

NO HEROIC BATTLES: LESSONS OF THE
SECOND LEBANON WAR

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

by

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 10-12-2010		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) FEB 2010 – DEC 2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE No Heroic Battles: Lessons of the Second Lebanon War				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) LTC Brian J. Murphy				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT On July 12, 2006, Israel went to war with Hezbollah in response to the killing and capture of Israeli soldiers along the southern Lebanese border. Believed at the time by many in the West to be an overreaction to a relatively minor border incident resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths in Lebanon, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians on both sides of the border, and the deaths of dozens of Israeli soldiers and civilians. More important to Israeli nation security, the war exposed basic flaws in Israel's national security assumptions, and defense strategy. This study reveals that Israel went to war without having clearly defined its critical political, diplomatic, or military goals and objectives. In the years immediately prior to the beginning of the war the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) rejected the long proven principles of war in favor of a novel, incoherent, and confusing doctrine. The war revealed the debilitating impact of a long counterinsurgency campaign on training, and traditional combined arms capabilities. Finally, despite the superb performance of the Israeli Air Force (IAF), airpower and technology proved to be inconclusive and a poor substitute for well-trained resolute maneuver forces directly engaging enemy forces.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Second Lebanon War - 2006, Israel, Hezbollah, Lebanon, Middle-East, Strategy, Lessons Learned, Deterrence, Counterinsurgency, Combined Arms Battle					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	110	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

NO HEROIC BATTLES: LESSONS OF THE SECOND LEBANON WAR, by
Lieutenant Colonel Brian J. Murphy, 110 pages.

On July 12, 2006, Israel went to war with Hezbollah in response to the killing and capture of Israeli soldiers along the southern Lebanese border. Believed at the time by many in the West to be an overreaction to a relatively minor border incident resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths in Lebanon, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians on both sides of the border, and the deaths of dozens of Israeli soldiers and civilians. More important to Israeli nation security, the war exposed basic flaws in Israel's national security assumptions, and defense strategy.

This study reveals that Israel went to war without having clearly defined its critical political, diplomatic, or military goals and objectives. In the years immediately prior to the beginning of the war the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) rejected the long proven principles of war in favor of a novel, incoherent, and confusing doctrine. The war revealed the debilitating impact of a long counterinsurgency campaign on training, and traditional combined arms capabilities. Finally, despite the superb performance of the Israeli Air Force (IAF), airpower and technology proved to be inconclusive and a poor substitute for well-trained resolute maneuver forces directly engaging enemy forces.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my wife, Vita Marie, and my children, Mark and Brian, for their love, understanding, and support while completing my thesis. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Jerold Brown, LTC (ret.) Robert Salvatorelli, and Dr. Janet A. Carleton for their advice and counsel. Finally, I would like to thank the citizen Soldiers of the Arizona Army National Guard whose commitment to duty, loyalty, and selfless sacrifice in war and peace both humbles and inspires me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE THESIS APPROVAL PAGE	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
ACRONYMS.....	viii
TABLES	ix
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Early Morning Patrol: Background to the Conflict	1
Scope.....	3
Importance	4
Primary Question	5
Underlying Assumptions	5
Key Terms.....	6
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	8
Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War.....	9
The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives	15
We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War	20
The Rocket Campaign against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War	23
Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead.....	25
Summary	31
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	38
Introduction.....	38
Conceptual Design.....	38
How the Information Was Collected	39
Importance and Limitations	40
Summary	41
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	43
A National Hallmark of Improvisation: Security Strategy and the Israeli Decision-making Process	43

No Heroic Battles: The Second Lebanon War July 12 through August 14, 2006	48
Reflection and Recriminations: Did the Israelis achieve their wartime goals?	55
Winograd Commission Findings	56
Keeping the Wolves at Bay--the State of Israel's Deterrence after the War	59
Summary	64
CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	71
Did Israel Achieve Its Strategic Goals?	72
Destroy Hezbollah's Strategic Missile Force	73
Re-establish the Creditability of Israel's Deterrence	76
Forcing the Lebanese government to establish and maintain Sovereign	
Control over South Lebanon	78
Damage Hezbollah	79
Securing the Release of Their Soldiers	80
Future Preparedness	81
Lessons for the United States	88
Summary	91
Recommendations for Further Research	92
BIBLIOGRAPHY	94
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	101

ACRONYMS

C ³ I	Command, Control, Communication, Intelligence Collection and Dissemination
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COS	Chief of Staff
CSIS	Strategic and International Studies
EBO	Effects-Based Operations
IAF	Israeli Air Force
IDF	Israeli Defense Force
IEDs	Improvised Explosive Devices
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCW	Network-Centric Warfare
NSC	National Security Council
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
SOD	Systemic Operational Design
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
U.S.	United States

TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Rocket Impacts per Day.....	75

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis is the Israeli-Hezbollah War of July 13, 2006 through August 14, 2006. The purpose of this thesis is to: (1) identify Israeli's strategic goals for the war and whether or not these were achieved; (2) examine Israel's prosecution of the war against Hezbollah and whether or not the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) achieved the war's intended strategic ends; (3) identify what actions need to be taken for the Israeli's to be better prepared to defeat Hezbollah, and similar militias; and (4) identify lessons from Israel's experience in the Second Lebanon War which may assist the United States (U.S.) military in combating Islamic militia and terrorist organizations.

Early Morning Patrol: Background to the Conflict

Guarded by a combination of sophisticated electronic monitoring, fencing, and armed troops the border of Israel and Lebanon, commonly referred to as the Blue Line, is one of the most heavily guarded international boundaries in the world. The Blue Line runs from the Mediterranean Sea in the west, through mountainous county, to the disputed lands of the Golan Heights and Syria.

Sometime during the early morning hours of July 12, 2006, a band of guerilla fighters belonging to the Islamic Resistance (the military arm of Hezbollah) infiltrated across Israel's northwestern border. Their intended mission was to capture Israeli soldiers to negotiate their release for Hezbollah and Palestinian prisoners held by the Israelis. At 0900 hours local time, the guerillas ambushed a small IDF vehicle mounted patrol, killing three, and wounding two. Three other soldiers were captured by Hezbollah fighters and

then spirited off into Lebanon. Simultaneously, Hezbollah forces north of the border fired suppressive volleys of Katyusha rockets into northern Israel.¹ The IDF retaliated swiftly by sending ground units and strike aircraft against Hezbollah targets in the south of Lebanon. The Israeli Air Force (IAF) destroyed five bridges across both the Litani and A-Zaharni rivers to cut Hezbollah lines of communication and prevent the movement of IDF captives further into the interior of Lebanon.²

Thus began the Second Lebanon War³ between Israel and Hezbollah. In the end, several hundred Lebanese civilians were killed, thousands wounded, and an estimated one-half million people on both sides of the border were displaced. Hundreds of Hezbollah's best-trained and motivated fighters, and auxiliaries, were dead. Dozens of Israeli Soldiers and civilians were killed and thousands of Israeli civilians who chose to remain in their homes were bunkered down for weeks. The war inflamed passions in Europe, the U.S., and throughout the Arab world. Much of Europe decried Israeli retaliatory strikes as an over-reaction to a relatively minor border incident. The U.S., also actively fighting Islamic insurgents in both Iraq and Afghanistan, stood behind its ally (encouraging the Israelis to inflict as much damage on Hezbollah as possible) while at the same time pressing for a diplomatic solution through the United Nations (UN). Many of the neighboring Arab states, with the exception of Syria (a sponsor of Hezbollah), criticized Hezbollah's imprudent timing and for instigating an unnecessary war. This criticism was borne of fear of Iran's (Hezbollah principal sponsor) encouragement of Hezbollah conflict with Israel at a time when Iran was also facing a showdown with the UN over its nuclear program.

In 2000, the IDF withdrew from southern Lebanon ending an agonizing eighteen years of war and occupation. Since declaring its independence in 1948 and up until the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the Israelis principally fought defensive wars against numerically and militarily (at least on paper) superior Arab nations sworn to its destruction.

Through a combination of professionalism, training, tactical doctrine, tenacious courage and raw luck, the IDF handily vanquished the combined militaries of its enemies in four conventional wars. These were conventional wars in every sense, employing the latest in western and Warsaw Pact equipment, training, and doctrine. The IDF mastered modern industrial warfare--large mechanized armies and air forces employing maneuver and massed firepower. The combined Arab armies were forced to yield the field of battle both defeated and humiliated. By the late 1970s, Israel was the most powerful military force in the Middle East. In 1982, as a nearly unchallengeable and thorough practitioner of modern war, the IDF entered southern Lebanon to drive the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) out of its sanctuary. While successful in defeating the PLO militarily and driving its leadership into exile, the Israeli venture inflamed Lebanese Islamic nationalism and thus provided the fuel for the rise of Hezbollah--“the party of God.”

Scope

This thesis will not attempt to recount the complete voluminous history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, nor delve into a detailed review of the Israeli occupation of Lebanon from the early 1980s through the year 2000. Nor will this thesis attempt to look at the broader Middle East or Islamic world conflict. However, this thesis will examine Israel’s strategic goals and objectives for the war and whether or not the Israelis failed or

succeeded in achieving these. In addition, this thesis will examine the lessons of the war how Israel can prepare for a possible war against Hezbollah, Hamas, or some other external threat. Finally, this thesis will examine what, if any, lessons can be applied to the U.S. military and the fight against Islamic militia and terrorist organizations.

Importance

Though geographically positioned within the Middle East, Israel is culturally western. Israel is a constitutional parliamentary democracy; it is capitalist with a heavy dose of western European socialism and “nanny state” welfare programs. The IDF is also culturally western. It relies heavily upon technology, speed, and decisive action. Like other western societies, Israel holds in high regard the lives of its soldiers who are principally conscripts and reservists. Israel’s foes do not intend merely to defeat Israel militarily but to physically destroy it and remove it permanently from what they consider Islamic and Arab lands.

Although the U.S. does not face such potential destruction from its immediate neighbors, the threat of Islamic extremism to our national wellbeing nonetheless must be taken seriously. The U.S. has felt the bite of terrorism for failing to take the Islamic threat seriously. The consequences for failing to learn how to fight, and defeat this enemy may prove to be lethal for both the U.S. and for its allies. Israel’s success, or failure, in combating Hezbollah may be fortuitous of U.S. and fortunes of western civilization in the wider conflict against Islamic extremism.

Primary Question

The primary question to be answered by this thesis is what lessons can the U.S. learn from the Israeli experience in combating Hezbollah? This thesis will have to answer several contributing questions. First, what were Israel's strategic objectives and goals? Did the IDF achieve the war's intended strategic ends? What actions need to be taken for Israel to be better prepared to defeat Hezbollah, and similar militias in the future?

Underlying Assumptions

The Israeli-Hezbollah War of July through August of 2006 is analogous of the wider Middle East conflict and is therefore instructive for the U.S. and its allies in the fight against Islamic militia and terrorist organizations. The IDF is a western oriented and organized military force that has mastered the strategies and tactics of modern conventional war. However, the IDF has been less successful in combating an organized, well-trained and armed Islamic militia organization than it had in combating Arab conventional military force.

Similarly, the U.S. has been less than successful in combating Islamic guerillas and terrorist organizations in both Iraq and Afghanistan. U.S. forces dominated the conventional fight against Iraq's Republican Guard, Regular Army, and the Saddam fadayeens between March and April 2003; however, U.S. forces and the newly constituted Iraqi Army have had a difficult time suppressing and defeating sectarian militias, Islamic terrorist organizations, and former regime miscreants. Likewise, in Afghanistan where the national government is considered to be corrupt and incompetent- a rejuvenated, and relatively unmolested, Taliban operating from its Pakistani sanctuaries threatens the U.S. lead North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) mission.

Key Terms

It is important to clarify certain terms for this paper. This is not intended to be an all-encompassing list of key terms.

Asymmetric Warfare. “Asymmetric warfare is a term that describes a military situation in which two belligerents of unequal strength interact and take advantage of their respective strengths and weaknesses. This interaction often involves strategies and tactics outside the bounds of conventional warfare.”⁴

Hezbollah (Hizbullah). The Party of God. Hezbollah was formed in the mid 1980s for ending Israel’s occupation of Lebanon. Hezbollah consists of mainly Shiite Muslims and based predominantly in southern Lebanon. It consists of a political wing (which holds seats in the Lebanese parliament) and a militia wing (The Islamic Resistance--*Al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*). For the purpose of consistency all instances of the spelling of “Hizbullah” has been substituted for “Hezbollah” excepted when directed quoted.

Insurgency. “A protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order.”⁵

Militia Organization. “A private, non-government force, not necessarily directly supported or sanctioned by its government.”⁶

Terrorist Group. According to the U.S. Department of State terrorism is defined as “means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents; and the term ‘terrorist group’ means any group practicing, or which has significant subgroups which practice, international terrorism.”⁷

¹GlobalSecurity.org, “Operation Change of Direction,” <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/lebanon-change-of-direction-chron1.htm> (accessed November 4, 2006).

²Ibid.

³DefenseNews, “Israeli Government Chooses ‘The Second Lebanon War’,” <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?F=2647468&C=mideast> (accessed March 28, 2007).

⁴Wikipedia, s.v. “Asymmetric Warfare,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asymmetric_warfare (accessed November 11, 2006).

⁵David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 2005), 4.

⁶Wikipedia, s.v. “Militia,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Militia> (accessed November 11, 2006).

⁷U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Terrorism, “Legislative Requirements and Key Terms,” April 28, 2006, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2005/64331.htm> (accessed November 11, 2006).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Second Lebanon War was a wake-up call not only the Israeli military establishment and political elites but also for Israeli society, which took for granted Israel's military dominance of the region. Not since the Yom Kippur War in 1973 has the Israeli military and political establishment been required to re-examine fundamentally their preconceived notions of their military invulnerability born of a type of hubris, which often comes after stunningly spectacular battlefield victories.

In the wake of the Second Lebanon War, both the Israeli military and political establishments had to confront their basic assumptions concerning their strategic outlook within the region. First their doctrinal approach to war did not fit the type of counterinsurgency war which they had long trained, practiced, and equipped themselves to fight. Second, the training of both active duty conscripts and reserve forces that make up the majority of the IDF's available strength was far below Israel's historic standard of excellence. Finally, Israel's strategic perceptions, along with a paradigm shift in how the battlefield operational model used by Hezbollah had fundamentally changed the way Israel's enemies in the region would prosecute future battles and campaigns.

Since the conclusion of hostilities in August 2006, a substantial body of literature concerning the Second Lebanon War has been published which examine strategic, tactical, and the political perspectives of the war. There have been a number of major and minor works published on the Second Lebanon War by think tanks in the U.S. (RAND, Center for Strategic and International Studies, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy) and internationally (Began-Sadat center for Strategic Studies, The Jaffee Center

for Strategic Studies). There have also several official U.S. Army sources (Combat Studies Institute), and on-line sources as well (Council on Foreign Relations, Defense News, Jane's Defense Weekly). What is common amongst these works is the recognition that Israel fundamentally failed to achieve its stated goals and objectives in its war against Hezbollah. What are remarkable about the Israeli studies are the honesty, cutting self-criticism, and the willingness to accept a reordering of the Israeli military to better address the outcomes of the Second Lebanon War.

Most notable amongst the volumes published on the subject of the Second Lebanon War are the follow five publications:

1. *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War* by Anthony H. Cordesman, George Sullivan, and William D Sullivan.¹

2. *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives* by the Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University.²

3. *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War* by Matt M. Matthews.³

4. *The Rocket Campaign against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War* by Uzi Rubin.⁴

5. *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation CAST LEAD* edited by LTC Scott C. Farquhar.⁵

Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War

Anthony H. Cordesman is the Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Along with his co-authors George Sullivan and William D. Sullivan, in 2007 Cordesman wrote the first seriously thoughtful full-

length study of The Second Lebanon War. The work addressed the important tactical and strategic lessons learned along with certain long-range consequences of the conflict for both Israel and the U.S. Shortly after the beginning of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, Cordesman began writing critical observations of Israel's performance in pursuit of its stated strategic goals in its war against Hezbollah.

His first observations concerning the war are in "The Road to Nowhere: Everyone's Strategic Failures in Lebanon." In this work, Cordesman contextualized the conflict as part of the greater Israeli-Palestinian conflict and asserted that the war would amount to strategic defeat if Israeli did not disarm Hezbollah.⁶ Since withdrawing from southern Lebanon in 2000, Israel had been almost passively "watching" Hezbollah amass a sizable arsenal of long and medium range surface-to-surface rockets, surface to air, anti-ship missiles, and anti-armor missiles as well as the "capability to carry out much more lethal attacks deep into Israel across the security barriers in the North."⁷ Cordesman noted at the time that should Israel be drawn into southern Lebanon to attack Hezbollah forces that they would be walking into a "strategic trap" in which Hezbollah forces could disperse, regroup, and ambush IDF ground units, the Arab street would be enraged, and relations with European nations would be further strained.⁸ It is significant to note that Cordesman predicted a potential consequence of the war would be a strengthening of Iran's influence upon Hamas in Gaza and an increase in the strategic conflict with Israel.⁹

Within a few weeks of the beginning of the war Israel's strategic and tactical malaise was readily apparent. In "Israel's Uncertain Military Performance and Strategic Goals in Lebanon" Cordesman notes that Israel "seems to have escalated without a high probability it could do critical damage to Hezbollah or coerce the Lebanese government,

and the tactical execution of its air and land actions seems to be weak.”¹⁰ Cordesman seemed to be puzzled with the IAFs heavy use of limited stocks of “high cost precision weapons to destroy a few very low cost systems (Katyusha rockets) that are easily replaced.”¹¹ Israel’s ineffectual use of massive firepower, to include “precision artillery fire,” destroyed little of any tactical military importance and resulted in a flood of displaced Lebanese civilians.¹² Cordesman again warned against an Israeli attack into southern Lebanon by harking back to memories of the IDF’s last military adventure into the south. An attack into Lebanon to directly confront Hezbollah forces with its own ground forces would create “a new exposed ambush zone where the Hezbollah can selectively strike at times and in ways of its own choosing did not do well last time.”¹³

Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War is a comprehensive examination of Israel’s performance and vindicates Cordesman’s earlier predictions. The book addresses the following key critical areas: (1) what the war did and did not accomplish on behalf of Israel’s stated goals; (2) strategy and the conduct of the war; and (3) tactics and the impact of technology.

Wars--especially those of small scope, “tend to have far less limited results and far more uncertain consequences than the planners realize at the time they initiate and conduct such wars.”¹⁴ Neither Israel nor Hezbollah began the war with specific strategic goals in mind. The immediate goal of Hezbollah on July 12, 2006, was to ambush an IDF patrol, kidnap IDF personnel, hold them for the purpose of propaganda advantage, and ransom them for Hezbollah and Palestinian prisoners held by the Israelis. Israel’s immediate goal in the hours after the ambush was simply to recover their lost soldiers. However, as the cycle of violence grew over the days following the initial attack the

government of Prime Minister Olmert attempted to articulate some greater goals to justify the increasing crescendo of violence. According to Yehuda Ben Meir in “Israeli Government Policy and the War’s Objectives,” the government attempted to identify early on some type of justification for the path they were following. Through press releases, the government offered “three general and unfocused objectives for the war: 1) shattering Hizbollah; 2) restoring Israel’s deterrence; and 3) changing the reality in Lebanon.”¹⁵ On July 17, 2006, Prime Minister Olmert addressed the Israeli Knesset and offered the following goals:

1. Destroy the ‘Iranian Western Command’ before Iran could go nuclear.
2. Restore the credibility of Israeli deterrence after the unilateral withdrawals from Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005, and counter the image that Israel was weak and forced to leave.
3. Force Lebanon to become and act as an accountable state, and end the status of Hezbollah as a state within a state.
4. Damage or cripple Hezbollah, with the understanding that it could not be destroyed as a military force and would continue to be a major political actor in Lebanon.
5. Bring the two soldiers whom the Hezbollah had captured back alive without major trades in prisoners held by Israel--not the thousands demanded by Nasrallah and the Hezbollah.¹⁶

According to the authors, Israel failed to succeed in all but one (deterrence) of its stated goals for the war. First, Israeli military action did not destroy Hezbollah nor significantly weakened either politically or militarily.¹⁷ Second, Israel did manage to enhance its deterrence standing by demonstrating that it could inflict massive damage on

its enemies.¹⁸ Third, Israel was not successful in either forcing the Lebanese government to assert its sovereignty in Hezbollah controlled areas or in diminishing its status as a “state within a state.”¹⁹ Fourth, Israel failed to create conditions that would prevent Hezbollah from reconstituting its military strength or from obtaining weapons that are more dangerous in the future.²⁰ Finally, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701 (which called for the cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah) “did not give the return of Israeli prisoners a special priority”²¹

In the summer of 2006, Israel was not prepared to face certain strategic dilemmas necessary for battlefield success. The long-term negative impact of the war on Israel’s strategic deterrence as viewed by both its traditional nation state enemies and non-state actors such as Hezbollah and Hamas:²²

1. Hezbollah’s use of civilians on the battlefield as “both defensive and offensive weapons.”²³

2. Heightened international sensibilities to Israel’s use of force as being disproportional--especially those related to the ensuing humanitarian crisis--in response to Hezbollah’s relatively low-tech rocket salvos into northern Israeli communities.²⁴

3. Pursuit of a coherent strategy within the planned limits of the war.²⁵

4. Reconciling the use of military means to achieve a desired political end state.²⁶

5. Having alternate plans available when it became evident, the pursued courses of action will not meet the desired end state.²⁷

6. How to successfully terminate the conflict--or at least minimize the impact of a poor showing.²⁸

Cordesman and his co-authors conduct an extensive examination of the tactical approach to the war by both Hezbollah and the IDF. Among their findings are:

Hezbollah's military forces are organized in a manner complimentary with the organizations strategic vision. Hezbollah forces are comprised of a relatively small corps of elite specially trained fighters and a large reserve of village fighters--many veterans of past conflicts with Israel--all operating in "small, self sufficient teams capable of operating independently and without direction from high authority for long periods of time."²⁹ This type of force is relatively impervious to conventional attacks on its command, control, communication, intelligence collection and dissemination (C³I) infrastructure.

Israel fought the war predicatively, ineffectually, and under conditions largely predetermined by Hezbollah. Hezbollah was well versed in Israeli tactics and had spent the previous six years "preparing and shaping the landscape of Southern Lebanon for possible conflict."³⁰ Cordesman cautions against "fighting on the enemy's terms" yet Israel's risk and causality adverse approach lead to a war of attrition, which may have contributed to greater Israeli military and civilian casualties.³¹

Years of fighting in the territories to quiet the intifada had contributed to a "COIN (counterinsurgency) state of mind."³² The mistaken belief that Israel's military domination of the region meant it no longer had to contend with attacks by its neighbors led directly to slashing of training budgets and new equipment purchases for the ground forces, and led to a defense strategy, which emphasized air power and technological solutions to Israel's security needs. As a result, when war came in July 2006 Israel was largely unprepared for the challenge posed by Hezbollah.³³

Hezbollah exploited its asymmetric advantage by employing tactics and largely low technology weapons systems, which Israeli--in spite of its technological advantages--was unable to counter.³⁴

Anthony H. Cordesman, George Sullivan, and William D. Sullivan conclude, in part, “that asymmetric wars generally involve far more than asymmetric methods of fighting: they often involve asymmetric ideologies and values.”³⁵ In the end the enemy’s ideology, not necessary their military capabilities must be defeated. Periodic cycles of inconclusive fighting which foment resentment and hatred will play to the advantage of the militias and religious extremists.

The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives

First published in Hebrew in 2007 by the Tel Aviv University’s Institute for National Security Studies, *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives* examines the war on two “dimensions.” The first dimension of the study being the political and military objectives; the Israeli decision-making process; deterrence; the military campaign; etc. The second dimension looks at the regional impact of the war and examines Hezbollah as the implicit strategic victor; implications for Lebanon; the growth of Iranian power and the impact of the war for Arab regional security.

In the chapter titled “Political and Military Objectives in a Limited War against a Guerilla Organization,” Shlomo Brom examines the war and its results from the perspective of “a limited war of a state against a non-state actor operating from the territory of a failed state that does not control its own territory. The non-state player (*Hezbollah*) fought as a guerilla force, though in some areas it possessed the state like capabilities, acquired from supporting states.”³⁶ He notes that Hezbollah fought as a

classic guerilla organization--an armed force dispersed amongst the population, outgunned by a technologically superior force, yet possessing the ability to watch and wait for the opportunity to strike at the time and place of its own choosing. For Hezbollah, the goal was not to defeat Israel militarily--something it could never do on its own--but to wear down Israel's willingness to fight by means of a long war of attrition.³⁷

Defeating a guerilla organization, or insurgent movement, such as Hezbollah requires time, the ability to control both the population and territory, and the willingness to endure casualties--all things that the Israeli political and military establishments were unwilling to pursue in the summer of 2006. Israel's goals of both destroying Hezbollah's "military capabilities and disarming it" were "unrealistic."³⁸ Instead, containment of Hezbollah should have been Israel's primary goal in July and August 2006 because "containing a guerilla organization generates a situation in which the organization may gradually understand that it is unable to achieve its objectives through military means, as its rivals can accommodate and adjust to them."³⁹

Brom believes the Israeli government set unachievable goals and had unrealistic expectations of the IDF's ability to accomplish what it said it could through military means. As the war dragged on for weeks without perceptible gains, it became clear that Israel would have to adopt "more modest yet attainable goals."⁴⁰ Israel's initial strategy of a short campaign using air power against Hezbollah's long-range rockets and its command infrastructure, along with punishing blows to Lebanese targets may well have worked provided such tactics "spurred" the international community into action to disarm Hezbollah, or neutralize its ability to launch missiles into northern Israel.⁴¹ Brom believes that when it became apparent that international action would not be forthcoming in

applying pressure on Lebanon to effect military action of its own against Hezbollah, it was only logical to assume the IDF would be required to move militarily into southern Lebanon.⁴²

Brom concludes that it does not matter that the Prime Minister Olmert or the IDF COS General Halutz, believed in the end that they could have defeated Hezbollah. What matters is the “discrepancy that emerged between the expectations and the reality became a major influence on the development of the campaign. It generated public and media pressure on the decision makers, who in turn were pushed toward problematic decisions during the course of the war, particularly with regard to all aspects of the ground operations.”⁴³

In the chapter titled “The Decision Making Process in Israel,” Giora Eiland finds that decisions which lead Israel to pursue a military solution to the attack of July 12, 2006 can be directly attributed to the disjointed nature of the Israeli decision making process.⁴⁴

There are two major contributing factors to Israel’s poor decision-making process. The first is the Israeli parliamentary system, which forms government coalitions from the temporary allegiance of minority parties. The Prime Minister spends much of the time maintaining the coalition, and managing his ministers, who are often political rivals within his own party or leaders of minority parties vying for government leadership.⁴⁵ The second factor leading to poor decision making is that the Prime Minister lacks a professional staff able to advise him during periods of crisis.⁴⁶

Like Eiland, Charles D. Freilich in “National Security Decision-Making in Israel: Processes, Pathologies, and Strengths” examines what he describes as the “pathologies” of Israel’s national security decision making.⁴⁷ These pathologies are “the extreme

politicization of the decision-making process stemming from the proportional representation electoral system, the consequent need to govern through coalition cabinets, and the absence of effective cabinet-level decision making support capabilities.”⁴⁸

Because of this politicization of the decision-making process, the Prime Minister is required to rely upon a small personal staff of trusted aides and advisors. The only organization within the Israeli governmental hierarchy with requisite professional staff able to advise the Prime Minister on the full spectrum of diplomatic, strategic information, military, and economic affairs is the IDF.⁴⁹

Eiland believes that had there been a staff independent of the IDF available on July 12, 2006, to advise the Prime Minister and the Cabinet they could have presented other than military options such as:

An air force retaliatory action aimed at choice Hezbollah targets (long range missiles whose locations were well known) and Lebanese infrastructure. . . . A limited war with numerous objectives, including dealing a severe blow to Hezbollah’s military capability, particularly its rocket launching capability. . . . A strategic decision on limited war, but postponement of action until a later opportunity, thus allowing the army several months to prepare.⁵⁰

Eiland recognizes that the IDF staff is subject to bending to the assumptions and prejudices of the COS. In “The IDF: Addressing the Failures of the Second Lebanon War” he states that “it is possible that some of the reasons for the army’s mediocre performance related to outmoded decisions or institutions and the habits deeply rooted in basic assumptions that seemingly required no reexamination.”⁵¹ Eiland argues that a significant fault of the IDF staff process at the senior level is that officers on the General Staff “also serve as staff officers (at division and corps levels) and as operational commanders.”⁵² The net effect is that the General Staff issues orders to “itself,” therefore there is a missing internal review to question assumptions and known facts. During the

Second Lebanon War this staff system, lead to a type of group-think and “exaggerated adherence of senior officers to the chief of staff’s decisions. There is no question that the final word rests with the chief of staff. . . . However, it is the senior officer’s job to argue with the chief of staff when they feel he is wrong, and this should be done assertively on the basis of professional truth as they see it.”⁵³

In the chapter titled “Deterrence and its Limitations,” Yair Evron defines deterrence as a twofold concept. First, deterrence is “an obstructing measure to deny the challenger its goals, i.e., defeating its armed challenge (deterrence by denial); second, a punitive measure, i.e., punishing its assets, including civilian targets, beyond the battlefield (deterrence by punishment) . . . the success of deterrence is contingent on an intermixture of political, strategic, and psychological factors. The greater the relative denial/punitive capability of the deterrer (sic), i.e., military advantage, the more effective are the deterrent threats.”⁵⁴

Evron argues that between the time Israel withdrew its forces from Southern Lebanon in May 2000 and July 2006 an almost customary balance of deterrence existed between Israel and Hezbollah along the border. Neither side wishing to over antagonize the other would nonetheless engage in “regular ritual” attacks with each responding to the others provocation in limited fashion. Attacks by Hezbollah on Israel generally targeted the IDF and avoided civilian targets. “While inconvenient for Israel, they did not disrupt civilian life in the north of the country.”⁵⁵ The practice of limited attack and limited response established the understood “rules of the game” and set the standard for “a mutual mini-deterrence balance.”⁵⁶ It therefore came as somewhat of a surprise for Hezbollah on July 12, 2006, when the IDF responded so massively to a limited ambush

and kidnapping raid against an IDF target which they believed to be within the limits of the “understood” rules.⁵⁷

Evron believes that the war--while not an Israeli victory--did manage to reinstate the deterrence balance. The Israeli Air Force’s swift and decisive air campaign inflicted massive damage against Hezbollah’s long-range strategic missile arsenal thereby eliminating it--at least temporarily--as a threat to Israel’s larger population centers. The war also severely damaged much of Lebanon’s critical infrastructure, caused a humanitarian crisis, and damaged Hezbollah’s public standing in Lebanon. Since 2006 Hezbollah has been “cautious” and “has directed much of its activity to the domestic-political scene inside Lebanon.”⁵⁸

Evron concludes that despite the IDF’s overall poor performance, traditional enemies such as Syria were careful to avoid any pretext for inciting an Israeli attack. He argues that the performance of the IDF against a guerilla organization like Hezbollah is much different than it would be in a war of maneuver against a traditional state and its conventional military and neither Israel nor Syria were interested in broadening the conflict.⁵⁹ Further, Israeli relations with its Arab neighbors Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan have been generally stable since the 1970s. Recognition of Israel’s qualitative military advantage and converging interests in containing Iran will contribute to an enhanced political approach to solving disputes “and less based on the mode of deterrence.”⁶⁰

We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War

Matt M. Matthews’ paper “We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War” is a detailed study of the tactical conduct of the war from the perspective of

the IDF. The work places the events of July through August 2006 from the time of Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon, how each side then prepared for war, and the eventual results.

Matthews begins by briefly examining Hezbollah's rise as a political and military movement in the aftermath of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon to drive out the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) out of that country. As Hezbollah matured and learned from relentless attacks on the IDF they developed "13 principles of war, specifically designed to defeat a relatively fixed, technologically advanced enemy."⁶¹ Among these principles are: "Avoid the strong, attack the weak--attack and withdrawal; strike only when success is assured; don't get into a set-piece battle--slip away like smoke, before the enemy can drive home his advantage; and, keep moving--avoid formation of a front line."⁶²

In the years leading up to the Second Lebanon War Hezbollah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah viewed Israel as a comfortable "post-military society" which no longer had the stomach for war. "Hezbollah was convinced that, in any future war, Israel would rely heavily on air and artillery weapons and limit its use of ground forces."⁶³ Therefore, it "was imperative that Hezbollah's combat operations penetrate well inside Israel's border and not yield to the IDF's massive precision firepower. To accomplish this task Hezbollah formed several rocket units between 2000 and 2006."⁶⁴ Hezbollah also built a complex and interconnected system of bunkers, tunnels, hidden underground ammunition and weapon caches, and hardened missile launch points all without being detected by Israeli intelligence.⁶⁵ Hezbollah also formed units of elite cadre specially trained in Iran and raised a part-time militia consisting of local villagers and farmers--many of whom

were veterans from the eighteen-year war against Israel's occupation of the south.⁶⁶

These forces were well acquainted with the terrain on which they would fight, they were well prepared tactically, and they could operate independently and without orders from a central command authority.

The IDF on the other hand had spent most of its energies over the previous six years fighting a counterinsurgency in the territories. As a result, much of the IDF was unprepared, poorly trained, and ill equipped for what lay in store for them in Lebanon.⁶⁷

Shifts in Israeli strategic thinking led it to embrace a new doctrinal approach, which took advantages of its technological edge in an effort to reduce future battlefield casualties. "[In] the years following its withdrawal from southern Lebanon, the IDF began to embrace the theories of precision firepower, Effects-Based Operations (EBO), and Systemic Operational Design (SOD). EBO emerged out of Network-Centric Warfare (NCW). . . . EBO is designed to affect "the cognitive domain" (i.e., psychological perspectives leading an enemy to conclude that they have been defeated) of the enemy systems, rather than annihilate his forces."⁶⁸ EBO was adopted as IDF doctrine "(replacing) the 'old' structure of Mission, Commander's Intent, Forces and Tasks . . . with a whole new world of Political Directive, Strategic Purpose, System Boundaries, operational Boundaries, Campaign's Organizing Theme, Opposite System Rationale."⁶⁹ So convoluted are the precepts of EBO, it can be argued that those who planned, organized, and directed the campaign against Hezbollah in accordance with the new doctrine did not understand EBO principles themselves. Nor could they articulate the new doctrine into coherent guidance to subordinate commanders on the ground.

Matthews concludes that Israel's embrace of EBO contributed greatly to its failures during the Second Lebanon War. He writes the "the IDF attempted to orchestrate the strategic cognitive collapse of Hezbollah through the use of air power and precision firepower-based operations. When this failed, the IDF sought to produce the same effects by using its ground forces to conduct limited raids and probes into southern Lebanon. The presence of several IDF mechanized divisions north of the Litani in the first 72 hours of the war, combined with a violent, systemic clearing of Hezbollah's bunkers and tunnels, might have brought about the cognitive collapse (COS) Halutz so desperately sought."⁷⁰

Matthews also warns of the degenerative effect of prolonged counterinsurgency operations have on conventional war fighting abilities. "For the US Army, which has been almost exclusively involved in irregular warfare for years, this issue is of paramount importance. While the US Army must be proficient in conducting major combat operations around the world, it is possible that years of irregular operations must have chipped away at this capability, not unlike this situation encountered by the IDF."⁷¹

The Rocket Campaign against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War

In *The Rocket Campaign against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War*, Uzi Rubin of The Begin-Sadat center for Strategic Studies examines the Hezbollah rocket campaign against Israel, the effectiveness of the Hezbollah's rockets on Israel, and Israeli counter-rocket efforts. According to Rubin, the IAF destroyed the majority of Hezbollah's strategic rocket force within the first few days of the Second Lebanon War. However, the IAF achieved only minor effect in countering Hezbollah's short-range tactical Katyusha rockets. The IAF's seeming inability to counter the Katyusha, along with Hezbollah's

near limitless supply, had the effect of turning a low-tech antique weapon into a strategic asset, which forced the Israelis to launch an ill-conceived ground war to stop the rocket attacks on populated areas of northern Israel.

According to Rubin, Hezbollah considered its use of rockets against Israeli population centers during the occupation of southern Lebanon between 1982 and 2000 as having been critical in eventually driving Israel out of southern Lebanon.⁷² Between 1996 and 2006, Hezbollah amassed an “infrastructure of rocket power, unprecedented in its size and lethality. . . . In his May 2005 “Resistance and Liberation Day” speech, Sheikh Nasrallah, the (Hezbollah’s) charismatic leader, bragged about possessing ‘more than 12,000’ rockets and extolled their potential to deter Israeli attacks on Lebanon.”⁷³

The purpose of Hezbollah’s rocket campaign in 2006 was “to make life insufferable for the people of northern Israel. The goal of Israel’s counteractions was to stop the attacks or at least mitigate their impact. Like all terrorist onslaughts, the rocket attacks of summer 2006 had multiple objectives—among them, political, economic and psychological--beyond its pure military aim.”⁷⁴

Hezbollah’s thirty-three day rocket campaign against northern Israel resulted in 53 Israeli deaths, over 2,000 structures of various types damaged or destroyed, and a near complete cessation of economic activity in the north. Between 100,000 and 250,000 residents sought shelter in the south.⁷⁵

Rubin’s evaluation of Hezbollah’s rocket campaign is that it was “a textbook example of an asymmetric confrontation between the heavily equipped modern army of an industrial state on one side and a lightly equipped but well entrenched and dedicated militia on the other side.”⁷⁶ Hezbollah’s strategy provoked Israel into launching an ill-

prepared ground offensive into territory dominated by a well-armed and trained guerilla militia with the intent “to kill Israeli troops, not to defend real estate.”⁷⁷

Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead

“Back to Basics” is the first comprehensive study of The Second Lebanon War that compares Israel’s performance in the Second Lebanon War and Operation CAST LEAD. This work published by the Combat Studies Institute Press and edited by LTC Scott C. Farquhar examines the military performance of the IDF against Hezbollah in 2006, compares, and contrasts it to its operational performance in the winter of 2008/2009. The study covers: lessons learned from 2006; a comparison of the tactics employed by Hamas and Hezbollah against the IDF; the tactics employed by the IDF during CAST LEAD; and strategies to combat the hybrid threat of sub-national organizations.

In the chapter titled “Hard Lessons Learned,” Matthews describes the IDF of Operation Cast Lead as having “undergone a major cultural change in terms of decisiveness, aggressiveness, commitment to the mission and willingness to accept casualties” in comparison of the same organization of only two and a half years previous.⁷⁸ The IDF had devoted the interwar period carefully training its soldiers and commanders, providing them with proper equipment, and developing a clear doctrinal approach, which reaffirmed the long held principles of war.

In the summer of 2006, Israel faced a tough, determined, well-trained and equipped guerilla force operating with many of the trappings of a legitimate national military. Hezbollah Secretary Nasrallah railed against Israeli society as being “as weak as

a spider web.”⁷⁹ Matthews touches upon many of the points made earlier in “We Were Caught Unprepared” to include: (1) Hezbollah’s need to strike deep inside Israel to counter its massive firepower advantage; (2) Hezbollah’s short range rocket forces were dispersed south of the Litani River; (3) a massive array of bunkers, tunnels, and hardened rocket launch sites protected Hezbollah forces from Israeli observation and direct fire attack; much of the bunker and tunnel work was built under the supervision of both North Korean and Iranian advisors; (4) Hezbollah had established a network of fortified hilltop towns along likely IDF ground avenues of approach; and (5) to minimize the effects of Israel’s precision strike capability against Hezbollah’s “centers of gravity” they “simply did away with them” by decentralizing tactical authority to local commanders and creating autonomous anti-armor and rocket teams.⁸⁰

Israel on the other hand had been preparing for a different type of war than the one Hezbollah had been planning. Since 2000, successive Israeli governments had reduced defense spending to concentrate more on domestic needs. The Israeli government made the deliberate decision to cut back on unit readiness in favor of maintaining funding for ongoing operations in the territories. In addition, Giora Eiland observes, with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 “no war was expected to erupt between Israel and its neighbors in the future.”⁸¹

Besides, the IDF hierarchy believed that future wars would be fought predominately by its Air Force with long-range standoff weapons. Preferring a technological approach to warfare over one that endangered the lives of its troops the IDF embraced EBO as its principle war fighting doctrine.⁸² When tested in combat for the first time EBO proved to be disastrous. EBO had completely muddled the long held

principles of war, it was as unintelligible for those who gave orders as it was for those who received them, and caused confusion and delay at the maneuver level of command.⁸³

Matthews noted other problem areas for the IDF, which only became apparent after the war. Included amongst these are an over emphasis on COIN operations in the territories, negligent and poor quality training for all levels from the individual soldier to the division level. Equipment set aside in depots in the advent of a reserve call up had been stripped from depots over the previous years to meet current operational requirements. Furthermore, an over reliance in the faith of its technological abilities to provide solutions to overcome strategic and tactical difficulties became problematic.⁸⁴

In the chapter “ Hamas and Hezbollah: A Comparison of Tactics,” Penny L. Mellies gives a detailed account of the political and military structure of both organizations. Hamas and Hezbollah each have as their ultimate objective the destruction of Israel; both are sub-state actors in failed states--or in the case of Hamas, a failed region of the Palestinian territories.

However, Hamas is really a second team player in the world of militias especially when compared to Hezbollah. Prior to Cast Lead it is reported that Hamas managed to stockpile large quantities of weapons to include “small arms, and sniper rifles, grenades, ATGMs, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), IEDs, large amounts of explosives, various mortar and rockets.”⁸⁵ Hamas did not have the training or the cadre of dedicated militia members willing to fight the IDF in a decisive battle.

Hezbollah on the other hand maintains a dedicated cadre of guerilla fighters prepared to battle the IDF under conditions of its own choosing. Hezbollah forces proved effective against the IDF on a number of fronts. “Hezbollah fought in small, dispersed

and shielded units.”⁸⁶ Decentralized command and control prevented the IAF from inflicting a “decapitating” blow early in the war.⁸⁷ Bunkers, tunnels, and prepared hide positions frustrated Israeli attempts at detection and destruction by air power.⁸⁸ Hezbollah effectively used civilians on the battlefield by interspersing their forces amongst the population, knowing that Israel was hesitant to cause Lebanese civilian casualties.⁸⁹ Hezbollah rocket attacks against northern Israel were never interrupted in spite of attempts at air interdiction and a ground incursion.⁹⁰ In addition, Hezbollah controlled the information battle by carefully manipulating the flow of news to the international press, broadcasting from the organization’s own television and radio stations, and through the internet. Hezbollah exploited every Lebanese civilian injury and death in front of the camera to portray Israel as the aggressor.⁹¹

In conclusion, Mellies notes that Hezbollah did not attempt to take advantage of the fighting in Gaza “most likely because Hezbollah realized Hamas might not win and it did not want its hard-won 2006 victory tarnished.”⁹²

In *The Tactics of Operation CAST LEAD*, LTC Abe F. Marrero gives a short but detailed account of the tactical lessons learned from the Second Lebanon War and their application in Gaza. He recognizes that it is easy to draw the wrong conclusions when comparing the results of the Second Lebanon War and Cast Lead because “Hamas is not Hezbollah and the terrain in Gaza (dense urban coastal desert) is quite different than the terrain in south Lebanon (hills, ridges, valleys, and wadis). The common denominator then is the IDF and more specifically its performance in Operation Cast Lead relative to its performance in the Second Lebanon War.”⁹³

Marrero believes that there are three generally agreed upon tenets, or lessons, drawn from Israel's performance at the "operational level" in 2006. They are:

1. Airpower alone is not decisive.
2. Precision fires without dominant maneuver are indecisive.
3. Decisive operations are enhanced when precision airpower is coupled with combined arms ground maneuver.⁹⁴

The above lessons are a result of the IDF's reliance upon EBO as a technological solution to its major security dilemmas. EBO attempts to dominate enemy forces by applying precision fires--generally through standoff airpower applications--to effect enemy decision making, alter their perceptions of the battlefield environment, and destroy enemy moral by creating a state of hopelessness in the mind of the enemy. Despite early success by the IAF in destroying much of Hezbollah's long and medium range rockets, the Israelis were unable to quell the fusillade of Katyusha and Qassam rockets through means of its dominate airpower. "Clearly, the notion that airpower (using precision-guided munitions) alone could achieve national Israeli strategic objectives was misplaced."⁹⁵

In addition, years of counterinsurgency operations had critically affected the IDF's abilities to conduct combined arms operations. Marrero describes this as a "COIN state of mind" in which military operations were performed at the platoon level and below and were focused on security patrolling.⁹⁶ Budget restrictions hindered training from the company through brigade level. By July 2006, the IDF consisted of a generation of soldiers and officers whose collective tactical understanding was dominated by COIN group think and had little practical understanding and application of combined arms

operations.⁹⁷ This practical ignorance of combined arms experience would prove critical when the IDF attempted a ground invasion of southern Lebanon.

Even as the war in Lebanon was unfolding, many observers both inside of Israel and out recognized the shortcomings in performance of the IDF. A positive outcome of the war, however, is the Israeli ability to be self-critical and a willingness to change course in the face of compelling evidence that it was on the wrong security path. The government paneled a commission (the Winograd Commission) which examined all aspects of the Israeli government and the IDF. Among the commission's findings was the recognition of the need to purchase new equipment for both the regular and reserve forces. More time and effort had to focus on all levels of training from individual soldier skills up to division and higher echelon staff training. In addition, IDF doctrine needed to return to more traditional understanding of the principles of war; i.e., mission and objective, initiative, unity of effort, simplicity vs. EBO, and inane concepts such as "cognitive perception of defeat."⁹⁸

Marrero concludes that Israel had implemented the major lessons learned from the Second Lebanon War by the time it initiated Operation Cast Lead in the winter of 2008 and 2009. One of the key lessons of the Lebanon war, applied in Gaza, was the necessity to integrate airpower and precision firepower with a robust ground combat plan.⁹⁹ Unit commanders leading their troops from the front versus from remote command posts simplified command and control. When the IDF crossed into Gaza, they "went in heavy using fires to suppress and neutralize the enemy."¹⁰⁰

Summary

Based upon the literature review, there exists sufficient information to pursue this thesis. This thesis will (1) identify Israeli's strategic goals for the war and whether or not they were achieved, (2) examine Israel's prosecution the war against Hezbollah and whether or not the IDF achieved the war's intended strategic ends, (3) identify what actions need to be taken for the Israelis to better prepare to defeat Hezbollah, and similar militias organizations and (4) identify the lessons from Israel's experience in The Second Lebanon War that may assist the U.S. military in combating Islamic militia and terrorist organizations.

From the review of the literature, several common themes have been identified, which support the thesis. It is clear that the IDF is a first rate military organization with the ability to dominate the conventional operational environment when pitted against any regional near peer military. It is also evident that Hezbollah is more than just an ordinary militia movement operating on the fringes of a failed state. This review identified the following common threads:

1. The Israeli Government allowed itself to be embroiled in a war without first setting clear and obtainable goals and the measures of determining how to achieve the desired end state. This lack of direction created a strategic dilemma for Israel, advanced the cause of Hezbollah, and enhanced the influence of Iran in the region.

2. The IDF's embrace of novel doctrinal concepts led to confusion, and indecision, which ultimately resulted in a war of attrition. Untested doctrine attempted to replace the long held and understood Principles of War. Novel concepts such as "cognitive

perception of defeat of the enemy” could not translate into a decisive actionable plan understood by commanders or their soldiers.

3. A long operational period devoted to counterinsurgency (COIN) patrolling in the territories left the IDF ill prepared for combined arms combat. Between 2000 and 2006, the IDF focused on the battle it was in and lost sight of the need to maintain conventional war fighting capabilities against potential and emerging threats.

4. The IDF's airpower and long-range precision fire was not an effective substitute for ground maneuver against Hezbollah. Strategic and tactical planning must integrate the complementary effect of airpower, precision-fires, and ground maneuver capabilities.

5. Advanced technology as an end unto itself to solve strategic and tactical dilemmas is indecisive. Hezbollah proved that a disciplined and less technologically sophisticated enemy could effectively leverage its asymmetric advantage.

6. Hezbollah is a sophisticated political movement with a combat hardened militia. Hezbollah dominated the information battle and was able exploit international media sources to condemn Israel's military campaign.

7. Civilians on the battlefield were effectively used by Hezbollah as both an offensive and defensive tool. The militia used dwellings and public buildings to store its weapons, shelter its forces, and to mask its operations. The suffering of Lebanese civilians caught between the combatants proved to be an effective propaganda weapon to inflame rage in the Arab world and isolate Israel from its traditional western base of support.

¹Anthony H. Cordesman, George Sullivan, and William D. Sullivan, *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War* (Washington, DC: The CSIS Press, 2006).

²Shlomo Brom and Meir Elran, eds., *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives* (Tel Aviv, Israel: The Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2007), [http://www.inss.org.il/upload/\(FILE\)11967736.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)11967736.pdf) (accessed January 5, 2008).

³Matt M. Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War* (Ft Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Combat Studies Institute, 2008), <http://www.cgsc.army.mil/carl/download/csipubs/matthewsOP26.pdf> (accessed March 13, 2008).

⁴Uzi Rubin, *The Rocket Campaign against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War* (Israel: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, 2007), <http://www.biu.ac.il/soc/besa/MSPS71.pdf> (accessed June 19, 2007).

⁵Scott C. Farquhar, ed., *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation CAST LEAD* (Ft Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Combat Studies Institute, 2009), <http://www.cgsc.army.mil/carl/download/csipubs/farquhar.pdf> (accessed May 20, 2009).

⁶Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Road to Nowhere: Everyone's Strategic Failures in Lebanon* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006), http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/060721_nowhere.pdf (accessed November 3, 2006), 2.

⁷*Ibid.*, 3.

⁸*Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁹*Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰Anthony H. Cordesman, *Israel's Uncertain Military Performance and Strategic Goals in Lebanon* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006), http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/060725_israel_performance.pdf (accessed November 3, 2006), 2.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*, 3.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Cordesman, Sullivan, and Sullivan, 4.

¹⁵Yehuda Ben Meir, "Israeli Government Policy and the War's Objectives," *Strategic Assessment* 9, no. 2 (August 2006), <http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/sa/v9n2p2BenMeir.html> (accessed April 20, 2007).

¹⁶Cordesman, Sullivan, and Sullivan; Meir, 6.

¹⁷Ibid., 9.

¹⁸Ibid., 19.

¹⁹Ibid., 22.

²⁰Ibid., 29.

²¹Ibid., 31.

²²Ibid., 38-41.

²³Ibid., 41-50.

²⁴Ibid., 50 -51.

²⁵Ibid., 51-55.

²⁶Ibid., 55-57.

²⁷Ibid., 57-59.

²⁸Ibid., 59-60.

²⁹Ibid., 80.

³⁰Ibid., 85.

³¹Ibid.

³²Abe F. Marrero, "The Tactics of Operation CAST LEAD," in *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon war and Operation CAST LEAD*, ed. Scott C. Farquhar (Ft Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2009), <http://www.cgsc.army.mil/carl/download/csipubs/farquhar.pdf> (accessed June 18, 2009), 85.

³³Cordesman, Sullivan, and Sullivan, 91-99.

³⁴Ibid., 99-119.

³⁵Ibid., 154.

³⁶Shlomo Brom, "Political and Military Objectives in a Limited War against a Guerrilla Organization," in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, eds., Shlomo Brom and Meir Elran (Tel Aviv, Israel: The Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2007), [http://www.inss.org.il/upload/\(FILE\)11967736.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)11967736.pdf) (accessed June 28, 2009), 13-14.

³⁷Ibid., 14-15.

³⁸Ibid., 17.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., 20.

⁴¹Ibid., 21.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., 23.

⁴⁴Ibid., 25.

⁴⁵Ibid., 25-26.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Charles D. Freilich, "National Security-Making in Israel: Processes, Pathologies, and Strengths," *Middle East Journal* 60, no 4 (Autumn 2006): 636, http://bcsia.ksg.harvard.edu/BCSIA_content/documents/Freilich_MEJ_Autumn_2006.pdf (accessed June 30, 2007).

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Brome and Elran, 29.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Giora Eiland, *The IDF: Addressing the Failures of the Second Lebanon War, The Middle East Strategic Balance 2007–2008* (Annual Report), (Tel Aviv, Israel: The Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2008), [http://www.inss.org.il/upload/\(FILE\)1213863714.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1213863714.pdf) (accessed January 17, 2009).

⁵²Ibid., 36.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Yair Evron, "Deterrence and its Limitations," in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, eds., Shlomo Brom and Meir Elran (Tel Aviv, Israel: The Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2007), [http://www.inss.org.il/upload/\(FILE\)11967736.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)11967736.pdf) (accessed June 28, 2009), 35.

⁵⁵Ibid., 38.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., 39.

⁵⁸Ibid., 41.

⁵⁹Ibid., 43.

⁶⁰Ibid., 46.

⁶¹Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 7.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid., 16-17.

⁶⁴Ibid., 17.

⁶⁵Ibid., 19.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid., 22.

⁶⁸Ibid., 23.

⁶⁹Ibid., 26.

⁷⁰Ibid., 61.

⁷¹Ibid., 65.

⁷²Rubin. 2.

⁷³Ibid., 2-3.

⁷⁴Ibid., 4.

⁷⁵Ibid., 14-15.

⁷⁶Ibid., 22.

⁷⁷Ibid., 31.

⁷⁸Matt M. Matthews, “Hard Lessons Learned - A Comparison of the 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War and Operation CAST LEAD: A Historical Overview,” in *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation CAST LEAD*, 5.

⁷⁹Ibid., 6.

⁸⁰Ibid., 8-10.

⁸¹Giora Eiland, “The Decision Making Process in Israel” in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, 31.

⁸²Ibid., 11.

⁸³Ibid., 12.

⁸⁴Ibid., 12-15.

⁸⁵Ibid., 51.

⁸⁶Ibid., 61.

⁸⁷Ibid., 62.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid., 66.

⁹²Ibid., 73.

⁹³Ibid., 83.

⁹⁴Ibid., 83-84.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid., 85.

⁹⁷LTC Abe F. Marrero, electronic correspondence with author, June 15, 2009.

⁹⁸Farquhar, *Back to Basics*, 86-88.

⁹⁹Ibid., 98.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the research methodology used throughout this paper which supports the thesis: (1) identify Israeli's strategic goals for the war and whether or not these were achieved; (2) examine Israel's prosecution the war against Hezbollah and whether or not the IDF achieved the war's intended strategic ends; (3) identify what actions need to be taken for the Israeli's to be better prepared to defeat Hezbollah, and similar militias; finally (5) identify lessons from Israel's experience in The Second Lebanon War which may assist the U.S. military in combating Islamic militia and terrorist organizations. This chapter should establish an understanding of the processes used to gather information on the basic facts, lessons learned, and critical analysis of the Second Lebanon War.

Conceptual Design

The methodology used throughout this thesis is the case study method. The sources examined demonstrate that the Second Lebanon War as a representative event in the greater so-called "Global War on Terrorism."

The focus of the thesis is lessons learned from the Second Lebanon War and how these lessons may be applied to the U.S. efforts in battling Islamic extremism in Iraq, Afghanistan, or wherever U.S. forces find themselves engaged with the enemy. The evidence demonstrates that the Second Lebanon War is representative of the greater asymmetric battle against a reactionary and vituperative strain of Islam.

First, this thesis examines news accounts, official statements of the Israeli government and the IDF, commentary of military, diplomatic, and regional experts, as well as analysis by respected think-tanks, such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies, made while the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah was actually taking place. The primary focus is on those accounts that attempted to explain Israeli strategic goals for the war, long-term objectives relating to Israeli security concerns, and implications for U.S. security interests within the region. Second, the thesis examines literature in the immediate aftermath of the war to identify common themes and trends of thought. Many of these early works attempted to place blame on various parties for Israel's poor performance during the war. With time, more sober and thoughtful works began to appear which sought to identify the causes of Israeli failure and ways to improve military efficiency before hostilities with Hezbollah resumed sometime in the future. Third, current thought on counterinsurgency, asymmetric warfare, the role of air power and technology in the contemporary warfare environment, along with other emerging thought on warfare and how these concepts differ from traditional western military thought and traditional ways of fighting. Finally, analysis of the war somewhat removed from the immediate events of the Second Lebanon War, to include excerpts from the Winograd Commission Report as well as the Brodet Commission, to discern the long-term strategic lessons learned from the Second Lebanon War.

How the Information Was Collected

The primary method of gathering information for this study on the Second Lebanon War was through internet-available resources. These resources included Israeli academic sites devoted to the study of international relations, military, and security

affairs such as the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies and the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. Other notable internet sites include RAND; the American Enterprise Institute; the Brookings Institute; Center for Strategic and International Studies; Council on Foreign Relations; Foreign Affairs; and Foreign Policy. In addition, a number of professional military journal web sites were examined for pertinent material that would both support or refute the main thesis. These internet sites included *Parameters*; *Military Review*; *Joint Force Quarterly*; *Air Power Journal*; *Canadian Military Journal*; and the *Canadian Army Journal*. Daily and weekly news sources include *Jane's Defense*; *Defense News*; and Israeli daily newspaper sites such as *Haaretz* and the *Jerusalem Post*.

As part of the research, endnotes of available journal articles were reviewed to discern what else might have been written on the subject, or relevant subjects of interest, which would provide further insight into Israeli actions during the war, strategic thinking, and political/military culture. Through this method of research, a number of books that provided relevant background information on Israeli military history, the role of technology, and the evolution of Israeli military thought.

Importance and Limitations

This research is important and relevant because Israel's conflict with Hezbollah is representative of the western civilizations wider conflict the Islamic armies of the Levant. Since its independence in 1948, Israel has been the lynchpin of Arabic and Islamic hostility towards the West, and especially the U.S. For the most part, Israel has been successful in staving off several major combined efforts of its neighbors to eliminate it from the map. Israel has also had some notable diplomatic success in winning over former enemies, such as Egypt and Jordan, by engaging them in negotiated peace

settlements. However, Israel still lives in a dangerous region of the world with enduring challenges to its security and mortality.

The Second Lebanon War and Israel's performance during and efforts at reform efforts are instructive for the U.S. and its armed forces in an effort to improve national strategic outlook and fighting abilities.

There were two limitations in the research of this paper. The first is that Hezbollah is not an open organization nor does it share its thoughts and lessons learned with the world. This does not mean that Hezbollah has not undertaken a thorough review of its military performance or the strategic decision-making processes that nearly took the organization down the path of oblivion. Hezbollah has in fact made some public demonstrations of its preparedness for its next round of battle with the IDF.¹

The second limitation is that of language. Many of the original documents that would have been most valuable to build on are available only in Hebrew. While a summary of the final Winograd Commission Report is available in English the full 600 plus page report is not. In addition, the Israeli professional military journal *Maarachot* is not available in an English edition. This would be a valuable resource in understanding the IDF professional discussions in what went wrong during the war and efforts to improve military performance by those who are responsible for making it happen.

Summary

The Second Lebanon War is an important case study because of its implications on the wider Global War on Terrorism. Many of the challenges faced by the Israelis are similar to those faced by the U.S. in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and perhaps Iran at sometime in the future. In the past, the Israelis have been expert practitioners of

traditional Western and Cold War industrial warfare and have demonstrated skill and innovation in counterinsurgency warfare. Nevertheless, during the summer of 2006 both the Israeli political and military leadership demonstrated indecisiveness and the inability to follow through with over-whelming military force once the decision to go to war had been made.

Both political and military decision makers in the U.S. would benefit by learning the consequences of failing to prepare for the next war and failing to articulate a strategy for long-term security and stability.

¹Hezbollah, Three-day Exercise in South Lebanon, Tel Aviv, Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, November 9, 2007, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hezbollah_1107e.pdf (accessed February 17, 2008).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter examines the Second Lebanon War and its consequences for Israel, and it focuses on three areas in order to draw specific conclusions and make recommendations for future conflicts. The first area will examine the Israeli Security and decision-making process and how that process contributed or failed to contribute to Israel's wartime performance. Next will be an examination of the Israeli political and military strategic management during the fight against Hezbollah July 12 through August 14, 2006. The final part of this chapter will explore whether or not Israel succeeded in achieving its strategic aims.

A National Hallmark of Improvisation: Security Strategy and the Israeli Decision-making Process

Since 1948, Israel has demonstrated remarkable battlefield successes in defeating numerically and militarily superior adversaries through a combination of aggressiveness, offensive oriented operations, and plain raw luck. However, according to Michael Handel, author of *The Evolution of Israeli Strategy*, Israel's battlefield success has masked significant "strategic inadequacies--serious flaws borne of an unremitting sense of vulnerability and the constant threat and occurrence of war."¹ Israel has had to wrestle continuously with the everyday practicalities of survival in a very hostile neighborhood. The nearly overwhelming requirement of warding off everyday threats has pushed the Israeli government and the military establishment to focus on practical short-range tactical fixes rather than the development of long-range strategic goals and objectives.² An impending sense of danger shapes Israeli perception of the regional political

environment in which they live. Charles D. Freilich, author of *National Security-Making in Israel: Processes, Pathologies, and Strengths* adds “Arab hostility as being so pervasive and extreme as to preclude any ability to materially alter the nation’s circumstances through either military or diplomatic means.”³

Israel’s governmental and military decision-makers historically have believed that they are incapable of shaping, or maneuvering, the international political environment to their benefit. As such, they have grown to rely upon a ‘watch and see’ approach to security and defense matters.⁴

[Improvisation] prevails rather than forethought, planning, and prevention Crisis management and improvisation were an unavoidable outgrowth of Israel’s national security environment, particularly in the early decades after independence, when resources were extremely scarce and institutional capabilities and standardized procedures far more limited.⁵

For Israeli strategic thinking, the “trial-and-error” approach is so pervasive that Freilich believes it as having become a “hallmark” of national excellence.⁶

Yoav Ben-Horin and Barry Posen, in their 1981 study of Israel’s strategic doctrine, found that the Israeli reliance upon improvisation is more than just empty swagger and bravado. The ability to adapt has provided them with a significant strategic advantage over their Arab adversaries. Limited resources in both manpower and material have required IDF leaders to think fast and act decisively on their own initiative in a rapidly changing tactical environment. Moshe Dayan’s assessment of the Egyptians operational performance during the 1956 Sinai campaign was that their “commanders were ‘schematic,’ inferior to the Israelis at improvising in a confused battle.”⁷ Arab coalition armies, when faced off against the IDF such as in 1967 and 1973, would conduct operations in accordance with formalized plans with limited room for deviation.

As soon as IDF forces blocked Arab maneuver or penetrated their lines of communication Arab commanders at all levels would begin to hesitate and waiver without specific orders from their superiors. Arab military commanders, though often maneuvering armies with a numeric and fire power advantage, were more likely than not to have had their hands tied by suspicious political régimes more concerned for self-preservation from the threat of being removed from power by a coup-d'état. Therefore, strong, aggressive, and tactically adept Arab commanders tended to be relegated to lesser positions of authority lest they become a threat to the established order.

Israel's strategic policymaking has tended to be reactive to the security crisis of the moment, as well as to international criticism, and Arab antagonism.⁸

The combination of its geographical vulnerability, fear of annihilation, political isolation, and domestic political system gave priority to the immediate problem of national survival. Historically, top Israeli decision-makers have acted according to operational imperatives without clear conception of long-range objectives and without assessing the ultimate consequences of operational success. Instead of strategy governing the use of force, the logic of military operations often determined that of strategy. . . . This phenomenon is referred to . . . as the "tacitization (sic) of strategy."⁹

Avi Kober in "Western Democracies in Low Intensity Conflict: Some Postmodern Aspects" describes the "tacitization of strategy" as the attempt by both political and military leaders to control all decisions and actions on the battlefield.

In High Intensity Conflicts (HICs), political control over the conduct of war is usually exercised across the entire levels-of-war pyramid, from the upper, grand-strategic level all the way down via strategy and the operational level to tactics. . . . Given the particular sensitivities and vulnerabilities of Western democracies involved in Low Intensity Conflicts (LICs) and the existence of unprecedented effective information sources and means of command and control at the political leadership's disposal, the political echelon often finds itself directly interfering in tactical matters. This bypassing of the strategic and operational levels is a manifestation of the "tacitization of grand-strategy."¹⁰

The Israeli security decision-making process is an outgrowth of traditional Jewish concerns for preserving their national existence and practical considerations drawn from six decades of political violence as a common occurrence. Israeli national security strategy is the combined effort of overwhelming military deterrence; preemptive military action when faced with an external threat; and the maintenance of qualitative military edge (QME) against any single or combination of regional threat states. Likewise, Israeli strategic decision-making has been constrained by its nearly indefensible geography and lack of strategic depth, comparative small population that has forced the necessity for reliance on a large reserve military structure, limited economic and natural resources have manifested the development of advanced technologically oriented society. Furthermore, Israeli leaders blame the intervention of outside powers for “snatching” away from it clear and decisive victories in past wars (i.e., the “Cold War” superpower conflict between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union).¹¹

It is important to understand the strategic thinking process of successive Israeli governments and that of the IDF to put into context Israel’s reaction to the events of the morning of July 12, 2006.

The Israeli decision-making process is not based upon a formalized structure; however, it includes the prime minister, the minister of defense, a number of personal advisors, select cabinet ministers, as well as the IDF COS--the principal military advisor to the government, and the Chief of Intelligence.¹² With the assistance of a few aids and trusted ministers, the prime minister has final authority for determining Israeli security policy.¹³ In Israeli military service is compulsory for Jewish men and women. Many Israeli political leaders have first worked their way through the senior ranks of the

military before entering politics. Having first-hand knowledge of military affairs, many of Israel's political leaders are inclined to trust their own intuition over the carefully thought-out assessments of a national security staff.¹⁴ In general, Israeli political culture is highly militarized and it favors leaders who view issues in black and white, and then act decisively.¹⁵

Together, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, personal advisors, select cabinet ministers, and the IDF Chief of Staff are responsible for charting the national security course. However, Freilich believes that the Israeli "electoral system" is the single most important factor contributing to the "decision-making process."¹⁶ Since its founding, successive Israeli governments have been formed from diverse political coalitions "which represents the ideological beliefs and interests of narrow constituencies."¹⁷ Coalition management has long dominated Israeli governance and ministerial appointments have typically been awarded based not upon individual ability, competence or subject matter expertise but upon "personal political clout" and political ambition.¹⁸

Israel's informal and politicized system of decision-making has given the IDF COS extraordinary power to influence governmental decisions concerning defense policy, budget priorities, and diplomatic effort. The Prime Minister and the cabinet lack the expert staff to formulate security policy effectively. Even with the establishment of a National Security Council in 1999, Prime Ministers have continued to rely upon personal advisors, and a few "trusted" cabinet ministers, in the formulation and implementation of security policy.¹⁹ The Israeli system of governance has led to what Freilich considers one of the principle faults of the decision-making process, which is the "predominance of the

defense establishment and its considerations.” In the arena of strategic policy making the “civilian bureaucracy” is out-paced by the IDF in analysis of “intelligence, planning, operations and ability to generate rapid and sophisticated staff work.”²⁰ No other organization in the Israeli strategic decision-making process has as much influence as the military.

No Heroic Battles: The Second Lebanon War
July 12 through August 14, 2006

Even before the end of the war, it was evident that the Israeli decision-making process had failed. In their assessment of Israeli decision-making during the war, David Makovsky and Jeffrey White of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy find that the government of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the IDF under the leadership of General Dan Halutz lacked a thoughtful strategic plan for responding to Hezbollah’s provocation of July 12, 2006. “Israeli decision making seemed to be plagued by a lack of clarity on Israeli objectives, an inability to formulate a strategy to achieve those objectives, and a failure to devise an operational plan that supported that strategy. Israel proved incapable of defining a relationship between tactical military moves and strategic political objectives.”²¹

In the immediate hours after the Hezbollah ambush on a small IDF patrol, the Israeli government objective should have been securing the return the two captured soldiers. Rather than focus on diplomatic means, the Israeli government and the IDF attempted to use military means to shift the strategic balance in Lebanon by weakening Hezbollah and forcing the Lebanese government to exert sovereign control of the southern part of the country. From a strategic perspective, this makes logical sense for

Israel to take advantage of the situation and attempt to shape the environment to its advantage. However, the hasty manner and poorly conceived means by which Israel chose to achieve their strategic objectives in the end proved problematic.

The roots of the war go back to May 2000 when Israel left its self-declared security zone in southern Lebanon after an eighteen-year occupation. Over the next six years, the IDF developed two competing strategic approaches should Israel be compelled to deal with Hezbollah militarily. The first was a ground-centric operation code named “High Water.” This approach called for a swift air campaign against Hezbollah’s strategic rocket forces followed by a two-division thrust into the area that encompassed the former Lebanon security zone in order to neutralize Hezbollah’s ability to fire short-range Katyushas rockets into northern Israel.²² The second air-centric option, code named “Specific Gravity” called for a three-week air campaign concentrated against Hezbollah’s long-range rockets, and precision attacks on command and control, communications, and ground transportation networks.²³ The final week of operations would introduce limited ground operations, or “commando raids” to kill select targets, but would not re-establish an occupied security zone.²⁴ Both “High Water” and Specific Gravity had as its ends the Lebanese government taking sovereign responsibility for the southern part of the country, the disarmament of Hezbollah, and an international security force to insure Hezbollah did not re-infiltrate its weapons back into the area.

Specific Gravity was the more attractive choice for Prime Minister Olmert and his cabinet because the plan maximized standoff precision fire and minimized the use of ground combat thereby avoiding the specter of another drawn-out occupation of Lebanon. General Halutz was perhaps less than objective with his recommendations to the Prime

Minister and the cabinet in his advocacy for this plan. Prior to his appointment as COS of the IDF, General Halutz had been Chief of the Israeli Air Force. In this position, he strongly advocated for increases in the Air Force budget while the Army budget was being radical reduced. In addition, as Chief of the IAF Halutz had been the architect of the Specific Gravity air campaign plan. Halutz, according to his detractors, “sticks to what he knows and trusts: the capabilities of the air force.”²⁵

In an interview given after the war, General Halutz recalled the July 12 meeting with the Prime Minister and the cabinet:

We presented an operation that would last six to eight weeks: two weeks of counter fire, fire from the air and from the ground, and another four–six weeks of a ground operation. We said that katyushas would fall on Israel up to the last day. And nonetheless, our assessment was that the fighting would stop earlier because of international intervention. . . . I was opposed to the goal being to return the kidnapped soldiers. We must not set a goal that is not achievable. Instead, we said that the goal was to create conditions to return the kidnapped soldiers. We said Hizballah must be weakened. Not eliminated, not disbanded, and not pounded. The ministers, not by the IDF, said that. We said that the Lebanese must be led to implement UN Resolution 1559.²⁶

Prime Minister Olmert did not agree with key elements of the plan as presented by the COS but deferred to his military judgment. Olmert and the cabinet were concerned with Halutz’s indifference to the effects of causing widespread damage to Lebanese civilian infrastructure, the international outrage such attacks would certainly invite, and the domestic political concerns certain to erupt from thousands of Hezbollah rockets landing in Israeli cities and towns.²⁷ They were also aware that any operation undertaken to eliminate the Hezbollah threat “faced an international stopwatch that required a rather tight time-table for its military actions.”²⁸

Late in the evening of July 12, operation Specific Gravity began with dozens of fighter-bombers simultaneously attacking Hezbollah military command and control,

rockets and launchers, as well as critical Lebanese infrastructure believed to be vital to Hezbollah's resupply efforts. Within thirty-nine minutes, the initial attack was complete. So confident was General Halutz of the IAF's achievements he called the Prime Minister that night and announced "All the long-range rockets have been destroyed. . . . We've won the war."²⁹

By all outward appearances, the IAF performed magnificently in systematically dismantling Hezbollah's command structure and military capabilities. The IDF had imposed a nearly complete air, ground, and sea blockade of Lebanon. However, as the air campaign pressed on it became increasingly clear that Halutz's pronouncement of victory on the night of July 12-13 was premature. Hezbollah stubbornly continued to launch upwards of a hundred rockets a day into northern Israel.³⁰ For all of its technological superiority the IAF appeared to be ineffective in coping with massed volleys of antiquated Katyusha rockets. Pressure mounted to launch a ground offensive but General Halutz resisted and continued to put his full faith in the ability of airpower to achieve Israeli political and military objectives.³¹

Beginning on July 17, the IDF Northern Command under the leadership of Lieutenant General Udi Adam launched a series of ineffectual attacks on the Lebanese border towns of Maroun al-Ras and Bint Jbail. At Maroun al-Ras, Israeli Special Forces troops hit a wall of intense Hezbollah gunfire and soon found themselves surrounded and trapped.³² The next morning a force of conventional infantry, airborne, and armor units mounted an attack to relieve the Special Forces troops but they too soon found themselves decisively engaged by well-disciplined Hezbollah fires.

The next day, General Halutz ordered Adam to attack the Hezbollah stronghold of Bint Jbail because of its symbolic importance as the site of Nasrallah's victory speech after Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000.³³ Adam protested the order because he did not want to risk lives in symbolic attacks, his forces were already heavily engaged in Maroun al-Ras, he did not have sufficient forces to engage in an urban fight, and it diverted forces away from his primary mission of finding and destroying Katyushas rockets. The COS was unmoved by Adam's protests and ordered him to "Conquer Bint Jbail."³⁴

After two days of heavy artillery preparation, Lieutenant General Adam's forces occupied "over-watch" positions near Bint Jbail and set additional forces into a blocking position to the northwest of the town.³⁵ For the next four days, Israeli soldiers and Hezbollah fighters slugged it out in bitter "room-to-room" fighting.³⁶ During the evening of July 26, the Israelis engaged Hezbollah forces in heavy fighting in Bint Jbail and Maron A-Ras in which nine officers and soldiers were killed and an additional twenty-five wounded.³⁷ A later investigation found that the battle of Bint Jbail was "plagued by botched planning; uncoordinated operational aims; conflicting, blurred and incomprehensible orders, and equivocating commanders reluctant to send their untrained troops into battle."³⁸

By Friday, July 21, General Halutz realized that the war would likely drag on longer than estimated by the original Specific Gravity campaign plan. At this point Halutz believed it necessary to request of the Prime Minister that he call up a limited number of reservists. According to Alastair Crooke and Mark Perry writing for the Asia Times, the decision came as a complete surprise to the senior leadership of the reserves.³⁹

The COS had not briefed the reserve generals beforehand of his intent to request a call-up of reserve forces. In addition, for much of the previous six years the IDF relegated the reserves to counterinsurgency work in the territories, had given them little in the areas of training and equipment, and they planned for the regular forces of the IDF to fight the “next war” without them.⁴⁰ Crooke and Perry add:

The reserve call-up was handled chaotically--with the reserve "tail" of logistical support lagging some 24-48 hours behind the deployment of reserve forces. . . . The July 21 call-up was a clear sign to military strategists in the Pentagon that Israel's war was not going well. It also helps to explain why Israeli reserve troops arrived at the front without the necessary equipment, without a coherent battle plan, and without the munitions necessary to carry on the fight.⁴¹

On July 26, General Halutz convened a meeting of his top military advisors to discuss the aims of current operations. With reports of heavy fighting and mounting casualties in Maroun al-Ras and Bint Jbail, the COS was looking for a way to end the stalemate and gain the initiative. Major General Idan Nehushtan, head of Plans and Policy Directorate, expressed his concerns that the air campaign was not meeting the objective of halting the Katyusha threat and that the COS must inform the Prime Minister of the immediate need for a major ground campaign. If the Prime Minister did not agree then General Halutz should recommend a cessation of military operations.⁴² Most of the officers assembled, to include the majority of those from the IAF, agreed for the need of a major ground offensive. Deputy COS Kaplinsky concurred with Nehushtan and recommended to Halutz that he order the mobilization of reserve units, decide on a definitive operational plan with a “timetable” for completing objectives, and then follow through until all goals were complete.⁴³

Halutz relented to the advice of the General Staff and agreed to the call up an additional three divisions of approximately 15,000 reservists; however, he remained

uncommitted to a massive ground invasion of Lebanon to drive Hezbollah north of the Litani River.⁴⁴ “There are no winning options here,” he said “on the level of preparedness, we must be prepared to do it all. . . . We need no heroic battles.”⁴⁵

The war would continue for the next several weeks. Diplomats from the U.S. and Europe attempted to negotiate a ceasefire to allow relief supplies to be brought into areas most affected by the fighting and to allow displaced Lebanese civilians to move out of the combat zone. On August 1–2, in anticipation of UN sponsored ceasefire, Hezbollah rocket attacks against Israel tapered off nearly to zero. When negotiations failed to secure an end to the fighting, Hezbollah launched over 200 rockets in a single day--the most rockets launched during the war except for the last day.⁴⁶

By August 8, General Halutz had lost confidence that Lieutenant General Adam would faithfully follow his orders. Halutz appointed Deputy COS Kaplinsky to act as his “personal representative” at the Northern Command Headquarters. According to official IDF sources, Adam would remain in command and Kaplinsky would act as coordinator.⁴⁷ In an interview with Israeli television given at the time, Adam demurred that nothing in the command had changed, that the military situation was under control, and that he would fulfill his duties.⁴⁸ However, Halutz had effectively fired Adam as commander of the Northern Command.

On August 11, the UN approved Resolution 1701, which called for a ceasefire to begin on the 14th; General Halutz ordered a series of pointless and ultimately disastrous attacks into Lebanon in an effort to demonstrate to Hezbollah that the IDF maintained the ability and the will to continue to press the attack.⁴⁹

After the war, there was disappointment over the performance of the once invincible IDF. At a meeting with retired IDF general officers to discuss the war and its results, a retired Major General called on Halutz to resign and added; “You are the first and last air force officer who will command the IDF.”⁵⁰ There were calls for Prime Minister Olmert to resign and for an independent investigation of the government and the IDF’s conduct of the war. By the middle of September, Prime Minister Olmert named retired judge Eliyahu Winograd to head up a commission of inquiry to investigate the political and military dimensions of the war. General Halutz resigned as the Chief of Staff on January 17, 2007.

Reflection and Recriminations: Did the Israelis
achieve their wartime goals?

On July 12, 2006, the Israeli government embarked on a military adventure in Lebanon against the battle hardened guerilla army of Hezbollah. Prime Minister Olmert aimed to achieve five goals by going to war with Hezbollah. The first goal was to destroy what they believed to be Iran’s strategic rocket force in Lebanon before Iran had an opportunity to develop fully its nuclear weapon capabilities. The second goal was to reestablish Israel’s deterrence posture after their unilateral withdraw from Lebanon and Gaza. Third, force the Lebanese government to take sovereign responsibility for Hezbollah controlled areas of the country. Next, cause severe damage to Hezbollah’s military capabilities. Lastly, secure the release of their captured soldiers.⁵¹

In regards to its first objective, Israel was largely successful in its effort to destroy the majority of Hezbollah’s strategic rocket force. However, Israel failed to hinder significantly Hezbollah’s ability to fire thousands of short-range tactical rockets into

northern Israel. These tactical rockets became a strategic asset for Hezbollah because of the impact these weapons had in influencing Israeli political and military decision making in the prosecution of the war. On the second goal, Israel did manage to achieve some level of success in re-establishing the creditability of its deterrence but not because of the showing of its military but because of the unpredictable ferocity of Israel's reaction to a relatively minor provocation on the part of Hezbollah. The level of Israel's response so unnerved Hezbollah's leadership that Nasrallah questioned the wisdom of his original decision to approve the operation of July 12, 2006. The goal of forcing Lebanon to establish sovereignty over the south remains problematic because Hezbollah is not simply a religious and nationalist movement it is also a political part with elected representation within the government itself. With the assistance of European peacekeeping assistance under the direction of UN authority, the Lebanese government has been able to establish some tepid influence in the south. In causing irreparable damage to Hezbollah's military capabilities, Israel has made little head way in diminishing the organization's formidable military structure. While hundreds of Hezbollah's best fighters and auxiliaries had been killed during the fighting, the war had little impact upon the organization, its fighting abilities, or its ability to be resupplied with weapons from Syria or Iran. Finally, in the purpose for which they initially went to war for--the return of their captured service members--here Israel failed completely.

Winograd Commission Findings

On January 30, 2008, the Winograd Commission published its final investigative report on the Israeli government's conduct of the Second Lebanon War. The report found the "political and military echelons" of the Israeli government responsible for the failures

of the Second Lebanon War.⁵² Among the commission's findings, they found fault with the civilian and military decision-making process, poor quality of staff work, a lack of strategic thinking, poor planning, communications, and coordination between the civilian and military leadership of the Israeli government. The commission concluded that the war revealed significant flaws in military preparedness "especially in the Army."⁵³

The Winograd Commission questioned the government's decision of July 12, 2006, to go to war with Hezbollah in response to the abduction of two soldiers. The commission noted that the decision to go to war "was not based on a detailed, comprehensive and authorized military plan, based on careful study of the complex characteristics of the Lebanon arena."⁵⁴ Had careful analysis of the political-military situation been done prior to the authorization for military action it would have revealed that: (1) the likelihood of Israel achieving significant political gains from the international community were limited; (2) military action would lead to Hezbollah retaliation against northern Israel; and (3), there was no effective alternative to stopping Hezbollah rockets short of a ground operation into southern Lebanon.⁵⁵ In the commission's view, the decision to pursue military means limited the government's options to just two: "The first was a short, painful, strong, and unexpected blow on Hezbollah, primarily through standoff fire-power. The second option was to bring about a significant change of the reality in the South of Lebanon with a large ground operation, including a temporary occupation of the South of Lebanon and 'cleaning' it of Hezbollah military infrastructure."⁵⁶

The government failed to delineate clear purpose and failed to set the strategy before making the decision to go to war. The decision to begin military operations against

Hezbollah without first defining a political and military strategy contributed to an atmosphere within the government and the IDF of indecision and “equivocation.”⁵⁷

Failure to set Israeli strategic goals and clear means to achieve them at the outset of the war resulted in an Israeli strategic loss. For the first time in Israel’s history, a war ended not through decisive Israeli fire and maneuver against an enemy force but by a political agreement, “which permitted it to stop a war which it had failed to win.”⁵⁸

The commission praised the early achievements of the Israeli Air Forces. However, it reserves criticism on “those in the IDF high command, joined by some in the political echelon, who entertained a baseless hope that the capabilities of the air force could prove decisive in the war. In fact, the impressive achievements of the air force were necessarily limited, and were eroded by the weaknesses in the overall performance of the IDF.”⁵⁹ The Commission found that both the air campaign the eventual ground invasion had little significant impact in reducing the rate of Hezbollah rocket fire into northern Israel.⁶⁰

The decision by Prime Minister Olmert and General Halutz not to mobilize the reserves in preparation for “an extensive ground offensive” and exploit the early success of the air campaign further limited Israel’s strategic freedom of action. The IDF did not begin to plan for large-scale military invasion of Lebanon until early August “and was ‘dragged’ into a ground operation only after the political and diplomatic timetable prevented its effective completion.”⁶¹

The decision to launch a ground invasion less than three days before the beginning of a negotiated ceasefire cast serious doubt on the judgment of the decision makers.⁶² The Commission found no discussion amongst the civilian officials and the

general staff on the necessity of continuing military operations once the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1701.

When the ground offensive finally began, investigators found that “most of the war fighting units did not uphold their mission.” The IDF lost 33 soldiers in those last 60 hours of combat without influencing “in any meaningful way” Israel’s strategic and diplomatic war aims, according to the report.⁶³ Barbara Opall-Rome, writing for *Defense News*, reported, “Mission objectives remained a subject of debate even as soldiers were sent into battle. In many instances, orders were not understood or purposely ignored, with commanders often preferring to halt operations and attend to casualties rather than seeing their missions to fruition.”⁶⁴

The Commission concludes, “Only an IDF that dares to investigate itself and its conduct in a comprehensive way will be able to learn the lessons and improve its ability to face future challenges. Only an IDF that can truly internalize demanded reforms will be able to preserve for the long term its ability to fulfill its missions, the faith of the Israeli public and its deterrent strength.”⁶⁵

Keeping the Wolves at Bay--the State of Israel’s Deterrence after the War

Deterrence is a strategic process to dissuade an enemy from attempting to achieve their goals through hostile means. Deterrence is effective if the enemy believes the deterrent measures are creditable, effective, and too costly either militarily or politically to chance. Yair Evron writing in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives* finds that deterrence is:

a highly complex process comprising the threat to use forces to deter the opponent . . . who aims to change the status quo from resorting to violence. Deterrence

threats are of two modes: first, an obstructing measure to deny the challenger its goals, i.e., defeating its armed challenge (deterrence by denial); second, a punitive measure, i.e., punishing its assets, including civilian targets, beyond the battlefield (deterrence by punishment).⁶⁶

In the 1981 RAND study titled “Israel’s Strategic Doctrine,” Yoav Bon-Horin and Barry Posen observe that Israeli conceptual thought on deterrence is much less constrictive than an American approach to traditional superpower balance of conventional forces and nuclear retaliatory capabilities. Israeli thought concludes that the means of conventional warfare are “fundamentally” limited by their ability to engage in it (conventional war) as well as by the nature of Arab states aligned against them.⁶⁷ Conventional warfare practices can only limit Arab aggression and not prevent it because “[The] tremendous disparity in size and resources will sustain (Arab) hopes of future success in the defeat of Israel military and the eventual destruction of the Jewish state.”⁶⁸

Israel’s military might have been less effective in deterring non-state, or sub-state, terrorist actors such as Fatah (the political successor to the Palestinian Liberation Organization), Hamas (which now controls the Gaza region and Israel has subsequently successfully fought between December 2008 and January 2009) and of course Hezbollah. “Deterrence can generally be effective . . . when the challenger is a state with a formal decision-making center that controls the state’s elements of armed power. Deterrence against sub-state actors is much more complicated. When the sub-state actor (guerrilla or terrorist organization) acts against the will of the government from whose territory it operates, military retaliation against the state can push it to impose restrictions on the sub-state actor.”⁶⁹

In his victory speech shortly after the IDF withdrew from southern Lebanon in May 2000, Nasrallah spoke contemptuously of Israel and said to the gathered crowd “in

order to liberate your land, you don't need tanks and planes. With the example of martyrs, you can impose your demands on the Zionist aggressors . . . Israel may own nuclear weapons and heavy weaponry, but by God, it is weaker than a spider's web.”⁷⁰

Six years later and after a period of reflecting on the war and its consequences Nasrallah's opinion of Israeli weakness had changed. During a television interview given shortly after the war, Nasrallah admitted, “If I had known on July 11 . . . that the operation would lead to such a war, would I do it? I say no absolutely not.”⁷¹

There are two schools of thought concerning the condition of Israel's deterrence after the Second Lebanon War. The first group believes that the war enhanced Israel's deterrence because; Israel demonstrated a willingness to go to war to protect its interests when they believed that Hezbollah had crossed the deterrent threshold; Israel's “disproportionate response” caused Hezbollah to question its own actions for provoking the war; and, prevented Syria from entering the conflict. The second school believes the war diminished Israel's deterrence in four key areas: (1) Israel had lost its credibility over the previous six years for not responding forcefully to Hezbollah and Hamas cross border mortar and rocket attacks; (2) Israel mistakenly gave “land for peace” which demonstrated that these organizations could achieve their goals through forceful means and added further legitimacy to the notion of Israel being as frail as a “spider web”; (3) Israel failed to achieve their primary war goal of dismembering and disarming Hezbollah; and (4) Israel demonstrated the ease at which it can be provoked into a major war.

Between May 2000 and June 2006, Hezbollah attacks along the border were more “ritual” than provocative, concentrated on IDF outposts, and generally avoided civilian areas. Hezbollah voluntarily restrained itself in the level of cross border violence it

employed to demonstrate continued resistance to Israel, which it used to serve its electoral interests.⁷² The IDF would respond in kind by firing on Hezbollah positions, limit the scope of its military response, and avoid the necessity of having to invade and reoccupy portions of Lebanon.⁷³

According to Yair Evron writing in “Deterrence and its Limitations,” the July 12, 2006, ambush and abduction did not represent a full violation of the deterrent rules as understood by Hezbollah; however, the combination of this action combined with the firing upon civilian settlements along the border “violated Israel’s deterrence threshold and prompted the heavy Israeli reaction.”⁷⁴ The Israeli destruction of Hezbollah’s medium and long range rockets, along with the flattening of its Dahiya enclave in Beirut in the opening hours and days of the war “served as a major signal of Israel’s ability and resolve to punish the organization, thus strengthening Israel’s deterrence vis-à-vis Hizbollah (sic).”⁷⁵ Evron believes that continuation of the campaign beyond this point to disarm and dismember Hezbollah and force the deployment of the Lebanese army south did not serve to enhance Israel’s deterrence.⁷⁶ To destroy or disarm Hezbollah would have required a massive Israeli ground campaign, a possible repeat of the post 1982 occupation of Lebanon, along with a protracted “counterinsurgency campaign” all of which Prime Minister Olmert and General Halutz were reluctant to undertake.

Envron points to three factors that provide evidence that the war may have restored the deterrent balance with Hezbollah: (1) Nasrallah’s public contrition that he had made a strategic mistake authorizing the July 12, 2006 operation, (2) Hezbollah accepted the provisions of UN 1701 to include the presence of the Lebanese Army and UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon and (3) since the end of the war Hezbollah has

limited the violence along the Lebanese-Israeli border so as not to provoke an Israeli reprisal (including avoiding provocative military action during IDF operations in Gaza during the winter of 2008-2009).⁷⁷ Makovsky and White add that the presence of mainly European peacekeeping troops further restricts Hezbollah's freedom of action because Syria and Iran will restrain Hezbollah from actions that violate UN resolution 1701 and thereby threaten their relationships with Western Europe.⁷⁸

Perhaps the most significant boost to Israeli deterrence is that Syria remained neutral throughout the war and did not provide Hezbollah with overt support during the fighting, which would have lent cause for Israeli military action. While the IDF was floundering in the war against Hezbollah, the Syrian's assessed that Israel could quickly reorient its forces to counter a Syrian military threat, maximize its technological advantage, and decisively engage Syrian forces.⁷⁹

Major General Uzi Dayan, writing in "Israel's deterrence after the Second Lebanon War," believes the war ended in a "collapse" of Israel's strategic deterrence. Israel, according to his assessment, should have undertaken a campaign that resulted in the unquestioned defeat of Hezbollah and established measures to prevent it from ever being able to rearm and reconstitute its military capabilities.⁸⁰ "UN Resolution 1701 is problematic for Israel because it does not give Israel the tools to prevent Hizbullah (sic) from regaining its strategic capabilities."⁸¹

Dayan also faults Israel unilateral approach to relinquishing "land for peace" for fostering a sense of Israeli weakness amongst its enemies (Hezbollah, Hamas, Iran, and others). The unilateral approach contributes to a sense that Israel weariness and that it is unwilling to accept the casualties of a long slow war of attrition.⁸²

In the end, the Second Lebanon War did not do long lasting damage to Israeli strategic deterrence. The IAF, which represents Israel's single greatest conventional power projection asset, performed well at systematically reducing Hezbollah's strategic rocket force and to a lesser degree, its centralized command and control. Israel successfully exercised its rehabilitated strategic deterrence on September 6, 2007, when the IAF struck, and reportedly destroyed, a suspected covert nuclear weapon facility near the northeastern Syrian city of At Tibnah.⁸³ The Army, which has been Israel's strategic branch of decision, performed poorly in the combined arms role against Hezbollah. Had the Army not undergone a complete external and internal self-assessment of its institutional strengths and weaknesses the credibility of Israel's deterrence would cause irreparably harm to its credibility; however, because it did do just that, Israel has improved the quality and credibility of its ground forces. Because the IDF is an integrated service, combining the Army, Navy, and Air Force all the components have to be of equal high quality to insure the fighting integrity of the whole. What remains to be determined is how well the Israeli government can combine diplomatic, informational, and economic deterrence with military efforts during future crisis.

Summary

Looking back several years at the war it is still difficult to discern whether the Second Lebanon War can be considered a complete strategic defeat for Israel. A strategic defeat portends potential cataclysmic outcomes such as annihilation, a battlefield rout, and the inevitability of surrender. Like the British at Dunkirk in 1940, it is easy to conclude that the results of a single--or even a chain of strategic setbacks--will lead to final demise. The question for Israel is what have they learned from the war with

Hezbollah and the measures they are willing to implement to avoid successive defeats in the future against Hezbollah, Hamas, or a more challenging state player such as Iran? The same question could be asked of the U.S. After years of irregular warfare against Iraqi insurgents, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban in Afghanistan how will the U.S. political and military establishments adapt to the current operational environment to better prepare for future conflicts with guerilla organizations as well as near peer competitors?

What is clear is that the war was a tactical defeat for Israel from a perspective of both the war fighting and diplomatic functions of the government. The war revealed that there are systemic weaknesses in the Israeli strategic decision making process. That there is an over reliance upon military judgment in charting the fortunes of the nation, and that repeated victories and technological superiority breed an atmosphere of contempt for the abilities of less technologically capable enemies, as-well-as complacency in maintaining essential combined arms war fighting skills--especially in readiness of the reserve forces. The Israeli government had failed to invest in political diplomacy to isolate Hezbollah as the aggressor and Israel as the victim of an unprovoked attack. Instead, the Israeli government sought a military solution of such massive proportions that it had the effect in international circles of painting the Israelis as the instigators of a malicious war of aggression against beleaguered Lebanese civilians.

The next chapter will cover specific lessons learned from the 2006 campaign against Hezbollah. What is clear is that complacency can lead to disaster from both a political or military perspective when dealing with any enemy--whether a near peer competitor or a guerrilla organization such a Hezbollah. Whether confronted by shadowy terrorist organizations, an organized guerrilla paramilitary force, a criminal organizations

with the ability to challenge the legitimacy of the political order - nation states must act in an unified approach by clearly identifying the threat, articulating the means by which they will counter the threat, and then apply diplomatic, informational, military, and economic power to defeat the enemies of its interests.

¹Michael I. Handel, "The Evolution of Israeli Strategy: The Psychology of Insecurity and the Quest for Absolute Security," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, ed. Williamson Murray, Macgregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 534.

²Ibid.

³Freilich, *National Security-Making in Israel: Processes, Pathologies, and Strengths*, 637.

⁴Ibid., 636.

⁵Ibid., 644.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Yoav Ben-Horin and Barry Posen, *Israel's Strategic Doctrine* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 1981), <http://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/2007/R2845.pdf> (accessed June 27, 2008), 11.

⁸Handel, 570.

⁹Ibid. Here Handel discusses how strategic considerations have been reduced to tactical problems. Handel makes reference to Yehoshafat Harkabi's book "Israel's Fateful Hour" for a description of the tacitization of strategy: however, this concept does not seem to appear in the English language edition.

¹⁰Avi Kobar, "Western Democracies in Low Intensity Conflict: Some Postmodern Aspects," in *Democracies and Small Wars*, ed. Efraim Inbar (London, Frank Cass and Co Ltd, 2003), 9.

¹¹Ben-Horin, Posen, 5-7.

¹²Handel, 570.

¹³Freilich, 653.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., 639.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 639-640.

¹⁹Ibid., 641.

²⁰Ibid., 657.

²¹David Makovsky and Jeffrey White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbullah War: A Preliminary Assessment* (Washington, DC, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006), 13, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/PolicyFocus60.pdf> (accessed October 10, 2007).

²²Amos Harel and Issacharoff Avi, "Halutz Objected to Ground Offensive Almost Until End of War," *Haaretz* (January 23, 2007), <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/816502.html> (accessed June 18, 2009)

²³Matthews in *We Were Caught Unprepared* refers to this operation as "MEY MARON, 36-37. In this option, the air campaign "Ice Breaker" or "SHOVERET HAKERACH" would take place simultaneously with the activation of the reserves followed up with a ground invasion.

²⁴Matthew Kalman, "Israel set war plan more than a year ago," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, June 21, 2006, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2006/07/21/MIDEAST.TMP&type=printable> (accessed April 9, 2007).

²⁵Harel and Avi, 2.

²⁶Makovsky and White, 15.

²⁷Meir, *Israeli Government Policy and the War's Objectives*.

²⁸Makovsky and White, 14.

²⁹Uzi Mahnaimi, "Humbling of the Supertroopers Shatters Israeli Army Morale," *The Sunday Times*, August 27, 2006, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article620874.ece> (accessed June 19, 2009).

³⁰Uzi Rubin, *The Rocket Campaign against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War*, 37.

³¹Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 43.

³²Ibid., 44.

- ³³Harel and Avi, 2.
- ³⁴Ibid., 3.
- ³⁵Matthews, 44-45.
- ³⁶Penny L. Mellies, " Hamas and Hezbollah: A Comparison of Tactics," in *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation CAST LEAD*, Scott C. Faquhar (Ft Leavenworth, KS, Combat Institute Press, 2009), 63.
- ³⁷IDF press release, "Nine Killed, 25 Wounded in Lebanon," July 26, 2006, <http://www1.idf.il/DOVER/site/mainpage.asp?sl=EN&id=7&docid=55114.EN> (accessed October 28, 2006).
- ³⁸Barbara Opall-Rome, "War Probe Pounds Israeli Military Over Lebanon War," *Defense News*, February 4, 2008, <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=3348666> (accessed February 6, 2008).
- ³⁹Alastair Crooke and Mark Perry, "How Hezbollah Defeated Israel. Part 2: Winning the Ground War," *Asia Times*, October 13, 2006, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HJ13Ak01.html (accessed February 22, 2007).
- ⁴⁰Yoaz Hendel, "The Reserves Comeback," *Strategic Assessment* 10, no 4 (February 2008), <http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=1647> (accessed March 3, 2008).
- ⁴¹Crooke and Perry.
- ⁴²Harel and Avi, 3.
- ⁴³Ibid
- ⁴⁴Crooke and Perry.
- ⁴⁵Harel and Avi.
- ⁴⁶Rubin, 37.
- ⁴⁷YNet News, "In Controversial Move, Head of IDF Northern Command is Pushed Aside Mid-War," August 8, 2008, <http://web.israelinsider.com/Articles/Security/9103.htm> (accessed June 20, 2009).
- ⁴⁸Ibid.
- ⁴⁹Jonathan Spyer, "Our Tank was a Death Trap," *The Times*, August 30, 2006, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/article621919.ece (accessed April 3, 2007).

⁵⁰Alon Ben-David, “New Model Army?,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly* (October 11, 2006): 24.

⁵¹Cordesman, Sullivan, and Sullivan, *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War*, 9-32.

⁵²The Final Report of the Israeli Investigation into the Lebanon War in 2006, *Winograd Commission Final Report*, January 30, 2008, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/15385/> (accessed January 31, 2008), 2.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁵⁴“The Main findings of the Lebanon war panel,” *Haaretz*, April 30, 2007, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/854051.html> (accessed April 30, 2007).

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Winograd Commission Final, 3.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 3.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 5.

⁶³Barbara Opall-Rome, “War Probe Pounds Israeli Military Over Lebanon War,” *Defense News*, February 4, 2008, <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=3348666> (accessed February 6, 2008).

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶Yair Evron, “Deterrence and its Limitations,” in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, 35.

⁶⁷Ben-Horin and Posen, 13.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 37.

⁷⁰David Makovsky, "Deterrence and the Burden of Israeli Moderates," *The Washington Institute for Near East Studies* (August 3, 2006), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=959> (accessed July 3, 2009).

⁷¹Makovsky and White, 22.

⁷²Evron, 39.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 39.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁷⁸Makovsky and White, 22.

⁷⁹Evron, 43-44.

⁸⁰Uzi Dayan, "Israel's Deterrence after the second Lebanon War," *Jerusalem Issue Brief* 6, no. 19 (February 13, 2007), http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=443&PID=0&IID=1497&TTL=Israel%92s_Deterrence_after_the_Second_Lebanon_War (accessed May 1, 2007).

⁸¹*Ibid.*

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³David Albright and Paul Brannan, "Suspect Reactor Construction Site in Eastern Syria: The Site of the September 6 Israeli Raid?," *The Institute for Science and International Security* (October 23, 2007), http://www.isis-online.org/publications/SuspectSite_24October2007.pdf (accessed November 1, 2007).

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Second Lebanon War is representative of a trend in contemporary combat in which a technologically advantaged combative is effectively countered by a less advanced military force. As often happens in modern war, seemingly disadvantaged combatants can leverage their tactical flexibility and antiquated weapons to their strategic and asymmetric advantage. Seemingly, unstoppable salvos of Katyusha rockets came to symbolize Israeli defeat just as roadside Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), suicide bombers, and insurgent bands in Iraq and Afghanistan have come to symbolize defeat for the U.S. military in the eyes of many Americans.

During the opening hours of combat operations over Lebanon the IAF, demonstrated expert skill in its application of overwhelming firepower to eliminate quickly the threat posed by Hezbollah's long-range rockets. Israel's technological advantage minimized the ability of Hezbollah to retaliate meaningfully with a missile strike deep into the heart of Israel and robbed Iran--for a time--of its forward deployed strategic weapons. Yet these same forces, which so masterfully executed the initial air campaign, were confounded and nearly impotent to counter the strategic affect of massed volleys of rockets fired into northern Israeli. When the IDF ground forces finally sallied into southern Lebanon it was as much for symbolic purposes as it was for silencing the rockets or for achieving a decisive defeat of the Hezbollah militia. Israel never managed to significantly impact Hezbollah's command and control nor eliminate their television, radio, or internet communication with Lebanese and international audiences.

When the war entered the ground combat phase of operations the Israelis learned the depreciative affect of a long counterinsurgency campaign on the ability of a conventional force to transition back to a dynamic combined arms fight. The war also demonstrated the need for clear a strategic vision from national leaders, which can then be fashioned into an executable campaign strategy, the essential need for sound doctrine based upon the long held principles of war, clear mission orders, tactical, and strategic objectives.

This chapter will address the three questions originally asked in the first chapter of this thesis: (1) did Israel achieve their strategic goals for the war against Hezbollah? (2) what steps do the Israelis need to take to be better prepared to defeat Hezbollah and other guerilla organizations in the future? and (3) what lessons can the U.S. learn from the Israeli experience in combating Hezbollah?

Did Israel Achieve Its Strategic Goals?

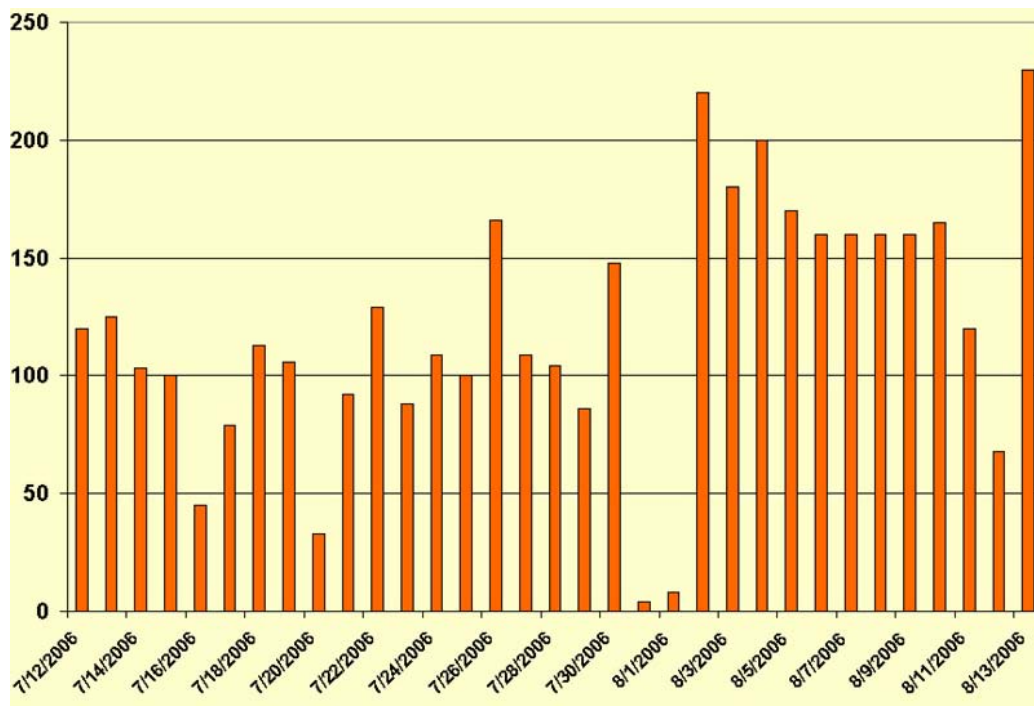
Shortly after the onset of the war, Prime Minister Olmert set five ambitious goals: destroy Hezbollah's strategic missile force; re-establish the creditability of Israel's deterrence; force the Lebanese government to establish and maintain sovereign control over the south of their country; damage Hezbollah severally; and, secure the release of their captive soldiers. Israel did manage to achieve many of their stated objectives despite the overall poor showing of the IDF: however, the war did little to affect the long-term defeat of Hezbollah or shift the political balance in Lebanon.

Destroy Hezbollah's Strategic Missile Force

The IAF destroyed 59 of Hezbollah's long-range rocket launchers within the first half hour of the campaign against Hezbollah.¹ To Israel's credit, the early success the air campaign is attributable to years of preplanning in anticipation of the necessity of having to eliminate the threat of Iranian rockets held in Hezbollah's custody. Though Israel did not destroy all of Hezbollah's strategic rockets during the first night of the war, the IAF did manage to limit Hezbollah's ability to launch these rockets by means of innovative tactics and advanced "sensor to shooter" technology.² In addition to long-range rockets, Hezbollah amassed a sizable arsenal of Katyusha, and other short and medium range, artillery rockets that were compact enough to be hidden within apartment buildings, residential neighborhoods, and well-concealed bunkers scattered throughout the countryside. These rockets were easily transported in automobiles or small trucks, could be quickly assembled for firing by well drilled crews of part-time guerilla fighters, then remotely or time delayed fired. Hezbollah rocket teams working in coordination, or independently, could mass fire on area targets--such as towns and cities--causing relatively minor damage in military terms but inflicting a blow to Israel's psychological sense of vulnerability. Having limited impact on the ability the battlefield, these weapons had a significant strategic affect upon the economic and civic life of northern Israel and caused the displacement of tens of thousands of ordinary civilians. "The rockets that the Hizbullah rained on northern Israel were aimed to maximize casualties among its civilian population. Some military installations were targeted by Hezbollah, but infrequently and without the usual Hizbullah fanfare. The declared purpose of the attacks was to make life insufferable for the people of northern Israel."³

Most estimates are that Hezbollah had in its possession between 10,000 and 13,000 short and medium range artillery rockets at the beginning of the war.⁴ These rockets were largely undetectable by IAF fighter-bombers and unmanned reconnaissance aircraft until after launch. Israeli counter-rocket fire was largely ineffective because Hezbollah fighters typically abandoned the launch sites before the actual weapon launch leaving little of value behind except for the disposable launcher. In addition to the expenditure of untold numbers of expensive precision guided ordinance, IDF ground forces fired thousands of unobserved rounds of artillery into southern Lebanon with little effect on suppressing Hezbollah rocket fire.⁵ Even as the IDF launched its long delayed ground offensive into the Lebanese towns of Maroun al-Ras and Bint Jbail to re-enforce the “cognitive perception of defeat” upon Hezbollah they had as one of their principle tactical objectives silencing the enemy’s rockets. However, because Israel’s senior leadership decided to pursue a strategy of assaulting symbolic objectives rather than massing forces, moving swiftly, and acting decisively by over-running the rocket launch points Hezbollah maintained the initiative and its tactical freedom of action. Between July 12 and August 13, 2006, Hezbollah fired between 3,970 and 4,200 rockets into Israel with the single greatest number falling on the last day of the war.⁶ This alone demonstrates that Hezbollah was not defeated at the tactical level, that significant stocks of weapons remained untouched by Israeli eradication efforts, and that they maintained the ability to coordinate the efforts of dispersed cells of rocketeers.

Table 1. Rocket Impacts per Day



Source: David Makovsky and Jeffrey White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbullah War: A Preliminary Assessment* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/PolicyFocus60.pdf> (accessed October 10, 2007), 37.

In the literal sense, Israel did succeed in eliminating Hezbollah's strategic rocket force in the first hours and days of the war. This was a significant victory for Israel, which speaks volumes of the quality of the IAF flying skills, its intelligence collection methods, and its ability to undertake successfully a complex coordinated attack against dispersed enemy assets. However, this was a partial victory as has already been discussed. Israeli political and military decision-makers became entangled in a trap that they failed to recognize because of the hasty manner in which the decisions to go to war were made. Throughout the leadership structure, key individuals failed to consider, the strategic "cognitive effect" of a militarily insignificant weapon system employed against

civilian targets would have on the public, and the pressure felt to mitigate the threat. Israeli political and military decision-makers made the choice to direct military resources to the defeat a weapon rather than to the defeat the enemy. Had Israeli ground forces attacked swiftly and over-run Lebanese territory beyond the maximum effective range of Hezbollah's short and medium range rockets, isolated and eliminated pockets of resistance, and established conditions for the peaceful turnover of southern Lebanon to the government authority and UN peacekeepers then perhaps Israel could claim success in eliminating the threat of Hezbollah's strategic rockets. Instead, Israel chose a course of action equivalent of the carnival game "whack-the-mole" by identifying then eliminating individual targets as they appeared from their holes.

Re-establish the Creditability of Israel's Deterrence

Hezbollah's leadership approved the cross boarder raid of July 12, 2006, because they did not believe Israel would respond in any meaningful way. Secretary Nasrallah stated after the war that had he known beforehand the degree to which Israel was prepared to respond that he never would have approved the operation. If nothing else, this reveals that in the years preceding the war Israel had lost the respect of its enemies. Hezbollah believed Israel to be weak through long peace, and complacency borne of affluence and a desire for comfort. Israel appeared not to have the fortitude to withstand the tribulations and deprivations of war. This belief was derived from Israel government actions such as their unilaterally withdraw from Lebanon and Gaza.

It came as a surprise not only to Hezbollah but too much of the international community the extent to which Israel was prepared to respond to Hezbollah's raid of July 12. Prime Minister Olmert's decision to approve a military operation of such scale and

ferocity was completely unexpected by the leadership of Hezbollah. The summer of 2006 was also a period of heightened international tensions over Iran's nuclear program. It is believed that Iran forbade the use of their undamaged long-range rockets so as not to draw unwanted attention to their role and additional scrutiny upon their nuclear program.⁷ Syria, another Hezbollah patron, also did not overtly support Hezbollah during the war. While Syria continued to resupplying Hezbollah with weapons during the war, they were careful not to antagonize Israel by making provocative military moves of their own. Israel in any case was not interested in expanding the conflict beyond Hezbollah. The Israeli government publically reassured Syria that it did not intend to open up a "third front" in addition to Lebanon and Gaza.⁸

Israel's deterrence did not improve because it demonstrated a willingness to go to war over a relatively minor cross boarder raid. Nor was its deterrence increased because of the performance of the IDF--quite the contrary. Israel's deterrence can be seen as more credible after the war because the post-war top to bottom assessment of the blunders made by both the government and the IDF during the war and the effort to make institutional improvements. The Winograd Commission, the IDF, and a number of university and strategic/military think-tanks examined the conflict from the initial decision to go to war, the civilian government and military decision-making process, the performance of the IDF--especially that of the Army--against Hezbollah, and war fighting doctrine. While many of the findings of the Winograd Commission remain classified, the public report revealed many serious institutional deficiencies that required immediate attention. The IDF began its own self-assessment shortly after the war which resulted in the firing many of its senior commanders as well as the eventually resignation of the COS

General Halutz. The IDF made new investments' in equipment, individual and combined arms training at all levels, and re-affirmed the principles of sound military doctrine.

It is unknown at this point whether the lessons learned from the Second Lebanon War are sustainable for the long-term. What is encouraging is the performance of the IAF in raids against the suspected Syrian nuclear reactor near At Tibnah in 2007. Israel has also conducted several IAF long-range training operations in the eastern Mediterranean in anticipation of a possible attack on Iranian nuclear facilities should the need arise. As LTC Marrero describes in "Back to Basics," the war energized the citizens, government, and IDF establish in a new commitment to the quality of all levels of military Israeli military preparedness and traditional principles of war. This reaffirmation of national will was evident in Gaza in the winter of 2008-2009 as Israeli Army commanders' demonstrated greater commitment to mission achievement and a willingness to accept operational risk and casualties.

Forcing the Lebanese government to establish and maintain Sovereign Control over South Lebanon

Lebanon became a failed state in the mid-1970s. Years of sectarian civilian war, Syrian and Israeli occupation, and the rise of Hezbollah did great damage to Lebanese civil society. When Israel withdrew from its security zone in southern Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah was quick to fill the power vacuum and claim victory. Starting in the 1990s, Hezbollah became a legitimate force within the Lebanese political system winning electoral success and positions of authority in the ministerial bureaucracy.

The July 12, 2006, attack on the IDF patrol stirred up a great deal of hostility in Lebanese people against Hezbollah for instigating an unnecessary war with Israel. In

June 2009, the Lebanese people rebuked Hezbollah at the polls and gave a parliamentary majority to the western leaning “March 14th” party; however, Hezbollah still maintains a sufficient number of seats--and the military strength--to block major legislation or actions that would limit its power.⁹ Hezbollah has been somewhat weakened politically by the war with Israel but it has hardly been marginalized.

Hezbollah remains defiant to the efforts of the international community to disarm it. Since August 2006, Hezbollah has rearmed with greater quantities of longer-range rockets to include “Iranian-built Zilzal and Fajr rockets with the ability to reach as far as Tel Aviv.”¹⁰ Both Syria and Iran continue to smuggle arms to Hezbollah across the Syrian border with Lebanon in defiance of UN resolutions 1701 and 1559.¹¹

It is clear that Israel failed in its war goal of the Lebanese government establishing sovereign control over southern Lebanon. Given the degree to which Hezbollah has been able to infiltrate the Lebanese government through electoral means, both Syrian and Iranian support for the organization, and the UN peace-keepers (UNIFIL) inability, and un-willingness, to disarm Hezbollah guerilla forces, it is clear that Israel failed to achieve this necessary goal for its long-term security interests.

Damage Hezbollah

As has already been discussed, the war has not damaged Hezbollah in any meaningful way. According to Anthony Cordesman, Israel did not inflict enough damage on Hezbollah, they over estimated the ability of air power to bring about a decisive victory, and when the ground campaign began in the final hours of the war they advanced cautiously and predictably.¹² The IDF’s disastrous and futile battles in Maroun al-Ras and Bint Jbail demonstrated the Hezbollah militia’s tactical prowess and the skill and

adaptability of individual militia cells. The IAF largely destroyed the majority of Hezbollah's signature command and control infrastructure in the first hours of the war. However, prior to July 12, 2006, IDF planners did not fully anticipate or appreciate the redundancy and complexity of Hezbollah's command and control infrastructure and the autonomy given and exercised by its local commanders.

While inconvenienced by the presence of UNIFIL troops in its area of control, Hezbollah has not been slow in their rearmament efforts. The Lebanese Army deployed forces to the southern region of the country in early October 2006 more for show rather than in an active effort to disarm or prevent the re-arming of Hezbollah.¹³ While Hezbollah lost some of its luster with the Lebanese electorate for instigating an unnecessary war with Israel, they have, however, lost none of their ability to challenge the authority of the Lebanese government or their ability to resist Israel.

Securing the Release of Their Soldiers

The fate of Israel's three captured soldiers remains unknown. Since military service is compulsory for every fit young Jewish man and woman, Israel takes the combat loss of every service member the same as any tightly knit family would the loss of a close relative. It is a great credit to Israeli nation culture that they show such devotion to their service members. However, when Prime Minister Olmert declared one of the goals for going to war with Hezbollah was the return of its soldiers, he set a goal that was nearly impossible to achieve even with a full-scale ground assault and occupation of all Lebanese sovereign territory.

Every great nation must make the choice what price they are willing to pay with human life to secure the lives and freedom of its citizens. The decision to commit a

nation to war must never be made in haste and must be balanced against the cost to the nation in lives and treasure. While nothing can compensate the families of the Israelis killed and captured, the Israel government embarked upon a military adventure for a purpose they were not fully committed to achieve.

Future Preparedness

The IDF remains the dominant nation military in the Middle East and one of the most technologically advanced and innovative military organizations in the world. The Second Lebanon War revealed some significant erosion to Israel's formidable military status and fully unmasked the decrepit state of the Israeli national security decision-making process. The war also demonstrated the strength of a democracy in the heart of the Middle East to be self-critical and discuss, publically debate, and investigate itself in an effort to improve its future performance. The results of Operation Cast Lead demonstrate that the IDF is already on the right track for preparing for future conflict. However, Hamas is not nearly as formidable an adversary as Hezbollah or over the horizon threats like Iran. There are three dimensions to the future success of Israel's national security: (1) domestic political, (2) diplomatic, and (3) military.

As has already been reviewed, the Israeli national security decision-making process is highly politicized; it relies upon a few trusted advisors close to the Prime Minister, and IDF opinion is highly influential. Israeli decision-making is improvisational and tends to focus on practical day-to-day tactical considerations and less upon strategic issues and trends. The process by which Israeli political leaders make national security decisions needs to reflect that of a mature nation with formalized structures to analyze, cross check, and provide dispassionate and objective advice to the Prime Minister and his

ministers. Though the Israeli government has had a National Security Council (NSC) since 1999, it still lacks any real authority to compel the intelligence services, diplomatic corps, and the IDF to provide it with essential information. A formalized structure by which the various elements of the government bureaucracy are required to provide strategic assessments to one formalized body which in turn advises the Prime Minister and the cabinet on important national issues.

By empowering the NSC with the single authority as the clearing housing for information to the Prime Minister the deteriorating effect of political influence by opposition party ministers and bureaucratic inertia may be minimized but not wholly eliminated. The NSC will also be in a position to focus government attention away from the minor daily security issues that have had the tacticization effect on national strategic perspective. An influential NSC giving objective expert advice to Prime Minister Olmert on July 12, 2006, may have been able to provide him with an alternative strategic analysis of the state of both Israel's and Hezbollah's military preparedness, obtainable strategic goals and objectives, the means by which to obtain them, and whether the costs outweighed benefits of going to war.

The Israeli diplomatic corps has long been a second team player in the Israeli national security decision-making process. With the exception of Egypt and Jordan, Israel is largely diplomatically isolated in the Middle East. Israel holds a seat in the UN and maintains relations with most of the nations of the world. However, international opinion--especially in Western Europe has generally viewed Israel in a negative light. The continued Palestinian issue and the perceived over use of military force by Israel when

raiding or retaliating into the territories against various terrorist organizations and the belief that Israel must act with restraint regardless of the level of provocation.

To assist with the rehabilitation with the Israeli national security decision-making process the diplomatic corps needs a strong advisory role within the NSC structure. Positioned throughout the capitals of the world, Israel's diplomats have their fingers on the pulse of international opinion. Further, as representatives of the Israeli government aboard, they can influence international public opinion, establish professional and personal relationships with influential government officials and the business community, and provide vital intelligence.

Had the Israeli diplomatic corps had a seat in a robust NSC structure, they could have provided the Prime Minister and his cabinet with an assessment of possible world reaction to an Israeli attack upon Hezbollah in Lebanon. The diplomatic corps could have been in a position to provide the Prime Minister with options short of war such as: working with western nations and emerging powers, such as Turkey and India, to condemn Hezbollah; apply diplomatic pressure through the UN on Iran and Syria for a negotiated return of the Israeli captives; and, implement an information campaign on Hezbollah and the danger the organization represents, the extent of its infiltration into other parts of the globe; and engage the U.S. and European nations to apply pressure, provide military, and economic resources to assist the Lebanese government in taking full sovereign control over their country.

In general, the overall performance of the IDF during the war was nothing short of miserable. That the IAF alone performed as well as expected should not be a surprise since it is the one branch of the IDF that received more than adequate funding in the

years preceding the war. However, the IDF is a single integrated military structure consisting of the Army, Navy, and Air Force and not separate services. The war revealed that the neglect of the Army and to a lesser extent the Navy could have a devastating effect in the event of war with a region power. The war made evident the following weaknesses in the IDF force structure: (1) over reliance upon technological solutions as a means to achieve victory and avoid military casualties; (2) poorly conceived and unproven doctrine; (3) long period of counterinsurgency operations diminished conventional war fighting capabilities; (4) limited combined arms training at all levels of the IDF; and, (5) a reserve force that was largely hollow and severely under equipped and trained.

Since its founding, Israel has sought technological solutions to minimize casualties and counter numerically superior enemies. During the years leading up to the war, the pursuit for technological solutions to war fighting became an end in itself. This was driven by several factors: (1) public discontent from the 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon and the memory of slow attrition of Israeli soldiers in that feeble cause quickened the desire for technological solutions to military problems; (2) the past successful performance of the IDF would give any enemy pause before seriously considering an attack upon Israel; and, (3) the general desire amongst the Israeli people to enjoy a period of diminished regional tensions brought about principally by an enhanced U.S. military presence in the region (containment and later occupation of Iraq).

While Israel does possess one of the most advanced industrial bases for the development and manufacture of weapons, it still must import much of its advanced combat aircraft, precision munitions, and other war fighting technologies from the U.S.

and other nations. This technology is not without cost, and in the case of the Second Lebanon War, the ground forces and reserves were shorted funds to pay for much of the advanced weapons held in the Israeli arsenal at the start of the war. These weapons employed chiefly by the IAF demonstrated their worth in the systematic destruction of Hezbollah's command and control network, and long range strategic rockets. However, when low-tech artillery rockets became the primary weapon employed by Hezbollah to strike against northern Israel the IAF lacked the ability to respond effectively.

The Second Lebanon War demonstrated the modern warfare remains a social activity in which humans are the primary actors. Technological solutions to tactical and strategic problem and must be linked to the underlying human activity and desire for victory over their opponent. Technology is a means to achieve an end. For military operations to be successful, advanced weapons and the combined arms maneuver of combat forces must be intertwined in all dimensions of the battle space.

To be successful in future conflicts Israel must trust its soldiers and commanders to take risk and employ the forces they have available even at the expense of sustaining casualties. There is no substitute for troops on the ground with the firsthand knowledge of combat conditions. Commanders must maintain the ability to make individual assessment based upon experience and the ability to act in accordance with the situation. As demonstrated during the war, Israel did not make any meaningful progress in eliminating Hezbollah short-range rockets through advanced "sensor to shooter" means. Only after the introduction of ground forces into southern Lebanon was the IDF able to engage individual guerrilla cells in close combat, identify hidden rocket launch points and

weapons caches, and make any serious dent in the ability of Hezbollah to threaten northern Israel.

Just prior to the war, Israel adopted a new and unproven war doctrine. The new Israeli doctrine employed battlefield domination techniques in an attempt to convince the enemy that they had no means by which to resist. This doctrine was deconstructionist in nature, rejected the long held principles of war, and sought the psychological rather than the physical defeat of the enemy. As has already been discussed in detail, this new doctrine lead to confusion, miscommunication, and battlefield inaction as commanders sought clarification of the meaning of their orders.

The long understood principles of war are immutable and include mass, unity of command, mission, objective, maneuver, firepower, economy of force, etc. Violating any one of these and the commander risks defeat. Innovative thinking and vigorous discussion for how best to achieve military ends is essential to for the success of any military organization. However, doctrine must be grounded within the practical application of the principles of war; clearly understood by commanders and troops at all levels, and must result in clear mission orders and achievable objectives. According to Matt Matthews in “Back to Basics,” the IDF discarded the incomprehensible “cognitive effects” doctrine shortly after the war in favor of the one they had employed previously until a permanent doctrine was developed.¹⁴ In September 2007, Lieutenant General Gabi Ashkenazi, who replaced Halutz as COS of the IDF, announced a five-year military rebuilding plan titled “Teffen 2012.” The plan has as its objective: (1) the development of a “decisive ground maneuver capability” built around tanks, armor personnel carriers, attack helicopters, and UAVs; (2) enhanced “precision strike capability” for the IAF;

(3) intelligence domination of the battlefield; and, (4) advanced logistical preparation and stock piling of all classes of munitions.¹⁵

The IDF is on the path for correcting its previous mistakes and reorienting doctrine around combined arms maneuver. These efforts will go a long way in assisting the IDF in preparing to fight future adversaries.

The long counterinsurgency campaign associated with the intifada in the territories had a debilitating effect upon the IDF's ability to fight a combined arms war. As discussed, an entire generation of Israeli officers and soldiers only operational experience was in counterinsurgency warfare. Tankers, artillerymen and others were tasked away from their primary military specialties to battle insurgent bands in the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem. The result was a military that was adept at the subtleties of counterinsurgency operations but incapable executing combined arms war fighting.

While the intifada is a continuing security concern for the IDF, counterinsurgency is a mission within the vast array of military tasks any national military must be prepared to perform but not to the neglect of all other war fighting functions. The IDF must train and prepare to execute a wide array of missions to defeat all potential threats whether from a terrorist organization, conventional, or nuclear attack.

The reserve force is the backbone of the IDF and as such must receive the most careful attention. During the Second Lebanon War, the activation of the reserves for duty came too late; they lacked the proper equipment, supplies, and were un-prepared for the mission. Israel needs to ensure the reserve forces demonstrate proficiency in their basic combat tasks through regular training and exercises. Reserve equipment levels and sufficient wartime stocks of all classes of supply must be maintained to handle a large-

scale mobilization on short notice and not be used as a pool to sustain daily operational requirements. The IDF reserves should model their sustainment training on one that requires soldiers to muster monthly for training in addition to a yearly period of activity duty. This will ensure that reserve soldiers have an opportunity to maintain greater familiarization with the combat skills and exercise the equipment they will operate in battle.

Lessons for the United States

The U.S. entered Iraq in 2003 with arguable the most advance conventional war fighting capabilities in the world. Unlike Israel, when the U.S. military engaged Iraqi forces they were expertly trained in the dynamics of high intensity industrial warfare. However, for thirty years, the U.S. neglected the art of counterinsurgency warfare. The Second Lebanon War demonstrated some critical lessons for the U.S. to consider before deciding to commit the nation to military action.

First, do not go to war without clear achievable goals and a clear understanding of what the desired post war architecture will look like. Israel went to war with one the goals being that the Lebanese government would exert sovereign authority over the Hezbollah controlled area of southern Lebanon. Olmert assumed that military action alone would force the Lebanese to do what they had failed to do over the previous six years. Similarly, the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003 with the goal of replacing the regime of Saddam Hussein with a western leaning freely elected government without first figuring out how to achieve the desired end state or committing the resources to achieve the goal. The Bush administration assumed that the international community would commit to the

rebuilding process and that the western democracies would engage in the support democratic Iraq.

It is not possible to know beforehand all the possible outcomes and consequences of military action. Detailed planning for the post war environment is as essential as planning for the military campaign. If the nation does not have a vision what the post war environment, or how to achieve that goal, it is foolish to engage militarily until an achievable strategy is developed.

Second, Israel, unlike the U.S., had maintained continuous counterinsurgency operations in the territories since the late 1960s and in Lebanon from 1982 through 2000. Israel developed a special set of skills that proved to be invaluable in penetrating and disrupting the various terrorist organizations that threatened its security. While Israel maintain a sizable conventional force consisting of combined arms units with the end of the cold war and peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan the likelihood of attack by its neighbors seemed more remote. As a result, the Israeli government cut defense budgets and various combat arms and combat support arms units were diverted from the combat specialties' into counterinsurgency policing in the territories. These units where skilled at counterinsurgency warfare, however, their skills at combined arms combat suffered due to lack of training, budget limitations, and limited operational experience.

U.S. forces have suffered for their neglect of counterinsurgency warfare since the end of the Vietnam War. Thousands of U.S. service members have paid with the lives for institutional failure to maintain counterinsurgency doctrine and training. The U.S. military have made great strides in relearning the lessons of previous generations and retraining the force to be successful in the current operational environment in both Iraq

and Afghanistan. However, the danger of over learning the lessons of counterinsurgency warfare could have a deteriorating effect on conventional warfare skills, maintaining a balanced combat force structure, weapons development, equipment maintenance, training, and doctrinal development. The U.S. military must maintain a balanced force (ground, air, naval, cyber, and space based) to fight both low intensity counterinsurgency, and large-scale maneuver forces capable of defeating traditional enemies.

The Israelis neglected conventional war fighting capabilities believing that traditional threats no longer endangered the nation and focused their efforts on counterinsurgency in the territories. Likewise, the U.S. may be in danger of believing that the conventional threat has disappeared and the likelihood of conventional warfare is limited. As demonstrated in the Second Lebanon War, it is dangerous to assume that the conventional threat has disappeared and that less advanced military organizations cannot defeat our conventional forces after years of brutal counterinsurgency warfare.

Finally, technological advantage is important in modern warfare but it is not necessarily a determining factor in guaranteeing success. Israel, like the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan, held the technological advantage over Hezbollah. Advanced Israeli technology proved to be invaluable in quickly eliminating Hezbollah long-range strategic rockets early in the war. However, Israeli's technological advantage in the end proved to be indecisive because it could not adapt to the threat posed by Hezbollah's low-tech artillery rockets and autonomous guerilla bands. When the IDF introduced ground combat forces into Lebanon they began to have some positive effect on limiting Hezbollah's ability to strike northern Israel.

Technology innovation on the battlefield has demonstrated its worth for centuries. However, technology cannot guarantee victory over a determined foe. Israel attempted to substitute technology for soldiers in the field in the belief they would reduce casualties and dominate the enemy through remote means. Advanced Israeli weapons systems failed to achieve a final victory over Hezbollah. Likewise, the U.S. believed that its massive firepower and technological edge would achieve a quick victory in both Iraq and Afghanistan. However, after initial spectacular success, an adaptive insurgency force was able to threaten seriously the sustained effort of U.S. forces in both countries. Both the Israeli and U.S. experience demonstrate the need for technology to complement forces on the ground with both combat operations and for maintaining battlefield domination in suppressing an insurgency, and protecting the civilian population.

Summary

The Second Lebanon War is an important case study in understanding the dynamics of modern war in the early 21st Century. The War between Israel and Hezbollah demonstrated the capabilities and limitations of precision high technology weapons and their limitations, the consequences of poorly considered doctrine, and the effect of long counterinsurgency operations may have on conventional war fighting abilities.

This study identified the following common themes of the war: (1) the critical need to identify clear and obtainable goals before undertaking military operations; (2) novel and incoherent doctrinal concepts lead to confusion and indecision; (3) a long operational period devoted to counterinsurgency operations will diminish conventional war fighting capabilities if not properly balanced by proper and continuous training;

(4) airpower and long-range precision fire was not an effective substitute for ground maneuver; and, (5) advanced technology as a means unto itself to solve strategic and tactical dilemmas at the expense of a trained and ready troops in a combined arms force is indecisive against an adept and determined enemy.

Recommendations for Further Research

The Israeli military response to the Hezbollah cross border raid of July 12, 2006, is a fascinating look into the modern state political and military response to a terrorist organizations slow morph into a semi-state conventional military organization. Based upon the findings of this thesis there is a need for further research in the following areas:

1. How did the IDF conduct post combat action reviews and then turn the lessons learned into an effective strategy for retraining both its active and reserve forces?
2. How has the Israeli political and military decision making process adapted because of the Second Lebanon War?
3. How has the IDF refocused its doctrinal approach to war in light of the failures of its base doctrine during the war?
4. To what extent is did the reliance on airpower and technological means to achieve military ends lead to a degradation of the IDF ground forces?
5. Because of the war, have civilian and military leaders become more or less willing to accept both military and civilian casualties to achieve victory?
6. Because of the Second Lebanon War, is Israeli better prepared to maintain security along its border in the event that it has to project military power beyond its traditional area of operations?

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- ¹Rubin, *The Rocket Campaign against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War*, 18.
- ²Ibid., 23.
- ³Ibid., 4.
- ⁴Makovsky and White. *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War: A Preliminary Assessment*, 39.
- ⁵Rubin, 19.
- ⁶Ibid., 10.
- ⁷Ibid., 7.
- ⁸Makovsky and White, 21.
- ⁹The Washington Institute, "Gauging Hezbollah After the Vote," June 8, 2009, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3063> (accessed November 1, 2009).
- ¹⁰Greg Bruno, "Hezbollah's Shadow War," *Center for Foreign Relations* (May 30, 2008), http://www.cfr.org/publication/16382/hezbollahs_shadow_war.html (accessed November 1, 2009).
- ¹¹Ibid.
- ¹²Cordesman, Sullivan, and Sullivan, 29-30.
- ¹³Jihad Siqlawi, "Lebanon Army Deploys on Border as Israel Leaves," *Defense News* (October 2, 2006), <http://defensenews.com/story.php?F=2145555&C=landwar> (accessed January 26, 2007).
- ¹⁴Matthews, *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation CAST LEAD*, 22.
- ¹⁵Ibid.

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