonstrates. In the long term, however, the outcome of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon is far from predetermined: if the country capitalizes on foreign aid and invests in political and economic integration, the refugee population can be a resource for the country.

Thus, the last decade has been highly eventful within the Lebanese political arena, amid growing domestic polarization, internal paralysis, and heavy external involvement. Looking ahead, Lebanon's political future will continue to be tied to both the outcome of the Syrian civil war and of the broader geopolitical regional balance of power, stressing how the small country is itself a mirror and a reflection of the broader Middle East.

Notes

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Hezbollah's Concept of Deterrence vis-à-vis Israel according to Nasrallah: From the Second Lebanon War to the Present

Carmit Valensi and Yoram Schweitzer

“Lebanon must have a deterrent military strength...then we will tell the Israelis to be careful. If you want to attack Lebanon to achieve goals, you will not be able to, because we are no longer a weak country. If we present the Israelis with such logic, they will think a million times.”

Hassan Nasrallah, August 17, 2009

This essay deals with Hezbollah's concept of deterrence against Israel as it developed over the ten years since the Second Lebanon War. The essay looks at the most important speeches by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah during this period to examine the evolution and development of the concept of deterrence at four points in time that reflect Hezbollah's internal and regional milieu (2000, 2006, 2008, and 2011). Over the years, Nasrallah has frequently utilized the media to deliver his messages and promote the organization's agenda to key target audiences – Israel and the internal Lebanese audience. His speeches therefore constitute an opportunity for understanding the organization's stances in general and its concept of deterrence in particular.

Principal Messages

An analysis of Nasrallah's speeches, especially since 2011, shows that he has devoted them primarily to the war in Syria and internal Lebanese politics. Hezbollah's attitude toward Israel, including the element of deterrence, is mentioned in those speeches, but to a more limited extent than in the period preceding the regional upheaval and especially the civil war in Syria.

Hezbollah's narrative of victory over Israel in the Second Lebanon War has remained firmly intact over the years, and is used by the organization as justification for its ways. The narrative continues to be a source for consolidating Hezbollah's concept of deterrence against Israel. At the same time, it can be concluded that Hezbollah has no interest in reigniting the front against Israel on its own initiative. Nasrallah's statements about Hezbollah's military capabilities emerge in a purely deterrent context, and are designed to deliver the message that despite the organization's being mired in the Syrian theater, it continues to prepare for war against Israel – hoping to prevent it, and winning it, should a war break out.¹

Nasrallah's speeches indicate that mutual deterrence exists, both as a result of the Second Lebanon War and because of the regional situation: "There is deterrence on both sides of the border. No one can deny this. If the resistance decides to force a confrontation, it should be aware that Israel is a strong enemy. We are not visionaries, and the Israelis, when they try to do something concerning Lebanon, also know that the resistance is strong and capable."² As Nasrallah sees it, Israel's restraint results from its fear that a war with Hezbollah will open a Pandora's box and restore Israel to a prominent position on the regional agenda, particularly regarding the Palestinian issue, in contrast with the current situation, in which the Arab and Muslim world is busy with internal matters. Another reason for Israel's restraint cited by Nasrallah involves Israel's desire to avoid a war as long as a speedy victory is not assured: "The one thing that prevents Israel from launching a war...after the experience of the Second Lebanon War and the Winograd Commission...is its knowledge that a clear, decisive, quick, and uncontroversial victory is not assured...because of the resistance and the support of its people and the national army."³

As to Israel's deterrence against Hezbollah, Nasrallah has distinguished between deterrence resulting from a military campaign, which exists between the two sides, and deterrence stemming from the "soft campaign" Israel conducts against the organization. According to Nasrallah, a soft campaign

involves “applying political, public, and media pressure...and imposing a financial embargo and exhausting the organization’s financial resources in a way that will weaken it from inside following an embargo and isolation and erode popular support for it.”⁴ He asserted that Hezbollah has had to counter false accusations and demonization from both Israel and some Arab countries acting in its service. It appears that in contrast to the military narrative, Nasrallah is hard pressed to present an effective response to the type of threat posed by psychological and financial warfare, which is apparently effective in creating deterrence against the organization, and even restricting its freedom of action: “We are dealing with this slander through our credibility, morality, behavior, history...and most of all through achievements and victories.”⁵

Another area used by Hezbollah to deter Israel is the international arena. This mode of operation is not new; it has served as an additional form of deterrence for the organization for many years, along with the deterrence in the Israel-Lebanon physical arena. Hezbollah’s foreign activity, or the threat to take action in this sphere, is sometimes designed to preserve the organization’s deterrent capabilities in circumstances in which it has difficulty conducting operations, or as a result of strategic considerations requiring it to refrain from conducting operations in the local arena.

Hezbollah first took action against Israel in the international sphere in 1992, following the killing of Sheikh Abbas al-Moussawi, Nasrallah’s predecessor as Hezbollah secretary general, and the attack two years later against a Hezbollah training camp in which 15 people were killed. In response, the organization conducted two deadly suicide attacks: one at the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires in March 1992 (29 killed and 220 wounded), and the second at the Asociacion Mutual Israelita (AMIA) Jewish community building in Argentina in July 1994 (85 killed and over 300 wounded). Hezbollah thereby proclaimed an “eye for an eye” principle designed to signal to Israel that any strike against Hezbollah in Lebanon would give the organization a free hand to respond anywhere in the world it saw fit. For Nasrallah, the attacks against Israeli overseas targets demonstrated effective deterrence capability.

Evolution of Hezbollah Deterrence, 2000-2016

Highlighting the Inherent Advantages of Asymmetry (early years)

During the 1990s, violent non-state Middle East actors, as in the case of Hezbollah, became increasingly conscious of their technological inferiority

and the wide gap in their military capabilities vis-à-vis Israel.⁶ Consequently, a concept of warfare took shape based on the assumption that balance and equality between the two sides in other (non-technological) facets could be created, and even an imbalance in favor of the ostensibly weaker side. For example, the technologically inferior side can achieve an advantage in parameters such as size of territory and population, determination, endurance and resilience, willingness to take risks, and the degree of sensitivity to losses caused by a violent clash. This notion enabled Hezbollah to generate credible deterrence, first and foremost in order to prevent a large scale conflict with Israel, which is perceived as contrary to the organization's interests and capabilities. This capability also provides that if basic deterrence fails, the war will be conducted in spheres more comfortable for the ostensibly weaker side, thereby, without combat, offsetting some of the attacker's superior technological advantage.⁷

Nasrallah's statements during these years reflect his awareness of Hezbollah's technological inferiority and advantages as a guerilla organization. Later, during the Second Lebanon War, Nasrallah continued to base his deterrence against Israel on the inherent advantages in guerrilla warfare: "Our policy is not to hold any particular point in a given village and so forth. Our warfare is not warfare with a geographic dimension, because we are not an organized army, and we do not fight like an organized army. We are fighting a guerrilla war. It is therefore preferable for us to let [the IDF] advance and enter cities and villages, because that way we can fight them directly and cause them damages and casualties."⁸

The "New School of Warfare" (2006)

Complementing the recognition of the inherent advantages of guerrilla warfare to deterrence, Nasrallah began to develop another theme, reflecting his effort to acquire and develop more advanced military capabilities than those of a classic guerrilla organization. The principal change, as reflected in the new discourse, is the use of high trajectory ballistic weapons (rockets and surface-to-surface missiles). The great advantage of these weapons is their ability to penetrate the territory of an enemy that has not developed effective countermeasures, and the difficulty of detecting and attacking the ballistic missile launchers because of their low signature and large numbers: "The purpose of our rockets is to deter Israel from attacking Lebanese civilians. The fact is that Israel did not attack Lebanese civilians. The enemy fears

that every time he confronts us, whenever there are victims in our ranks among Lebanese civilians, this will lead to a counter-barrage of our rockets, which he fears.”⁹

This combination of conventional and guerrilla warfare capabilities was expressed even more forcefully in Nasrallah's comments during and after the Second Lebanon War. Syrian and Iranian support for Hezbollah enabled it to enjoy the singular combination of a terrorist organization with advanced military capabilities. At the start of the war, Hezbollah had a large stock (1,000) of long range (up to 250 kilometers) rockets, a large quantity (13,000) of short range rockets, an aerial array that included unmanned aerial vehicles for attack missions, a naval array that included anti-ship missiles, and a large ground force (approximately 10,000 soldiers). The ground force, which operated as a guerrilla force, was armed with advanced individually launched anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. In addition, Hezbollah established a military deployment in southern Lebanon that included anti-tank weapons, underground bunkers, and a logistics system designed for prolonged warfare. Part of this deployment was stationed within Shiite villages or on their outskirts.¹⁰

The organization's achievements in the Second Lebanon War, together with the critical discourse that developed in Israel concerning the limited achievements in the campaign against Hezbollah, led Nasrallah¹¹ to proclaim a more sophisticated concept of deterrence that highlighted the organization's ability to merge conventional forms of warfare with guerrilla warfare and terrorism, while blurring the boundaries between the front and the rear and between military and civilian, thereby further challenging Israel's military response: “From a traditional guerrilla war, the strategy of resistance has become a new, utterly unique school of warfare between the regular army and guerrilla warfare... the victory in the July war (and the achievements) following it have made the resistance very advanced in comparison with the enemy's capabilities before the next war.”¹²

The “Open War”: Expanding Foreign Activity (2008)

The killing of Imad Mughniyeh in Damascus in February 2008, less than two years after the Second Lebanon War, was a turning point for Nasrallah, following which he declared an open blood feud with Israel. His subsequent speeches indicated that he regarded the international arena as a significant area for deterring Israel and for responses against it as revenge

for what Hezbollah regards as aggressive actions against the organization or a violation of “Lebanese sovereignty,” which, according to Nasrallah, is within Hezbollah’s mandate. The international arena thus became a venue for relaying to Israel that it “stepped over the line,” and signaling to it that even if Hezbollah has limitations in operating against Israel from Lebanon or Syria, the organization will not be deterred from attacking its targets elsewhere. This position was based on the precedent of the organization’s retaliation in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994.

Indeed, at Mughniyeh’s funeral on February 14, 2008, Nasrallah declared that Israel had “crossed the line,” and that from then on, the campaign was an “open war... considering such murder, its timing, its location and the method, if you Zionists want this kind of open war, let the whole world hear me now, it shall be an open war.”¹³ Immediately afterward, in the same spirit, Hezbollah’s foreign terrorist command began its efforts to carry out the threat. The same year, Hezbollah operatives attempted a series of terrorist attacks, sometimes in cooperation with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard al-Quds force, in Azerbaijan,¹⁴ Turkey, and Egypt.¹⁵ Hezbollah also continued to attempt terrorist attacks against Israeli (and Jewish) targets overseas, such as the attack against a vehicle with Israeli diplomats at the Allenby Bridge between Israel and Jordan.¹⁶

In 2011, in his annual speech on the anniversary of Mughniyeh’s death, Nasrallah reiterated that Mughniyeh’s blood would continue to haunt Israel, and Hezbollah’s response, which had not yet been carried out, would come at the appropriate time and place.¹⁷ About two months later, in May 2011, three Hezbollah operatives sent from Beirut unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate the Israeli consul in Istanbul.¹⁸

Hezbollah also attempted a number of terrorist attacks in the international theater in 2012: on January 8, it was reported that in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, a routine check revealed an explosive device that had been loaded in Turkey on a bus for Israeli tourists.¹⁹ This event took place after the Israeli media reported on January 5, 2012 that Hezbollah was planning a terrorist attack against Israeli tourist targets in Europe.²⁰ That same month, the Thai police arrested a Lebanese man with Swedish citizenship suspected of being linked to Hezbollah, after receiving information about “a threat of an immediate terrorist attack” in Bangkok.²¹ A terrorist attack in Azerbaijan aimed at the Israeli embassy there was also thwarted in January 2012. Then-IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz attributed the attempt to Hezbollah.

The event in Azerbaijan took place three weeks after the anniversary of the killing of Imad Mughniyeh.²²

On July 18, 2012, Hezbollah succeeded in its attempts to take revenge against Israel. The organization detonated a bomb on a bus carrying Israeli tourists in Burgas Airport in Bulgaria. The attack killed five Israelis and the Bulgarian driver, and wounded 36 Israeli civilians.²³

The overseas war continued following the December 4, 2013 killing of Hassan al-Laqqis, head of Hezbollah's communications and technology unit responsible for its advanced weaponry. Hezbollah blamed Israel, although a Kuwait newspaper hinted that Hezbollah itself was behind the killing, after having claimed that al-Laqqis was a spy for the Israeli Mossad.²⁴ In Nasrallah's statements (on May 25 and November 4, 2014), he avoided direct attribution of responsibility for al-Laqqis's death, but at the same time again threatened that Hezbollah would retaliate for any aggression at any time it saw fit.²⁵ On January 30, 2015, Nasrallah labeled the killing of senior Hezbollah leaders in Quneitra, including Imad Mughniyeh's son, Jihad, as a military operation in broad daylight – in contrast to the killing of al-Laqqis eight weeks prior, which was “a security operation which some may refer to as equivocal.”²⁶

Hezbollah continued its attempts to stage overseas terrorist attacks against Israelis in 2014. On April 15, a Hezbollah terrorist cell gathering intelligence information and planning an attack against Israeli tourists was discovered in Thailand.²⁷ In October 2014, a young man of Lebanese origin was arrested in Peru on suspicion of starting a Hezbollah cell and planning terrorist attacks against Jewish sites (Chabad houses and Jewish community sites), places frequented by Israeli tourists, and the Israeli embassy in Lima.²⁸

A review of Hezbollah's broadened overseas operations since 2010 shows that despite Israel's deterrence against the organization on the northern front (Lebanon and Syria), the regional and internal dynamic has less of an effect on deterrence concerning its overseas activity. Hezbollah spokesmen also threatened to conduct an “open war” against Israel in 2015, i.e., to continue operations in the international theater in response to Israel's isolated attacks against the organization, mainly following the killings of Hezbollah operatives attributed to Israel.²⁹

Creating the Image of Strategic Parity (2011 onwards)

While Hezbollah's concept of deterrence in the first decade of the 21st century focused on the advantages of guerrilla warfare, combined with the organization's advanced military (mainly ballistic) capabilities, in the following decade, especially since 2015, there was a turning point in the threat and comments about deterrence. Nasrallah's rhetoric in recent years has striven to paint an image of an organization not only with the same advanced capabilities possessed by regular armies, but military capabilities equal to those of Israel, whereby Hezbollah is at least capable of responding to aggressive actions in equal measure.

Two main reflections of this attitude can be found. The first is Hezbollah's threat to conquer Israeli territories and communities in the framework of "the operational plan for conquering the Galilee" announced by Nasrallah on February 16, 2011, at the events marking the third anniversary of the killing of Imad Mughniyeh. In his remarks, Nasrallah instructed his soldiers to be ready to conquer the Galilee if Israel begins a war against Hezbollah.³⁰ Over subsequent years, Nasrallah threatened to "conquer the Galilee" several more times, and Hezbollah published a video clip explaining the operational plan for doing so.³¹ To a large extent this new element in the balance of deterrence between Israel and Hezbollah reflects the organization's involvement in the civil war in Syria. Hezbollah accumulated substantial combat experience there, improved its operational methods, and learned how to occupy territory, clear urban territory of enemies, and use tanks and artillery. The organization has also acquired Russian-made advanced weapons.

Another indication of the change in Hezbollah's discourse about deterrence can be seen by comparing statements by Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem in 2005 with remarks by Nasrallah in 2015. In 2005 Qassem said, "The function of the resistance is not necessarily to conquer any territory from the liberated lands, as in the case of the liberation of Sojod, Armata, and Devasha, where Hezbollah's flag was raised. A resistance operation is considered successful when it strikes and causes injury, death, or blows up the occupier's outposts, not necessarily one that conquers his outposts."³² In contrast, a decade later, Nasrallah claimed, "There is no precedent for the coordinated forces of the jihad resistance entering a city or occupying a large geographic area by military means. This attempt never existed in the past, The resistance has now gained this experience... The resistance is ready with its people, officers, and resources to enter the

Galilee. The resistance is ready to move the war to the enemy's territory, not just using rockets, but also through activity in the field.³³

A second reflection of the concept of responding in equal measure is Nasrallah's speech in February 2016, which became known as the "ammonia speech." Nasrallah then referred to a deterrence equation between Hezbollah's ability to cause the death of tens of thousands of people by firing precision guided missiles at the ammonia tank in Haifa Bay and Israel's ability to cause heavy damage to Dahiyeh (the southern suburb of Beirut) with its air force, in what he called the Dahiyeh doctrine. Nasrallah estimated the organization's new capability as equal in value to an "atomic bomb."³⁴

Although Hezbollah is drawn into the Syrian theater, it appears that its "open war" concept and continued readiness to operate against Israel in the international arena have not been affected. On January 30, following the January 18, 2015 killing of Jihad Mughniyeh and other senior Hezbollah leaders and members of the Revolutionary Guard force, Nasrallah delivered a speech stating that there was no doubt that an assassination was involved, and that the evidence pointed to Israeli responsibility. He reiterated that the resistance was entitled to respond to this assassination in any place and in any way.³⁵

The killing of Samir Kuntar on December 19, 2015, also widely attributed to Israel, drew a routine rhetorical response from Nasrallah on December 27, 2015 to the effect that Hezbollah was determined to respond to the attack near Israel's borders, inside them, and abroad.³⁶ Nasrallah mentioned Kuntar's killing again in his speech on January 3, 2016, in which he threatened that retaliation would come.³⁷ In his speech on the eighth anniversary of the killing of Imad Mughniyeh, on February 16, 2016, Nasrallah reiterated that the war with Israel was "open," and that revenge for the death of the organization's various commanders, including in the field, had not been forgotten.³⁸ These comments followed his remarks in an interview with the al-Mayadeen network, when he said that Hezbollah was not committed to any single principle, and had the right to retaliate for Israel's attacks at any time, in any place, and in any way or method.³⁹

The May 12, 2016 killing in Damascus of Mustafa Badreddine, Imad Mughniyeh's brother-in-law and his formal replacement as Hezbollah's supreme military commander,⁴⁰ drew aggressive initial responses in Hezbollah circles, but these faded with time. At a memorial ceremony for Badreddine in Beirut on May 20, 2016, Nasrallah declared that Hezbollah did not regard

Israel as responsible for the killing, saying, “when facts show the responsibility of the Zionist enemy in any operation we would not hide that,” but there was no proof that Israel was responsible here. Nasrallah also addressed allegations that Hezbollah had not accused Israel of the killing because that would have obligated Hezbollah to retaliate, saying that he “regrets that it was not the Israelis who said this, but Arabs and Lebanese. . . when we have data, even theoretical, indicating that Israel is responsible, we accuse it, as happened in the case of Imad Mughniyeh.” He warned Israel, “if you target any of our mujahedeen we will have a clear and direct response no matter what the consequences were, and it will be outside Shebaa Farms.”⁴¹

Hezbollah’s ongoing activity against Israel in the international theater indicates that the organization continues to regard Israel, its civilians, its official and other representative offices, and Jews throughout the world as legitimate targets. Nasrallah’s statements show consistently that Hezbollah will not hesitate to attack these targets when necessary, and that it possesses the tools needed to carry out these threats. At the same time, however, Hezbollah takes action in the international theater only after receiving approval from Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei; it is required to coordinate its actions with Iran, from which it sometimes receives assistance, and is affected by the restrictions applying to Iran. Another factor sometimes contributing to Hezbollah’s restraint overseas is the classification by several countries, including the United States and European countries, of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization (sometimes restricted to its military wing). This classification causes Hezbollah to take care to avoid being perceived as being responsible for bloody terrorist attacks.

Ramifications

This essay examines Hezbollah’s concept of deterrence against Israel, as it has developed over the past decade, based on selected speeches and statements by Secretary General Nasrallah. Analysis of his rhetoric indicates an evolutionary change in his concept of deterrence and its fundamental principles. This change reflects the internal and regional circumstances in which Hezbollah operates and the organization’s process of learning and force buildup in recent years.

Until early in the millennium, Hezbollah’s discussion of deterrence highlighted the inherent advantages of guerrilla warfare and Israel’s inability to cope with this type of threat. Starting in 2006, following Hezbollah’s

achievements in the Second Lebanon War, Nasrallah's speeches emphasized the organization's ability to merge conventional warfare with guerrilla and terrorist tactics, and portrayed this combination as a new concept of warfare even more challenging to the response capabilities of regular armies. Since 2008, following the killing of Imad Mughniyeh, much of Nasrallah's discussion of deterrence has dealt with Hezbollah's actions against Israeli and Jewish targets overseas in what he refers to as the "open war." The efforts to carry out attacks against Israel in the international theater have usually been due to the deterrence displayed by Israel in the regional theater and to internal considerations, principally the desire to avoid another direct conflict with Israel.

Nasrallah's speeches since 2010 bring to the fore his attempt to create the image of strategic parity with Israel – to portray Hezbollah's improved offensive capabilities as in no way inferior to Israel's military capabilities, combined with the organization's offensive efforts in the international theater. The reason for Nasrallah's use of the principle of responding in equal measure is the damage to the organization's deterrence against Israel as a result of its deep involvement in the fighting in Syria, which has led Hezbollah to halt its direct struggle against the IDF. Given this development, to a great extent Nasrallah's speeches deal with the operative advantages Hezbollah has gained from the war in Syria – advantages that give the organization offensive capabilities purportedly no less advanced than those attributed to Israel. Indeed, Hezbollah's accumulated experience and the development of its military capabilities since the beginning of the war in Syria heighten the threat it poses to Israel. Furthermore, although Nasrallah's references to Israel in his statements have been relatively mild since Hezbollah became involved in the fighting in Syria, the organization continues to regard the Second Lebanon War as a source of pride in its successes and as highlighting Israel's weakness. The mention of this war and its results continues to constitute a key element in Hezbollah's concept of deterrence.

Nasrallah's speeches indicate his acknowledgment that mutual deterrence exists between Hezbollah and Israel. The organization has no wish for another round of fighting against Israel, and in fact fears one, not only due to the damage it suffered in 2006, but also due to its recognition of the improvement in the IDF's offensive capabilities since the Second Lebanon War. The success of Israeli deterrence against Hezbollah is reflected first and foremost in Hezbollah's position that it does not favor a war in the current

circumstances, as repeatedly stated in Nasrallah's remarks. At the same time, despite the deterrence on Israel's northern front, Hezbollah's overseas operations, including the squads dispatched to commit acts of mass terrorism in South America and Southeast Asia and its efforts to avenge the killing of Mughniyeh, prove that Israel has no effective deterrent against Hezbollah in the international theater. The constraints on Hezbollah there are due mainly to instructions from Iran or internal organizational considerations.

The statements by Hezbollah about its lack of desire for a war against Israel, together with the considerable price in casualties that the organization is paying in the Syrian theater, are liable to give Israel's public and decision makers the feeling that the quiet on the Lebanese border may well last for a long time. Past experience shows that deterrence is a fluid concept, and that a single local violent incident or shifts in the regional or internal Lebanese environment are sometimes enough to change Hezbollah's assessment of the situation. The organization's internal problems, combined with its ideological and strategic vision of maintaining the resistance to Israel, are likely to turn the situation around and ignite a renewed conflict between the two sides. This possibility requires constant consideration and periodic validation for assessments of the security situation with respect to the existing lull on Israel's northern front.

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WHAT WILL THE NEXT WAR
LOOK LIKE?

The Next War against Hezbollah: Strategic and Operational Considerations

Udi Dekel and Assaf Orion

The IDF does not hide the fact that it is preparing for war in Lebanon. These preparations take the form of learning and applying the lessons of the Second Lebanon War while incorporating the modifications required in light of changes in the region's strategic reality, especially in Israel's northern theater. *The IDF Strategy*, published in 2015, which serves as the compass for military force buildup and operation, notes that a war in Lebanon is one of the reference scenarios in IDF preparations. As defined, the IDF required achievement in such war must be a decisive outcome against Hezbollah forces at the operational level while causing significant damage to its capabilities, and a victory at the strategic level, i.e., attaining the political objectives to be determined by the political echelon and the ability to compel the enemy to accept Israel's conditions for a ceasefire or a political arrangement. The operational approach in the northern sector is based on combining strong defensive measures designed to protect the civilian front and maintain its resilience, with a massive offensive of precision strike and a rapid multi-formation ground maneuver to access and damage Hezbollah's centers of gravity.

Hezbollah: The Principal Threat in IDF Preparations

The Israeli government's strategic situation assessment identifies Hezbollah as the executive arm of the Shiite axis led by Iran and the principal military threat to Israel. As such, the IDF must prepare for the possibility of a war on

the northern theater. Over the past decade, senior IDF officers have indicated that another confrontation with Hezbollah is only a matter of time.¹

As the Syrian civil war has led to a weakening, if not breakdown, of the Syrian military, the primary military threat to Israel in the north comes from Hezbollah. Since the Second Lebanon War, the organization, which for all intents and purposes is the strongest political and military force in Lebanon, has armed itself with thousands of rockets and missiles covering the whole of Israel. This arsenal, which affords Hezbollah enhanced military capabilities, includes Iranian and Syrian supplies of more accurate surface-to-surface missiles than before, attack UAVs, coast-to-sea missiles, and advanced air defense systems. At the same time, Hezbollah fighters have gained operational experience from fighting in Syria alongside Bashar Assad's army against the rebels and the Islamic State. There are also signs that the organization has improved its guerrilla fighting tactics. Furthermore, Hezbollah has developed special operations capabilities, and prepared to penetrate Israel and seize control of villages or critical installations.

The principal direct military threat to Israel at the present time, therefore, stems from Hezbollah (and its Iranian backing). Israel must be prepared for scenarios of escalation on the northern front despite the fact that Hezbollah is enmeshed in the fighting in Syria. Indeed, a deterioration to war between Israel and Hezbollah could result from a range of scenarios linked to the instability characterizing the northern arena, both in Syria and in Lebanon. One concrete scenario in this context is an extreme Hezbollah reaction to an Israeli attack on advanced weapons transported from Syria to Lebanon. Over the years of the civil war in Syria, certain "rules" have developed de facto in Israeli-Hezbollah relations, whereby Israel does not intervene in events in Syria, other than foiling concrete threats and transfers of advanced weapons to Hezbollah. One of these rules is that an Israeli attack on convoys in Syria ferrying arms to Hezbollah does not generate a Hezbollah counterattack on Israeli targets. However, should Israel attack such a convoy on Lebanese territory, Hezbollah might feel obligated to respond, if only to prevent the IDF from expanding its freedom of action and changing the rules. A second scenario might develop as a result of an Iranian-backed Hezbollah decision to try to establish a terrorist infrastructure against Israel in the Golan Heights. Israel has already made it clear that it will not accept such a development or deployment of Iranian and Hezbollah forces near the border on the Golan Heights and, should it occur, will be forced to respond.²

Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah apparently believes that Israel has no solid, orderly strategy for facing his organization. He formulated Hezbollah's operational doctrine and strategy based on the following principles: creation of a balance of deterrence vis-à-vis Israel with the capability to attack Israel's civilian and strategic depth with tens of thousands of accurate missiles, rockets, and UAVs to inflict direct damage on strategic installations;³ high organizational survivability and redundancy of capabilities to be obtained by maintaining secrecy and a low signature, dispersing its fighting forces, hiding weapons in the battlefield areas, assimilating into the civilian surroundings (hundreds of pre-loaded missile launchers are already located in homes), and digging into underground infrastructures;⁴ the support of Iran, a regional superpower, which gives the organization breathing room, as does the maintenance of a strategic rear and open supply line outside of Lebanon – in Iran, Iraq, and Syria; and reliance on intra-Lebanese legitimacy. For years, Hezbollah has been a key player in Lebanon's political and governing systems. The organization enjoys a special status as the only entity capable of effectively defending the country against the Salafist jihadist threat, spearheaded by the Islamic State. At the same time, this support is not guaranteed if Hezbollah initiates an escalation vis-à-vis Israel, causing Lebanon a great deal of damage.

The Political Directive

Israel's political echelon has made a clear choice in recent years to preserve the existing security status quo, primarily through perception shaping measures. The fact that Israel does not strive to expand its territorial reach and is experiencing relative prosperity, leads to its preferring the current situation over other options that might involve high risk and uncertainty. Military operations seeking to preserve the status quo necessarily focus on the defensive, because they do not aim to substantially change the strategic situation. Therefore, the reasons for embarking on a military action would primarily address the need to respond to hostile actions aimed at Israel, presumably after Israel's deterrence eroded, especially when the political echelon identifies a public desire to use military force.

When the enemy is a sub-state entity such as Hezbollah and is not governed by the international rules and standards that apply to states, it is difficult to translate operational success into political achievement, and the direct military-political link in this type of asymmetrical confrontation tends to

be blurred. In addition, when the strategic objective is to preserve the status quo, any event that challenges it – rocket fire, the abduction of a soldier, penetration of an Israeli town or village to carry out a terrorist attack, takes on heightened importance far beyond its strategic significance or actual impact. Moreover, when one seeks to preserve the status quo, it is quite natural to neglect to seek political opportunities, perhaps finding it difficult even to see them when they exist.

Under such circumstances, Israel's political echelon finds it difficult to define for the IDF thoroughly and clearly its expectations of the outcome of the next war against Hezbollah, other than the basic assumption that the results should be clear and unequivocal on the ground and impervious to Nasrallah's manipulations, unlike those of the Second Lebanon War. To improve the way Israel handles the next round of fighting – before its outbreak and as it unfolds – it is necessary to look at two fundamental questions in the government's decision making process.

First, what is required at any given time to prevent the outbreak of the next war? At no time should the possibility a "preemptive war" be ruled out. Realizing such an option would be grounded on the assessment that war is certain and that the balance of power represents an opportunity for Israel to harm Hezbollah severely and consequently change the balance of power in Lebanon and Syria, especially when the organization's forces are stretched over Syria and Lebanon, and Hezbollah is suffering from losses and attrition because of the years of fighting in the Syrian civil war. Second, it is necessary to examine the probability that war will develop from a process of miscalculation, escalation, and deterioration. Due to considerations of legitimacy, Israel would prefer a situation of deterioration toward war that could be blamed on Hezbollah.

Israel's political echelon appears to be avoiding a thorough examination of these basic questions. Instead, its thinking seems to revolve around two axes: one relates to the perceptions versus the physical dimension (especially in relation to the damage expected to the civilian front), and the other relates to the scope ranging from preserving the status quo to a change in Israel's strategic situation. These axes are meant to affect the choice of the operational design appropriate to the nation's political goals. Clearly, the discourse between the political and military echelons touches on the question of what kind of perceived military achievement is required for leverage into a political achievement. The effectiveness of military power is mostly

focused on the physical dimension; the Israeli security establishment has yet to adjust to the use of military force as one element among many efforts involved in a multidisciplinary action, especially as the senior political echelon is image-oriented and does not believe it is possible to generate a fundamental change in the strategic situation.

Formulating an Operational Plan under Vague Political Directives

The conclusions of the various commissions of inquiry, including the Winograd Commission, have taught the political echelon that it better formulate vague policies and directives that will make it difficult to examine and judge it after a war, allowing it to elude the question of whether or not the political and security objectives determined by the government were achieved.⁵ Given the government's vague, ambiguous directives, the IDF prepares for the same scenarios it knows from the past – in this case, the Second Lebanon War – while trying to fix the errors of the previous engagement. If the IDF is not instructed to generate a strategic change but only to preserve the calm, strengthen deterrence, and restore the situation to what it was before the fighting, the operational possibilities it will plan and offer will necessarily be limited. This is also affected by the nature of the confrontations, the weakness of the Lebanese state (which increases the concern over instability and chaos in extreme scenarios), and the constraints of being mired for a long time in a hostile populated terrain without being able to pass the baton to another responsible party. These difficulties greatly reduce the potential operational benefit of gaining a decisive outcome against the enemy or conquering areas in which it operates.

On the operational level, confrontations with sub-state entities, especially Hezbollah, require the consideration of two alternative concepts of operation: the first is the systemic dismemberment of the enemy, combining military measures with economic, psychological, legal, social, and other efforts, and the second is bringing about a rapid termination of the fighting while strengthening deterrence, and stressing the ability to cause serious damage to the enemy from the outset and knowing full well when to end the move before the enemy has time to adjust to the newly created situation, yet at the same time leaving the enemy an honorable way out of the battle.

If the IDF chooses to systemically dismember Hezbollah, the following questions arise:

- a. Can the IDF significantly reduce the launch capabilities of Hezbollah and its supporters in Lebanon and Syria? While the IDF has powerful precision offensive capabilities based on high quality intelligence, and well developed rocket and missile interception capabilities (Iron Dome and David's Sling), these are insufficient to totally neutralize Hezbollah's ability to strike Israel's rear.
- b. Similarly, is a ground maneuver into Lebanese territory necessary to distance Hezbollah strongholds from the Israeli border and clear the area of launch capabilities and other threats against Israel?
- c. Given constraints as to collateral damage, what is the policy of damaging urban and other populated zones where Hezbollah embeds its launch capabilities?
- d. Does the IDF have a "target bank" that would help it damage Hezbollah's command, control, and logistics systems effectively?
- e. What is the likelihood of harm to UNIFIL forces in southern Lebanon, and what are the possible ramifications of this in terms of international pressure on stopping the fighting before Israel has attained its military goals?
- f. Should responsibility for what happens in its sovereign territory be placed on Lebanon, given Hezbollah's centrality to the Lebanese political system and its forces being Lebanon's de facto army? Should the IDF inflict heavy damage on state infrastructures in Lebanon in response to Hezbollah damaging Israel's civilian front? Alternately, should Israel consider attacking Lebanese infrastructures, especially as retribution for and/or deterrence against attacks on Israeli infrastructures?

Should the political echelon require the IDF to bring about a rapid end to the fighting and strengthen deterrence, it will have to examine different questions, namely:

- a. How does Israel bridge its desire to control the escalation in order to prevent deterioration into full war with the need to strike early to damage most of Hezbollah's capabilities threatening the country before they are turned against Israel in a way that has the potential to lead to rapid escalation?
- b. Does the IDF have a quality intelligence assessment that gives it a high quality "target bank" that, if attacked early in the war, will surprise and shock Hezbollah, demonstrating that the cost of continuing the fighting is greater than ending it immediately?

- c. Will an attack on Lebanese state infrastructures bring about a rapid end to the fighting? On a similar note, the IDF must take into consideration that there will be external pressure on Israel to end the fighting before it has had an opportunity to cause massive damage to Lebanon.
- d. Is there any point to an indirect approach of attacking targets of critical importance to Iran in Syria and Lebanon so that Iran instructs Hezbollah to end the fighting?
- e. Is the IDF prepared to prevent the infiltration of terrorist groups attacking Israeli population centers or abducting soldiers and/or civilians?

In any scenario, it is necessary to prepare an exit strategy already at the beginning of the fighting. This will help enable choosing the right time to conclude the confrontation. Despite the desire to maximize both military achievements and political achievements, it is necessary to avoid trying to adjust the operational clock, which ticks very fast, to the political clock, which moves more slowly. Experience shows that synchronizing the two clocks reduces operational outputs. Given the limitations of the international mechanisms and peacekeeping forces, and the inherent weakness of the whole subject of enforcement, it would be unwise to extend the fighting in an attempt to gain “stronger” resolutions in the UN Security Council.

Failure to implement these rationales will help the enemy adapt to the situation of war and flip the equation between the benefit of continuing to fight and the cost of losing. This is liable to give rise to mutual attrition, which leads to combat lasting longer than planned. Therefore, Israel should prefer to set clear operational facts on the ground, and later, leverage them into political gain. The primary shaper of the post-war reality will be the balance of costs to both sides and the balance of power that will develop, rather than the particular wording of the UN Security Council resolution at the fighting’s end.

The IDF’s Operational Doctrine

In the rounds of fighting in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, Israel prioritized using the IDF’s massive firepower, while taking advantage of precision intelligence and operational capabilities, while preventing collateral damage and reducing harm to its own soldiers. The reliance on firepower, both precise and massive, led to an approach that preferred eroding the enemy by means of standoff fire. Therefore, the ground maneuver was postponed to as late a stage as possible. In practice, the ground maneuver was almost the last

move, used only if the IDF failed to attain the necessary achievements by firepower and if it was deemed essential to an image of victory whereby the IDF operated in and even controlled enemy territory and cleared it of military and terrorist threats and infrastructures.

If the “dismemberment of the enemy system approach” is applied to Hezbollah, a rapid maneuver is needed soon after the start of the campaign in order to reduce and suppress the launches and fire from the area conquered, and reach the centers of gravity – the organization’s critical nodes – such as command and control centers, the units operating the launch arrays, and long range surface-to-surface missiles and surface-to-surface rockets, most of which are embedded in urban, populated areas. These tasks raise the question whether they necessarily require the operation of a heavy masse of multi-divisional ORBAT, or whether flexibility, mobility, and speed, attained through the deployment of combined, small scale forces, are preferable.

Should the “rapid termination approach” be selected, there is great importance in executing a surprise opening move, designed to inflict a severely painful blow on Hezbollah (including at the tactical, operational level), based on intelligence superiority and operational opportunities. When taking this approach, it is necessary to avoid automatic employment of aerial capabilities, based on the approach of “maximize strike volume,” and instead focus on precise attacks against targets representing Hezbollah’s centers of gravity. At the same time, it is important to deploy smart power, i.e., a concentration of multidisciplinary efforts that are not only kinetic. Such a policy is designed to foil Hezbollah’s goals and strengthen Israel’s deterrence, while at the same time strengthen actors in the Lebanese system whose interests are congruent with Israel’s, actors that can bolster the opposition to Hezbollah in Lebanese society once fighting abates.

In whatever approach is taken to the use of power, defense plays a central role. The ability to intercept surface-to-surface missiles and rockets allows defense of strategic sites and areas, which gives the IDF and the strategic rear breathing room and functional continuity. At the same time, particular attention must be paid to the civilian front, especially encouraging the population to accept a reality in which they must remain in protected areas for extended periods of time in order to reduce the number of casualties. The outcome of a war is also measured in the number of civilian casualties, the mood, and the resilience of the society during and after the war.

In current frameworks, it is difficult to reach a point of strategic decisive outcome against an enemy such as Hezbollah. Nevertheless, tactical decision capabilities are still needed in every encounter with Hezbollah forces on the battlefield. The military echelon must make it clear to the political echelon that there is no point in using force for the sole purpose of creating the image of victory. Israel must bring its various powers to bear in order to attain actual strategic advantages, which may open up new options and create the possibility of shaping a more convenient environment after the war and for a long time to come.

The need to formulate a multidisciplinary operational doctrine incorporating many various efforts – military, diplomatic, economic, civil, humanitarian, legal, media, and infrastructural – within an organizing framework of smart power is critical before, during, and after the war. Such a doctrine is shaped by means of a systematic, ongoing process of learning, likewise taking place during the war itself, as a relevant response to a specific threat or combination of threats. In the context of such a process, it is necessary to consider stability and governance, reduce the distress experienced by civilians, limit terrorist recruitment and radicalization pools, and strengthen actors with the potential of sharing interests with Israel. A multidisciplinary approach requires a coordinated effort to formulate a proactive policy designed to improve Israel's standing in the region and the world, starting with the political level and ending with the synchronization of all the operative entities required to act, based on shared understanding and uniform goals.

Ramifications of the Regional Strategic Situation

The changes in Israel's strategic situation since the Second Lebanon War are dramatic: the renewed presence of Russia in Syria represents a possible constraint on Israel's aerial freedom of action in this theater in a future conflict, and at the very least requires coordination. Russia is also likely to intervene in some way, in particular to prevent the current Syrian regime from collapsing, and accordingly, to bring about a rapid end to a war between Israel and Hezbollah.

The hostile stance of the Sunni states toward Hezbollah and Iran increases the potential of their support for weakening Iran and for the IDF damaging Hezbollah and Lebanon, the state they identify as the "state of Hezbollah." Hezbollah's widespread presence in Syria increases the chances it will fight Israel from that direction as well. In addition, the deepening partnership

with Hezbollah heightens the probability that the Lebanese army too will fight against the IDF, in a way that will require Israel to damage it severely. The relatively widespread presence of international forces operating as part of UNIFIL will result in early and increased involvement of the UN and donor nations to end the fighting. Another probability is a disruption of the dynamic equilibrium in the multi-actor war in Syria, as radical Sunni factors exploit Hezbollah's aiming its main effort against Israel to ramp up the pressure to topple Assad's regime and allow them to spread throughout Syria and perhaps also into Lebanon. Given this possibility, Iran is liable to dispatch its own troops to the northern theater in numbers exceeding those it has sent to date.

Israel should assume that reconstruction after the war will proceed more slowly than in the past decade, because of the widespread destruction of the Middle East, the refugee problem (in Lebanon there are already more than one million Sunni refugees from Syria), and changes in the priorities on the international agenda. A war could generate more profound instability in Lebanon, and perhaps even accelerate the collapse of Syria as a state, especially because Hezbollah is currently a key stabilizing factor on both sides of the Syrian-Lebanese border. Stabilizing the border area after the war will depend on the Lebanese army's ability and desire to do so and the international community's willingness to continue to invest efforts in an environment where the risk level is on the rise.

Assessment

More than a decade since the Second Lebanon War, the contrast between the unprecedented years of calm on Israel's border and Hezbollah's force buildup, leaving it the major direct military threat against Israel, is starker than ever. As a professional military, the IDF builds its force and preparedness for a war scenario against Hezbollah in Lebanon while adapting the operational plans to the organization's current capabilities on the one hand, and the IDF's own capabilities on the other. In recent years, both have improved and grown significantly.

The major differences between the Second Lebanon War and the possible future confrontation with Hezbollah lie not in changes in the balance of power but in the dramatic changes in the strategic environment, first and foremost a regional, multi-actor war, centered on Syria and Iraq, whose outcomes spell extensive destruction, mass death, and floods of refugees,

more sharply defined enmity and hostility between Shia and Sunni camps, the Islamic State phenomenon, and the active presence of superpower and regional militaries in the area.

Israel's minimum objective in a future war with Hezbollah is to reduce the scope of damage to Israel during the fighting and its direct and indirect costs, deter Hezbollah from attacking Israel in the future, and prevent a destabilization of the borders on the northern theater, also on the part of other entities. At the end of such a war, Israel would strive to preserve freedom of action for its military, such as aerial freedom over Lebanon and Syria. Beyond this level, Israel may strive for changes in the security situation in the northern theater by means of a significant reduction in Hezbollah's strength and Iran's influence. Such a change would have to entail heavy damage to the organization and a tipping of the balance of power in Lebanon and the region to its detriment over the long haul.

In the current strategic reality, the likelihood that Iran and Hezbollah will initiate an escalation of the situation against Israel is low. Iran has no desire to encourage a military confrontation against Israel, especially as Iran is already over-extended in regional fighting and conflict arenas, and in light of the reduced overt tension between Iran and Israel, resulting from the nuclear agreement between Iran and the international community concluded in July 2015. For its part, Hezbollah, which is up to its neck in the Syrian civil war, will find it difficult to fight in the long run on two fronts, where one of the fronts involves fighting with an enemy such as Israel, while worrying about the implications of such a war for its standing in Lebanon.

The Israeli government, which has opted for a policy of non-intervention in the regional turbulence, is also not interested in escalation in the northern arena in general and the Lebanese front in particular, especially after a decade of unprecedented calm. Nonetheless, two scenarios are liable to disrupt the balance of deterrence and affect the mutual desire to avoid war at present: one is the dynamics of escalation, which could develop from a sequence of events in which each side feels compelled to respond to an act of the other side, because both sides need to preserve their deterrence and both sides worry about breaking the accepted rules of the game. This is reminiscent of the mistake made in the Second Lebanon War: deterioration into war at a time with neither side wanting to be drawn into it. The second scenario stems from a sense on the Israeli side, liable to result in an uncontrollable dynamic: an assessment that the next confrontation with Hezbollah is inevitable and

only a matter of time, and when it erupts will present an opportunity to fix the flaws revealed by the Second Lebanon War. However, Israel's government is endowed with the understanding, power, and tools to strengthen Israel's deterrence and reduce the effect of factors of escalation in order to push off the next round of fighting with Hezbollah to the extent possible.

Notes

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Reuven Erlich is Head of the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies, Israel. He served in the IDF Intelligence Corps, mainly as an analyst specializing Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian affairs. He retired in 1994 with the rank of colonel after 30 years of service in staff and operational duties. Between 1985 and 2000 he served as deputy to Ambassador Uri Lubrani, Israel's government coordinator for Lebanese affairs. Between 1991 and 1993 he was a member of the Israeli delegation to the Israeli-Lebanese peace negotiations in Washington. Dr. Erlich also focused on Syrian-Lebanese issues in his academic studies; his PhD from Tel Aviv University focused on "The Policy of the Zionist Movement and the State of Israel toward Lebanon (1919-1958)." Among his many publications: *The Syrian Involvement in Lebanon since 1975* (1991).

Shmuel Even, a senior research fellow at INSS, is an economist and the owner of Multi Concept (Consultants) Ltd., which deals with financial and strategic consulting. Dr. Even retired from the IDF with the rank of colonel, following a long career in the IDF's Intelligence Branch. His publications deal with Middle East economies, the Israeli economy, the defense budget, the world oil market, intelligence, and terrorism. Dr. Even's fields of research at INSS include: the Israeli economy; intellectual property; the gas and oil markets; national security strategy; defense expenditures; cyber issues; intelligence; the political process with the Palestinians; and more.

Zipi Israeli is a research fellow at INSS and a lecturer at Tel Aviv University and at the Lauder School of Government of the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya. She specializes in media and public opinion in national security; media and military; civil-military relations; national resilience; bereavement and casualties; and protest and national security. She is a board member of the Association of Civil-Military Scholars in Israel, as well as a member of the academic committee of the annual conference of the Association. Among her publications: "Media and Strategic Aspects of Low Intensity Conflicts: The Case Study of Israel in Lebanon, 1985-2000"; "Headline-Seeking Doormats and VIPs"; "Protest, the Media and National Security"; "Mobilized Media: Press Coverage of Air Force Accidents" (with Y. Orbach); "Men and Boys: The Identity of the Israeli Soldier in the Media"; and "From 'Rambo' to 'Sitting Ducks' and Back Again" (with E. Rosman).

Assaf Orion, a senior research fellow at INSS, is a key member of the research program on Israel-China relations. In his final posting in the IDF, Brig. Gen. (res.) Orion served as head of Strategic Planning in the Planning Directorate in the IDF General Staff (2010-2015), responsible for strategic planning and policy formulation, international cooperation and military diplomacy, and ties to neighboring militaries and peacekeeping forces in the region. He was in charge of communication with UNIFIL and the Lebanese army, led staff meetings with counterparts from the Pentagon and other Western armies, took part in the US-Israel security dialogue, and represented the IDF in talks with the Palestinians. Prior to that he headed two departments in the Planning Directorate, following more than two decades in Israel's National SIGINT Unit 8200 and Israeli Defense Intelligence, in SIGINT, OSINT, and international intelligence cooperation command positions. Brig. Gen. (res.)

Orion holds a BA in Arabic language and literature and Middle Eastern history from Tel Aviv University (1992), and an MA from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University (2000), the Advanced Course on Operational Art, and the international Intelligence Directors' Course (DISC) in Great Britain (2005). His fields of interest include national and regional security, applied strategy, combined approaches, human learning systems, and leadership challenges in a fast changing world.

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Eyal Zisser, the vice rector of Tel Aviv University, was the dean of the humanities faculty at the University in 2010-2015. Prior to this Prof. Zisser served as head of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies (2007-2010) and as chairman of the department of Middle Eastern and African history (2004-2008). His fields of expertise include Syrian and Lebanese modern history, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Among the many books he has authored: *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power* (2006); *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition* (2001); and *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence* (2000).

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- No. 167, July 2017, Udi Dekel, Gabi Siboni, and Omer Einav, eds., *The Quiet Decade: In the Aftermath of the Second Lebanon War, 2006-2016*.
- No. 166, July 2017, Yehuda Greenfield-Gilat, *The Palestinian Refugees: The Israeli Interest* [Hebrew].
- No. 165, June 2017, Dan Weinstock and Meir Elran, *Securing the Electrical System in Israel: Proposing a Grand Strategy*.
- No. 164, February 2017, Einav Yogev and Gallia Lindenstrauss, eds., *The Delegitimization Phenomenon: Challenges and Responses* [Hebrew].
- No. 163, February 2017, Nizan Feldman, *In the Shadow of Delegitimization: Israel's Sensitivity to Economic Sanctions*.
- No. 162, November 2016, Yoel Guzansky, *Between Resilience and Revolution: The Stability of the Gulf Monarchies* [Hebrew].
- No. 161, November 2016, Udi Dekel, Gabi Siboni, and Omer Einav, eds., *The Quiet Decade: In the Aftermath of the Second Lebanon War, 2006–2016* [Hebrew].
- No. 160, November 2016, Pnina Sharvit Baruch, *The Report of the Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry of the 2014 Operation in the Gaza Strip – A Critical Analysis* [Hebrew].
- No. 159, September 2016, Meir Elran and Gabi Sheffer, eds., *Military Service in Israel: Challenges and Ramifications*.
- No. 158, September 2016, Doron Matza, *Patterns of Resistance among Israel's Arab-Palestinian Minority: A Historical Review and a Look to the Future* [Hebrew].
- No. 157, August 2016, Emily B. Landau and Anat Kurz, eds., *Arms Control and Strategic Stability in the Middle East and Europe* [Hebrew].
- No. 156, August 2016, Udi Dekel, Nir Boms, and Ofir Winter, *Syria's New Map and New Actors: Challenges and Opportunities for Israel*.
- No. 155, June 2016, Emily B. Landau and Anat Kurz, eds., *Arms Control and Strategic Stability in the Middle East and Europe*.
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The Second Lebanon War broke out on July 12, 2006, without either Israel or Hezbollah intending such an escalation. For Israel, the Second Lebanon War was a milestone in several ways. It was the first war in which Israel was exposed to the massive use of high trajectory fire directed at its civilian population, and the central role played by the civilian front in the fighting brought some new critical issues to the fore. The war compelled the IDF to reexamine its force buildup and operational doctrine, improve the army's basic skills, look afresh at how the reserves are used, and give new thought to emergency storehouses. New technologies allowed the media to cover the war and provide public access to the events almost in real time.

The war was a milestone for Hezbollah as well. During the war it scaled new heights, establishing itself as a military outfit with some features normally reserved for regular armies, and proved capable of fighting the army usually considered the strongest in the Middle East. Lebanon too experienced significant changes; since then, the civil war in Syria, with its vast flood of refugees, terrorism in both the urban and rural areas, and Hezbollah's intervention to help Bashar Assad in the civil war have all had a significant effect on Lebanon.

Many in Israel assume that the countdown to the Third Lebanon War has already begun. The fact that Hezbollah is arming itself for a future war is indisputable. The organization is fine-tuning its capabilities and has gained important combat experience on the battlefields of Syria. *The Quiet Decade: In the Aftermath of the Second Lebanon War, 2006-2016* examines various aspects of Israel's northern theater. The essays chosen for this compilation paint an inclusive picture of the Second Lebanon War, its outcomes, and its ramifications. More than one decade after the war, studying the war and learning its lessons are critical for the State of Israel and its national security.

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