

Balancing the Israeli Defense Force for Future Warfare

**A Monograph
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Abstract

Balancing the Israeli Defense Force for Future Warfare by LTC Randy T. Johnson, U.S. Army, 42 pages.

Since its establishment as a state Israel's geo-political circumstance demands that the small nation state adapt to an ever changing threat environment. Israeli defense policy traditionally consisted of deterrence through a dominant military capable of quickly defeating conventional threats. The emergence of Hezbollah, a non-state actor operating in Lebanon and receiving support from Iran, and its capability to conduct hybrid war changed the way the Israeli Defense Force balanced its capabilities in preparation for future conflicts.

This monograph examines the IDF following its 2000 withdrawal from Lebanon when it prepared to fight a counterinsurgency but instead fought a "hybrid war" of mixed major combat operations and counterinsurgency in Lebanon in 2006. It uses the lenses of Israeli Defense Policy, Israeli Defense Force doctrine, training, and officer educational system to determine why the IDF was defeated during its 2006 war with Hezbollah despite of its recent counterinsurgency and counterterrorism experiences in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

As the IDF prepares for its next war, a balanced approach between low intensity conflict and high intensity conflict provides the greatest flexibility to hedge against an uncertain future. While a general purpose Army may not solve any one problem specifically, it will get close enough which will enable necessary adaptation. The force is required to effectively apply combined arms formations and work jointly with government agencies. The Israeli experience in its 2006 war in Lebanon is a reminder that it is better to prepare for a conventional conflict and fight an unconventional conflict if required. This prescription accounts for the following two assumptions: unconventional conflict generally is longer in duration and allows more time for leaders to make the required adaptations. Unconventional war is likely but not of an existential nature. The IDF cannot afford to choose between preparing for unconventional or conventional threats but rather find a balance which will allow for adaptation depending on the nature of the conflict.

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Introduction

Israel's history is, in many ways defined by conflict with its Arab neighbors. Since the inception of the state in 1948, Israel has fought six major wars and experienced persistent uprisings in its occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.¹ Historically, owing to its geopolitical circumstance and lack of strategic depth Israel used a dominant military to swiftly defeat its enemies in an effort to negotiate better terms of peace.² In 2006 Hezbollah, a non-state actor, operating inside of Lebanon, with support from Iran defeated Israel in a thirty-four day war that was characterized by the employment of "hybrid" warfare.³ Why did Hezbollah defeat Israel, one of the most advanced military organizations in the world? This monograph proposes that Hezbollah defeated the Israel Defense Force (IDF) in 2006 because the IDF had focused on low intensity conflict with counter-terrorism aspects as it did throughout the First and Second Intifadas.

There are four reasons why the IDF was unprepared for its war with Hezbollah in 2006. First, Israel's Defense Policy was established after the Yom Kippur war in 1973 to fight conventional threats and did not change when Israel's primary threat became non-conventional. Israel's defense policy was based on deterring conventional threats from neighboring states through the use of a dominant military force.⁴ Based on Israel's experience in its six previous wars, Israel determined that its lack of strategic depth meant its defense forces were required to fight and win wars quickly. The paradox of this strategy was manifested in Israel's twenty years after its last major war with Lebanon in 1982. The IDF was confronted with successive

¹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Israel Wars," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Modern+History/Israel+wars/> (accessed 9 March 2011).

² Ze'ev Schiff, *A History of the Israeli Army 1874 To The Present* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985).

³ Matt Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 6-9, 22.

⁴ Israeli Defense Forces, "Doctrine," http://docer.idf.il.IDF/English/about/doctrine/main_doctrine.htm (accessed 1 January 2011).

Palestinian uprisings and terrorism primarily inside Israel used an operational approach geared toward low intensity conflict. Israel's leadership did not consider the Palestinian problem an existential threat and therefore never adapted its strategic thinking. The IDF adapted to low intensity conflict but failed to maintain skills critical to fight aspects of a conventional war. Additionally, the IDF believed its past dominant victories against its neighbors were enough to deter any conventional enemy.⁵

Second, from 2005 to 2006 the IDF did not train its active Army formations to fight a conventional war. Falling into the syndrome of planning and preparing to fight the last war, the IDF defense budget reflected an over reliance on stand-off precision munitions delivered from aerial platforms requiring high fidelity intelligence to determine target packages.⁶ The Israeli Army's active and reserve soldiers did not execute any major training exercise focused on conventional war fighting skills for five years previous to the 2006 war against Hezbollah.⁷ Battalion sized units and smaller did not conduct combined arms maneuver training prior to the IDF leadership's employment of ground forces in the 2006 war.

Moreover, twenty years of low intensity conflict informed the IDF's war fighting doctrine. From 2001 to the 2006 war the IDF's doctrine neglected high intensity conflict. Subsequently, just prior to the start of the 2006 war the IDF adopted a doctrine informed by Systemic Operational Design (SOD). In an effort to prevent high casualty rates the IDF's doctrine relied heavily on stand-off precision fires. This was a manifestation of Israeli society's casualty-averse culture.⁸

⁵ Stuart Cohen, *Israel and its Army: From Cohesion to Confusion*, (New York: Routledge, 2008) 37.

⁶ Johnson et al., *Preparing and Training for the Full Spectrum of Military Challenges*, 205-206; Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 64.

⁷ Captain Daniel Helmer, "Not Quite Counterinsurgency: A Cautionary Tale for US Forces Based on Israel's Operation Change of Direction." *Armor*, (January-February 2007), 9. This is based on the author's interview with Yaakov Kaatz, an Israeli journalist and author.

⁸ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 23.

Finally, the IDF valued officer experience over education. This created challenges for junior Israeli army officers and inhibited their ability to adapt from fighting a low intensity conflict style of warfare to fighting against a conventional or hybrid threat. The officer selection and training process was independent of civilian schooling and degree completion. Israel's society requires compulsory service beginning at the age of 18.⁹ It is difficult for Israeli soldiers selected to serve as officers to earn bachelor degrees because of the officer career progression model and the value the IDF's leadership place on experience. The IDF greatly values on-the-job training over a broad educational experience for officers serving at the battalion and below.¹⁰

The IDF failed to defeat Hezbollah in 2006, because of a defense policy that was established to defeat conventional threats from neighboring states and did not accommodate the threat of a non-state actor operating inside of a state and sponsored by a different state. The IDF's training prior to its 2006 war was focused on low intensity conflict and combatting terrorism rather than preparing for aspects of conventional war and hybrid war. The IDF's war fighting doctrine was in flux and mainly focused on a low intensity conflict environment. Prior to 2006, The IDF's officer developmental system valued experience rather than a broad education causing junior officers difficulty adapting to an enemy that fought not in the same manner as the previous adversary.

The purpose of this monograph is to identify the significant lessons the IDF learned during its journey from 2000-2009. The 2006 Israeli War with Hezbollah was the result of a defense force ill prepared to face a hybrid threat. The monograph focuses on those reasons the IDF was ill prepared and the resultant actions during its thirty four day war against Hezbollah.

⁹ Reuven Gal, *A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier* (West Port, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 35.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

Literature Review

This paper answers the primary question of why Hezbollah defeated the IDF in Israel's 2006 war with Lebanon. Key components to answering this question are how did Israeli policy evolved after twenty years of fighting a low intensity conflict against Palestinians in the occupied areas, the evolution of IDF training and from 1983 to 2006, how two Intifadas (uprisings) shaped IDF war fighting doctrine, and the impacts of the IDF's officer education system as it relates junior officer adaptability. Several books, journal articles and periodicals are available with reference to Israeli lessons learned during the 2006 war with Hezbollah. These works can be divided into two categories: those written by Israeli authors to include military personnel and interviews and those written by U.S. institutions as an effort to learn from this conflict. All of these works provide valuable information for the purpose of this monograph.

First looking at Israeli self-assessment, there is a strong disagreement between military leaders and other Israeli government officials about of IDF performance and the causes of its failures. As expected, The IDF conducted the most specific and dedicated assessments, but these assessments often remove blame from the IDF and military leaders. Two reviews of IDF lessons learned in the 2006 war provided background information.

The first was the Winograd Commission Report. The report categorized the 2nd Lebanon war as a significant missed opportunity. The war ended without clear military victory against a much smaller para-military organization which successfully resisted a much larger force that had complete air superiority, among other technological advantages. Palestinian rocket attacks aimed at Israel's civilian population continued throughout the war and Israel did not effectively stop them. Life in the affected regions of Israel was seriously disrupted, with many civilians either

leaving their homes temporarily or virtually living in shelters. 30 days into a 34 day war Israel initiated a large scale ground offensive; the offensive did not result in military gains.¹¹

Some of the troubling findings revealed that there were serious Israeli political and military shortcomings. The shortcomings included preparedness, decision-making and performance in the IDF and strategic thinking and planning in senior Israeli the political organizations. The decision to react immediately to the kidnapping of IDF soldiers limited Israel's range of options to only two, a stand-off war or an invasion. Israel went to war before it had decided which option to use and military and political echelons failed to have a serious discussion of the options or decide between them. Even so, until the first week of August, Israel was unprepared to launch a large-scale ground operation.¹² As a result, Israel was 'dragged' into a ground operation and did employ its military force effectively. Israel did not achieve political goals because of military successes.¹³

The second review is Avi Kober's analysis of the Second Lebanon War.¹⁴ In this review Kober was critical of the IDF's transition from low intensity conflict which he characterizes as "post heroic" warfare to conventional or hybrid warfare which Hezbollah employed. He criticized the IDF's assumption that a reliance on airpower was enough to decide the outcome of the war. He also analyzes the IDF's employment of special forces units, Israel's belief in near-

¹¹ Council on Foreign Relations, "Winograd Commission Final Report," Council on Foreign Relations published January 2008.
http://www.cfr.org/publication/15385/winograd_commission_final_report.html (accessed 15 January 2011), paragraph 11.

¹² Council on Foreign Relations, "Winograd Commission Final Report," paragraph 13.

¹³ Ibid., Paragraph 17.

¹⁴ Avi Kober. "The Second Lebanon War. "Perspectives: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. Perspective Paper no. 22 (28 September 2006). 2-3

perfect real time intelligence, “controlling” instead of conquering territory, and the inadequate training of both regular army ground formations and reserve units.¹⁵

Kober argues the IDF violated basic military principles because the IDF did not open the war with quick flanking and encircling operations by taking over northern parts of Southern Lebanon. He asserts that an indirect approach, as Sun Tzu suggests, would have caused confusion in the Hezbollah ranks and brought about its psychological collapse much better than the Clausewitzian direct approach which helped Hezbollah recover and stand strong.¹⁶

Lastly, Kober argues despite tactical achievements, the IDF did not achieve a battlefield decision against Hezbollah. He argues that Israel’s unrealistic war objectives (e.g. destruction of Hezbollah’s infrastructure in South Lebanon, its disarmament, and return of the hostages) raised the level of expectations, and, when they were not achieved, deepened the sense of IDF failure. Kober’s review is relevant because it offers a perspective of the conflict external to the IDF or the Israeli government.

A significant number of U.S. institutions have also conducted studies on the Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006 and analyzed this conflict as a means of driving U.S. policy and actions. The majority of these publications focus on strategic level issues with tactical implications as opposed to Israeli reviews that focus on operational level issues with tactical and strategic implications.

Anthony Cordesman of the Center of Strategic and International Studies conducted a thorough study of lessons learned from the Israeli-Hezbollah war. In “Preliminary Lessons of the Israeli-Hezbollah War,” Cordesman identifies several critical areas that led to the Israeli inability to defeat Hezbollah. In his paper, Cordesman examines how limitations placed on a state (Israel)

¹⁵ Kober. “The Second Lebanon War.” Perspectives: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. Perspective Paper no. 22 (28 September 2006). 2-3.

¹⁶ Ibid., 4.

when opposing a non-state threat (Hezbollah) prevented Israel from defeating Hezbollah. He specially examines proportionality, collateral damage, media and limits placed on states or rational actors in war. This paper provides one of the more thorough and combat focused assessments published.¹⁷

The United States Army, through the Combat Studies Institute (CSI) at Fort Leavenworth and the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College, have published studies focused on capturing the military lessons learned by the IDF as a means of improving U.S. Policy and military capability. In Occasional Paper 26 of the Long War Series, “*We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War*” the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth examines intricate tactical and strategic details that affected Israel’s preparation and execution of the 2006 war with Lebanon. In this paper, Matt Mathews concluded that Israel’s doctrine was focused on defeating the Palestinians, a more conventional insurgent threat, and was inadequate for defeating Hezbollah, who employs “hybrid” capabilities. This is one of the few similarities between Israeli issues raised in the literature and issues raised by U.S. authors and organizations conducting reviews.¹⁸ On the same note, in “The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and Future of Warfare: Implications for the Army and Defense Policy,” The Strategic Studies Institute focused on Hezbollah’s “Hybrid” capability. This study highlights how Hezbollah did not perform exceptionally well at the traditional insurgent tactics of guerrilla warfare, nor did it perform exceptionally well at conventional operations. Rather Hezbollah’s success against Israel was owed to its ability to apply both methods of warfare simultaneously against an enemy whose doctrine left them unprepared for a hybrid threat.¹⁹

¹⁷ Anthony Cordesman, “Preliminary ‘Lessons’ of the Israeli-Hezbollah War,” *Center for Strategic International Studies*. (Revised: 17 August 2006). http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/060817_isr_hez_lessons.pdf(accessed 15 December, 2010), 1-38.

¹⁸ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 18-23.

¹⁹ Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey Friedman. *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy*. (Washington, DC: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008). 12.

The relevance of the 2006 Israeli-Lebanon War continues to provide an impetus for substantial research and analysis. Variances of perspectives about the war and IDF have created a rich texture to conduct significant inquiries that lead to various conclusions about the lessons learned from the conflict. The authors aforementioned are representative of the greater body of writers who have contributed to the subject and therefore reveal the gap between the Israeli perception and the United States' perception of the important lessons learned from the war.²⁰

Methodology

The methodology for this monograph consists of historical research based in primary and secondary sources. These include regional publications such as periodicals and literature published by the IDF, the government of Israel, and Hezbollah and independent sources that provide insight of the greater attitudes and perceptions of each actor to frame the operational context of the 2006 Lebanese war. The methodology supports the research for this monograph on the IDF in the areas of defense policy, war fighting doctrine, training, and leader education prior to, during, and after the 2006 Second Lebanon War.

Israel's security situation demands that it prepare for multiple types of warfare. It must prepare for low intensity conflict mainly focused on the West Bank and Gaza. The IDF is required to prepare for high intensity conflict against neighboring states. Lastly, the IDF must address non-state actors like Hezbollah and Hamas. The First and Second Intifadas affected

²⁰ Authors used as part of the literature review for this paper include: Stephen Biddle and Jeffery Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future Of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy*, Sergio Cantignani, *Israel Counter-Insurgency Intifadas: Dilemmas of a Conventional Army*, Stuart Cohen, *Israel and Its Army*, Anthony Cordesman, "Preliminary 'Lessons' of the Israeli-Hezbollah War", Reuven Gal, *A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier*, Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History*, Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *34 Days, Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon*, Avi Kober, "The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?", Sarah Kreps, "The 2006 Lebanon War: Lessons Learned." David Makovsky and Jeffrey White, "Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War: A Preliminary Assessment", Matt Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, Ze'ev Schiff, *A History of the Israeli Army, 1874 To The Present*, Yehuda Wegman, *Strategic Assessment: The Struggle for Situation Awareness in the IDF*.

Israeli perceptions about future warfare prior to the 2006 Lebanon War. The 1999 war in Kosovo, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) spurred a belief in the Israeli defense establishment that stand-off attack by fires (principally air power) was an effective means to affect the will of the adversary and determine conflict outcomes. This approach also seemed to promise lower IDF casualties, less collateral damage, and budgetary savings.²¹

The second critical event shaping the IDF's adaptation of warfare was the second al-Aqsa intifada, which began in late 2000. The second al-Aqsa intifada forced the Israeli Army to focus on operations to stop terrorist attacks inside of Israel. Third, the U.S. presence in Iraq following OIF, coupled with low threats from neighbors Jordan and Egypt, encouraged a belief that Israel's dominant military capability was enough to deter an enemy from engaging the IDF in a high intensity conflict style of warfare and that the primary role of ground forces was low intensity conflict.²²

The findings of the Israeli government's Winograd Commission showed the problem this kind of thinking had caused Israel:

"Some of the political and military elites in Israel have reached the conclusion that Israel is beyond the era of wars. It had enough military might and superiority to deter others from declaring war against her; these would also be sufficient to send a painful reminder to anyone who seemed to be undeterred; since Israel did not intend to initiate war, the conclusion was that the main challenge facing the land forces would be low intensity asymmetrical conflicts."²³

This view of Israel's future security environment fundamentally shaped the mindset of Israeli military and political leaders. The net result was significant cuts in defense spending for

²¹ Biddle and Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy*. 13.

²² Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008). 627.

²³ The Winograd Report: The Main Findings of the Winograd Partial Report on the Second Lebanon War, Hareetz.com, January 5, 2007 (accessed 17 January 2011). <http://www.haareyz.com/hasen/spages/854051.html>

ground forces, both regular and reserve, that affected training, procurement, and logistical readiness, particular for reserve ground units and active heavy units.²⁴ The active Israeli Army focused on stopping terrorist attacks, using targeted assassinations (including air strikes). The Israelis were successful at low intensity conflict in the years before the Second Lebanon War, suppressing the Intifada and dramatically lowering Israeli casualties or ending suicide bombings inside Israel. Unfortunately for Israel, as operations in Lebanon in 2006 would show, the Israeli Army's almost exclusive focus on low intensity conflict resulted in a military that was largely incapable of joint combined arms fire and maneuver. Furthermore, operations in Gaza and the West Bank were highly centralized small-unit actions that were conducted almost exclusively by active infantry formations and special operations forces. The clear imperative was "zero casualties to our forces."²⁵ The IDF could wait for the best time and place to strike.

Tank and mechanized infantry units played little role in these operations. Armored unit training was neglected, because they were deemed largely irrelevant in low intensity conflict. Furthermore, training and exercise for division and higher units were infrequent. Additionally, the IDF posted the best brigade commanders to deal with low intensity conflict threats further incentivizing the focus on low intensity conflict. Finally, Air Force tactical air control capabilities were removed out of ground brigades. This is particularly important in the IDF, because the Israeli Air Force owns almost all fixed-wing and rotary wing aircraft; the Israeli Army has only small unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV).²⁶

The second step in this methodology is to explore the IDF during the 2006 Second Lebanon War. In Lebanon, the Israelis faced terrain and enemy conditions for which they were

²⁴ Sergio Catignani, *Israel Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas: Dilemmas of a Conventional Army*. (New York: 2008, Routledge), 81.

²⁵ Yehuda Wegmen, "The Struggle for Situation Awareness in the IDF." *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 10, No 4, February 2008, p 23.

²⁶ Catignani, 83.

not prepared. An Israeli journalist, writing about the war, noted that in the years preceding the operation in Lebanon, “at no stage was an Israeli unit required to face down an enemy force of a size larger than an unskilled infantry squad.”²⁷ Hezbollah was trained and organized into small units and armed with sophisticated weapons including anti-tank guided missiles, RPGs, rockets, mortars, mines, improvised explosive devices, and man portable air defense systems. Hezbollah also occupied prepared defensive positions in Lebanon’s difficult hilly terrain and urban areas. Initially, the IDF tried to decide the issue with stand-off air and artillery attacks, but this did not stop the rocket attacks on Israel, nor result in the return of the soldiers whose capture had precipitated the war.²⁸ Eventually, IDF ground forces entered Lebanon, where they had real difficulties. One of the key problems was that Hezbollah presented a high intensity challenge that required joint combined arms fire and maneuver, a combat mindset different from the Palestinian terrorist, even though Hezbollah did not have large formations.

Hezbollah was a disciplined and well trained adversary, operating in cohesive small units and occupying defensible terrain. It also possessed the capability for stand-off fires (anti-tank guided missiles, mortars, and rockets).²⁹ Thus defeating Hezbollah required joint combined arms fire and maneuver, something the IDF was largely incapable of executing in 2006. Finally, the IDF’s highly centralized command and control system, which was effective confronting the intifada, proved problematic against Hezbollah. During the Second Lebanon War the IDF was not prepared for ground operations when stand-off strikes did not force Hezbollah to meet Israeli demands.³⁰

²⁷ Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 45.

²⁸ Mathews, 31.

²⁹ Kober. “The Second Lebanon War.” Perspectives: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. Perspective Paper no. 22 (28 September 2006). 7.

³⁰ Ibid., 7.

Finally the research methodology explores the IDF after the 2006 Lebanon War. In the aftermath of the war, the IDF underwent intense internal and external scrutiny. Regarding the military, the Winograd Commission is very specific:

“The [chief of staff] did not alert the political echelon to the serious shortcomings in the preparedness and fitness of the armed forces for an extensive ground operation, if that became necessary. In addition, he did not clarify that the military assessments and analyses of the arena was that there was high probability that a military strike against Hezbollah would make such a move [ground operations] necessary.”³¹

Findings such as the one above prompted the Israeli government to execute significant personnel changes within the IDF’s leadership, organizational changes to the Israeli Army’s combat units, and focus on more conventional warfare doctrine and training to balance the IDF’s capabilities against future hybrid threats.

The IDF set about correcting the deficiencies identified in the Second Lebanon War, particularly in its ground forces. Several generals resigned, including the chief of staff, Lieutenant General Dan Halutz (the only air Force officer ever to serve as the IDF chief of staff).³² Most important, the IDF shifted its training and equipping, for both reserve and active forces. Most important, the IDF shifted its training focus from low intensity conflict to high intensity conflict and an approach that emphasized joint combined arms fire and maneuver training.

The IDF also rethought the role of heavy forces. Finally, procedures to integrate artillery and air fires into maneuver brigades were adopted and practiced, and air controllers were again assigned to maneuver brigades.³³

³¹ Council on Foreign Relations, “Winograd Commission Final Report,” paragraph 31.

³² Ibid., paragraph 37.

³³ Kober. “The Second Lebanon War.” Perspectives: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. Perspective Paper no. 22 (28 September 2006). 8.

1973-2006 Israeli Defense Force Policy: A Policy for Conventional Threats

The first reason Hezbollah defeated the IDF in 2006 is because Israel's defense policy was based on deterring state threats with a conventional army capable of dominating short conflicts.³⁴ Ze'ev Schiff's book *A History of the Israeli Army* succinctly details the historic strategy of the IDF.³⁵

Israeli defense policy encompasses several themes. These themes have been manifestations of Israeli culture and societal thinking with respect to Israel's geo-political situation in the Middle-East. The themes that resonate Israeli defense policy are the few against the many, a strategy of attrition, a war of national survival, geographic pressure, and the time factor. The few against the many is the notion that Israel's Arab neighbors surround and outnumber them. This means Israel believes it will always face military forces numerically superior to its own forces. The IDF believed its previous dominant victories over its neighbors would deter conventional aggression from enemies with numerical superiority.

A strategy of attrition characterizes the importance of Israel inflicting unacceptable losses on its enemies to bolster its national defense strategy. A war of survival refers to surrounding Arab states (and now non-state actors) intent to destroy Israel as a state and as a nation. Historically, Israel viewed all threats as existential. During the 2006 war Israel did not initially view Hezbollah as an existential threat.³⁶

Israel's small population makes it extremely sensitive to casualties. Israel possesses many geographical disadvantages: the inability to trade space for time during a defense, limited early warning due to its lack of strategic and operational depth, and a vulnerability to naval

³⁴ Ze'ev Schiff, *A History of the Israeli Army 1874 To The Present* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985). 19.

³⁵ Ibid., 23.

³⁶ Wegman, 25.

operations threatening sea lines of communication and naval blockade. The factor of time is a concept that Israel will need to rapidly conclude war and maintain a position of strength from which to bargain for advantageous political settlements. The concept of rapid military victory and strategic advantage is based on an assumption that United Nations will intervene early during a conflict with Israel and one of its Arab neighbors. The supporting ideas of Israel's limited resources of territory and population contribute to the assumption of the United Nations intervening early during any Arab-Israeli conflict.³⁷ These ideas remained consistent prior to and through the 2006 war.³⁸

In 2006, the Israeli basic defense policy was Israel would remain defensive at the strategic level and not seek territorial gains. Israel would avoid war through political and diplomatic means, maintain a credible deterrent posture, prevent the escalation of incidents and conflict, seek decisive and advantageous outcomes of conflict quickly, combat terrorism, and maintain a very low casualty ratio.³⁹

From 1973 to 2006 the Israeli defense policy possessed interesting peculiarities. Conducting quick and decisive wars leave very little room for error or miscalculation at the political, strategic, operational, or tactical level. The opening events of a conflict between Israel and its enemies require precise execution and coordination in an environment that lacks both strategic and operational depth. The lack of strategic and operational depth amplifies Israel's sensitivity to casualties. This all means that the IDF must not falter in its strategic planning or

³⁷ Schiff, 115.

³⁸ Ibid., 116.

³⁹ Israeli Defense Forces, "Doctrine." http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/about/doctrine/main_doctrine.htm (accessed 1 January 2011).

tactical execution of its operational plans. The IDF will not possess much time for adaptation or reframing.⁴⁰

During Israel's 2006 War in Lebanon, Hezbollah, a semi-military organization of a few thousand men resisted, for a few weeks, the strongest army in the Middle East, which enjoyed full air superiority, size, and technological advantages.⁴¹ The barrage of rockets aimed at Israel's civilian population lasted throughout the war, and the IDF did not provide effective response to it. The fabric of life under the fire was seriously disrupted, and many civilians either left their home temporarily or spent their time in shelters. After a long period of using only stand-off fire power and limited ground activities, Israel initiated a large scale ground offensive, very close to the Security Council resolution imposing a cease fire. This offensive did not result in military gains.⁴²

At approximately 8:07 a.m. local time on July 12, 2006 following a Hezbollah ambush of an IDF patrol, Hezbollah fighters kidnapped two wounded Israeli soldiers and carried them across the Lebanon border. Within two hours of Hezbollah's kidnapping of the IDF soldiers, the IDF initiated a series of immediate and localized planned contingency designed to rescue the abducted soldiers. All of these operations failed.⁴³

Beginning the night of July 12th, the IDF initiated an air campaign aimed to both render Hezbollah militarily ineffective and compel them to release the captured soldiers. To execute the air campaign, the Israeli Air Force planned on attacking Lebanese infrastructure, Hezbollah military and political leadership, Hezbollah rocket positions, and command and control nodes.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Schiff, 122.

⁴¹ Council on Foreign relations, Winograd Commission Final Report," Council on Foreign Relations published January 30, 2008. Paragraph 14.

⁴² Ibid., paragraph 14.

⁴³ Kober, "The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War," 10.

⁴⁴ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 37.

On July 17, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert articulated the objectives of the war in a speech to Knesset. The objectives were: the return of the hostages, Ehud (Udi) Goldwasser and Eldad Regev [the two captured Israeli Soldiers], a complete cease fire, deployment of the Lebanese army in all of southern Lebanon, expulsion of Hezbollah from the area and fulfillment of the United Nations Resolution 1559⁴⁵

Israeli defense policy remained consistent with Israel's post 1973 view of the world. Neighboring states posed existential threats to Israel through potential military action.⁴⁶ Over a period of twenty years the IDF adapted to a threat that transformed from conventional style threat to a threat geared for low intensity conflict and terrorist tactics. Israel did not adjust its cultural and social perspectives toward the changing threat and therefore did not make any wholesale changes to its defense policy. This ultimately resulted in the IDF slowly transforming into an organization that was prepared for a threat similar to the Palestinians which it had faced over two decades rather than a threat that adapted to fight a mix of low intensity and high intensity conflict.

2000-2006 Israeli Defense Force Doctrine: The Influence of Systemic Operational Design and Effects Based Operations

Most IDF doctrine used during 2006 remains classified. Several sources indicate that low intensity conflict constituted a significant portion of the IDF doctrine.⁴⁷ Low intensity conflict served as a way to conceptualize conflict that informed doctrine. The IDF's doctrine's greatest fault may have been its characterizing a conflict by the intensity level. In perception this minimizes the notion that a low intensity conflict can involve aspects of high intensity conflict

⁴⁵ Ehud Olmert. Prime Minister of Israel, "Address to Knesset by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, 17 July 2006," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2006?Address+to+the+Knesset+by+PM+Olmert+17-Jul-2006.htm> (accessed 8 February, 2011).

⁴⁶ Catignani, 83.

⁴⁷ Kober, "The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War," 33; Johnson et al., 207.

aspects. It is probable that characterizing the conflict as low intensity influenced the IDF war fighting doctrine.

From 1996-2005, the IDF revised its doctrine. The IDF adopted a new doctrine just prior to the Second Lebanon War. Two ideas influenced this doctrinal revision. One was the relatively new concept of Effects Based Operations (EBO) which the United States had recently adopted. The second concept was Systemic Operation Design (SOD) a way of thinking to understand and develop approaches to war fighting.⁴⁸ The combination of these two concepts resulted in a poorly understood and ineffective new doctrine that was unevenly socialized throughout the IDF. Additionally, the IDF adopted this doctrine immediately before the Second Lebanon War. There was neither time to educate those who would implement the doctrine nor time to train using it. Partially because of the pressure from Hezbollah and perhaps because of their reluctance to get involved in another war in Lebanon, the IDF adopted a version of EBO that relied heavily on precision firepower and information dominance. This approach appealed to Israel because of its relatively small population, the enemies surrounding it, and Israel's "persistent" conflict with the Palestinians.⁴⁹

The true Israeli doctrinal evolution began with the establishment of the Operational Theory Research Institute (OTRI) under Brigadier General (retired) Shimon Naveh in 1995 and continued until 2005. This evolution in operational thinking was initiated from a desire among some senior members of the IDF to "move beyond tactical virtuosity and develop a systemic approach to military operational art that aimed at linking the utilization of military force with the achievement of Israel's national interests, political goals, and strategic objectives."⁵⁰ OTRI

⁴⁸ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 23.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁰ Shimon Naveh, *Operational Art and the IDF: A critical Study of a c Command Culture*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment, prepared for the Director of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense (September 30, 2007), 1.

sought to translate Israel's historic tactical dominance into strategic success. Naveh and his cohorts believed Israel needed to consider a new approach if it were to win strategically in modern conflicts.⁵¹

After studying the evolution of operational art, Naveh determined that systemically the IDF possessed an inability to appropriately link tactics and strategy—the essence of operational art. Naveh and his colleagues” turned to emerging decision-making theories based on systems and complexity theory to develop a new approach to operational art and operational design. The result was Systemic Operational Design (SOD).⁵² According to Naveh, although SOD was a critical component of the new doctrine, the IDF failed to properly integrate SOD into the IDF's doctrine as a whole.⁵³ Naveh attributes this failure partially the IDF senior staff's lack of understanding with respect to SOD, but primarily to a flawed socialization process, internal IDF jealousies and competing agendas—in short bureaucratic resistance to change.⁵⁴

The new Israeli doctrine was signed by the Chief of the IDF General Staff, Lieutenant General Dan Halutz in April 2006. “Many IDF officers thought the entire program of [of SOD] elitist, while others could not understand why the old system of simple orders and terminology was replaced with a design that few could understand.”⁵⁵ According to Naveh SOD was not

⁵¹ Ibid., 77-78, 81.

⁵² LTC L. Craig Dalton, “Systemic Operational Design: Epistemological Bumpf or the Way Ahead for Operational Design?” A Monograph, School of Advance Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, (Fort Leavenworth, KS AY 05-06), http://cgsc.dcmhost.com/cdm4/item_viewr.php?CISROOT=/p4013coll3&CISOPTR=783&CISBOX=1&R EC-1, accessed (January 25, 2011), 27.

⁵³ Matt Mathews, “An Interview with BG(Ret) Shimon Naveh” (Operational Leadership Experiences in The Global War on Terrorism, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1 November 2007). <http://cgsc.dcmhost.com/cgi-bin/shoefile.ece?CISROOT=/p4014coll3&CISOPTR=754&filename=755.pdf> (accessed 25 January 2011), 4.

⁵⁴ Naveh, *Operational Art and the IDF*, 3-6.

⁵⁵ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 25.

intended to serve as a type of replacement for doctrine or planning but rather to serve as predecessor to, an addition to, or to work cooperatively with the planning process.⁵⁶

Although the doctrine that General Halutz approved is classified, what is known of it provides a fair understanding of the IDF's general approach to warfare. According to Israeli officers who were familiar with the doctrine, land forces were to focus on low intensity conflict. The doctrine also combined the concepts of both EBO and SOD and relied on precision stand-off fires, primarily delivered from aerial platforms as the main way of conducting war.⁵⁷ Given the new doctrine's complexity, it was unfortunate for the Israeli Army that it found itself in the midst of embracing an evolutionary doctrinal change while employing it during a conflict for which it was not practically prepared.

The doctrine General Halutz signed in April 2006 was based on Systemic Operational Design (SOD). Some, including Brigadier General (ret) Naveh, later argued that the doctrine failed to make the necessary links to the tactical level, it inappropriately addressed its purpose of serving as an overarching document that addressed everything, and it failed to readily understandable to those who would implement it.⁵⁸ The basic problem in this case is either the doctrine was designed to operate at the operational level and should have so stated, or it should have established links to the tactical level.

Maybe SOD was not intended to function or have application at the tactical level in the manner that the IDF implemented it. Instead, perhaps it was intended to promote understanding of operational campaigns, and serve as a pre-cursor to planning, rather than to serve as a means to

⁵⁶ LTC Dalton, "Systemic Operational Design," 26.

⁵⁷ Johnson et al., *Preparing and Training for the Full Spectrum of Military Challenges*, 207.

⁵⁸ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 26-27. This characterization is based on Mathews' interviews with Shimon Naveh and Ron Tira who is an author, former Israeli Air Force (IAF) fighter pilot, former section chief of the IAF intelligence division ("Lamdan") and reservist in the IAF Campaign Planning Department.

transmit orders.⁵⁹ These comments made by BG Naveh suggest that SOD was intended to generate understanding, operational concepts, and guiding principles rather a replacement for a doctrine upon which orders are based.

Although Kober and Mathews blamed the Israeli Army failure in the Second Lebanon War to varying degrees on the adoption of new doctrine and SOD in particular, the IDF adopted its new doctrine so late that it is likely SOD had little effect on the force's overall performance.⁶⁰ Since it was not properly socialized or disseminated throughout the IDF, it did not receive the primary blame for the IDF's failure in the war.

The IDF's doctrine was certainly important however, the operational approach mattered more than the details of the doctrine. More than the eventual doctrine itself that was adopted, the slow migration towards EBO and reliance on precision weapons and air power is what ultimately hampered the Army rather than a poor doctrine. The doctrine certainly contributed to some degree but the evidence does not demonstrate it was the critical factor.

Following Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah began preparing for its next conflict and it considered Israel its next opponent. Drawing from its experience fighting Israeli forces in Lebanon in 2006, Hezbollah developed plans to incorporate both guerilla and high intensity conflict aspects of warfare.⁶¹ Hezbollah based its preparation for the 2006 war on a few assumptions about how Israel would approach future conflict which turned out to be remarkably accurate. First Hezbollah assumed Israel was casualty averse—both in terms of its defense forces and the Israeli civilian population. From that premise Hezbollah further estimated

⁵⁹ Naveh, 81.

⁶⁰ Matt Mathews and Avi Kober. See Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 61-63. See Kober, "The Israeli Defense forces in the Second Lebanon War", 35-37.

⁶¹ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 22.

that in any future conflict, Israel would likely rely on air power and precision based munitions therefore reducing the need to employ casualty vulnerable ground forces.⁶²

When Hezbollah considered what these assumptions meant in relation to their own plans, they determined they would have to somehow influence Israeli society's perception that the IDF was not capable of stopping indirect fire attacks of Israeli settlements. It planned to target northern Israeli settlements with rockets that required protection from Israeli strengths—precision firepower and aerial delivered munitions. In order to protect its rockets, Hezbollah developed a firing system that minimized exposure of rocket positions and hid their rocket munitions in an extensive tunnel and bunker system.⁶³ Hezbollah ground forces protected these rockets and their launch sites through prepared extensive defensive positions, an established advanced command and control system and the use of anti-tank weapons.⁶⁴ Similarly, Hezbollah determined it would protect its command and control apparatus from the IDF's aerial delivered precision munitions and ground forces fire power. It established “a network of autonomous cells with minimal inter-cell systemic interaction.”⁶⁵ As a result Hezbollah lacked high payoff targets—it did not possess the command and control nodes that the IDF could target with precision munitions.⁶⁶ Hezbollah further enhanced the effectiveness of their defensive tactics locating their bunkers and rockets close to and inside densely populated areas; this enhanced Hezbollah's attempt to prosecute a successful information campaign.⁶⁷

⁶² Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 16.

⁶³ Ibid., 17-18. The firing system included the use of timers as well as separate elements to move, set-up and fire the rockets.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 17-18.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁶ Sarah E. Kreps, “The 2006 Lebanon War: Lessons Learned,” *Parameters* 37, no 1(Spring 2007): 79.

⁶⁷ Cordesman, “Preliminary ‘Lessons’ of the Israeli Hezbollah War,” 10. Non-state actors like Hezbollah typically plan on using civilian shields in a variety of ways when facing a more powerful enemy because this is one of the few ways they can counter their more powerful opponent's advantages. If the more powerful opponent harms these civilian shield, non-state actors will use this to win the media war.

Hezbollah effectively generated an operational approach that was consistent with both its logic and its capabilities. Hezbollah's operational approach was feasible, suitable, and acceptable to its leadership. It had a reasonably accurate understanding of the enemy, itself, and the environment in which the future conflict would likely occur. Its operational plan presented the IDF with the options of conducting a sustained ground campaign potentially resulting in a large number of casualties or allowing sustained but likely lower levels of civilian casualties due to rocket attacks.⁶⁸

Following Israel's initial bombardment and the destruction of some Hezbollah long range rocket positions along its border with Lebanon, Hezbollah fired long range rockets into northern Israeli cities in retaliation.⁶⁹ It subsequently began launching its short range Katyusha rockets into northern Israeli settlements. The Israeli air campaign and its use precision guided munitions failed to affect the daily launch of the enemy's indirect fire. These rockets which landed in northern Israel terrorized the Israeli citizenry.⁷⁰

"We found serious failings and flaws in the quality of preparedness, decision-making and performance in the IDF high command, especially in the Army. These weaknesses resulted in part from inadequacies of preparedness and strategic and operational planning which go back long before the Second Lebanon war."⁷¹ BG Naveh identified the same inadequacies in the IDF as early as the mid-1990's. IDF doctrine was revised to correct the deficiency in operational understanding and yet the IDF failed to link tactical actions to strategic objectives to achieve political aims.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁹ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 38.

⁷⁰ Kober, "The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War", 4.

⁷¹ Council on Foreign Relations, "Winograd Commission Final Report," paragraph 12. Only two of the five points from the paragraph twelve are quoted here for relevance.

Israel received significant internal and external criticism for its lack of force employment acumen with respect to the strategic, operational, and tactical level of war during this conflict. The IDF was maligned for its lack of imagination at the operational level, a general lack of conventional war fighting skill, and apparent incompetence at combined arms operations. There remains debate about who eventually won the tactical battle from the battalion echelon and below.

Understanding the importance and necessity of intelligence, Israel expanded significant effort towards gaining and employing solid intelligence during this conflict. The Israelis required accurate intelligence to effectively employ Effects Based Operations. However, the Israeli understanding of their intelligence may have been inaccurate. Part of the Israelis' challenge stemmed from a misguided reliance on technology and what they could reasonably gain from it. Another IDF challenge was its human intelligence network which was effective in their previous conflict with the Palestinians, had significant shortcomings in Lebanon against Hezbollah.

Although the Israeli intelligence apparatus tracked the in- flux of various rockets, anti-tank weapons, and small arms into Lebanon, the Israelis did not predict how Hezbollah would fight nor how they would use these weapons.⁷² Whether this happened at the strategic or at the tactical level is immaterial. The IDF understood, at least functionally, Hezbollah's capability. The IDF was aware of the types of anti-tank weapons that Hezbollah had and the capabilities of those weapons. Predicting what the enemy will do is difficult. It did not appear that the Israeli's considered Hezbollah would fight differently from the way the Palestinians did nor even Hezbollah themselves would fight differently than it had in previous conflicts.

Additionally, intelligence that relies primarily on technology of any sort is not perfect. Part of this imperfection results from the lack of real time intelligence and part of it results from the dual purposes that many objects (and people) serve in an asymmetric fight. For example, a

⁷² Cordesman, "Preliminary 'Lessons' of the Israeli-Hezbollah War," 20.

truck is both a vehicle that carries food to households and a vehicle that carries rockets to their launch site. “The truth, however is that modern technology does not provide the kind of sensors, protection, and weapons that can prevent a skilled urban force from forcing Israel...to fight it largely on its own terms and to exploit civilians and collateral damage at the same time.”⁷³

This addresses one limitation of intelligence: it cannot directly influence battle; it cannot prevent conflict from spreading amongst the population. Even precise intelligence used for targeting cannot prevent civilian casualties and collateral damage when lethal operations occur in an urban setting. However, intelligence, when coupled with effective analysis can predict reasonably well how the enemy will fight. Additionally, intelligence at the tactical level should drive operations. In the same way, effective operations should improve the quality of intelligence. In this case the Israeli Army based its intelligence expectations on its previous operational experiences in the West Bank and the occupied territories.⁷⁴ These expectations proved unrealistic when applied to the situation in Lebanon with Israel’s greatly reduced intelligence infrastructure.⁷⁵ The Israeli Army did not appear to focus its efforts on generating or obtaining the right intelligence for the fight in which they were in.

To varying degrees Israeli leadership also relied too heavily on technology.⁷⁶ This allowed commanders to command from “their plasma screens” rather than personally experiencing the battlefield. This apparently stemmed from the supposed quality of intelligence or information that these command centers could provide rather than any claims of an unwillingness to share danger. An over reliance on technology, as opposed to a reliance on combat

⁷³ Cordesman, “Preliminary ‘Lessons’ of the Israeli-Hezbollah War,” 11.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁵ Russell W. Glenn, *All Glory is Fleeting: Insights from the Second Lebanon War* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, February 2008), 31-32. This document is classified as “Unclassified/For Official Use Only.” Only those portions which were “Unclassified,” and not “For Official Use Only” were used.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 37.

fundamentals, permeated the force and many blame it for more than just leadership failures.⁷⁷ There was also the prevalent culture in the IDF that sought to limit or eliminate friendly troop casualties, even at the expense of mission accomplishment. Many commanders, because of pressure from their superiors, thought that safeguarding their men was more important accomplishing their mission.⁷⁸ As in most conflicts there appears to be a mixed account of Israeli leadership. Most of the complaints are directed at the senior levels of the Israeli Army and fewer directed at the tactical level where combined arms skills were poorly applied. In this relatively short conflict, it is unclear if the Israeli Army demonstrated a greater level of incompetence, unpreparedness, or lack of agility.

The concept of low intensity conflict devoid of any aspects of conventional warfare informed the IDF's doctrine during the 2006 war. SOD and EBO also influenced the IDF's doctrine. The IDF's moved toward an "EBO like" application of combat power resulted in the reliance of information dominance and high fidelity intelligence to prosecute precision stand-off fires. Ultimately the new doctrine did not provide an effective framework for the IDF to link tactical success to strategic goals. The combination of low intensity conflict's effect and SOD's influence on the new IDF doctrine resulted in Hezbollah's successful employment of hybrid warfare and the Israel's inability to achieve strategic goals.

Israeli Defense Force Training: Training to Fight the Last Conflict

From 2000-2005, events associated with the Second Intifada dominated the IDF's operational planning. Low intensity conflict and counter-terrorism was the Israel's primary concern and therefore low intensity conflict and counter-terrorism was the focus of their training.

⁷⁷ Kober, "The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War," 19.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 11. This trend was identified in a post conflict report conducted by Major General(res.) Yoram Yair. General Halutz latter attributed this trend to the IDF's counter-terror operations.

Israeli Defense Force leadership was convinced they would face both an insurgency and a terrorist threat while conducting major combat operations against their enemies. Israel's training continued to prepare their military organizations for the continued use of terrorism and the low intensity conflict it experienced against the Palestinians during the Second Intifada. The IDF gradually abandoned its preparation for conventional war with its Arab neighbors or with a non-state actor.⁷⁹

In 2006, the Israeli conventional Army had not conducted a major training exercise for over a year while the Israeli reserve forces had not conducted major maneuver training in over six years. This dated back to the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2000.⁸⁰ Additionally, defense budgetary priorities partially accounted for the shift in Army's lack of major combat operations training. Anthony Cordesman, a defense analyst, contends that the Israeli Army realized they lacked experience in conventional warfare and failed to mitigate this weakness with supplemental training that may have assisted in balancing the IDF's preparation.⁸¹ "Soldiers with perishable combat skills, such as tank crewmen, patrolled the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in some cases, going years without training on their armored vehicles."⁸²

The Israeli Defense Force chose to focus on low intensity conflict and counter-terrorism operations rather than the potential of a conventional or hybrid fight with one of its Arab state neighbors or a non-state actor with state support. Based on the perceived current strategic

⁷⁹ David Makovsky and Jeffery White, "Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War: A Preliminary Assessment," *The Washington Institute* for Near East Policy, Policy Focus no. 60 (October 2006). <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/PolicyFocu60.pdf> (accessed 10 December 2010), 42.

⁸⁰ Daniel Helmer, "Not Quite Counterinsurgency: A Cautionary Tale for US Forces Based on Israel's Operation Change of Direction," *Armor*, (January-February 2007), 9. This is based on the author's interview with Yaakov Katz, as Israeli journalist and author.

⁸¹ Anthony H. Cordesman, "Preliminary 'Lessons' of the Israeli-Hezbollah War," *Center for Strategic International Studies*. (Revised: 17 August 2006). http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/060817_isr_hez_lessons.pdf (accessed 15 December, 2010), 23.

⁸² Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 27.

environment and the IDF's reputation of a dominant conventional force, the Israeli Defense Force leadership hedged its bets that future opponents would need to resort to low intensity conflict and terrorism rather than face one of the West's most potent military powers.

After five days of an ineffective air campaign, on July 17, 2006 General Dan Halutz, the IDF Chief of Staff, ordered limited battalion and brigade raids into Lebanon in lieu of a full scale ground offensive to the Litani River. The intent of the ground raids was to produce a sense of defeat amongst Hezbollah. In spite of stated war aims, these raids were not designed to destroy Hezbollah, or to capture the rockets, or to seize the rocket launch sites.⁸³ The raids seemed designed to support the dictates of the newly approved doctrine, to produce a cognitive sense of defeat in the adversary.

On July 21, 2006 General Halutz employed the Israeli reserves.⁸⁴ Calling up the Israeli reserves indicating General Halutz's understood the conflict may become protracted or at a minimum signaled that ground forces were required. An Israeli raid on Maroun al-Ras, a town inside Lebanon typified the urban nature of the ground offensive. "On July 22, Hezbollah units of the Nasr Brigade fought the IDF street-to-street in Maroun al-Ras. While the IDF claimed at the end of the day it had taken the town, it had not. The fighting had been bloody, but Hezbollah fighters had not been dislodged."⁸⁵

The fighting continued with varying intensity within Maroun al-Ras, until the end of the conflict. The Israelis never fully defeated Hezbollah in the town nor did the IDF ever firmly

⁸³ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 43. The Litani River is generally considered the boundary between Israel and Lebanon.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁵ Alastair Crooke and Mark Perry, "How Hezbollah Defeated Israel, Part 2: Winning the Ground War," Asia Times Online. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HJ13AK01.html (accessed 10 February 2011). This report was generated from Hezbollah sources.

control it.⁸⁶ On July 25, following a similar raid on Bint-Jbeil, the IDF claimed it had captured the town.

“[T]he fight for Bint-Jbeil went on for nine days. Bint-Jbeil remained in Hezbollah hands until the end of the conflict. By then, the town had been destroyed, as Hezbollah fighters were able to survive repeated air and artillery barrages, retreating into their bunkers during the worst of the air and artillery campaign, and only emerging when IDF troops in follow-on operations tried to claim the city.”⁸⁷

The battle for Bint-Jbeil is indicative of the inconclusive results of the IDF’s tactical engagements throughout the war and its struggle to achieve operational objectives in support of strategic goals.

On July 27th the Israelis activated three more reserve divisions, a total of 15,000 troops.⁸⁸ Two days later on July 29th the IDF expanded its operations to seize terrain north of the Israeli Lebanese border and establish a security zone in order to create a buffer between Hezbollah rocket firing positions and northern Israeli settlements. By mid-August it became clear the IDF offensive did not achieve its aims: Hezbollah’s command and control system remained intact and the IDF failed to stop the launch of short range Katyusha rockets into Israeli towns and homes.⁸⁹

On August 11th, the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved resolution 1701 whose aim was to end the war and implement a cease fire thorough the creation of a buffer zone free of armed personnel other than Lebanese and UN forces.⁹⁰ Knowing that the adoption of this resolution marked an end of the war, General Halutz ordered ground forces north to the Litani River. The reasons for this operation remain unclear. Perhaps General Halutz intended to demonstrate Israeli military prowess in an effort to regain lost face, or to gain some type of

⁸⁶ Ibid., http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HJ13AK01.html (accessed 10 February 2011). This report was generated from Hezbollah sources.

⁸⁷ Alastair Crooke and Mark Perry, “How Hezbollah Defeated Israel, Part 2: Winning the Ground War,” Asia Times Online. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HJ13AK01.html (accessed 10 February 2011). This report was generated from Hezbollah sources.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Kober, “Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War,” 5; Johnson et al., *Preparing and Training for the Full Spectrum of Military Challenges*, 199. By the end of the conflict between one hundred and two hundred Katyusha rockets impacted Israeli communities.

⁹⁰ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 51.

nominal victory. Regardless, it made no progress towards achieving the stated objective of destroying Hezbollah or of capturing rocket sites.⁹¹ This late attack seemed terrain based rather than focused on the enemy. In light of the previously passed United Nations Resolution 1701, this appears odd. The resolution defined the borders and directed the re-establishment of such. The IDF divisions that took part in the offensive to the Litani River encountered serious problems. The airborne reserve division managed limited gains and failed to reach the Litani River. Division 91 similarly failed to reach its objectives, partly because of confused orders and mediocre execution. Division 162 faced similar problems. Division 162 was engaged with a conventional ambush. Twenty four of Division 162's tanks were hit with anti-tank missiles. This ambush prevented Division 162 from achieving its assigned objectives. A reserve armored division also encountered similar problems.⁹² Each of these divisions experienced similar fates. They suffered from a series of erratic starts and damaging initial small engagements which distracted the divisions, thus they never gained momentum. As a result, the offensive did not succeed and it is questionable if it ever really began. At the end of the war Israel claimed 400-500 Hezbollah killed in action but a different counting (of funerals for Shi'ia) suggest that the number killed was closer to 184.⁹³ Israel reported over one hundred of its soldiers killed and almost 1000 wounded.⁹⁴

Throughout the ground offensive, the IDF consistently were concerned about its lack of combined arms experience and poor tactical skill. Mathews claims that years of fighting counter-insurgency operations and a lack of subsequent training to mitigate this focus led to conventional

⁹¹ Ibid., 52.

⁹² Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 52-55.

⁹³ Crooke and Perry, "How Hezbollah Defeated Israel, Part 2." 88.

⁹⁴ Daniel Byman and Steven Simon, "The No-Win Zone: An After-Action Report from Lebanon," *The National Interest* 86 (November/December 2006): 58.

war fighting skills atrophying.⁹⁵ For example early in the conflict the IDF disregarded maneuver and instead chose to execute frontal attacks against positions Hezbollah had prepared for six years.⁹⁶ This was an example the IDF's lack of experience, its conventional expertise atrophy, and illuminated poor understanding of combined arms operations.

When the Israeli ground forces conducted limited raids, the Israeli chain-of-command appeared to place their soldiers in poor positions. These same soldiers reportedly performed poorly when they faced a conventional and persistent enemy. Hezbollah repeatedly (and unexpectedly) isolated Israeli units that subsequently required extrication. Hezbollah used precision guided anti-tank weapons, as well as small arms, rockets, mortars, and mines to target IDF when they moved into planned Hezbollah targeted locations.⁹⁷ As an example the Israeli Army improperly applied some of the experiences and lessons it learned from low intensity conflict operations.

“For example, in the territories the IDF used to protect soldiers from small arms fire by sheltering them in the houses of the local population. Based on this experience, in Lebanon soldiers were ordered to take shelter in a similar manner, ignoring the fact Hizbollah was using sophisticated anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs)...9 soldiers were killed and 31 were wounded when Hizbollah destroyed the house using ATGMs.”⁹⁸

Israel also had difficulty defending its armor and using it in ways that prevented its destruction. Israel left behind more than forty armored vehicles in Lebanon when they withdrew back across the border.⁹⁹

Makovsky and White gave Israel forces generally high marks for performance at the battalion echelon and below.¹⁰⁰ Makovsky and White further claimed Israel began leveraging its

⁹⁵ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 44.

⁹⁶ Helmer, 9.

⁹⁷ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 45-48.

⁹⁸ Kober, “The Israel defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War,” 16.

⁹⁹ Crooke and Perry, “How Hezbollah Defeated Israel, Part 2.” 89.

inherent advantages of technology and superior troop strength, including the addition of eight brigades, which began to give the IDF tactical and operational advantages. “What began to make a difference was the combined weight of Israeli infantry skill and numbers and fire power provided by tanks, artillery, and air power. Hizballah was able to offset some of these, but ultimately could only raise the cost to Israeli forces.”¹⁰¹ Markovsky asserts that the momentum was shifting to the IDF and given more time (which seems supported by Hezbollah pressing early for a cessation of hostilities) Israel would have improved its gains.

The Israeli Army’s employment of its forces in the Second Lebanon War left much to be desired. From its experience fighting the Palestinians, the army drew inappropriate lessons or at least applied them incorrectly. Additionally, the Second Lebanon War demonstrated at multiple levels Israeli high intensity conflict, specifically combined arms, skills degradation.

The decision made on the night of July 12th to react (to the kidnapping) with immediate and substantive military action, and to set for ambitious goals – limited Israel’s range of options. In fact, after the initial decision had been made, Israel had only two main options, each with its coherent internal logic, and its set of costs and disadvantages. 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 South Lebanon with a large ground operation, including a temporary occupation of the South of Lebanon and ‘cleaning’ it of Hezbollah military infrastructure.¹⁰²

At first glance, the appearance of problems with the Israeli Army’s leadership during this war. Although the Israeli Army leadership is accountable for the Army’s results, the results themselves are rarely as simple as a failure or a success of leadership as a whole.

¹⁰⁰ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 50.

¹⁰¹ Makovsky and White, 35, 44.

¹⁰² Council of Foreign Relations, “Winograd Commission Final Report,” paragraph 13.

One of the primary problems was determining what was happening at the operational level. In this case General Halutz first considered the IDF's action as a retaliatory attack rather than a war. Consequently, he refused to allow his staff to refer to the conflict as a war until much later.¹⁰³ Furthermore, once the government started its political goals, the Army did not provide a plan that adequately achieved what the government desired. This was particularly evident in its reaction to the short range missile threat.¹⁰⁴ At the operational level the Army fought within a construct that failed to account for (or improperly accounted for) such factors as domestic public opinion, international opinion, the limits of force, and time.¹⁰⁵ The Army's operational plan and execution appeared disjointed, indecisive, and unclear as to what it was actually attempting to achieve. Additionally, it appeared void of nuance, relied on improvisation, and relied far too much on brute force at the operational level.

Makovsky notes significant problems in the senior leadership of the IDF at every critical point in the war: determining to go to war, developing the plan, making adjustments after the first week, advancing to the Litani River, and accepting the ceasefire.¹⁰⁶ There were serious command problems at the operational level (the Northern Territorial Commander was relieved during the conflict) and to an extent there were problems at the division echelon as well.¹⁰⁷ However, Makovsky balances this criticism by citing several success in IDF leadership including initiating the air campaign, adjusting to the nature of the war, preparing for the ground offensive, and managing a two front war.¹⁰⁸ During the conflict various members of the chain of command, at an unspecified level, committed forces piecemeal and thus did not take advantage of Israel's

¹⁰³ Kober, "The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War," 9-10.

¹⁰⁴ Makovsky and White, 50-51.

¹⁰⁵ Makovsky and White, 13-15. General Moshe Yaalon, a previous IDF Chief of Staff detailed a plan that was previously in place to address a Hezbollah provocation.

¹⁰⁶ Makovsky and White, 49-50.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 50.

¹⁰⁸ Makovsky and White, 50.

superior numbers. If the initial forces required assistance, the chain of command committed additional small forces that Hezbollah subsequently easily engaged. These types of employments failed to take advantage of Israel's greater firepower, command and control capability, synchronization, and maneuver.¹⁰⁹ It is difficult to justify how employing forces piecemeal and failing to take advantage of their superior numbers of troops is not a case of incompetence. While mass tends to lesser importance in irregular conflicts, mass is extremely important in conventional ones.

Israeli Defense Force Education: Challenges for Junior Officers

The IDF's educational and officer selection and training process are significantly different from most Western militaries. Generally, Israeli officer education focuses far more, and perhaps exclusively on combat related tasks. There are no educational pre-requisites to qualify as an Israeli officer. An officer's training and experience, particularly at the junior ranks (up to battalion command) is far more important than his education. "The IDF's conclusion [from an experiment correlating combat command to academic proficiency] was the ability to lead combat units effectively required something more than, or perhaps different from, academic prowess and hence demanded a selection and training process independent of civilian schooling."¹¹⁰ Another reason for the focus on training stems partially from the unique requirements and constraints of the Israeli Army and its people. A citizen's compulsory service begins at the age of eighteen, lasts for three years, and is considered preparation for service in the reserves.¹¹¹ Within that time, if a soldier is to become a commissioned officer he must first make selection as a non-

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 52.

¹¹⁰ Rueven Gal, 35.

¹¹¹ Gal, 32-33, 122. Three years is the baseline for men. It may increase with additional voluntary skill training. Women have a two year term of service.

commissioned officer and then as an officer. If he is chosen as a commissioned officer, he will incur an additional year in his conscription.¹¹²

Most learning and training is acquired on the job. Since the officer candidates already have the technical expertise, the officer candidate training and selection curriculum focuses on developing and evaluating creative thinking, problem solving, adaptability, flexibility, and aggressive leadership by example.¹¹³ In this way the best Soldier, in the platoon for example, should be the platoon leader.¹¹⁴ This also simultaneously precludes him from attending a university at this time in his career. Generally after forty-eight months on active service, at which time he is generally a captain, the officer must decide if he will remain on active duty or revert to the reserves.¹¹⁵ If he chooses to remain in the active army, he may be offered a two or three year period of academic study followed by a return to active duty. From there the officer will continue a full year at the Command and Staff School as a Major, which is a pre-requisite for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel.¹¹⁶ Following the Command and Staff College, as officers progress they will attend a university and an increasing number of military schools.¹¹⁷

The Israeli Officer educational model suggests that the experience and training of Israeli officers is of greater importance, especially in the junior ranks. As a whole the IDF views training and education attained from institutional schools sufficient, and in some ways superior or more desired than the educational benefits of academic institutions that offer little or no direct relation to the military. Although this preference for institutional education is distinct at the junior officer

¹¹² Ibid., 91, 199.

¹¹³ Gal, 119.

¹¹⁴ Cohen, 99.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 99.

¹¹⁶ Gal, 125.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 169-170.

ranks of command, it certainly becomes less distinct and in fact may disappear with increasing rank.

Learning and adapting the Israeli Army experienced as part of this conflict figured prominently in the leadership's effectiveness, or lack thereof. An important part of leadership is to know when to adapt and then affect the adaptation. Thus far it is clear that the Israeli Army began fighting a conflict from the one for which they prepared. As the Israelis realized this, did they adapt to a new reality? Were they able to rapidly adjust and disseminate appropriate lessons to increase their effectiveness? The Israeli Army did this at the tactical level but failed to learn how to do this at the operational and strategic level.

“Hizballah’s adroit use of ant-armor missiles not only against Merkava III tanks, but also to destroy improvised IDF defensive positions, was extremely effective and was countered in short duration of hostilities.”¹¹⁸ The quite prevalent conclusion that Israel failed to adapt during the short war is an easy one to make, but it ignores some of Israel’s tactical adjustments. During the war the IDF established a Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) that collected and distributed tactical lessons learned throughout the force. “The center gathered knowledge gained from each day’s operations, printed digests, and distributed these down to company level by the next day.”¹¹⁹

Although not widely publicized these near real time lessons learned provided tangible effects in operations in vicinity of Bint-Jbeyl . The IDF CALL disseminated lessons learned from attacking units to other units across the IDF the next day. In addition to generating close to real-time lessons learned, CALL was located so that units preparing for battle “received ‘fast-forward’

¹¹⁸ Byman and Simon, “The No-Win Zone, 58-59.

¹¹⁹ Department of the Army, *TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5: The U.S. Army Commander’s Appreciation and Campaign Design* (Fort Monroe, Virginia: United States Training and Doctrine Command, January 2008), 7.

training, an operational knowledge package and digest of lessons learned so far, updated on a twenty-four hour cycle...”¹²⁰

This is an important aspect of this conflict in particular and shorter duration wars in general. Israel possessed minimum time to adjust to Hezbollah’s tactics, techniques, and procedures and learn from its mistakes; the ground war lasted twenty-eight days. The Israeli Army appears to have adapted at least fairly well at the tactical level, but poorly at the operational level.

Learning should take place not only from direct experience but also through the experience of others. Education plays a major role in learning. Because of Israel’s unique geographical location, its wars of this nature are likely to be very short and it should be ready to incorporate lessons faster.

Israeli Defense Force Conclusion: Prepare a Balance Force with the Ability to Adapt

The IDF experience preparing for one type of war and fighting another substantially helped it when that experience was applied to low intensity conflict situations, but it may have also impeded the IDF just the same when applied to hybrid (a mix of low intensity and high intensity conflict) warfare situations. This resulted from several factors. First, the Israeli Army inappropriately and unconsciously adjusted to an inferior enemy during its experience with both Intifadas. Second, the training that the IDF conducted prior to the war did not fundamentally prepare them for what they eventually faced. Lastly, the IDF did not adapt to hybrid warfare fast enough.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Gil Ariely, “Learning to Digest During Fighting –Real Time Knowledge Management.” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, September 11, 2006. <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/229/currentpage/10/Default.aspx> (accessed March 16, 2010).

¹²¹ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 41.

The Israeli Army's experience fighting the Palestinians under favorable conditions overshadowed the positive results of the experience the Army gained such as learning during the conflict. While experience is generally helpful, it is harmful when a new experience is fundamentally different from previous experiences. The Israeli Army found itself fighting Hezbollah instead of the Palestinians. In a way the Israelis adapted too well to the Palestinian fight which impeded their adaptation to Hezbollah, in terms of intelligence, nature of combat, and the role time played in the conflict.¹²² Furthermore, Israel's tactical low intensity conflict experience was counter-productive because it produced a false sense of security and it generated lessons that did not apply to the war against Hezbollah. For example, when conducting low intensity conflict operations it is sometimes better to do nothing than to do something that turns the population against you. Although this is also the case in conventional war, it is less often so. While it may make sense in low intensity conflict to not risk casualties to achieve an immediate goal, in low intensity conflict it often makes even less sense, partially because of the likely duration of the conflict. Similarly, casualty aversion may make more sense if the nature of the war is a long duration low intensity conflict.¹²³ However, in short duration high intensity conflict this is potentially debilitating. From 2000-2006 the Israeli Army prepared for low intensity conflict based on its most recent experiences fighting the Palestinians and how they expected to continue fighting in the future—low intensity conflicts.¹²⁴

Two broad factors impeded the Israeli's ability to adapt. First they had an unhelpful construct, low intensity conflict, which characterized a conflict's intensity and positively reinforced the Israeli Army's recent experiences. Second, there was limited time between when

¹²² Kober, "The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War," 3.

¹²³ Ibid., 4.

¹²⁴ Catignani, 61.

the conflict was initiated and when Israeli leadership recognized the conflict as a war.¹²⁵ The first led to a difficulty understanding the war for what it was rather than trying to fit it within the time frame of the conflict, which was primarily at the operational level. Both, the conflict's short duration and its relatively rapid start impeded adaptation because adaptation requires time and multiple "iterations" in order to process information and effectively learn.

Regardless of the length of the conflict, it was difficult for the Israelis to determine the true nature of the war and then adapt to it. They fought the war as a conventional conflict at the operational level and in many ways as a low intensity conflict at the tactical level. This approach was almost completely opposite to the true nature of the war, which aligned more closely to a low intensity conflict at the operational level and a conventional war at the tactical level.¹²⁶ Although this characterization is helpful it is also simplistic and inaccurate because the nature of the war was a mix of both types.¹²⁷ Critical in the successful prosecution of a war is matching the appropriate military approach to the political goals. The Israeli Army, for the reasons outlined above, were unable to do this.

Implications: Broadly Train and Educate Leaders to Adapt to Uncertain Environments

The IDF remains unable to accurately predict the nature of its future conflicts. Regardless of its preparation, the IDF will need to adapt to the specifics of the next conflict that it endeavors. Failing to do so will likely doom its role in the conflict again. To enhance the likelihood that the IDF can successfully adapt, it must invest heavily in educating and training its

¹²⁵ Cohen, 102.

¹²⁶ Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 15.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 17.

leaders. In Israel's second war with Lebanon, the IDF's leaders' willingness and ability to adapt was a key determining factor in the conflict's outcome.¹²⁸

Israel was involved in conflicts with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip dating back to 1983.¹²⁹ The IDF was required to assimilate what it learned during the twenty-two years of fighting with the Palestinians, make assumptions about the nature of its future conflicts and decide how to prepare to meet the challenges of its future conflicts. Once the IDF was involved in its war with Hezbollah, it was required to adjust to the war's particular character.

From this case study of Israel's war against Hezbollah some basic lessons are derived in relation to defense policy, doctrine, training and education as it prepares for an uncertain future and its next conflict.

It is difficult to accurately train a military force for its next conflict. Balance is what most organizational leaders seek to provide their organizations to insure flexibility while meeting the challenging demands of an uncertain future. In terms of military forces, the typical paradigm is to look to the past to figure out how to prepare today for tomorrow's wars. Although this is an appealing idea, training for the full spectrum of operations may result in a wide range of training without mastering any one particular aspect of war fighting. In essence, it necessitates little obvious strategic choice.¹³⁰

This approach possesses the potential to disguise what the force actually is prepared to do because leaders at all levels still make choices about how to allocate resources. In such a situation, the leaders' choices are apparent. Reasonable proficiency with respect to core war fighting competencies, when combined with individual and institutional ability and willingness to adapt is preferable to exceptional proficiency at some operations and a lack of proficiency at

¹²⁸ Cohen, 105.

¹²⁹ Gilbert, 514.

¹³⁰ Johnson et al., 6.

others. This is not a remarkable insight however the best way to prepare for uncertainty is to train for it. Perhaps the most important aspect to understand is that uncertainty is unavoidable and training for it will lessen its impact when it is encountered.

To a large extent Israel was not particularly well trained for the conflict with Hezbollah.¹³¹ Israel entered the conflict with a poorly trained force relative to the character of the war it was involved in. Israel assumed that the IDF would fight another low intensity conflict as it did from 2000-2005 and that is almost exclusively what the IDF prepared for. When confronted with a mix of high intensity conflict and low intensity conflict, it became evident that Israel was inadequately prepared for the conventional aspect of the war with Hezbollah.¹³²

Experience informed the IDF. Experience shaped IDF's identity. To an extent the IDF did not determine its experiences but rather the Israeli political leadership's defense policy determined the IDF's experience. However, the IDF possessed the ability to control its experiences with respect to training, with regards to how its experiences are translated, and through the educational curriculum of its leaders.

Understandably, the Israeli's low intensity conflict experience from 1983 to 2000 negatively impacted the IDF in 2006 while fighting Hezbollah. Israel's vast conventional institutional experience was not a factor because the soldiers who participated in its war in 2006 neither trained nor previously experienced conventional warfare.¹³³ The apparent importance of small unit actions in the Israeli territories prior to 2006 is an example. Small unit proficiency and leadership is an important imperative in low intensity conflict. As a result of the IDF preparing small unit proficiency and capable small unit leaders, it sacrifice training larger formations in the skills of high intensity conflict and it did not prepare its leaders to apply operational art to

¹³¹ Harel and Issacharoff, 22.

¹³² Kober, "The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War,"7.

¹³³ Cohen, 105.

situation where unconventional and conventional forms of warfare were brought to against the IDF. This is the danger in learning a few aspects of warfare to well and not training on the core competencies that will allow a military organization to adapt to uncertainty.

Doctrine can both constrain flexibility and serve as common departure point for adaptation. Flexible doctrine helps an army prepare for uncertain conflict by allowing it to operate within broad guidance that accepts the necessity of flexibility and adjustment. Maintaining a broad guideline approach to doctrine while simultaneously providing adequate direction on “the how” of operations is essential. This is not an easy to balance strike. Low Intensity Conflict informed the IDF’s pre-2006 doctrine. The low intensity conflict informed doctrine characterized conflict in terms of intensity which hampered both training and preparation. The IDF’s doctrine influenced by Systemic Operational Design was inadequate. The newer form of Israeli doctrine overly focused on precision firepower which similarly negatively impacted training, preparation, and an appreciation for the true nature of the conflict.¹³⁴

A broad approach to education, certainly no guarantee of flexibility, appears to increase the ability of leaders to more readily ascertain the true nature of the conflict and make necessary adjustments. A broad education that focuses on developing and encouraging attributes and characteristics that enable leader adaptation is critical. Broad education enhances experiences and complements training. The Israelis, although generally accepting of the idea that a better educated officer is a better leader, do not subscribe to the idea of broad education until later in the leader’s career. This approach appears to negatively impact junior IDF leadership and may also adversely affect officers at the more senior levels. The initial reason for developing SOD was a perceived inability to turn Israeli tactical success into strategic success. This may be a side effect

¹³⁴ Kober, “The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War,”4.

of beginning strategic development later in an officer's career. In general, Israeli officers are extremely tactically competent, but fail to develop operationally and strategically.

Once an army enters a conflict many of the same principles of broad education and adaptability apply. Accurately determining the nature of the war is critical. Israel incorrectly identified its war with Hezbollah as a conventional conflict (or perhaps a conflict based on terrorism) and neglected the irregular aspects of the conflict much to its detriment. In some ways, flexibility and mental agility at the operational level is more important and more difficult because either tactical leaders are closer to the fight and hence better able to adapt or tactical failures are not as costly as single operational failure.

As the IDF prepares for its next war, a balanced approach between low intensity conflict and high intensity conflict provides the greatest flexibility to hedge against an uncertain future. While a general purpose Army may not solve any one problem specifically, it will get close enough which will enable necessary adaptation. The force is required to effectively apply combined arms formations and work jointly with government agencies. The Israeli experience in its 2006 war in Lebanon is a reminder that it is better to prepare for a conventional conflict and fight an unconventional conflict if required. This prescription accounts for the following two assumptions: unconventional conflict generally is longer in duration and allows more time for leaders to make the required adaptations. Unconventional war is likely but not of an existential nature. The IDF cannot afford to choose between preparing for unconventional or conventional threats but rather find a balance which will allow for adaptation depending on the nature of the conflict.

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