The Threat to Ground Maneuver as a Deciding Element

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Ground maneuver is the movement of military forces in relation to an enemy in order to gain an advantage in both time and space. Effective maneuvering deceives the enemy, throws it off balance, and eventually overpowers it, while preserving the power of the maneuvering force. Maneuvering on the ground is also designed to take advantage of success, to preserve operational freedom of action, and to contain weaknesses. Continuity of maneuvering creates new problems for the enemy, and renders its activity ineffective. In the end, maneuvering leads to the defeat of the enemy.[1]

Are ground maneuvers the central operational response to the threat of guerilla warfare and terrorism? What is considered a victory in an asymmetrical conflict? What is the function of maneuvering on the ground in this context? This essay argues that maneuvering on the ground is a critical component to deciding conflicts, whether symmetrical or not, that cannot be neglected. The extent of its use depends on operational planning, but the principle of using it remains operative and strategic.

I t is possible to throw a conventional enemy off balance and to defeat it through maneuvering on the ground, and history is replete with examples. During the Six Day War, as part of comprehensive ground maneuvering by the Southern Command, Division 38 threw the Egyptian forces that were defending the central Sinai off balance and defeated them in the battles at Umm Katef. Similarly, in May 1940, the Germans maneuvering through the Ardennes into France threw the British and French forces off balance along the entire front, from its western edge of the Maginot line to the coast, and defeated them. During the Second Lebanon War, the IDF missed an opportunity to do the same to Hizbollah in Lebanon and to defeat it, if only for a limited time, despite the fact that it had all the conditions for doing so. The main reason was ineffective ground maneuvering.

The ability to maneuver is a product of force buildup, and therefore must be reviewed in terms of all its components: doctrine, weapons and equipment, available forces, manpower, training and drilling, and the capability of the command. Maneuvering requires effective integration that can put all

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those elements together judiciously under a single authoritative command with operational capabilities that has a grasp of the relevant doctrines of war, while interfacing these elements with the various civilian organizations that are part of the effort.[2]

The critical nature of ground maneuver in conflicts of various kinds is both strategic and cultural. In strategic terms, a non-loss is considered a victory by Israel's enemies. This situation, a result of Israel's technological and conventional military superiority, enables its enemies to create a new decision equation by firing surface-to-surface rockets. A non-loss coupled with Israeli attrition creates strategic gains for the enemy, even if only after a long process. The strategic solution to this problem is complex and multi-dimensional, and maneuvering on the ground is an indispensable element in this solution. From a cultural viewpoint, maneuvering on the ground is critical because the status of the land itself in the Arab worldview is of the utmost significance in the interpretation of victory and loss.

The need for maneuvering on the ground in order to decide a war is well known from military history. In the case of the IDF, this need stems from the fact that the Arabs have over the last few years chosen to operate from afar and to avoid direct confrontation with IDF forces. In the Second Lebanon War, the other side operated weaponry such as surface-to-surface and anti-tank missiles while avoiding direct confrontation, assuming that their own forces operating those surface-to-surface and anti-tank missiles would be attacked on the ground. This is true both of guerilla organizations and enemy states. Firing from a distance is the preferred method of the other side in order to gain an advantage in fighting with Israel, and to avoid direct

confrontation in which Israel's advantage is clear, both in its array of troops and in its range of operational capabilities. Therefore, maneuvering on the ground is the requisite response that can have an effect on attaining victory at the strategic level in conflicts between Israel and its enemies.

The extraordinary ability of technology-rich regular armies on the one hand, and the desire of guerrilla and terrorist forces to employ basic technologies of weapons and equipment on the other, can create an illusion that firepower represents a decisive element that will determine the nature of the future battlefield. In fact, the result of directing firepower against the enemy will be at best its attrition at a variable rate, and at worst, if it survives, the creation of the feeling of a non-loss. Maneuvering on the ground, on the other hand, of necessity requires direct confrontation with the enemy, be it a regular army or guerilla force, and produces a clear operational outcome.

Throwing the Enemy off Balance through Maneuver

Ground maneuvering plays a decisive role in throwing the enemy off balance as a result of its inherent operational capability: movement and firepower. The ability to engage in direct confrontation while firing makes ground maneuvering a decisive element. One of the definitions of decision is the enemy's loss of ability to operate effectively, to which Clausewitz adds loss of the will to fight. This decision results from the loss of balance. Decision is an event limited in time and space,[3] and to the extent that the nature of war is becoming more and more asymmetrical, this assumption only gains emphasis and credence. Therefore, the loss of motivation to fight is not relevant over time.

The more we are engaged is warfare against guerilla and terrorist forces, the less that motivation is a function of defeat in battle as it was in Clausewitz's time.

Throwing the opponent off balance is a function of surprise, which creates uncoordinated and disjointed responses in its operational systems and disrupts its ability to act effectively. Loss of balance is expressed primarily in: inability to carry out tasks in the allotted time; inability to operate central systems of warfare; inability to make use of fighting reserves; and inability to command and control the designated forces. At best, operational objectives are not achieved, and at worst, one is defeated. The significance of loss of operational balance is:

1. the loss of operational command capability

2. the loss of connection with the goal, and not understanding the reason for fighting

3. the loss of the operational abilities of elements such as troops, commanders, and weapons

4. the loss of credibility among commanders at the command level of the operational echelon

5. the loss of cohesion of operational units.

Firepower: Not a Substitute for Ground Maneuver

Firepower can assist but does not replace ground maneuver. Maneuvering on the ground supports the firing efforts because the movement it creates on the battlefield stirs the arena and creates additional targets for the firing systems. However, the main reason that firepower is not a substitute for ground maneuver is the proven psychological reality that firepower alone cannot throw the enemy off balance. The drive to damage the operational command capability by destroying targets has not ripened in modern warfare, and it seems that any precision fire will merit a response from the other side.

The command system's ability to regroup, even when damaged, is amazing, and the human ability to substitute for mechanized systems over time has been proven in many modern wars. Regrouping is aligned closely with the nature of guerilla and terrorist warfare, in which there is little dependence on mechanized command systems. Mechanized forces can be commanded through simple means, so that damaging the elements of the command system, such as control posts and mechanized control elements, does not suspend the functioning of the entire system. It is also necessary to harm the commanders themselves, but that is difficult to do from afar.

Attacking forces and operational and strategic infrastructure with firepower is firepower's great advantage. Damaging targets of different types, from military targets to infrastructure, weakens the enemy's operational capacity and strategic staying power. The ability to plan firepower based on centers of gravity and in coordination against groups of targets classified by various types makes it possible to operate systematic firepower that weakens the total structure of the opponent. Firepower always impacts on command capability, but is not enough to throw it off balance, because the human ability to adapt to incoming fire is greater than firepower's ability to throw a person off balance. On the other hand, seizing territory is a

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tried and true recipe for collapsing his ability to adjust. In the case of guerilla and terrorist organizations, the transition to decentralizing forces while the firepower is trained on the concentration of targets, and the limited use of mechanized systems for command and control, all serve to intensify the problem of using firepower to decide the outcome.

In the Second Lebanon War, there were quality targets to attack. The IDF's publicized success in neutralizing the long range launchers offers proof of this. The operational lack of ground maneuver during the war meant that most of the attacks on short range surface-to-surface rockets occurred after launchers were already put to use. Ground maneuvers in tandem with operating firepower would have exposed some of the launchers, caused movement on the part of Hizbollah fighters and their commanders, and created many quality targets for attacks on short range rockets. The efforts against short range rockets failed because of the decision to forego the basic elements of ground maneuvers: rapid movement, direct supporting fire, and tactical ruses and stratagems.

Anti-Tank Fire and Ground Maneuvers

There is a tendency to attribute operational capability to anti-tank missiles that prevent the ability to maneuver. This is a mistake. The advantage of anti-tank missiles lies in the ease of their operation and in the fact that it is possible to arm thousands of infantrymen with them. The anti-tank missile is not new on the IDF battlefield. It made its appearance before the Yom Kippur War, and its use then and in wars since has cre-

ated a counterbalance to tank operation. In the early years, techniques to operate tanks in combination with the infantry and artillery were developed to combat the anti-tank missiles. Similar to the development of the operational response of air forces to surface-to-air missiles, the response to the anti-tank missile too consists of many components that create operational conditions for acting and maneuvering even in an anti-tank missile environment.

The threat of the anti-tank missile limits maneuver in modern warfare but does not erase it. Developing an operational anti-tank missile response to the extent that is recognized today as essential is not a problem only of the armored corps but also of the entire array of ground forces. The existing response to this threat is partial and in many ways lacking, because the attempt to counter the threat is passive, i.e., through strengthening tank armor, rather than through a comprehensive and systemic effort to respond to the threat that would combine attack and defense. Better armor is important, but it is only a part of the solution, and given the current anti-tank missile threat, it is necessary to shift the emphasis to creating an operational response to attack the range of components of anti-tank missile ability. Such an approach would ultimately create a comprehensive operational capability that would overcome the maneuvering limitations imposed by the anti-tank missile threat.[4]

The experience of air forces around the world in coping with surface-to-air missiles is an example of a successful effort to handle a problem. Dealing with the range of the capability's components through the use of parallel efforts, i.e., technological development and the development of ways of thinking and doctrines of warfare, led to effective

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solutions in using airpower against extensive surface-to-air threats. Of particular importance was the approach of dealing with the scope of the problem's components, as well as the understanding that it is necessary to create operational situations in which it is possible to use airpower.

Today, the response to the anti-tank missile, albeit partial, is available, on condition that the approach to identifying the operational response to the threat changes. All the components exist, their integration can be effected, and already today it is possible to improve significantly armies' ability to maneuver in areas saturated with anti-tank fire. What is needed is a conceptual change that will be expressed as acting against the entire range of threat components, alongside accelerated development of fortified armor. Such a change will lead to operational planning that will decrease the anti-tank missile threat to a large extent, and the limitation on ground maneuvering will be slashed.[5]

Statements such as "it is impossible to overcome the anti-tank missile problem" should raise a red flag. They lead to neglect of existing operational capabilities, and legitimize an end to the development of a comprehensive operational response to the threat. Such a mindset is dangerous, because instead of developing an operational response using maneuvering capabilities, we try to find "something else" that might achieve the required operational outcome instead of ground maneuvering. A striking example was the ineffective ground maneuvering in the Second Lebanon War.

The Danger to Ground Maneuver as a Deciding Element
IDF ground maneuver during the Second Lebanon War was highly ineffective. The encounter between the maneuvering warfare of a regular army and a revolutionary type of war, in particular the Hizbollah version in which the principal threat was launching surface-to-surface rockets against civilian targets inside Israel, is an encounter that can very easily lead to the erosion of maneuvering as the main factor in decision. Wearing down maneuvering capability is an effect of the incessant guerilla attacks on a large number of factors that create the maneuvering capability. The guerilla attacks are aimed at the weak links in this capability, which make the maneuvering forces vulnerable. Impeding maneuvering frequently by use of anti-tank ambushes and explosive charges at unavoidable crossings, in areas that present topographical difficulties (the mountainous areas of Lebanon, for example), damaging logistical ability by attacking logistical convoys with small forces – all of these and similar efforts are liable to slow down and affect the continuity of the fighting and, in particular, the determination of the maneuvering force. This in fact is the purpose of guerilla warfare: to sap the strength of the dominant power over time. A large number of operations in any place at any time, by day or by night, wear down the ability to maneuver. To a large extent, that is what happened to the Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

What can be considered a victory against guerilla and terrorist forces, and can it be attained? What is the significance of a victory against guerilla and terrorist forces? The great advantage of guerilla and terrorist forces is their ability to regroup after defeats, except for cases in which the military and

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political leadership is eradicated, a situation that causes the ideological energy to flag and die down. This is a function of the inner strength that guerilla and terrorist organizations have to rehabilitate themselves and to continue their struggle at another time and in another place. Therefore, reference to victory is restricted here to time and place. For the purposes of the discussion below on a victory in the conflict, Hizbollah is the defined enemy in a defined time.[6] Guerilla and terrorist forces can be defeated in a conflict that is limited in time and space using an approach of ground maneuvering. It can be via the classic giant maneuver, familiar from wars between large regular armies, or maneuvers of the sort underway in Judea and Samaria since Operation Defensive Shield, which consist of a series of tactical maneuvers occurring in tandem on different fronts. During 2003-2005, the IDF started to operate in Judea and Samaria using moves of continuous and unceasing maneuvering whose principles lead the fight against terrorists to this day. Movement and firepower are expressed in continuous, unceasing operations, the essence being striving for direct confrontation with the enemy. In this context, the following saying has been coined at the Central Command: "Terrorism must be fought with an M16 and not an F16." This is a proven directive that for some reason never made it to the Northern Command when it was trying to stop Katyusha fire coming into its zone.

It is ground maneuver that allows direct contact with the guerillas. Before the direct confrontation, preparing the battle scene through various means is intended to create optimal operational conditions, in terms of intelligence, firepower, and so on, in order to puncture the guerillas' staying power and make the direct encounter as smooth possible. This, in turn, allows effective maneuvering on the ground that will achieve its objectives with a minimum of casualties and with minimum damage to weaponry and equipment, maneuvering that in the end can be used to achieve strategic gains. Unsuccessful maneuvering in Lebanon, which did not bring to the fore IDF existing capabilities, affected the strategic situation in southern Lebanon. Had the maneuvering been successful from a tactical perspective, Hizbollah's regrouping in terms of fighters, weapons and equipment, and especially in determination would have taken longer.

History proves that it is impossible to crush the spirit of a people that generates the guerilla fighting force. However, it is possible, and imperative, to inflict grave damage on the guerillas' physical ability, i.e., on their fighters, weapons, equipment, and ability to control their sphere of operations. Doing so will make it possible to act in other dimensions, over an extended period of time, without the threat of fire from the guerillas. The longer this strategic time frame lasts, the better. This is similar to Ben-Gurion's basic approach to determining the outcome vis-à-vis the Arabs, an approach that supported winning every round and postponing the next confrontation. In such a manner, it will be possible, over time, to arrive at a strategic/political/other arrangement in which all sides will emerge victorious from the conflict. Only ground maneuvering allows for ensnaring the guerilla fighters. Although not the only component in achieving victory

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against the guerillas, it is indispensable,.

The biggest mistake in the Second Lebanon War was the transition to an extended war of attrition against the guerillas and terrorists through counter fire out of a desire to avoid casualties. In other words, an operational response to surface-to-surface rockets, based on a war of attrition that uses only firepower, is a mistake. Whoever fights this way out of a desire to gain a victory without suffering losses does not in fact gain a victory, and pays for it in the end with more casualties. To be sure, ground maneuver always incurs the cost of casualties, but if it is effected properly, it is possible to achieve a decisive outcome with a minimum of losses.

The principle of maneuver against guerilla and terrorist forces cannot depend on administrative control on the scene, but entails deep, constant, and extended intelligence control within it. This situation allows for maneuvering, carrying out detentions, and eliminations of terrorist nests. Repeated actions of this sort finally move the terrorists farther away from the population, create deterrence, and achieve solid operational gains, as in Judea and Samaria over the past three years.

Effective ground maneuver is maneuvering with defined objectives and creating ongoing punishment of the enemy, which results in deterrence. The aim of the maneuvering can be a decisive outcome or it can be punitive, i.e., achieving a defined operational result, limited in time and space, and creating deterrence. Therefore, the IDF must be ready and prepared to maneuver on the ground at any time, and the political echelon must be prepared to approve repeated actions until the desired strategic result – punishment and deterrence – is achieved.

In an article dealing with IDF fighting in the Gaza Strip,[7] Major General (ret.) Prof. Isaac Ben-Israel claims that because technology cannot provide a response to the Qassams fired at settlements in the Negev, Israel has no choice but to use its might and maneuver into the Gaza Strip in order to create deterrence over time. That is to say, even when fighting guerilla and terrorist forces, movement and firepower, and especially the element of movement in its broader meaning, are critical. The desire of guerilla and terrorist forces to drag Israel into an extended war, based on attrition via firepower, is a grave danger that might lead to a loss of will to maneuver and to a never-ending search for a way to fight back.

Conclusion: Combining Maneuver with Firepower

In conventional wars, technology that allows counterattacks at many targets created the expectation that it is possible to achieve similar results and to counterattack effectively also when the enemy consists of guerilla and terrorist forces.

Understanding maneuver as the central decisive factor of the IDF has been severely lessened, and therefore the process of correction will likely take a very long time. Nonetheless, it is an essential correction, as otherwise non-loss will become the concept that changed the nature of war in this era from a war of maneuver to a war of attrition. The IDF must adapt to effective operation of its forces as a maneuvering force against the guerillas. Hesitation in using combined forces with ground maneuvering efforts will undoubtedly lead to the success of guerilla warfare and terrorism.

In the Second Lebanon War, Hizbollah adopted an attack mode of battle combining defensive elements, its main attack effort be-

ing – in tandem with defensive efforts aimed at the uneven, confused, and hesitant maneuvering of the IDF – the unceasing firing of surface-to-surface rockets at Israel. The purpose of its tactical warfare was to enable the firing of rockets, while maximizing the damage to Israel's forces and an attempt to take soldiers hostage. Hizbollah combined ground maneuvering with firepower together with guerilla warfare by its ground arrays, in the fortifications, in the small towns, and in the "nature reserves."

An IDF attack on Hizbollah with a heavy maneuvering mass against defined objectives together with a series of raids deep into their forces, both of which are moved by the same goal of decision, would without a doubt have provided a clear operational direction in the Second Lebanon War. "Blocking and combing," as a battle method the Soviets developed in 1985 in Afghanistan, could have been effective against the "nature reserves" and Hizbollah towns. In any event, such a direction would have been a very effective maneuver against Hizbollah and would have damaged the organization for a long time, and in particular its ability to regroup.

Israel's strategy has not changed over its sixty years of existence. The strategy is defensive while the tactics are aggressive. That is to say, if a war is forced on Israel, the required operational response is one of attack and decisive outcome. Through the IDF and the other security organizations, Israel must move the war into the territory of its enemy and aim for a decisive outcome as quickly as possible.

Until the 2006 war, maneuvering in general and maneuvering on the ground in particular were a staple of the strategic essence of the IDF. The Second Lebanon War taught that the principle established by Ben-Gurion, in terms of moving the fighting to enemy territory, stands the test of history. Moreover, until the 2006 war, moving the fighting to enemy territory using maneuvering of all types was what created Israel's deterrent capability. Aerial maneuver deters in the sense that Israel is capable of responding quickly and effectively against strategic threats.

The right combination is simple, tried, and familiar: the combination of maneuvering and firepower in every dimension and at all levels. It bears remembering that there was not a single war in which the IDF was not required to move the fighting into the enemy's zone. Therefore, ground maneuvering, as an element of decisive outcome, is critical for any definition of decisive outcome. It is the basis for activating a military force in Israel's strategic situation. Maneuver capability among modern armies, including the IDF, is a basic capability; the conditions for its success are the right mix of the array of forces allowing for joint and combined battles, with modern weapons and equipment, skilled manpower trained in maneuvering, and regular drilling. All of these are supposed to rely on a whole operational concept whose objective is a decisive outcome, on tactical doctrine of war, on effective and simple doctrines of command and control, and on command capabilities superior by far to that of the enemy. Potentially, the IDF has all of these capabilities, and in particular trained commanders and a tradition of independent command. The IDF must maintain the range of these elements at a high level of operational fitness, over an unlimited period of time.

The conclusion is clear: in an encounter

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between guerilla and terrorist forces and the IDF, the IDF cannot overlook the use of ground maneuvering inside enemy territory as the main element of a decisive outcome. Inter-branch and inter-organizational cooperation under the authority of a single commander allows for effective ground maneuvering. Its presence will allow for a decisive outcome, and will prevent a "freeze" on the battlefield, the significance of which, given the Israel's strategic conditions, represents a non-loss for the enemy, which in effect is a loss for Israel. Ground maneuvering is not enough to attain a victory, but it is an essential condition for it.

Notes

1 This definition is based on the definitions of maneuvering of the IDF and the American armed forces as they appear in *The Dictionary of IDF Terminology*, 1998, and the pamphlet *FM 100-5*, 1993.

2 Effective maneuvering in conventional warfare and particularly in a war against guerilla forces and terrorism consists of the consolidation of military forces and various security organizations active in operative contexts at the tactical and operative echelons, and at the military and civilian-security strategic level. The purpose of this consolidation is to organize around a common goal and to work under a single authority. A consolidation of military and civilian-security organizations (intelligence, governmental/civilian administrative organizations in the conflict area, and so on) is a complex apparatus to construct, but it is vital in order to realize the goals of the maneuvering. It is essential to create a coherent unit under the command of a single commander. This is a direct result of the different organizational structures and cultures that are "a given complex of assumptions, values, beliefs and conventions that the members of the organization have in common"; see Isaac Samuel, *Organizations* (Tel Aviv: University of Haifa and Zmora-Bitan, 1996), p. 240. This is true also of military organizations comprising the consolidation discussed above (the air, the ground, and intelligence branches), and to a greater extent, it is true for the purpose of the inter-organizational cooperation between the armed forces and other security organizations that directly contribute to the maneuvering.

3 Gabriel Siboni, *On Decision: Understanding of Action*, published by the IDF Command and General Staff College/The Ministry of Defense, IDF.

4 Developing a correct operational response to anti-tank missiles requires that the following components be dealt with: operational understanding and war doctrine, weaponry and equipment appropriate to such warfare, a suitable mix of forces for such warfare (preference for infantry), operational command capability, training and skilled manpower for fighting in areas with massive anti-tank fire.

5 At the level of operational planning, the significance of creating operational conditions for warfare in an area saturated with anti-tank missile fire lies in dealing with all the components of the threat on the front and deep into the war zone at any relevant time, before maneuvering, during maneuvering, and at the stage of taking advantage of the victory.

6 A series of victories over time will make possible an overall victory in the conflict; however, a strategic approach requires countries to adopt a strategy of long term struggle if they want to attain a victory in this type of conflict.

7 Prof. Isaac Ben-Israel, "Strategy Versus Tactics," Ynet, September 9, 2007.