

# Breaking the Amoeba's Bones

Ron Tira

While the list of lapses in the second Lebanon War is long, the root cause of the failure on the battlefield stems from the deterioration in the Israeli approach to the buildup and use of military force. This deterioration has resulted partly inadvertently and partly from staunch adherence to preexisting concepts. Reviewing the deterioration in the approach to force buildup and the use of force, this article will examine the changes in buildup and the approach to force application during the period that preceded the war, and will look at the operational concepts adopted for the war that emerged from these changes. It will examine the inadequate results of force application during the war, discuss the alternative strategies for the use of force (if at all) available to Israel after the kidnapping of its two soldiers on July 12, 2006, and look at possible future directions.

## Before the War: Three Levels of Deterioration

The first level of deterioration stems from the view adopted over the past decade that the probability of war with countries that share a border with Israel ("the first tier") is low, and the main threat comes from countries like Iran ("the second-third tier") and from the Palestinians ("the inner tier"). As such, resources, military training, and approaches to the use of force were diverted from the first tier to the second and inner tiers. Thus, one regular division and several reserve divisions were dissolved, procurement plans were withdrawn, and reserve units were not trained in

high-intensity scenarios. In fact, some reserve units encountered first tier operational scenarios in the war after a lapse of four and even six years without relevant training.

The second level of deterioration stems from the thinking that if, nevertheless, first tier war erupts, Israel would be interested only in preventing change, not in effecting it. In such a case, Israel could make do with stopping the enemy at the borders with accurate firepower, and the importance of territory and ground maneuvers deep into enemy territory would lessen. Paraphrased, "a border patrol force rich in precision weapons" would suffice, and the need for armored formations moving heavily towards enemy towns would diminish. This approach is also reflected in a report prepared by a committee appointed by the minister of

defense and headed by Dan Meridor to examine Israel's security concept. The committee submitted its findings earlier this year. However, security, a term taken from the world of warfare, is a continuation of policy using other means and intends at times to impose change or generate a political result. Those interested only in destroying approaching enemy tanks engage in guarding the borders, but not in the country's security.

The precision firepower-oriented approach, in practice (if not in theory) foregoes taking the initiative to dictate political objectives, as it is doubtful whether firepower-based operations alone can in all cases unsettle an enemy and cause it to experience distress and defeat to the extent that it seeks a ceasefire or surrenders. Moreover, negating the ability and the concept of transferring the war to the enemy's

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territory in many cases is liable to obviate achieving victory even in wars designed to prevent change. It may result in an inconclusive ending to the fighting or, at least, prolong the war far beyond the length of the wars Israel has experienced to date, with all the implications this would have for the Israeli economy and society.

the system has critical junctions; and third, there is sufficient familiarity with the enemy's system and its critical junctions.

Against the background of these ideas, a flawed approach was adopted by some who believed that it is possible to wage a war with minimal friction and at a low cost, and the

late the nature of the second Lebanon War, and adopted operational concepts that were destined to fail.

The orders given for Operation Change of Direction (the Israeli military name for the second Lebanon War) indicate that Israel designed its operations in the campaign around two themes. The first was to conduct a standoff firepower-based war against the Lebanese Republic so as to push it to dismantle Hizbollah for us. Indeed, at the outset of the war Israel declared that the Lebanese government was responsible for the kidnapping of the two soldiers, and struck targets such as Lebanese air force bases, Lebanese oil refineries, petroleum and gas facilities, bridges inside and around Beirut, and so on. However, it soon became apparent – what should have been understood beforehand – that even if motivated by Israel, the Lebanese government did not have the political force to confront Hizbollah and its patrons, Iran and Syria. Conversely, pressure on Siniora's government could lead to its collapse and harm Israeli interests in sowing the seeds of pro-Western democracy in Lebanon. Siniora, al-Hariri junior, and their Sunni colleagues were indeed motivated to weaken Hizbollah well before the war, in the wake of the Hariri assassination and the Cedar Revolution. But they had reached the limit of their political powers and against their will were forced to accept representatives of Hizbollah into the government.

This campaign theme was rejected by Israel's American and European

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The third level of deterioration in the Israeli concept of employing military force was the over-zealous embrace of the American effects-based operations (EBO) idea. EBO's aim is to paralyze the enemy's operational ability, in contrast to destroying its military force. This is achieved by striking the headquarters, lines of communication, and other critical junctions in the military structure. EBO were employed in their most distinct form in the Shock and Awe campaign that opened the 2003 Iraq War. However, the Americans used EBO to prepare the way for their ground maneuvers, and not as an alternative to them. Notwithstanding their mastery of EBO, the Americans adhered to a balanced mix of forces and operational approaches. Moreover, even Col. John Warden (US Air Force), author of *The Enemy as a System*, in which the idea of EBO was first formulated, claimed there are three basic preconditions for EBO use: first, the enemy has a system-like structure; second,

IDF entered the second Lebanon War imbued with the three levels of deterioration. However, in contrast to all preconceived notions, this war was waged in the first tier; it attempted to effect change in Lebanon; and it was fought against guerilla forces, which not only do not have a system-like structure or critical junctions, but whose structure Israel barely understands.

#### **Misconceptions about Using Force**

Clausewitz argued that the second most important undertaking of the political and military echelons in any war (after defining its political objective) is to understand and formulate its unique nature, as no two wars are identical. The main question that the politician and general have to ask themselves is, how does the impending military campaign differ from campaigns that preceded it? Due to the three levels of deterioration, Israel failed to understand and formu-

allies, which blocked a larger scale offensive against Lebanese infrastructures. The use of force against the Lebanese Republic also damaged the sympathy of Lebanese Christians and Druze with Israel's drive to disarm Hizbollah. Moreover, after the Israeli soldiers were kidnapped, the Saudis, Egyptians, and other Sunni countries spoke out against the Shiite Hizbollah, described it as a destabilizing element, and agreed, in fact, with Israel's campaign aims. However, the damage subsequently inflicted on Lebanon represented the conflict as an Israeli-Arab conflict, and the Sunni countries backtracked from their previous position, at least publicly. As a result, Israel quickly abandoned the idea of a firepower-based operation against the Lebanese Republic, even if it did not declare this openly and the official orders did not reflect this.

The second campaign theme that Israel adopted was to conduct an operation that involved as little friction as possible and applied intensive precision firepower against Hizbollah, based on the Shock and Awe and EBO ideas. However, a guerilla outfit comprises the least successful example of a systemic structure and critical junctions suitable for EBO, and collecting intelligence on its structure is far more complex than collecting information about the chain of command in a regular army. Hizbollah has a relatively flat and decentralized organizational structure, and comprises a network of territorial units operating almost autonomously and, generally, without the need for ma-

neuvering forces or transporting supplies. The fighters, weapons, and supplies are deployed in the field in advance and blend in easily within the civilian population or in "nature reserves" (concealed bunker systems in valleys). On the other hand, Hizbollah does not have an operational center of gravity whose destruction would lead to the collapse of the organization's other organs and obviate the need

without Israel's being able to hit most of the launchers with standoff fire. Accordingly, there was no reason to believe that Israel would achieve better results, using a firepower-based operation only, against Hizbollah's light and medium surface-to-surface rocket launchers deployed dozens of kilometers inside Lebanon, in forested and populated mountains.

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to destroy them individually. The attempt to apply the Shock and Awe concept and the EBO approach against a guerilla organization like Hizbollah is therefore similar to trying to break an amoeba's bones – using force irrelevant to the circumstances, to the facts, and to the nature of the war.

Theoretically, the use of an EBO approach that paralyzes the enemy might have relieved the need to seek out each individual surface-to-surface rocket launcher, but in practice, due to the decentralized and autonomous nature of Hizbollah's rocket units, this became a primary task. However, Israel knew that IDF intelligence and firepower formations (air force and artillery) had for some years failed to obliterate Qassam rocket launchers near Beit Hanoun, where the theater is limited and accessible, and the terrain is flat. Indeed, just prior to the second Lebanon War, hundreds of Qassam rockets landed in the western Negev

eration also failed in terms of destroying the enemy (BDA – Battle Damage Assessment), namely, in terms of success of the firepower and in cost effectiveness, whereby over 15,000 air force sorties and 150,000 shells fired by the artillery corps achieved the destruction of only several dozen high value targets, and killed about 200-300 Hizbollah fighters (not including Hizbollah killed in ground battles). Due to the nature of the operation against a guerilla organization, which is generally not distinguished by clusters of intelligible targets, the vast majority of air strikes and the shells fired were not effective. This picture emerged early on in the campaign and it was possible to halt and reexamine the operational design after a week or two, after, say, 3,000 air strikes and 30,000 shells. It is not clear why the same operational concept continued to be adhered to if it was obviously not yielding effective results.

The idea of an operation based solely on firepower and without land maneuvers is still unproven and unfounded, and to date has scored just one success – in Kosovo. However, circumstances indicated that the second Lebanon War was very different from events in Kosovo, where the Americans engaged a sovereign country and its army. In Lebanon, however, the antagonist was a low-signature guerilla organization with relatively little sensitivity to damage inflicted on its host country. Israel also knew, or should have known,

factor in Kosovo, where the US employed its forces for almost 80 days until firepower accumulated to the critical mass required to achieve the campaign's political goals.

### **The Absence of a Coherent Operational Concept for the Ground Forces**

Too little, too late: Israel introduced ground forces into the fighting in Lebanon belatedly, indecisively, and above all, without a clearly defined operational concept. If anything, how the ground forces were used

efficient enough to repel a short range surface-to-surface rocket or achieve any significant political effect.

Hizbollah used only several hundred fighters in southern Lebanon and thus would not have been able to withstand a sustained effort over a number of days in several locations, even if only due to the inability of a few fighters to cope with the lack of sleep and manage a broad front. However, Israel played into the hands of Hizbollah by introducing the ground forces gradually and in a step-by-step manner, allowing Hizbollah to rest, regroup, assume the initiative, and surprise the IDF. In general, most of the IDF forces were deployed in a plain and predictable maneuver, from south to north. Hizbollah may have been surprised by the cause over which Israel waged war, but once it began, the IDF used its forces in ways foreseen by Hizbollah (except for the airborne flanking just prior to the end of the fighting, which was more symbolic than efficient).

The type of combat Hizbollah prepared for was to allow IDF troops to pass its fighters hiding in "nature reserves" and other places, and then continue surface-to-surface rocket fire into Israel and guerilla operations against rearguard forces. Thus, any Israeli movement deep into Lebanese territory had to include a thorough sweep to secure all the built up and open areas taken by the IDF. It is highly doubtful whether the forces that were mobilized were sufficient for this task as well as for maintain-

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that killing several hundred Hizbollah members and damaging some of the organization's storage and other facilities would yield only limited leverage on decision-makers in Damascus and Tehran. Indeed, to date it does not appear that the war produced a fundamental change in the positions and strategy of Damascus and Tehran towards Hizbollah and Lebanon. Moreover, the Americans operated in Kosovo free of counterattacks, whereas Hizbollah fire on towns in northern Israel turned the blows into a reciprocal affair, what helped make Israel just as vulnerable to the continuation of the fighting. It is also difficult to make a comparison between the diplomatic circumstances in Lebanon versus in Kosovo, as well as the insensitivity to the time

was a compromise of sorts between a school of thought calling for the non-use of ground forces and a school of thought calling for a massive deployment of ground forces, resulting in the use of limited ground forces. This poor compromise led to casualties among troops, yet from the outset it was evident that it could not achieve any campaign effect at all. Indeed, it is unclear what campaign effect was expected from using battalion-sized forces in the Lebanese border towns of Bint Jbail or Maroun a-Ras, sending brigade-sized forces just 2-3 kilometers over the border to destroy abandoned Hizbollah positions, or eventually using division-sized forces 10-15 kilometers over the border and across only part of the front. This sort of force application is not even suf-



ing reserves that would be required if the war spread to other fronts.

The oddest deployment of ground forces took place in the last sixty hours of the fighting. The ground forces were deployed after the political campaign ended (Security Council resolution 1701); in other words, the deployment was not intended to achieve any political objectives. The forces were deployed without the area being cleared of enemy combatants, i.e., the aim was not to search, destroy, and inflict damage on Hizbollah's firing capacity or its forces. When the ceasefire came into effect, IDF forces were interspersed with the enemy forces, and hence there were difficulties with land and air supplies (as the area had not been secured). In the words of Casper Weinberger about Vietnam, Israel too only asked its soldiers "to be there," but not to win. It should be stressed that the act of crossing into Lebanon, which involved passing through the kill zones prepared by Hizbollah, was therefore very dangerous and exacted a high price in the number of soldiers killed; thus, it was essential that there be a clear understanding of this offensive's objective. Moreover, the duration of the deployment in southern Lebanon and the exit strategy were not dependent on Israel, rather on the "good will" of Hizbollah to reach agreement on the conditions for deploying the Lebanese army and UNIFIL in the south.

In this war, the IDF thought in terms of targets and firepower, and

did not use its ground forces dynamically in ways that had bought it its previous victories: identification of enemy weaknesses, surprise, deception, deep maneuvering, pushing the enemy out of balance, exploiting successes, and maintaining pressure. Undoubtedly, one cannot compare operations against regular armies with action taken against a guerilla orga-



nization built of autonomous cells and lacking an operational center of gravity, and in the case of a guerilla organization, cutting supply lines or encircling the forward operational level is almost inconsequential. However, all organizations – even guerilla – have their weak points.

The Chinese strategist Sun Tzu claims that a military leader's objective is to dictate to his enemy the nature of a war in which he has a relative advantage, and he should not be

drawn into a type of war in which the enemy has a relative advantage. If this is not possible, said Sun Tzu, fighting should be avoided. For Clausewitz, in war one should attack the enemy's plans. Israel played into Hizbollah's hands, and conducted the campaign in accordance with Hizbollah's plans and strengths and, as such, from the outset there was almost no chance of victory.

### **The Results of the Inadequate Use of Force**

It is too soon to assess the long term political results of the war and gain the necessary perspective to appreciate if Israel stirred undercurrents in Lebanon that may produce benefits in the future. Ultimately, Lebanon experienced political and social traumas whose fallout cannot yet be assessed. However, the way the operation ended has severe ramifications, which can be divided into two types: the direct results of how the military force was used, and the indirect results.

The direct upshot of the deterioration in the IDF force buildup and in the operational design, and the consequent adoption of particular campaign themes, was the failure to destroy, repress, or even to substantially impinge on enemy activity according to the primary parameters of Hizbollah's operational design. Indeed, towards the end of the war, Hizbollah fired more than 200 rockets per day into Israel, while at the start of the war around 100 rockets

were launched per day (even if the mixture shifted during the war toward short range surface-to-surface rockets). Hizbollah's fighting forces continued operating while inflicting damage on the IDF, and even in most of the ground battles that they lost, they did not collapse or

of the past, and that the Israeli (and, in generally, the Western) soldier is weaker and finds it difficult to deal with the difficulties of battle. It is hard to overestimate the importance of this perception, if it takes hold. Since 1967 the Middle East has operated under the perception that the

in guarantees, the best arms available, and a political umbrella.

However, the manner in which the second Lebanon War was conducted and the way in which it is viewed may affect the perception of Israel's military superiority and, as such, may impact on many aspects of the reality in which Israel has existed since 1967. It is very difficult to foresee future political intent and to assess the probability of war; however it seems that in the wake of the second Lebanon War, at least some of the relevant parties may believe they can do battle with Israel and emerge from the fighting with the upper hand. As such, it appears that the obstacles to another war in the Middle East have been lowered.

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retreat. Hizbollah's command and control echelon continued to function throughout the war. Its fighting spirit for the most part stayed strong, and currently there are no signs that its political will has been irreversibly impaired. While Hizbollah preferred to arrive at a ceasefire, this was based on a justifiable wish to "lock in its profits" (i.e., to stop the fighting at a stage where its force was maximizing its achievements and was perceived as the victor) and not because it was in distress or on the verge of collapse. In Hizbollah's eyes, and in the view of some Arab onlookers, Hizbollah won the battle.

Moreover, the fact that several hundred Hizbollah fighters faced up to four Israeli divisions and the Israel Air Force, and ended the war standing up after inflicting significant damage on IDF forces, may also generate indirect results that are at best problematic. Some of the parties that followed the progress of the war may conclude, correctly or otherwise, that the IDF of today is not the IDF

Israeli military enjoys absolute superiority and thus, since 1967, Israel has not been seriously challenged. In 1973, the Egyptians and Syrians set themselves modest operational objectives (penetration of about 10 km), and when they achieved their objectives, they halted at their own initiative. This allowed Israel to regroup, launch a counterattack, and win the battle. Since 1973 Israel has not been challenged in an all-out war. The perception of Israel's military superiority was responsible for generating the requisite conditions for the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, the peace process with the Palestinians, and thirty-three years of quiet on the Golan Heights. It allowed Israel to sustain a peacetime economy and a society of plenty and wellbeing, despite the absence of peace. And due to the perception of its military superiority, Israel became an American strategic asset that justified the investment of an aggregate amount of about \$100 billion and the provision of dozens of billions of more dollars

### **How Could the Force Have Been Used?**

In order to analyze what kind of war and what operational concept Israel should have adopted following the kidnapping of its soldiers on July 12, 2006, we have to reexamine Hizbollah's approach to force buildup and force application, and the operational design it chose. Hizbollah established two parallel formations: the first, a decentralized and autonomous low-signature rockets formation devoid of a center of gravity that on the one hand applied pressure on Israeli towns and forced it to act immediately. On the other hand, certainly the short range rockets formation could not be neutralized, suppressed, or destroyed by standoff firepower within a reasonable period of time, but only by seiz-

ing the area from which it operated and by systematic destruction of each and every launcher.

However, a fighting formation was established alongside the rockets formation that was also decentralized, autonomous, and lacking an operational center of gravity, composed of both fortified as well as low-signature guerilla forces. These fighting forces were deployed to make both the act of taking and securing the south of Lebanon as well as the act of remaining in occupation and maintaining supply lines exhausting and costly in terms of human life. The two formations were designed to operate clandestinely through selective engagement with the Israeli ground forces, allowing Israeli forces to pass them, and continuing their operations in the rear of Israeli lines. Thus, any Israeli movement into Lebanon could not be based on seizing only select dominant points while avoiding entering populated pockets and “nature reserves,” rather had to involve a thorough sweep of the area.

Hizbollah designed a war in which presumably Israel could only choose which soft underbelly to expose: the one whereby it avoids a ground operation and exposes its home front vulnerability, or the one whereby it enters Lebanon and sustains the loss of soldiers in ongoing ground-based attrition with a guerilla organization. Hizbollah’s brilliant trap apparently left Israel with two undesirable options.

Any operational model that Israel should have formulated on July 12,

2006 had, therefore, to take into account Hizbollah’s force buildup and its mode of operation, and the nature of the resultant war. Taking this view, Israel had four alternatives with their own inherent logic, even if each had some basic deficiencies as well. The first was restraint, i.e., making do with a symbolic retaliation to the Hizbollah attack. Even if the kidnappings were not coordinated with Iran and did not result from a premeditated intent to escalate the situation to a war, the second Lebanon War was liable to slow down and complicate the international campaign against Iran on the nuclear issue and against Syria and Hizbollah with regard to the Hariri assassination and Security Council resolution 1559. It was thus not wise to rewrite the international agenda and have it led by an Israeli-Lebanese war. The main arena is, of course, with Iran, whence derives the confrontation between the West

declaring war, the second option was to refuse to walk into the brilliant trap set by Hizbollah but instead to opt for an operational model of exerting pressure on Asad’s regime and, through this, on Hizbollah and Iran. It was entirely feasible to inflict significant damage on the assets of the Alawi regime, even through the relatively sterile model of Shock and Awe and EBO. Syria is Iran’s strategic asset and Hizbollah’s patron, and when Asad’s foothold is precarious it is convenient for Israel and the US to negotiate a settlement in Lebanon, and more convenient for the Americans to negotiate with Iran on the nuclear issue. The disadvantage of this alternative is, of course, the disproportion between the incident of the soldiers’ kidnapping and the Israeli reaction, and the danger of uncontrolled regional escalation.

A third option was to forego an all-out war with Hizbollah, to adopt

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and Iran and Syria over hegemony in Lebanon, with the conflict between Israel and Hizbollah only a secondary offshoot. Thus, it was possible to wait for the American measures against Iran to be fully realized, and wage war with Hizbollah at a more convenient time once suitable preparations were made.

If, nonetheless, Israel insisted on

more modest political objectives, avoid the trap set in southern Lebanon, and to stage a daring, consciousness-oriented operation that goes beyond Hizbollah’s expectations such as, for example, a large scale special operation in the heart of Lebanon or in the Beka’a Valley.

And if, nonetheless, Israel insisted on a full scale direct confrontation

with Hizbollah, this could only be done with full awareness of the trap set by Hizbollah and implemented instantly, swiftly, and with full IDF power. In addition, this should have been carried out through Hizbollah's backdoor and not in an offhanded maneuver from south northward. As

lead to the collapse of the organization, there is no alternative to systematic face-to-face confrontation at each of Hizbollah's fortified positions.

### **Honest Conclusions and Preparations for the Future**

In order to win the next war Israel

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such, the fourth alternative was to utilize maximum friction and military forces – in all their forms – and in the shortest amount of time. This alternative required immediate mobilization of reserve units sufficient to achieve deep penetration of several dozens of kilometers, and to sweep and secure southern Lebanon. Force should have been used in a surprising way, including flanking the kill zones near the border, progressing continuously along unexpected routes, undertaking massive operations deep in Hizbollah's strategic rear, and pushing it out of balance. However, this alternative incurs two inherent drawbacks: first, it does not offer a successful exit strategy and involves a protracted occupation, since withdrawal would be liable to restore the situation to its pre-war status. Second, it would be costly in terms of human life, since at the end of the day, due to Hizbollah's decentralized and autonomous nature and the lack of a critical operational core whose destruction would

must conduct an investigation of what actually happened in Lebanon, take a sober look at reality – as it has changed for the worse in the wake of the war – and take immediate action to correct the situation and prepare for the next confrontation. If we just cover over our tracks, if we allow time to take its course and blunt the sharpness of failure, we will not learn, we will not improve, and we will lose the next war too.

First, Israel must retain the ability to fight based on the classic principles of war, whereby force buildup and utilization must reflect an ongoing balance between the various branches of the military and a balance between firepower, maneuvering, and protective gear. Once again Israel must lend appropriate consideration to territory, both in defensive and offensive terms. The world is undoubtedly changing, as is military force buildup and force application, but it is very risky to implement dramatic changes based on theories that have yet to be validated.

Examples of force buildup based on unproven theories include the American approach of the 1950s, whereby there was no need for a strong conventional army in the era of nuclear arms – an approach proven mistaken in the 1960s; the American idea that in an era of air-to-air missiles, there is no longer a need for guns on fighter aircraft or a need to train pilots to engage in close aerial combat – what resulted in the loss of hundreds of pilots and aircraft in the early years of the Vietnam War; or the approach that was supported by many in Israel after 1967 that argued that in an era of mobile tank battles, there was no more need for an infantry corps, and that the air force could serve as airborne artillery – an approach proven incorrect in 1973.

It is also very dangerous to allow temporary or reversible circumstances, or for that matter political views, to divert attention from the professional-practical necessity of preparing for the worst case scenario. In the words of Ben Gurion: "Let us assume that our peacemaking efforts will bear fruit and most or even all the Arab countries will sign peace and friendship treaties with us. Even then we should be wary of the dangerous illusion that peace will maintain our security. Even after peace is written and signed between us and all our neighbors, and the signatures are made and ratified by the UN, security will always be our main concern."

Israel's classic security concept was based on what in the 1950s and 1960s was known as "the case of



everything”: buildup of the IDF to achieve victory even in the worst case scenario in which the Arab countries join forces and surprise Israel with an all-out war. Yet preparing for “everything” demands vast resources; neither is it clear if the challenge was met even when this was official policy. However, we must at least be able to cope with the full spectrum of threats, and likewise with some of them simultaneously. We should not confuse the scenario that we cast as likely or unlikely with the need to be able to deal with the full range of threats and the full capabilities of the enemy, whatever the probability of its political intent to use them according to our current assessment. The enemy’s capabilities are given while its political intentions are liable to change, and we ourselves might err in our assessment of them.

While Hizbollah occupies a significant role in the spectrum of threats, we need to look beyond it at the wider picture. Hizbollah is a hybrid. Part of it is a genuine grassroots Lebanese phenomenon and part is an Iranian-Syrian proxy. However, there is no doubt that Hizbollah acts as a part of a broader effort that Iran is waging against Israel, which also includes the missile project and the nuclear project and, to a lesser degree, several Palestinian terror groups. On the other hand, Israel is not fighting back against Iran. Iran has managed to craft an asymmetrical conflict with

Israel: using its proxies it has created a de facto shared border with Israel (something it also learned from Israel, with regard to the Kurds in Iraq). However, Israel does not have a common border with Iran, and so Israel has to invest thought and resources in dealing with this lack of symmetry and strive to achieve strategic parity with Iran at the low-medium intensity conflict. On a wider perspective, Israel has to formulate a comprehensive, proactive strategy on Iran and not make do with passing the problem over to the Americans.

Maintaining the ability to handle the full spectrum of potential threats requires a force buildup and an operational concept based on the ability to engage in an all-out war in Syria, a war against Hizbollah, and a war on the Palestinian front, while maintaining strong strategic reserves in the case of escalation on another front. At the same time, this also requires deterring Iran and, if the deterrence fails, achieving a clear advantage in exchanging blows with Iran and creating a strategic balance with Iran in low-medium intensity conflicts. The timetable until the next war may be short and thus it is incumbent on Israel to act rapidly, diligently, and thoroughly while increasing the defense budget by billions of shekels.

The second Lebanon War did not add to Israeli-US relations, to say the least. First, despite the fact that the US had a clear interest in dam-

aging Islamic terror, Syria, and Iran, and despite the window of time and political umbrella the US offered, Israel did not deliver the goods, and its image as a regional military superpower was diminished. Second, it may very well be harder for the Americans to exert leverage against Iran after the precision firepower-based campaign the American proxy conducted proved inefficient against the entrenched and obstinate Iranian proxy. Thus, Israel’s standing in the US needs urgent repair work. The Americans don’t buy spins and in order to preserve strategic relations, Israel must tell the truth, submit a serious plan for restructuring, and work industriously to implement it.

To a large degree, the second Lebanon War was our Vietnam. Like the US in Vietnam, we tried to overcome guerillas with firepower but without massive maneuvering, force was put into use in rolling gradualism, the enemy leaned on a strategic rear in a neighboring country that was not attacked, and we did not engage in battle wholeheartedly and with a full commitment to victory. The bad news from the second Lebanon War is that we failed. The good news is that our regular and reserve forces are solid and committed; the problem is that they were assembled and deployed incorrectly. There is also good news in the fact that we received a wake-up call, and a second chance to learn and improve.