
# Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizballah War

## A Preliminary Assessment

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Front cover: Israeli soldiers stand at the Rosh Hanikrah border crossing between Israel and Lebanon, November 25, 2005. On the wall behind them, a sign marks the distances to Beirut and Jerusalem. Copyright AP Wide World Photos/Oded Balilty.

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# PART I

# Israel's Policy and Political Lessons from the War

**By David Makovsky**

# Executive Summary

IN THE AFTERMATH of its war with Hizballah, Israel has entered a period of self-examination. Objectively, the war was not without achievement for Israel. Hizballah's capabilities in terms of personnel and arms were eroded by Israel's military campaign. It is possible, furthermore, that the sizable deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in southern Lebanon, coupled with the deployment of multinational forces, may reestablish the Lebanese government's control of the southern part of the country.

How is it that a war that won broad domestic and international support from the outset, including from Arab Sunni regimes that feared Iranian ascendancy, ended inconclusively a month later with Hizballah still firing more than one hundred rockets a day against civilian targets—with approximately four thousand rockets fired during the course of the conflict? In summer 2006, Hizballah rockets fell in 160 cities, towns, villages, *kibbutzim*, and *moshavim*, and more than one million Israelis were forced to live in shelters.

At the outset of the conflict, Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert defined Israel's objectives in broad terms. At a Knesset speech early in the war, he insisted that Hizballah would have to relocate away from southern Lebanon, making clear the group would be rendered ineffective. As Israeli political leaders heightened public expectations, Hizballah lowered them. The failure of Israeli decisionmaking in defining and achieving realistic objectives has caused a crisis of faith among many Israelis in the nation's political and military leadership.

There was a lack of clarity regarding Israeli objectives and strategies to achieve those objectives and an inappropriate framing of the issues. Israel was not capable of defining a relationship between tactical military moves and strategic political objectives. The problem was compounded by the inability of the Israeli government to ask the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) hard questions as it laid out tactical military approaches that did not take into account the political realities facing Israel—consequently, political leaders were unable to press the military to refine its approaches. Furthermore, Israeli political leaders raised public expectations despite the IDF's warnings to the cabinet that key objectives could not be met.

Two critiques have emerged from Israel's political decisionmaking at the start of the conflict and the government's subsequent management of the war. The predominant public critique is that Israel did not have a strategy to obtain its ultimate objective of delivering an unrecoverable blow to Hizballah and did not use sufficient manpower and firepower on the ground early on to obtain the necessary territorial objective. Specifically, these critics say, an immediate ground thrust temporarily taking all areas south of the Litani River, thirteen miles from the border, would have given Israel a better chance to knock out Hizballah's katyusha rockets, which are virtually impossible to destroy from the air before they are launched against northern Israel.

The alternative critique, associated with Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni, is that Israel's objective was never realistic; therefore, it would have been preferable to have started with a more modest but achievable goal. According to this view, Israel should not have launched a war that it was ill prepared to successfully prosecute or conclude. The thesis is that it would have been more effective to launch a limited operation of a few days, such was done on the second day of the war when Israel hit fifty-nine of Hizballah's permanent rocket launchers in thirty-four minutes.

The problem of failed leadership and the inconclusive outcome to the war should not cloud more favorable aspects to this conflict. This war brought into international focus the fact that Iran is a destabilizing force in the region: Tehran provided missiles to a militia not even adjacent to its borders. Indeed, the fear of Iranian regional ascendancy brought together an unusual group of Sunni Arab states—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan—in publicly blaming Hizballah for recklessness in provoking the war.

A question remains whether Hizballah could have undertaken its July 12 operation without at least a green light from Teheran, if not direct Iranian instigation. It seems plausible that Iran favored an incident that would divert international attention from its own nuclear program and remind the world that it had options in any standoff. However, a low-risk incident is different from a full-fledged war. Interestingly, both senior echelons of the IDF and Hizballah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah declare that Iran did not want Hizballah to goad Israel into an all-out conflict, since that would expose the Iranian deterrent prematurely, before the Iranian nuclear program was fully developed.

In an interview after the war, Nasrallah said that he miscalculated the Israeli response; he thought it would be mild. Nasrallah's admission of miscalculation is a sure signal that he fears the loss of his standing inside Lebanon. Lebanese public opinion could constrain somewhat Hizballah's ability to rebuild its installations in southern Lebanon and launch attacks in Israel, but Nasrallah is counting on inflamed Lebanese public opinion against Israel as a result of the human toll of the war in Lebanon. It is well known that Sunni, Christian, and Druze elements of Lebanese prime minister Fouad Siniora's government want Hizballah to disarm, but they prefer cooption to confrontation. Hizballah needs to recover after this war, which may give the LAF and the multinational force an opportunity to constrain Hizballah. By deploying in southern Lebanon, the idea of Lebanese accountability may no longer be a fiction. At the same time, the prospect that a bolstered UN force may be effective must be weighed against the possibility that the force will inadvertently serve as a shield and block Israeli retaliation against any Hizballah provocation.

Israel cannot complain that it did not have breathing space from the Bush administration to prosecute this thirty-three–day war. That was more time than Washington had provided Israel in the past. It seems that the Bush administration was unhappy that Israel did not use the time more effectively. Questions remain whether Washington could have used Israel's military actions or Sunni regimes' fear of Iran to create an adequate international political coalition that would have enabled it to quickly obtain satisfactory security arrangements in southern Lebanon and thereby conclude the war sooner.

## Implications for Israeli Politics

The war with Hizballah in Lebanon changed Israel's political context. Having just been elected in spring 2006, Olmert had hoped that he could focus his tenure on withdrawal from much of the West Bank. Instead, his political coalition is hemorrhaging and he faces acute national security challenges on a variety of fronts.

It remains far from clear whether the Olmert coalition will survive. There is no doubt that a major preoccupation for Olmert for the rest of 2006 will be political survival. Does he have to change the character of his government in order to bolster his credibility? What could his coalition look like? Once he makes those political choices, they could have policy implications but at least give him a solid enough government to address the many challenges Israel faces.

In terms of his coalition choices, Olmert will have to balance the demands of political expediency and loyalty with the need for experience at times of crisis. Israel faces national security challenges and the public needs to be reassured that its leadership is capable of handling a crisis. The war in Lebanon has proven to be a major setback for Olmert's "civilian agenda," which is characterized by a defense minister who had no background in national security and by a push for more welfare spending after years of austerity. Israel's budget priorities are likely to shift. Olmert has pledged money for reconstruction in northern Israel and has promised to boost domestic security in light of the evacuation problems. Moreover, IDF chief of staff Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz has already declared that the IDF needs more funds, both to pay for the Lebanon war and to boost the defense budget to deal with national security threats. Unless Israel is about to ask for major supplementary assistance from the United States or raise taxes that reduce Israel's standard of living, Israel's welfare budget is likely to be adversely impacted. This could portend friction with Olmert's junior coalition party, Labor. The party's lever-

age, however, will likely be confined so long as it is led by a politically wounded Peretz.

## Future of Deterrence and Relations with Syria

Restoring deterrence—namely, persuading an enemy that it will pay a heavy price if it attacks—was one reason why Israel turned Hizballah's cross-border raid into a war. While Israel demonstrated that it is not afraid to go to war, which is a key element of deterrence, many people believe that this war resulted in an erosion of Israel's deterrence, not its restoration. Restoring deterrence remains a complex challenge. It is made up of several factors, including high-profile reforms in the military budget and training and a credible national security team and system. Israel continues to pay a heavy price for its lack of integrated civilian and military decisionmaking below the cabinet-level principals. An Israeli National Security Council (NSC) should bring together an effective interagency staff to shape and vet options based on seasoned judgment before they are presented to decisionmakers. Israel's inner cabinet of principal cabinet ministers is no substitute for an adequate decisionmaking process.

Another aspect of deterrence is not flinching if a legitimate military action is required. An artificial, illegitimate military action will not help Israel regain deterrence. One legitimate flashpoint could be the Syrian-Lebanese border. UN Security Council Resolution 1701 puts the onus on Lebanon to enforce an arms embargo to avert resupply of weapons, but gives no guarantee that the multinational force will be active or successful in enforcing an arms embargo. Indeed, this issue is likely to be pivotal in answering the question of whether a second round with Hizballah is inevitable. That the onus for halting Hizballah's resupply is placed on a relatively weak LAF, instead of on the international community, could put pressure on Olmert to act militarily amid criticism that Israel turned a blind eye to the importation of twelve thousand rockets since the start of the decade.

Therefore, there are questions about whether it is advisable to engage Syria in a dialogue, which could change the calculus for Damascus as Hizballah's resupplier. Syrian president Bashar al-Asad could be faced with a choice: choose noncompliance and face the consequences of economic isolation, or choose adherence and face the reward of a possible peace track. Without negative consequence for his actions, Asad is unlikely to act. At the same time, if the appeal of a Syrian track is whether it is part of a strategic reorientation by Damascus away from rejectionist elements such as Iran, Hizballah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, then this proposition needs to be tested in a convincing manner. Otherwise, Israel is not likely to view Syria as a legitimate peace partner.

## Other Implications

Nasrallah began the summer by saying that Hizballah wants to take actions in sympathy with the plight of the Palestinians. However, the war in Lebanon completely overshadowed the Palestinian issue during summer 2006 to the point that the Israeli military imprisoned many Hamas officials in Gaza and arrested suspected terrorists with very little media coverage, let alone international objection. By the end of the summer, Nasrallah's "resistance" greatly weakened Olmert, the one political figure in Israel who had made the withdrawal from much of the West Bank his mandate for the coming years. The Palestinians have Nasrallah to thank for the likelihood that Israeli control of the West Bank will be even more prolonged.

Even if Iran opposed the timing of war as a premature exposure of its deterrent, there should be close U.S.-Israeli consultations to discuss how to deal with Iran and its determination to obtain a nuclear capability. Israel may also find that the leaders of Sunni states that share similar fears are receptive to deepening quiet ties in ways that do not require Israel to insert itself into the Sunni-Shiite divide in the Middle East. Certainly, the United States could play a pivotal role in facilitating such ties. Progress would occur if the fear of Iran's ascendance would lend Saudi Arabia to undertake meaningful steps toward Israel as a way of jump starting talks with Arabs. The probability is low, but Riyadh needs to weigh the contained risk of its usual inaction with the risks that Israeli-Arab deterioration plays into Tehran's hands.

Its war with Hizballah in Lebanon has been a wakeup call for Israel on many levels. It is a wakeup call when it comes to the lethality of Iran's weapons, the ambitions of Hizballah's leadership, and the ability of a militia to operate like an army without being bound by the traditional rules of warfare as it turns civilian centers into the battlefronts of the twenty-first century. If the past is a guide, the war's aftermath is likely to usher in a painful period of self-examination for Israel. In the past, these periods have ultimately demonstrated Israel's ability to adapt.

# Introduction

THIS STUDY TAKES a preliminary look at the developments inside Israel during its July 12–August 14, 2006, war with Hizballah, as well as lessons and implications for Israel afterward. This war was Israel's most intense military engagement in Lebanon since the 1982 war that led to the ouster of the Palestine Liberation Organization that summer.

In the aftermath of the 2006 war, Israel has entered a period of self-examination. Objectively, the war was not without achievement for Israel. Hizballah's capabilities in terms of personnel and arms were eroded by Israel's military campaign. Furthermore, the sizable deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in southern Lebanon, coupled with the deployment of multinational forces, may be a tipping point that ends the thirty-one-year power vacuum that began with the 1975 Lebanese Civil War, when the central government lost control of the southern part of the country. That vacuum was filled first by Palestinian militants and later by Hizballah, while the cross fire with Israel continued. If the new deployments end the anomaly of making Israel share a border with a militia acting without state control and create greater normalcy for both Lebanon and Israel, much of the world will view this war as a critical turning point.

Nonetheless, what will transpire remains unclear. Meanwhile, the shortcomings of this war are quite apparent to the Israeli public. In its aftermath, the mood in Israel has been one of somber self-examination, extending even to a sense of having missed an opportunity to deal with its adversary Hizballah. Much as the Israeli public wondered in 1973 how Egypt and Syria were able to launch a "strategic surprise" against Israel, which led to a crisis of confidence in the leadership and key institutions; in 2006, new questioning has begun. How did a war that won broad domestic and international support from the outset—including from Arab Sunni regimes that feared Iranian ascendancy end inconclusively a month later with Hizballah still firing more than a 100 rockets a day? Did Israel not realize that Hizballah had trained for six years, planning fortifications, and was ready for a confrontation?

Obvious differences exist between 1973 and 2006. For the first quarter-century of its existence, Israel had been used to wars with nation-states, which were short, largely fought away from Israeli territory, and ended in decisive outcomes in Israel's favor. Hizballah, however, is an enemy more comparable to those of conflicts arising since the early 1990s; they have no battlefield but rather bring the war to Israeli population centers. In the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq fired thirty-nine Scud missiles at Israel. During the terror and violence of 2000–2004, dozens of suicide bombers killed more than 1,000 Israelis. In the summer of 2006, Hizballah rockets fell in 160 cities, towns, villages, *kibbutzim*, and *moshavim*, none of which had ever been hit as they were during this war.[1] An estimated 4,000 rockets were rained on Israel by a group that wanted the hardware advantages of war but did not want to be restrained by its traditional rules, such as not firing indiscriminately at civilians.[2] According to Israeli authorities, Israel lost 119 soldiers and another forty-three civilians. During Hizballah's month-long bombardment of Israel's civilian population, 6,000 homes were hit, 300,000 residents were displaced, and more than a million were forced to live in shelters. Almost one-third of Israel's population—more than 2 million people—were directly exposed to the missile threat.[3] Lebanon suffered as well. According to Lebanese authorities, 1,189 Lebanese were killed and

1. Author interview in Tel Aviv with IDF Gen. Gadi Eisencott, head of operations, Israel Defense Forces, August 23, 2006.
2. The Israeli Foreign Ministry website cites Israel's police authorities: "Since the beginning of the fighting on July 12, 3,970 rockets landed on Israel, 901 of them in urban areas. More than a thousand rockets landed in the Kiryat Shmona area, 808 rockets landed near Nahariya, 471 near Safed, 176 near Carmiel, 106 near Akko, 93 in the Haifa vicinity, and 81 near Tiberias." Available online (www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism+Obstacle+to+Peace/Terrorism+from+Lebanon-+Hizbullah/Hizbullah+attack+in+northern+Israel+and+Israels+response+12-Jul-2006.htm).
3. Ibid.

almost a million were temporarily displaced during the war; many homes and bridges were destroyed.[4]

This war represents a new type—the war of the twenty-first-century Middle East. It is fought by different means and waged by different groups than in the earlier years of Israel's existence. It is asymmetrical in how it is fought. Hizballah fired indiscriminately, and Israel wrestled with ways to both minimize civilian casualties and retaliate against fighters who were embedded in the civilian population. A partial response by Israel included dropping leaflets in advance, urging the population to flee before bombs were dropped. These leaflets obviously alerted Hizballah fighters to flee as well.

In this decade, war is being waged by groups with an orientation different from that of the past. The conflict is now driven by Islamists. Hamas and now Hizballah are spearheading this effort, and now Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad is threatening to wipe Israel off the face of the map. These three rejectionist groupings were not in the forefront in the past, but now they are.[5] Iran's formula of arming militias within states—whether Sunni Palestinians in the Gaza Strip or Shiite Arabs in Lebanon and Iraq—represents something new, because Iran could spread this idea to funding other fundamentalist groups in the Middle East. This possibility explains why the Sunni leadership in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan took the unprecedented step in July 2006 of blaming Hizballah for recklessness in provoking the crisis with Israel. The challenge represented by these well-armed and well-funded militia groups goes far beyond Israel and affects the entire region.[6]

Most Israelis were convinced of the legitimacy of this war and wanted a decisive outcome. At the outset of the conflict, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert defined Israel's objectives in broad terms. In a Knesset speech, he insisted that Hizballah would have to relocate from southern Lebanon, making clear the group would be rendered ineffective. Similarly, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) chief of staff Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz recalled the confidence that many cabinet ministers felt regarding Israel's objectives at the outset of the war: "They assumed that within ten days, two weeks, Hizballah's spine would be broken and it would all work out."[7]

For some, the political failure of this war was that Israel did not go to a ground offensive early enough to gain a decisive outcome. For others, the political decisionmaking failure was the opposite: not defining a realistic objective and failing to find a strategy that would have been more conclusive. This paper points to the lack of clarity in Israeli objectives and in the strategies for achieving those objectives. Israel was not capable of defining a relationship between tactical military moves and strategic political objectives. The problem was compounded by the inability of the Israeli political echelon to ask the IDF hard questions as it laid out military tactical strategies that did not take into account the regional or political realities that Israel faced. Furthermore, the Israeli political echelon ill-advisedly raised

4. See website of the Higher Relief Commission of the Government of Lebanon: www.lebanonundersiege.gov.lb/english/F/Main/index.asp.
5. Hizballah's public statements confirm that its grievance against Israel is not about territory inside Lebanon but about Israel's very existence. What many analysts believe to be Hizballah's original manifesto was published on February 16, 1985, in the Beirut newspaper *al-Safir,* and stated its view of Israel as follows: "Our struggle will end only when this entity is obliterated. We recognize no treaty with it, no cease fire, and no peace agreements, whether separate or consolidated."

   Hizballah's secretary-general, Hassan Nasrallah, leaves no room for doubt. In an interview conducted by Antoine K. Kehdy of *Middle East Insight* magazine and appearing in the *Washington Post* on February 20, 2000, Nasrallah states: "I am against any reconciliation with Israel. I do not even recognize the presence of a state that is called 'Israel.' I consider its presence both unjust and unlawful. That is why if Lebanon concludes a peace agreement with Israel and brings that accord to the Parliament our deputies will reject it; Hezbollah refuses any conciliation with Israel in principle." When asked in an interview on Egyptian television in July 2000 whether "the destruction of Israel and the liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem were Hezbollah's goal," he replied, "That is the principal objective of Hezbollah." Reuters and Associated Press report that at a December 31, 1999, rally in Beirut, Nasrallah announced, "There is no solution to the conflict in this region except with the disappearance of Israel." In July 2002, Hizballah's spokesperson, Hassan Ezzedin, told Jeffrey Goldberg of the *New Yorker:* "The Hezbollah campaign to rid Shebaa of Israeli troops is a pretext for something larger. If they go from Shebaa, we will not stop fighting them . . . our goal is to liberate the 1948 borders of Palestine. . . . The Jews who survive this war of liberation can go back to Germany or wherever they came from."
6. The fragility of the Sunni regimes, however, became apparent as Arab public opinion became more inflamed by broadcasts of the war on Arab TV stations, and the voice of Sunni regimes was muted.
7. Nahum Barnea and Shimon Schiffer, "What Would Halutz Say," *Yediot Aharonot* (Tel Aviv), August 25, 2006. The article is written as a first-person account of Halutz's views. Although it does not use quotation marks, the text does represent Halutz's verbatim remarks to the interviewers.

public expectations, especially when the IDF forewarned the cabinet from the outset that key objectives could not be met. (In contrast, the political echelon had a more realistic expectation of the consequences of Israeli force upon Lebanon than the IDF did). As Israeli political leaders heightened public expectations and Olmert publicly told the Knesset that Israel seeks the "expulsion of Hizbullah from the area," Hizballah did the reverse.[8] The group's leader and secretary-general, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, lowered expectations. Speaking to the world on television from an undisclosed bunker, Nasrallah declared: "The victory we are talking about is when the resistance survives. When its will is not broken, then this is victory . . . When we are not defeated militarily, then this is victory."[9]

The failure of Israeli decisionmaking in defining realistic objectives and implementing them has caused many in the Israeli public to suffer a crisis of faith in the nation's political and military leadership. This situation could be compared to the crisis of confidence after the 1973 war. If it is anything like 1973, the implications may be felt for a while.

8. Speech of Olmert to Knesset on July 17, 2006, five days after the outbreak of the war. An Associated Press story on July 14 called "Prime Minister Tells UN's Annan IDF Offensive Will Stop When Hizbullah Disarms" cites an aide to Olmert as telling UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that Israel would not halt its offensive in Lebanon until Hizballah was disarmed.
9. Hassan Nasrallah, interview with al-Jazeera, July 21, 2006.

# Run-Up to July 2006: The Perfect Storm

THIS WAR MARKED a certain irony of history. Beginning shortly after its 1982 incursion, Israel stayed in Lebanon's southern strip not for purposes of conquest and settlement, but rather to create a security zone south of the Litani River, thirteen miles from the Lebanese-Israeli border, to halt the firing of katyusha rockets into Israel. This issue had kept Israel in Lebanon until 2000, and debate in Israel focused on the wisdom of carving out a temporary, comparable security zone during this 2006 war. When in 2000 Israel found the security zone was ineffective because of the longer range of katyushas, which could fire beyond it, Israel left the area. Nevertheless, Hizballah had already built a legend for itself as the "resistance" organization that had liberated Lebanon, burnishing its credentials as a national movement inside Lebanon; now the group seemed to want to regain this aura.

In some ways, the Hizballah attack in northern Israel on July 12 marked a perfect storm, triggering Israel's rapid escalation into a full-blown war. In the immediate sense, Hizballah's act was widely viewed as completely illegitimate. On July 12, the group crossed the blue line, demarcated by the United Nations (UN) in 2000, killing eight Israeli soldiers and kidnapping two others. The area attacked was not even Shebaa Farms, which Hizballah claims as Lebanese but the UN recognized as Syrian territory. The incursion marked the first time since Israel exited Lebanon in 2000 that Hizballah claimed responsibility for an attack outside of Shebaa.

Moreover, the attack came at a time when the entire area had been unstable for reasons relating to a combination of internal Lebanese dynamics, the regional dimension, and dynamics inside Israel. For the last year, the new Lebanese government had avoided directly demanding that Hizballah dismantle its 12,000 rockets imported from Syria and Iran and cede its de facto control over the south,[1] fearing such a demand would trigger renewed sectarian strife. Therefore, Israel's repeated requests for Hizballah's disarmament as called for by UN Security Council Resolution 1559, passed in 2004, fell on deaf ears.

The attack on July 12 should be seen partly as Hizballah's attempt to move from a politically defensive domestic position, where it found itself since early 2005. At that time, Hizballah became perceived as Syria's sectarian Shiite advocates for remaining in Lebanon and had been feeling the pressure to disarm from many quarters inside Lebanon. Kidnapping Israeli soldiers to help free Lebanese prisoners could help Hizballah justify its continued armament and restore its national stature. Indeed, Nasrallah declared in late 2005 that 2006 would be the year of freeing prisoners.[2]

Regional dynamics added to the mix. Hizballah's regional patron was Iran. With a G-8 summit looming in St. Petersburg, Russia, an incident in south Lebanon could divert international attention from UN Security Council calls to halt Iran's nuclear program and remind the West that Iran has options.

Domestic dynamics inside Israel also contributed to the perfect storm of July 2006. Although Israel's military had not fought an interstate coalition of Arab states since 1973, and the United States had deposed another enemy of Israel—Iraq's Saddam Hussein—in 2003, Israel still had a vulnerable sense that its deterrent power was eroding. Of course, deterrence is a projection of the

1. On Hizballah's al-Manar TV station on May 23, 2006, Nasrallah declared: "A year ago today I said, in Bint Jbeil, that the resistance has more than 12,000 missiles. When I say 'more than 12,000 missiles,' it doesn't mean 13,000."
2. Three Lebanese prisoners are in Israeli jails. One of them is Samir Kuntar. See Smadar Haran Kaiser, "The World Should Know What He Did to My Family," *Washington Post,* May 18, 2003. On April 22, 1979, a Lebanese Druze named Samir Kuntar, who was part of a pro-Iraqi PLO faction named the Palestine Liberation Front, led a seaborne terror attack on a beach near the Israeli northern town of Nahariya about six miles south of the Lebanese border. The attack was one of the most gruesome in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. One of Kuntar's comrades shot the father in front of his four-year-old daughter, Eynat, and then Kuntar smashed the little girl's skull against a rock with his rifle butt. In order to muffle the sound of the mother and two-year-old sister in hiding from the killers, Smadar Haran accidently smothered to death the two-year-old sister, Yael. Kuntar was tried and convicted for murder in Israeli courts, and Israeli leaders have vowed never to release him.

enemy's perception. Among top Israeli security officials, the sense was one of Israel's deterioration.

In the aftermath of Israel's 2000 exit from Lebanon, Nasrallah spoke to 30,000 supporters. In his address, he not only claimed credit for Israel's departure that month, but he also exhorted Palestinians to choose the path of violence over negotiation in dealing with Israel. He declared, "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." He continued, "Israel may own nuclear weapons and heavy weaponry, but by God, it is weaker than a spider's web."[3] The "spider web" metaphor became the preferred imagery for Hizballah to describe the appearance, but not the fact, of Israeli power.

Some in Israel believe that the speech was instrumental in the outbreak of the Palestinian intifada from 2000 to 2004, which was characterized by dozens of Palestinian suicide bombings. In broad terms, many Israeli generals, such as IDF chief of staff Moshe Yaalon, would cite Nasrallah's "spider web" speech as suggesting that Israel had lost its deterrent power, a belief reinforced by some, including Yaalon, after Israel unilaterally left Gaza in 2005. He and others who shared this view believed it contributed more to Hamas's parliamentary victory in January 2006 than the corruption of the rival ruling party, Fatah. For his part, Ariel Sharon would constantly raise the issue of Hizballah's 12,000 rockets, but he was preoccupied with quelling a four-year Palestinian intifada and then subsequently with his pullout from Gaza in 2005. Sharon's own experience in Lebanon dating back to 1982 was also bitter, so his motives would have been questioned if he had chosen to pursue another military campaign in Lebanon.

In this context, Olmert's new government, elected in March 2006, felt politically vulnerable. Many of its ministers had voted for the Gaza pullout, yet an estimated 700 Qassam rockets continued to be fired from northern Gaza into southern Israeli towns. As the utility and wisdom of withdrawal were questioned, Olmert's standing came under additional fire arising from the political anomaly of a garrison democracy in which neither its prime minister, Ehud Olmert, nor the new defense minister and trade unionist, Amir Peretz, had command experience in the military. Nevertheless, Olmert was dedicated to pursuing his Convergence Plan, which would extend the unilateral pullouts to the West Bank. The government had a relatively poor approval rating for a new cabinet at the start of its term. A month into its term, only 35 percent of Israelis approved of Olmert's performance, despite his feted appearance at a joint session of the U.S. Congress. Only 31 percent thought Peretz was suited to be defense minister; 56 percent opposed Olmert's Convergence Plan for the West Bank, while only 37 percent were supportive.[4]

If these ratings were not trouble enough, at the end of June 2006, Hamas pulled off a daring assault that killed two Israeli soldiers and kidnapped Corporal Gilead Shalit, a move that received extraordinary attention in Israel because the IDF is a citizen army in a small country. With the Hizballah attack and a second round of kidnappings on July 12, Israel lost its patience. Moreover, the Olmert government was driven by the sense that Israeli withdrawals from Lebanon and Gaza and a future West Bank disengagement depended on demonstrating that Israel's concessions should not be misinterpreted. If withdrawals did not encourage moderates and could not constrain radicals, Israel retained the capacity to react to violence in a fierce fashion.

On the political defensive, the Olmert government did not feel it had sufficient public trust to make a restrained response if attacked by Hizballah. Olmert did not have the stature of his predeces-

3. Associated Press, May 26, 2000. Nasrallah's view of Israel dovetailed with his view of the Israeli public, which valued life as much as Hizballah was willing to die for a cause. In a speech broadcast by Hizballah's al-Manar TV station on May 23, 2006, Nasrallah declared about Israelis: "Another weakness is that both as individuals and as a collective, they are described by Allah as 'the people who guard their lives most.' Their strong adherence to this world, with all its vanities and pleasures, constitutes a weakness. In contrast, our people and our nation's willingness to sacrifice their blood, souls, children, fathers, and families for the sake of the nation's honor, life, and happiness has always been one of our nation's strengths."
4. Yossi Verter, Aluf Benn, and Jack Khoury, "Poll: Most Israelis Oppose PM Olmert's Convergence Plan," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), June 9, 2006, based on a Haaretz-Dialogue Poll, Tel Aviv University.

sor, Ariel Sharon, who conducted a prisoner swap with Hizballah in 2004, trading 435 Arab prisoners, including the bodies of Hizballah fighters, for Israeli businessman Elhanan Tannenbaum and three dead soldiers' bodies. At the time, the Tannenbaum exchange was excoriated in Israel as emboldening Hizballah. In contrast to Sharon, the Olmert government said it would not swap prisoners for the soldiers and would not return to the unstable status quo with Hizballah being able to fire at will on the Lebanese-Israeli border. Thus, the July 12 attack was a perfect storm for a desperate government that did not feel it could politically afford to look weak in the eyes of its own public.

# Israeli Decisionmaking during the War

HISTORIANS, and perhaps an Israeli inquiry commission, will be able to ferret out the Israeli decisionmaking process by obtaining notes of all cabinet meetings during this period. Until then, one is reliant upon personal interviews, news interviews of key figures, and news reports in making a preliminary judgment.

As previously noted, Israeli decisionmaking 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. The problem was compounded by the inability of the Israeli political echelon to ask the Israel Defense Forces hard questions as the IDF laid out a strategy that did not take into account the regional and international political realities that Israel faced and to insist that the IDF refine its strategy accordingly. Furthermore, the Israeli political echelon was ill advised to create unrealistic public expectations about the goals of the war, especially when the IDF forewarned the cabinet from the outset that key objectives could not be met.

## Two Emerging Critiques

Two different critiques have emerged of Israel's political decisionmaking at the start of the conflict and in the government's subsequent management of the war. The predominant public critique is that Israel did not have a strategy to obtain its ultimate objective of delivering an unrecoverable blow to Hizballah. Only such a blow would effectively disarm Hizballah and enable the LAF to take up its position in the south. On a tactical-operational level, an immediate ground thrust that involved temporarily taking all area south of the Litani River, thirteen miles from the border, would have given Israel a better chance to knock out katyusha rockets landing in northern Israel. These rockets are virtually impossible to destroy from the air before they are fired. According to this view, Israel failed to use sufficient manpower and firepower on the ground early on to obtain the necessary territorial objective. Large objectives require commensurate resources.

The alternative critique, associated with Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni, is that Israel's objective was never realistic; therefore, starting with a more modest but achievable goal would have been preferable. According to this view, Israel should not start a war that it is ill-prepared to launch, successfully prosecute, or conclude. Israel needs to think a few steps in advance. Furthermore, it should not fight a war on Hizballah's timetable, but rather wait until Israel is ready to strike. The thesis is that because Hizballah is impossible to destroy, going into Lebanon for a limited operation of a few days and inflicting a massive blow would have been sufficient, as was done on the second day of the war when Israel hit fifty-nine permanent rocket launchers in thirty-four minutes.

A person whose views were close to the Livni side of the equation is former IDF chief of staff Moshe Yaalon. In a wide-ranging interview he gave after the war,[1] Yaalon said Israel's military action in Lebanon ran counter to the plan in place at the IDF during his tenure, which had been formulated in the event that Hizballah triggered a crisis with Israel:

> The IDF was supposed to respond with an aerial attack and the mobilization of reserve divisions, which would act as a threat to the Syrians and to Hizballah and would encourage Lebanon and the international community to take action to achieve the desired goal. If the threat itself did not achieve the goal, a ground move would have begun within a few days aimed primarily at seizing dominant terrain as far as the Litani River and the Nabatiya plateau.... The ground entry was supposed to be carried out speedily, for an allotted time, without the use of tanks and without entering houses or built-up areas. Because of our awareness

1. Ari Shavit, "No Way to Go to War," interview with Moshe Yaalon, *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), September 15, 2006.

> of the antitank missile problem and our awareness of the bunkers and of the fact that the routes are mined, the intention was to activate the IDF in guerrilla modalities. That was the operational idea, that was the plan, and that is how the forces were trained.

Israel's actions in summer 2006 showed a different approach, however. According to Yaalon,

> They overused force. And instead of coordinating with the Americans for them to stop us when the operation was at its height, and setting in motion a political process to disarm Hizballah, we asked the Americans for more time. We let the Americans think that we have some sort of gimmick that will vanquish Hizballah militarily. I knew there was no such gimmick. I knew the whole logic of the operation was that it be limited in time and not be extended… [After the first week] I lost all logical connection with the events. I understood that there was a deviation from the plan that was based on some sort of false feeling that there is a military means to pulverize Hizballah and bring about its dismantlement and disappearance. Because the goals of the war were not defined and because no one clarified what the army is capable of doing and what it cannot do, the pursuit began of an impossible achievement. Instead of sticking to the IDF's operative plan, they started to improvise. They improvised, improvised, and then improvised again. Instead of grabbing political achievements at the right moment, they went on with the use of force. The excessive use of force in a situation like this is ruinous.

The commonality between the different critiques of Israeli decisionmaking is that Israel was gripped by political indecision that led to military failures during the summer of 2006. The government failed to think ahead and match tactical military moves with broader political objectives.

## Not Asking Hard Questions of the IDF

Dan Meridor, a veteran of Israeli cabinets and recent author of a still classified and revised Israeli strategic doctrine, believes that Israel did not think ahead in this war. In an interview, he recalled participating in a General Staff exercise a couple of years ago where he was asked to play the Israeli prime minister in a simulation about how a war with Hizballah would break out. According to Meridor, the simulation predicted the July 12 scenario and the result was an inconclusive outcome. However, the cabinet did not learn from that exercise.[2] Another Israeli familiar with the cabinet deliberations held on July 12 complained that IDF chief of staff Dan Halutz did not adequately answer the questions of Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres when asked how he would anticipate the reaction by Hizballah to an Israeli attack, nor was Halutz forced to do so by the prime minister or other ministers present.

In a broad sense, the IDF did not seem to adequately lay out objectives that took into account the constraints of international realities faced by Israel. Furthermore, the Halutz view that advocated destroying Lebanese infrastructure beyond bridges suggests that he had not only an undifferentiated view of Arab public opinion, but also little recognition of how massive destruction could undermine the international support that Israel relied on at the start of this conflict.

Throughout most of Israel's wars, it faced an international stopwatch that required a rather tight timetable for its military actions. Unlike the United States, which can veto any hostile resolution at the UN Security Council, such as when it launched a seventy-eight-day air campaign during the 1999 Kosovo War, Israel has been aware of the limits on its decisionmaking during wartime, as evidenced by the ceasefire called by the superpowers in 1973. As such, Israeli wars have been short. Yet, one wonders if during July 2006, the Israeli leadership believed that the diplomatic physics of Middle East wars were suspended because of the initial support Israel received at home and abroad, including support from the United States at the start and subsequently even from Sunni Arab regimes. This support has led to the complaint that Israel squandered excellent baselines for a military operation. After all, as offi-

2. Dan Meridor, interview by author, Tel Aviv, August 22, 2006.

cials in Israel's Prime Minister's Office later admitted privately, erosion of international support throughout the conflict was predictable as media pictures in the Arab world and Europe showed Israel hitting civilian buildings at the edges of Beirut.

Remarkably, Halutz acknowledged after the war that the plan he presented to the cabinet was not realistic given such traditional international constraints; but he did not lay out to the cabinet realistic objectives that were obtainable, nor did cabinet officials—including the prime minister—force the IDF to put forward realistic alternatives. According to Halutz's account of his July 12 remarks to 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.[3]

## Differing Military and Political Assessments

According to this and other accounts, Halutz and Olmert were at odds over decisive elements from the outset. Olmert and the cabinet ministers had a more realistic picture of the consequences of Israeli military force than Halutz, demurring at his idea of a massive attack on Lebanese infrastructure far beyond bridges, fearing that such a move would only unite the Lebanese around Hizballah.[4]

According to the accounts, however, the military and not the political leadership understood the limits of force in attaining objectives. Halutz made explicitly clear in advance that he did not believe Israel could guarantee that it could retrieve the two kidnapped soldiers, deliver an irretrievable blow to Hizballah, or stop the katyusha rocket attacks.[5] So a pivotal question is: why did the political echelon put forward objectives that the IDF said could not be obtained? This remains one of the central unanswered questions of decision-making during the war, leading to speculation that the political leadership thought it needed certain objectives for the political purpose of rallying massive public support for the war.

Perhaps to underscore that the IDF had more limited objectives than the political echelon, July 18 looms large. In an account written by Israel's military commentator, Zeev Schiff, both Halutz and Israel's director of military intelligence, Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, came to Israel's seven-member security cabinet on July 18 and offered to stop the operation, insisting that most of the objectives were achieved, but to no avail. Why was the IDF approach rejected by the cabinet? The answer remains a mystery. A military move was not under way. Reservists were not called up until July 23, 2006.[6]

## Growing Divergence between Olmert and IDF

When the war was almost four weeks old, Olmert was stung by reports that the civilian leadership was restraining the army. Either Olmert or his aides on August 7 leaked an unequivocal denial, while making it clear that both he and the army opposed a ground attack. At a meeting with top commanders, Olmert declared to senior officers: "Remind me of a single occasion when I didn't authorize a ground operation you submitted to me? If there's anyone here who claims I didn't authorize ground activity in Lebanon or that I placed limits on the army—let him show himself." He

3. Nahum Barnea and Shimon Schiffer, "What Would Halutz Say," *Yediot Aharonot* (Tel Aviv), August 25, 2006. The article is written as a first-person account of Halutz's views. Although it does not use quotation marks, the text does represent Halutz's verbatim remarks to the interviewers.
4. Ibid. On July 12 at 6:00 p.m., we, the IDF representatives, came to the cabinet meeting and presented three options. We go for Hizballah alone; we go for Hizballah and Lebanon; or for Hizballah, Lebanon, and Syria. I believed that we should go for the second option, Hizballah and Lebanon. I was opposed to the third option: not to attack Syria because of the kidnapping of the two soldiers.
5. Ibid. 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, not pounded. That was said by the ministers, not by the IDF. We said that the Lebanese must be led to implement UN Resolution 1559.
6. Zeev Schiff, "Lessons of War: War Could Have Been Shorter," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), August 28, 2006.

continued: "So far the army has not submitted to the political echelon any new operational plan which the political echelon has not authorized." In describing the political rationale, he said: "If we had sent all the divisions and all the fire power in, we would not have had the public's overwhelming support for the war's objectives . . . and at no stage so far has the army suggested to us that we should go in there at full strength."[7]

In a separate quasi interview with *Maariv,* comparable to Halutz's a week later in *Yediot*, Olmert said he was sympathetic to opposition of a major ground assault since a third of the katyushas were being fired from north of the Litani and therefore a ground operation would have been futile. Israel would pay a price with 300 dead Israeli soldiers.[8] The Halutz background interview came a week later and serves as a riposte to Olmert. While praising Olmert's determination in different parts of the account, Halutz clearly blamed him for indecision during the war. In reference to the ground operation, he said: "We wanted to take this step ten days earlier, but the prime minister believed that he was close to a diplomatic breakthrough and we were forced to take the combatants off the helicopters. In hindsight, perhaps I did not insist enough."[9] Possibly Halutz did not insist enough because the veteran air force officer had made clear very forcefully that he had a very high regard for air power and a limited view of the utility of ground forces.[10] For his part, Olmert may have been haunted not just by the loss of hundreds of young lives, but also by the specter of 1982, when Israelis (except then defense minister Ariel Sharon) thought they were embarking upon a limited ground operation at the war's start but did not fully leave Lebanon until 2000.

Regarding his biggest mistake during the war, Halutz issued a sharp rebuke:

> You are no doubt asking yourselves, what do I think was my biggest mistake. I think I did not give the proper weight to the political echelon's lack of experience. We told them everything. We didn't skip over a single fact. We presented the most gloomy scenarios. But I think they didn't understand the full significance in real time. . . . They assumed that within ten days, two weeks, Hizballah's spine would be broken and it would all work out.[11]

## Hesitancy on the Ground Thrust

On Wednesday July 26, an international conference convened in Rome. In its published communiqué, the conferees agreed on the deployment of a multinational force in Lebanon. In other words, within the first twelve days of the thirty-four-day war, Israel could see the multinational force was coming. Amid wide Israeli skepticism and doubts that such a force would succeed in conducting obtrusive inspections and disarming Hizballah, the stakes were clearly raised for Israel to act in the area south of the Litani River and root out the katyusha rockets before it would no longer be allowed to operate. However, the military instead went in and out of villages along the border, including three thrusts in the Hizballah town of Bint Jbeil. The debate about whether to proceed with a ground operation remained deadlocked. The cabinet decided on the move only two days before the vote on the ceasefire, but held up imple-

7. Shimon Shiffer, "Olmert: I Haven't Placed Limits on the Army," *Yediot Aharonot* (Tel Aviv), August 8, 2006.
8. Ben Caspit, "The Next War," *Maariv*, August 13, 2006: "'I'm a civilian,' he says to his aides, 'I let the military experts work. As soon as the army says that one-third of the launching grounds lie to the north of the Litani, we need to think about whether it is worth sacrificing so many soldiers for a partial result . . . The problem,' says the prime minister, 'is that the army thought that it could achieve this without a ground operation. Only last Wednesday was the plan for a ground operation produced. Imagine,' says Olmert, 'that I would have forced the IDF three weeks ago to undertake a ground operation and a call-up of reserves, and then 300 soldiers would have fallen. Just imagine.'"
9. Barnea and Schiffer, "What Would Halutz Say." See note 3 for more information.
10. Zeev Schiff, "The Foresight Saga," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), August 11, 2006. Schiff cites remarks by Halutz at Israel's National Security College in January 2001 about the relative weights of air and ground power. Halutz reportedly declared: "Many air operations were generally implemented without a land force, based on a worldview of Western society's sensitivity to losses. A land force is not sent into action as long as there is an effective alternative. Small forces, in commando format, have been utilized. The IAF [Israel Air Force] is a partner in or decides wars.

    "This obliges us to part with a number of anachronistic assumptions. First of all, that victory equals territory. Victory means achieving the strategic goal and not necessarily territory. I maintain that we also have to part with the concept of a land battle. We have to talk about the integrated battle and about the appropriate force activating it. Victory is a matter of consciousness. Air power affects the adversary's consciousness significantly."
11. Barnea and Schiffer, "What Would Halutz Say." See note 3 for more information.

mentation for another forty-eight hours. Instead, Israel acted just five hours before a ceasefire was about to be signed on Friday, August 11. Suddenly, Israel raced to the Litani in a bid to neutralize as much of Hizballah's capabilities as possible in a very limited time before the ceasefire was to be implemented on Monday, August 14. Many Israelis, including former IDF chief of staff Yaalon, disputed the utility of the last-minute move—which continued until a ceasefire took effect a little over two days after it was voted on—during which time thirty-four Israeli soldiers were killed.[12]

One might have thought the U.S.-Israel relationship would have facilitated correlation between key tactical military moves and widely anticipated political developments, but apparently not. This last-minute Israeli move suggests that the United States and Israel could coordinate on general principles, such as how much time Israel needed for the war, but not on specifics, because no synchronization existed between Israel's military strategy and U.S. political strategy.[13] The reasons why U.S.-Israel cooperation did not lead Israel to move much sooner are unclear, given the widely anticipated unfolding of developments. This failure suggests that U.S.-Israel coordination may not have been deep, perhaps because Washington assumed a higher level of Israeli political and military competence than was warranted. The more the United States and Israel agreed about how Israeli military steps were tied to political objectives, the more Washington could galvanize an immediate international coalition centered around Sunni opposition to Hizballah to hasten new security arrangements in southern Lebanon and even shorten the length of the war.

Although Israel widely praised the breathing time afforded by the United States during the war, the lack of synchronization between the military steps and a broad coalition to implement security arrangements would be problematic. As noted by former U.S. envoy to the Middle East Dennis Ross, the United States might have capitalized on Sunni regime opposition to Hizballah at the outset and converted this capital politically, with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan coalescing to press the ultimate objectives of the war early, namely the deployment of the LAF and the multinational forces. However, this conversion did not occur.

Israel's attitude toward a multinational force changed during the fighting. At the start of the war, senior Israeli officials scorned the idea of a multinational force because of Israel's sour record with United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) observers whose mandate was too narrow to halt any attacks since being established in 1978. By the end of the war, Israel became a booster of the deployment of a multinational force, realizing that the LAF was inadequate to serve as a counterweight to Hizballah in southern Lebanon. Suddenly, Israel favored a multinational force, but wanted to make sure that it had a robust mandate, despite open statements from Lebanese and European officials that they would avoid any confrontational approach in dealing with Hizballah. In short, Israel's objective changed during the war because it had no better alternatives.

12. Zeev Schiff, "General Staff Officers Warned PM: Last-Minute Expansion of War Is a Mistake," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), September 7, 2006. Shavit, Ari, "No Way to Go to War," interview with Moshe Yaalon, *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), September 15, 2006.
13. See Caspit, "The Next War."

# Assessments: A Balance Sheet

THE ASSESSMENTS of the war can be seen as a ledger. From Israel's perspective, the balance sheet contains both favorable or potentially favorable as well as unfavorable and potentially unfavorable outcomes.

## Potentially Favorable Outcomes

**International focus on Iran as a destabilizing factor in the Middle East.** The war brought into international focus the role of Iran as a destabilizing force in the region (one that provided rockets to Hizballah) and as an increasingly influentual actor in the heart of the Arab world. Indeed, the fear of Iranian regional ascendancy seems to have brought together an unusual group of states in publicly blaming Hizballah for recklessness in provoking the war. It is unprecedented for three Sunni Arab states—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan—to charge another Arab party with instigating a confrontation with Israel. These states understand that Iran has backed militias in Iraq, Gaza, and Lebanon, and they fear this recipe for instability could spread in the Middle East in the coming years.

Could Hizballah have undertaken its July 12 operation without a green light from Tehran, or did Iran perhaps instigate the operation? This question cannot be answered conclusively, but speculation swirls about whether Hizballah could have initiated this incident without approval from Iran. Because the history of the last six years in the wake of the Israeli pullback suggested to neither Iran nor Hizballah that Israel would respond so fiercely, one cannot preclude the possibility that Iran believed such a low-risk operation could yield overall favorable political benefits, given the timing of the G-8 summit.

A low-risk incident is different from a full-fledged war. Interestingly, both Halutz and Nasrallah separately declared that Iran did not want Hizballah to goad Israel into a full-fledged conflict, because it would expose the Iranian deterrent prematurely before Iranian nuclear arms were fully developed. According to this view, an Iran with a nuclear umbrella would make an Israeli attack on Hizballah unthinkable, and, more important, could make a U.S. or Israeli attack against Iranian nuclear facilities too costly. This view holds that the Iranian provision of rockets is not an ideological indulgence against Israel but rather an investment for its own strategic purposes. In an interview from his hiding spot during the war, Nasrallah declared:

> What will this change in the Iranian nuclear file? On the contrary, I tell you that if there is a relationship with the Iranian nuclear file, the current war on Lebanon is not in the interest of the Iranian nuclear file. The Americans and Israelis have always taken into account that if a confrontation takes place with Iran, Hizballah might interfere in Iran's interest. If Hizballah is hit now, what does this mean? This means that Iran is weakened in its nuclear file, not strengthened.[1]

General Halutz offered somewhat similar thoughts on the issue in his *Yediot Aharonot* interview: "We exposed a monster three to four years before it was completely mature. The Iranians never imagined that Hizballah would give us an alert, that it would set off a warning light here. Hizballah made it clear to us: guys, wake up."[2]

**Lebanon may have more control over its border with Israel.** The outcome of this war has included the deployment of the LAF to the border with Israel, making the idea of a Lebanese "central address" more credible than in the past, even if the 60,000-member LAF remains relatively weak. Moreover, the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 has at least made clear that Lebanon is accountable for actions inside its borders. At the same time, the prospects that a bolstered UN force may be effective must be weighed against

1. Hassan Nasrallah, interview with al-Jazeera, July 21, 2006.
2. Nahum Barnea and Shimon Schiffer, "What Would Halutz Say," *Yediot Aharonot* (Tel Aviv), August 25, 2006. See page 8, note 7, for more information.

the prospect that the force will inadvertently serve as a shield to block Israeli retaliation against any future Hizballah provocation. Israel was willing to incur that risk; whether it was worthwhile remains to be seen. Israel is breaking from its traditionalist position of fear that interposing international forces between combatants unwittingly helps a militia that plays by its own rules more than it assists Israel in curbing attacks because it reduces prospects of Israeli retaliation.

Israeli analysts are clearly counting on UNIFIL and LAF to constrain Hizballah's ability to rebuild its installations in southern Lebanon and launch attacks in Israel, but Nasrallah is counting on inflamed Lebanese public opinion against Israel as a result of the human toll of the war in Lebanon. Although very skeptical that UNIFIL and LAF will be effective in conducting intrusive inspections and disarming Hizballah, leading Israeli analysts, such as Arab affairs commentator Ehud Yaari, are assuming that Hizballah's room to maneuver will be limited and therefore the group will no longer enjoy control of southern Lebanon, or "Hizballahstan," as in the past. Yaari declared,

> Nasrallah is worried about not being able to continue the armed *muqawama*, or resistance, in the new framework of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. He understands that in south Lebanon, in the area below the Litani River and on the slopes of Mount Hermon along the contours of the Hazbani, his people will no longer be able to set up open military camps. . . . In other words, Nasrallah understands that the South has ceased to be 'Hizballahstan' and he is conceding the role that he had taken upon himself in the past, to serve as the guardian of Lebanon's border.[3]

Moreover, Hizballah needs to recover after this war, which may give the LAF and the multinational force an opportunity to constrain Hizballah.

**Reckoning for Nasrallah in Lebanon?** Nasrallah is not a man who admits mistakes easily, especially when his miscalculation affected an entire country—Lebanon. Yet, in an interview on Lebanon's New TV (NTV) on August 27, 2006, he declared: "We did not think, even 1 percent, that the capture would lead to a war at this time and of this magnitude. You ask me, 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."[4] Nasrallah's admission of miscalculation is seen by Israeli analysts as a signal that he fears the loss of his standing inside Lebanon. Nasrallah's miscalculation caused Hizballah substantial losses.[5] Apart from the temporary displacement of hundreds of thousands of Lebanese and hundreds of millions of dollars of infrastructure damage, Hizballah is said to have lost at least 500 fighters and thousands of rockets. For five weeks after the war ended, Nasrallah appeared in media interviews but remained in an undisclosed bunker; only on September 22 did he reappear at a public rally.

Despite admitting he miscalculated, Nasrallah called on Lebanese to "celebrate the divine and historic victory over the Zionists—the enemies of Lebanon and the nation" and "honor and thank all those who supported the resistance" during the Israeli offensive.[6] Nevertheless, Israeli analysts believe that the Lebanese public is largely furious with Nasrallah, citing many articles inside Lebanon questioning the wisdom of Nasrallah's action. After all, the Lebanese public has long been caught in the cross fire of the Arab-Israeli conflict and is well aware of its toll upon their country as Israel has battled Palestinians and Hizballah in southern Lebanon for the last thirty years. Israeli analysts expect the Lebanese public to understand the negative consequences of Nasrallah's bringing military conflict back to Lebanon. Yaari argues about Nasrallah: "He stands

3. Ehud Yaari, "Nasrallah's Malaise," *Jerusalem Report*, October 2, 2006. Yaari, a leading Israeli television commentator on Arab affairs, adds: "From now on, they will have to conceal their weapons in secret mountain caches, outside the villages. Hizballah's southern 'Nasr' (Victory) unit will no longer be able to move freely in the area, where the 15,000 soldiers of three regular brigades of the Lebanese Army will be manning roadblocks and carrying out patrols, bolstered by the troops of an upgraded UNIFIL force. There are already signs that Hizballah has started moving its military equipment from the South toward the Lebanese Bekaa."
4. Hassan Nasrallah, interview on NTV, August 27, 2006.
5. On the second day of the war, Israel knocked out fifty-nine permanent launchers of the intermediate Fajr missiles and Zelzal missiles in thirty-four minutes. Much of Hizballah's civilian infrastructure was knocked out, including financial institutions and social service centers.
6. Hassan Nasrallah, interview on al-Manar TV, September 17, 2006.

to lose control over portions of the Shiite community. Indeed, there is growing evidence of disaffection with Hizballah, and reservations on the part of some of the Shiite middle class, and among the local village leaderships, about the disaster visited upon them by Nasrallah's belligerent adventurism."[7] However, Nasrallah remains a potent force in Lebanon, as demonstrated by his ability to bring hundreds of thousands of followers to his victory rally on September 22.

Yaari continues: "What's more, Nasrallah fears rising tensions between the Sunnis and Shiites in Lebanon. He is trying with all his might to avoid open confrontation, but Sunni public opinion, under the leadership of the Hariri family and its loyalists, has turned largely against him."[8] Indeed, a poll taken after the war demonstrates that while some Lebanese may think that Hizballah won the war, at least half of them want it to disarm; the latter include large majorities among Christians, Sunni, and Druze Lebanese.[9]

Israelis cite interviews by Lebanese politicians that suggest Nasrallah is driven by an Iranian rather than a Lebanese agenda. Veteran Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt had already made this allegation before the war. On the eve of the war, Jumblatt said about Hizballah: "They are a tool in the hands of the Syrian regime and for Iran's regional ambitions."[10]

Some will argue that Nasrallah's postconflict comments about miscalculation suggest the possibility that Islamists can be deterred. Others will say that Nasrallah's comments are unrelated to deterrence but rather lip service that he pays to maintain his standing in the Lebanese political framework, and that he is actually driven by an Islamic jihadist agenda and, therefore, unrepentant.

**Israel's home front demonstrated stamina.** Hizballah's 4,000 rockets and missiles caused economic dislocation in northern Israel, because Haifa is Israel's second-biggest port. They also caused almost 2 million Israelis to either stay in bomb shelters for a month or flee to the center or south of the country. Importantly, the intensity of the war and the duration of the conflict did not weaken Israeli public resolve that the war needed to be prosecuted. Moreover, the Israeli public viewed the war against Hizballah as legitimate, realizing that Hizballah is a rejectionist group that had no legitimate grievance. Israelis not only did not stop supporting the war, but to the contrary, were upset it was not brought to a decisive outcome. Furthermore, despite the fact that Hizballah's attacks were indiscriminate and the civilian population was a central theater of the war from July 12 to August 14, relatively few civilians were killed—forty-three.[11]

**Relations with Washington remained strong.** Israel cannot complain that it did not have breathing space from the Bush administration to prosecute this war. The amount of time given to Israel exceeded anything provided by the United States in the past. In challenging Hizballah, the United States saw Israel as fighting a group that was not only considered terrorist by the U.S. Department of State but also responsible for the killing of 241 U.S. Marines in 1983, the bombing of American servicemen in Saudi Arabia's Khobar Towers barracks

7. See Yaari, "Nasrallah's Malaise." He added: "Nasrallah's promises to provide generous and speedy compensation to the thousands of families who lost their homes are not being realized. So far, only a few hundred families have received down payments on the $12,000 each is supposed to receive to cover a year's rent pending the rehabilitation of their permanent homes. At least 30,000 families, most of them Shiite, are expecting funds from Nasrallah's 'Construction Jihad' organization—a huge financial burden even for Iran, and all the more so considering that the Lebanese government will receive hundreds of millions of dollars from the Arab states and other donor nations to compete with Hizballah for the hearts and minds of the victims."
8. Ibid.
9. "Lebanon: Poll Shows 51% Want Hezbollah Disarmed," Naharnet, August 28, 2006. The poll by IPSOS for the French-language daily *L'Orient-Le Jour* found 51 percent of respondents supported the group's disarmament, with 49 percent against, a difference within the survey's margin of error. However, the poll found a wide divergence of views among Lebanon's various religious communities. Among the Shiite community—Lebanon's largest and the support base for Hizballah—the poll found 84 percent of respondents wanted the group to keep its weapons. But among the Druze and Christian communities, 79 percent and 77 percent, respectively, wanted the group to surrender its arsenal. Among the Sunni community, the poll found a slender majority of 54 percent in favor of the group's disarming.
10. Nicholas Blanford, "Will Hizballah Go to War for Iran?" *Time*, June 28, 2006.
11. Israel's inability to evacuate citizens from key northern towns during the war has been compared to U.S. inability to get people out of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and is often cited by Israelis as a central failure of the war.

in 1996, as well as the arming and training of insurgents in the current Iraq war. The United States viewed Hizballah as part of the "other Quartet," an axis of states and groups also including Iran, Syria, and Hamas. Furthermore, if done correctly, an attack against Hizballah could weaken the major group that wanted Syria to return to Lebanon and thus boost Lebanese prime minister Fouad Siniora's government, which the Bush administration saw as one of the signal achievements of its democratization campaign in the Middle East. If anything, some indications exist that the administration was unhappy that Israel repeatedly and publicly assured Syria that it would not pursue another front against Damascus, because this assurance would only make Syria more likely to engage in resupply. (Fearing that Syrian president Bashar al-Asad was not completely stable during a crisis, Israeli officials say that their move was intended to avert a third front, along with the fronts in Lebanon and Gaza.) In all, the United States supported the Israeli move, but the Bush administration was unhappy that Israel did not use the time effectively.

At the same time, officials like Yaalon complained that Israel failed in not adequately communicating realistic war objectives to the United States, which presumably could have forced Israel to halt within the first several days of the war, given how unrealistic the idea was that Israel would destroy Hizballah. According to that view, a more minimalist approach would have made a bigger impact. This failure could speak to the quality of the consultations between the two countries, which requires its own study. The tenor of the relationship seems to have been more about Washington's inquiring how much time Israel needed to prosecute the war, rather than a more meaningful and intimate dialogue that would have been centered on the relationship between Israeli military steps and agreed-upon political objectives, such as new security arrangements in southern Lebanon to weaken Hizballah. Such consultations could have probably enforced a greater discipline and focus on Israeli decisionmaking during the war.

## Negative Outcomes

Apart from the major issue of confused Israeli decision-making discussed at length earlier, there is no doubt that the war had other negative consequences as well.

**Emboldening Islamist radicals.** Nasrallah was able to mobilize hundreds of thousands of followers at a September 22 rally at which he declared victory and said Hizballah retained more than 20,000 rockets. He enjoys increased Arab public sympathy outside of Lebanon. He hopes that this reaction, combined with Lebanese anger at Israeli destruction of Lebanon's bridges, will translate into enhanced domestic standing for Hizballah and for outside Islamist groups in the region. Critically, Iranian hardliners are likely to believe their use of militias in Lebanon, Gaza, and Iraq is a winning asymmetrical formula to confront enemies that have far superior military capabilities. This strategy enables radicals to fire on civilians while knowing that their enemies will be more constrained in dealing with nonstate actors embedded in civilian population centers. If a Shiite Iran can fund a Sunni Palestinian Hamas, what would stop Shiites from funding militias in Sunni Arab states in the years ahead? As Henry Kissinger has pointed out, militias pose a uniquely dangerous challenge to the international nation-state system.[12]

**Strengthening Iran and Syria.** Iran and Syria may see the inconclusive outcome of this war as stiffening their defiance of the international community, which insists that they stop engaging in terrorism. It might make Iran believe that it can thumb its nose at the international community's demand that it desist from its nuclear program. Such an approach is only bad news for Israel, which views these issues as vital to its existence. In the postwar period, Syria immediately projected a position of defiance. Just after the war ended, Syrian leader Asad insulted Arab leaders who opposed Hizballah as "half-men." Then, in a major speech, he declared:

12. Henry Kissinger, "After Lebanon," *Washington Post*, September 13, 2006.

> Why this resistance is essential, let us just think of the direct achievements of the latest battles on the ground. The greatest achievement of those battles is that they came as a national response to the cowardly propositions that have been circulated through our region especially after the Iraq invasion. What made them more glorious is the reaction of the Arab people in general, which was marked by being a purely pan-Arab response to the abominable, seditious propositions that we have heard recently and to those who stand behind them.[13]

**A constrained Israel?** Israel has taken a calculated risk that the insertion of the Lebanese Armed Forces and a bolstered UNIFIL will constrain Hizballah in southern Israel. Very possibly this combination of forces will not be adequate in limiting Hizballah in southern Lebanon but will unwittingly serve as a shield that effectively precludes any Israeli retaliation in order to avert political tension with European friends. This possibility is especially likely because, as is explained later, UN Security Council Resolution 1701 makes clear that the activity of the UNIFIL force will be directed by the government of Lebanon, thus introducing the probability UNIFIL could be constrained in its actions against Hizballah.

**Eroded deterrence.** The idea of deterrence is persuading an enemy that it will pay a heavy price if it attacks. Some would argue that the war marked an unmitigated erosion of Israel's deterrence given its inconclusive result.

Undoubtedly, the war had negative implications for Israel's deterrence, but the picture is not overwhelming. On the favorable side, Israel demonstrated a key dimension of deterrence that came under fire from its critics: its willingness to act unpredictably and in a disproportionate manner that can inflict a heavy price upon an enemy. Nasrallah's television interview of August 27, where he admitted to the Lebanese people that he miscalculated in judging Israel's response, is important. Such admissions are virtually unprecedented for an Arab leader.[14] Nasrallah is aware not only of Lebanese anger against him, but also of Israel's ability to hit longer-range Iranian Fajr and Zelzal missiles and its ability to erode Hizballah's civilian infrastructure.

Nevertheless, if the net result of a mass deployment of multinational troops and LAF potentially limits Hizballah's room to maneuver without risking serious friction and perhaps even a confrontation between its patrons Iran and Syria, and European countries like France, Italy, and Germany, the constraint would be a major loss for Hizballah. As such, Israel's deterrence could be enhanced.

On the negative side of the ledger, Israel's deterrence has been hurt. First, this erosion was related to heightened public expectations put forward by Olmert in the Knesset and elsewhere that Israel would render Hizballah ineffective despite objective judgments on the difficulty of obtaining such sweeping success against insurgents embedded in the civilian population. Second, Israel's deterrence may have been harmed by a credibility gap that began to emerge after Israel left Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005. Before each pullout, Israeli leaders vowed that any attacks against Israel in the aftermath of a withdrawal would be met with an exacting response. Such reprisals did not occur, and over time, the perception of a menacing but harmless Israeli "spider web" took hold, as previously mentioned, which contributed to Nasrallah's miscalculating how Israel would respond to Hizballah's provocation.

Third, a key factor for deterrence is maintaining a margin of military superiority. However, amid major cuts in the Israeli military budget, which affected all levels of resupply and training, this edge was eroded—especially because Israel devoted much of its forces to quelling Palestinian violence from 2000 to 2004. Former deputy defense minister Ephraim Sneh, a member of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, asserted the cuts equaled 30 percent over the last three

13. Speech by Bashar al-Asad in Damascus, August 15, 2006.
14. On August 27, 2006, Nasrallah told Lebanon's NTV: "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."

years of budget austerity. Especially for a moderate government, military superiority is a prerequisite for making territorial concessions.[15] The burden of Israeli moderates is ensuring that their willingness to withdraw from land is not misconstrued by their Arab enemies. The concern is that Israel's enemies will view concessions as driven by weakness and not a desire for coexistence. Projecting the right message is particularly important when dealing with rejectionist Islamic groups whose idea of a legitimate grievance is not territories taken by Israel after the 1967 war but rather Israel's very existence.

The stakes are high for Israel in restoring deterrence. It must prepare for a potential "Round Two" with Hizballah, should the international forces deployed in southern Lebanon fail to curb Hizballah or should Syria defy the UN Security Council Resolution 1701 arms embargo and resupply Hizballah with impunity. Beyond the issue of Round Two looms the issue of Iran. Here, Israel needs to make sure that Iran does not miscalculate Israel's resolve.[16] This deterrence could involve increased military spending for missile capability.[17]

Restoring deterrence can be done through other means, such as high-profile reforms in the military, including enhanced training of reserves, a strategic intelligence success that gets the attention of the region, and the formation of a credible national security team and system. Israel continues to pay a heavy price for its lack of integrated civilian and military decisionmaking at a level before it reaches cabinet-level principals. Israel has traditionally seen the concept of "improvisation" as a hallmark of Israeli decisionmaking. This idea has been rooted in Israel's political culture since the prestate period before 1948 when Israel could not afford the luxury of specialization. Its consequences can be seen most vividly in this war. The conclusion that Israeli commissions of inquiry have called for since 1973 is hard to escape: Israel needs a stronger civilian National Security Council (NSC) that could serve as a counterweight to the IDF, which has traditionally dominated the Israeli decisionmaking system. Although Israel at least now has an NSC, its role in the overall Israeli decisionmaking system is exceedingly weak. A variety of distinguished heads have quit in despair amid a sense that they were neutralized or denied access to the prime minister.

15. See author's op-ed feature, "Deterrence and the Burden of Israeli Moderates," *USNews.com*, August 3, 2006.
16. According to a poll published in *Yediot Aharanot* on September 22, 2006, 53 percent of Israel's Jews defined Iran's nuclear program as the biggest problem facing Israel.
17. In a presentation to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy Weinberg Founders Conference in Lansdowne, Virginia, on September 16, 2006, Sneh called for an added $1 billion for this purpose.

# Implications

THIS WAR HAS CHANGED the political context in Israel. Having just been elected in spring 2006, Olmert had hoped that he could focus his tenure on withdrawal from much of the West Bank. Instead, his political coalition is hemorrhaging and he faces acute national security challenges on a variety of fronts. Following is a look at some of the challenges that he faces as Israel seeks to absorb the lessons of this war.

## Olmert's Political Choices

Whether the Olmert coalition will survive remains far from clear. No doubt a major preoccupation for Olmert for the rest of 2006 will be political survival. Does he have to change the character of his government to bolster his credibility? What could his coalition look like? Once he makes those political choices, they will have policy implications.

In terms of his coalition choices, Olmert needs to at least balance demands of political expediency and loyalty with experience in times of crisis. Israel faces national security challenges, and the public needs to be reassured that its leadership is poised at a time of crisis. This war did not inspire such confidence. In naming Labor Party head Amir Peretz—who had no national security experience—as defense minister, Olmert was keen at the outset of his term to ensure coalition stability and avoid controversy at the finance ministry (Peretz being an avowed socialist).[1] Nobody in the senior echelon of Olmert's cabinet has national security experience. This omission has been particularly glaring given the transition in the IDF, as an independent-minded Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon was replaced for the first time in Israel's history with a top air force officer, Halutz. Those changes seem to have contributed to the lack of clarity in objectives during the war. Unless Israel changes to a presidential style of governance, where a leader picks ministers based on demonstrated leadership performance and expertise, the vagaries of coalition politics will force Israeli prime ministers to name a cabinet based primarily on political expediency.

**A new IDF chief of staff?** Some wonder whether Olmert may get a political boost by jettisoning one member of his national security team who did not receive high marks during this war for his overestimation of airpower among other issues: Halutz. Politically, however, this move will not be simple for Olmert unless he privately persuades Halutz to resign, just as Maj. Gen. Udi Adam, head of the IDF's Northern Command, announced his resignation in mid-September 2006.

If Halutz resists, this move is much more complicated. IDF officers assume an often sacrosanct aura; they are often given the benefit of the doubt by a public not versed in the nitty-gritty of military affairs and are often credited for their self-sacrifice. In contrast, the public is often considerably less charitable toward politicians, believing they are often driven by self-interest and political survival. Therefore, political figures dismiss top military officers in Israel at their peril. This dichotomy gives military officers more independence in the Israeli system, often favoring the security views of military officers over those of politicians. Not coincidentally, an overwhelming 74 percent of the Israeli public wants Peretz to resign, which is 20 percent more than those calling on Halutz to quit his post.[2]

**End of civilian agenda: limits for Peretz and specter of alternative to Labor?** If Olmert cannot get a boost by making a major change at the top of the IDF, another alternative would be to make adjustments within his cabinet. Focusing on the defense ministry would address the issue of public confidence while trying to

1. Instead, Olmert gave the finance ministry to a loyalist, Avraham Hirschson. This move gave Olmert greater control of the country's purse strings.
2. *Yediot Aharonot* poll, August 25, 2006. Indeed, some of those calling on Halutz to resign might not be upset with his military strategy but rather appalled by the disclosure that he sold his stock portfolio on the fateful July 12 when the public expected him to focus only on his military duties.

maintain the existing coalition configuration. Overhauling his coalition would be a different matter and a riskier proposition. A cautious politician by instinct, Olmert is likely to fear that centrifugal forces could tear his coalition apart if he seeks to replace Labor with a combination of Avigdor Lieberman and his more right-wing Yisrael Beitenu party and the ultra-orthodox United Torah Judaism party. Lieberman would be compatible with Olmert's free-market policies, but as a settler, he could stymie Olmert at every turn on the Palestinian issue and politically hold Olmert hostage to his views. In Israeli politics, the coalition can define the mission; therefore, Olmert is likely to consider his ultimate policy direction as he contemplates a political survival strategy.[3]

**Adding gravitas in the cabinet.** Olmert's preference, therefore, would be either to find a way to put Peretz in a position outside the defense ministry while maintaining Labor as a coalition partner, or to add members to his cabinet that the public sees as heavyweights. Peretz believes enforcing such a move is unfair because the build-up of Hizballah missiles did not occur on his watch, and his departure from the coveted defense portfolio would doom his future leadership prospects.[4] Regardless, having an experienced defense minister would help Olmert. Reaching an agreement with Labor and Peretz will not be easy, but Olmert could choose either Kadima member and previous defense minister Shaul Mofaz or someone who has extensive national security experience, such as Dan Meridor, the author of the revised strategic doctrine, and former chief of staff and former prime minister Ehud Barak. Given their backgrounds, Meridor and Barak could serve as defense minister or be part of the inner cabinet on national security, and they both share the government's basic centrist philosophy.[5] Regardless of who is defense minister, the Israeli public is generally likely to view the addition of these two as restoring public confidence and bolstering the gravitas of the Olmert government. More specifically, both would contribute to defining the relationship between tactical military moves and strategic political objectives, and either could ask hard questions. If the IDF was laying out unrealistic military objectives for an eight-week campaign when Israel's diplomatic clock required a shorter campaign, what alternatives would have been more feasible at a reasonable price? If Olmert did not ask those questions, Barak and Meridor would have likely done so while avoiding raising public expectations. Livni's assessment at the start of the war may have turned out to be sound, but she is not known to have taken extraordinary steps to push her point of view.

So long as Peretz is a major liability for Labor as defense minister and the party's approval ratings continue to plummet, running at half of their level at the time of the spring election, the party is not well placed to challenge Olmert as he cuts Labor's signature plans to raise social welfare benefits.[6] Poor ratings for Labor will make the party fearful that Olmert will use any resistance to budget cuts as a pretext to bring in Lieberman. In short, a weakened Peretz at the defense ministry will be unable to mount a major challenge to Olmert's cutbacks of the "civilian agenda." It would be ironic that a civilian Israeli defense minister has become a liability for the very civilian, or social welfare, priorities that he has championed. Olmert has little choice but to mount cuts, because Israel's budgetary priorities are likely to undergo a shift. Olmert has pledged money for reconstruction in northern Israel and has promised to boost homeland security in light of the evacuation problems. Moreover, Halutz has already said the IDF needs more funds to both pay for the Lebanon war and boost the defense budget to deal with national security threats. The public is likely to be more sympathetic to bigger defense budgets, partly to facilitate a reorgani-

3. At this writing, one option not open to Olmert is reaching an understanding with his bitter rival, Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu. The Likud leader believes Olmert is politically finished after Lebanon and is waiting to sweep into power after Olmert's fall.
4. Sima Kadmon, "I Am Not to Blame," interview with Peretz, *Yediot Aharonot* (Tel Aviv), September 8, 2006.
5. One way Olmert could persuade Peretz to vacate his job as defense minister would be for Barak to join the cabinet within the framework of Kadima, so Barak would not be a future leadership rival to Peretz inside Labor.
6. Moti Bassok, "2007 State Budget Passes by Unexpected Majority of 19-4," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), September 13, 2006. In a preliminary cabinet vote on the budget that raised the issue of delaying the minimum wage increase, the Labor Party left its chairman, Peretz, alone in opposition.

zation of Israel's reserve system and enhanced military training. In all, unless Israel is about to ask for major supplementary assistance from the United States or raise taxes that reduce Israel's standard of living, Israel's welfare budget is likely to be adversely affected.

To survive this war, Olmert is counting not just on political moves to restore public trust, but also on a couple of parliamentary factors working in his favor as well as general antipathy to new elections. In the fifty-eight-year history of modern Israel, an Israeli leader has not been deposed by a parliamentary no-confidence vote and replaced with a leader of an opposing party without an intervening election. Two parliamentary measures make this more remote than in 1990, when it almost occurred. Since then, Israel passed a law similar to Germany's "constructive no-confidence" measure whereby a party that votes down a government must vote for a government to replace it at the same time. A second law forbids parliamentary defections from existing parties unless the defection includes a full third of the faction. In short, unless ten Knesset members of Olmert's twenty-nine-member Kadima Party want to rejoin Likud, for example, they are locked into the party for the rest of the government's tenure. Olmert is also counting on antipathy to holding new elections so soon after the spring 2006 balloting, which marked the fourth time that Israelis went to the polls in seven years. Also, backbenchers of all parties tend to oppose early elections during the first three years of an Israeli government's tenure, fearing the move throws them into the uncertain maelstrom of internal party primaries and other such potentially politically unpleasant contests.

A final political challenge to the Olmert government will be how the inquiry report on this war deals with political responsibility for the conduct of the war. Toward the end of September 2006 as the Jewish New Year ushers in a break from politics, Olmert believes he has steered the country away from an independent commission headed by someone of the independent stature of retiring chief justice Aharon Barak, whose legal finding as attorney general in 1977 on Leah Rabin's secret dollar account brought down the Rabin government.[7] Olmert is counting on a public that wants to avoid political upheaval and therefore finds a government-appointed panel sufficient. Unlike the independent commission that chooses its own terms of reference, the government decides the terms of reference for the committee that former district court justice Eliyahu Winograd will lead. The Olmert government has called on the Winograd committee to investigate as far back as 2000, when Israel left Lebanon, making clear that many politicians will share the blame for failing to halt the supply of rockets to Hizballah. Even independent-minded Attorney General Menachem Mezuz confirmed that the report of the Winograd committee cannot recommend dismissals of the prime minister.[8]

## Olmert's Policy Choices

**Impact on the Palestinians?** Nasrallah began the summer by saying that Hizballah wants to take actions in sympathy with the plight of the Palestinians. This war, however, completely overshadowed the Palestinian issue during summer 2006, to the point that Israel's military imprisoned many Hamas officials in Gaza and arrested suspected terrorists with very little media coverage, let alone international objection. By the end of the summer, Nasrallah's "resistance" had greatly weakened the one political figure in Israel who had made the withdrawal from much of the West Bank his mandate for the coming years, Olmert. Ironically, the Palestinians have their advocate Nasrallah to thank for the increased likelihood that full Israeli control of the West Bank will be more protracted.

Some Israelis note that the Israeli military's lack of preparation for this war in Lebanon was linked to the fact that Israel was channeling its military into policing the West Bank. For now, that view is outweighed by

7. An independent commission of inquiry was formed after the 1973 war and after the Sabra-Shatilla massacre that ended the 1982 war. Although the Agranat Commission did not find Golda Meir guilty, she stepped down after the report. The Kahan Commission forbade Ariel Sharon from ever serving again as Israeli defense minister.
8. Yuval Yoaz, "Winograd Committee Will Not Make Recommendations on PM," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), September 20, 2006.

those who think that a unilateral West Bank pullout is unrealistic amid Israeli domestic fear that the pullouts from Lebanon and Gaza have spurred radicalism. Moderates have not viewed unilateral withdrawal as a stake in a new reality involving responsibility to curb threats to security, but the concept deserves its own treatment in a separate work.[9] (Israel largely favored unilateralism in Gaza not as a preference to genuine bilateralism, but because the alternative appeared to be indefinite occupation led by 8,000 settlers at the expense of over a million Palestinians, with all the demographic consequences and at a time that public order among the Palestinians had broken down.) A major conceptual and emotional divide exists between Israelis still traumatized by this war and world leaders like Britain's Tony Blair who believe that the war with Hizballah should give greater international impetus to move forward on the Palestinian issue. Some would argue that the success of European countries in stabilizing southern Lebanon under a UN umbrella presages a more active NATO intervention in the West Bank and Gaza during the years ahead. An entire policy debate is required on the analogy between Lebanon and the West Bank/Gaza, but in the interim, only time will tell whether the south Lebanon intervention proves to be a success. Therefore, whether the international deployment in Lebanon will provide a short-term political boost for talks with the Palestinians is hard to predict.

At least in the short term, Olmert's policy direction is likely to be a function of his coalition situation and whether he can restore public confidence.[10] If Labor remains his major partner, the big question is whether a drop in support for unilateralism will translate into a boost for bilateralism when Olmert considers talks with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas. If Olmert stabilizes his political situation, he may be tempted to use bilateral cover to pursue his original objective of dismantling West Bank Jewish settlements that are not part and parcel of more established blocs that are mostly closer to the pre-1967 boundary. Can he do so while keeping the IDF in place in order to assuage Israeli public sentiment when the IDF has not stopped Qassem rockets? Abbas wants to pursue talks on the final disposition of the territories, but Olmert see that proposition as risky unless a successful outcome is foreordained, especially given the outbreak of violence after Camp David in 2000. Whether any bilateral Palestinian channel could generate genuine momentum is doubtful as long as an empowered Hamas continues to evade the Quartet's conditions of recognizing Israel, disavowing violence, and accepting previous agreements.[11] Another layer of doubt centers on the political strength of the Olmert government, which has yet to fully stabilize the coalition situation.[12] Although both Yitzhak Rabin in 1993 (Oslo) and Ariel Sharon at the end of 2003 (Gaza disengagement) opted for declaring a policy breakthrough as a way of diverting attention from internal cabinet turmoil, Olmert's situation appears more serious because this war came before Olmert had established his cred-

9. Shimon Peres, "End of Unilateralism," *Guardian*, September 4, 2006: "The failure to achieve peace with the Palestinians was not the result of ill will on the part of Israel, but of the lack of unity among the Palestinians. The Palestinians who wish for peace do not have the power to advance it. And the ones who do not want an agreement have the power to prevent it. As things stand today, policy will be replaced by tragedy. The initiative to withdraw unilaterally from the West Bank has lost its attraction in the eyes of the Israeli public due to the aftereffects of withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. I cannot envisage a situation today in which the majority of Israelis will support such a withdrawal."
10. Aluf Benn and Yossi Verter, "A Prime Minister Has to Run a Country," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), September 22, 2006. Olmert declared, "A prime minister has to run a country and do it in a manner that guarantees its important interests. He does not have to wake up every morning with an agenda."
11. The Quartet insistence on these three conditions actually demonstrates more diplomatic continuity than discontinuity with the past. Since 1975, the United States has insisted that its conditions for meeting with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) were that it recognizes Israel and accepts UN Security Council Resolution 242. Only after the group renounced terror in 1988 did the United States begin its dialogue with the PLO in 1989, which was interrupted after a terror attack. Talks resumed in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Declaration of Principles and with Yasser Arafat's letter of mutual recognition and renunciation of violence.
12. Another implication of the current war for the Palestinian issue might be operational. With the political and military leadership being scored inside Israel for not doing enough to halt the inflow of weaponry to Lebanon, and amid a sense that Hamas seeks to emulate Hizballah, some reassessment could take place inside Israel about the Egypt-Gaza border and whether security arrangements need to be revisited. The Italian foreign minister, whose country is the biggest contingent of the newly bolstered UNIFIL, recently said that success for a bigger UNIFIL in Lebanon will lead to international forces taking up positions in the West Bank. Nevertheless, whether the international forces will be successful remains unclear. One alternative might be that Israel consider taking up its old position on the Philadelphia Corridor dividing Egypt and Gaza, especially because the Security Council never provided incentives to Israel by recognizing its exit from Gaza in 2005.

ibility with the Israeli public, as Rabin and Sharon had done in the past.

**Closer Israeli ties with Sunni regimes?** Summer 2006 revealed concerns of the Sunni leadership in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan about the prospects of Iran's ascendance. The question is whether that anxiety can be parlayed to advance the cause of Middle East peace. Specifically, progress could occur if Saudi Arabia would undertake meaningful steps toward Israel as a way of jump-starting talks with Arabs. The probability is low, but Riyadh needs to weigh the contained risk of its usual inaction against the risk that Israeli-Arab deterioration plays into Tehran's hands. A meaningful step would be if the Hamas leadership would accept the three conditions of the Quartet or if this would be articulated by other Sunni states. The Saudi and other gulf states will most likely find it easier to work with the United States in dealing with Lebanon and curbing Iran, than publicly dealing with Israel. They are likely to press the United States for resumed peace talks, but characteristically avert anything that obligates them to high profile moves for now, citing unfavorable domestic exposure.

**Flashpoint of Syria-Lebanon border?** UN Security Council Resolution 1701 puts the onus on Lebanon to enforce an arms embargo to avert the resupply of weapons. Despite Israeli objections during the behind-the-scenes UN negotiations, Resolution 1701 makes clear that the multinational force can only respond to requests of the government of Lebanon. (The similarity of Resolution 1701 to Siniora's seven-point peace plan is widely seen to have bolstered his stature in Lebanon.) This formulation gives Lebanon the discretion to determine the scope of the multinational force's activity. A weak Lebanon, too politically constrained by domestic support to Hizballah, may limit the involvement of the multinational force's operations. This situation could hurt the UNIFIL mission.

Moreover, Syria's Asad has publicly termed the deployment of a multinational force along the border a hostile act. Therefore, the prospect of Syrian-backed smuggling to break the embargo is very possible and is likely to be a pivotal issue in answering whether a second round with Hizballah is inevitable. If the LAF is too weak and the UNIFIL force is too constrained to halt the resupply, the situation could impose pressure on Olmert to act militarily as a reaction to criticism that Israel has turned a blind eye since the start of the decade to the importation of 12,000 rockets. Moreover, should the LAF and UNIFIL refuse to act, disclosure of such information by Israeli intelligence at the Knesset could make such pressure unbearable. Four major crossing points of trucks from Syria into Lebanon are available and dozens of side routes, all contributing to an inherently unstable situation.

**Policy and politics of a Syria option.** Olmert's short-term interest requires stabilizing his coalition and avoiding divisive foreign policy initiatives. Moreover, Olmert does not want to be seen as suing for peace after an inconclusive war. Should Olmert stabilize his political situation in the months ahead, the situation could be different. Olmert's longer-term goal of consolidating Kadima as a centrist peace and security party may make him interested in pursuing options with Syria. However, this move would be controversial inside Israel, even among those in Kadima who occupy the center of the Israeli political spectrum.[13] No widespread public clamoring supports an initiative toward Damascus, especially because Syria has proven a staunch ally of Israel's enemies and supporter of the most virulent and violent anti-Israel terrorist groups. The key factor that may direct Israel to focus on Syria is evidence that peace with Damascus actually severs Syria from its relationship with radicals. Some may seek a way to test the proposition that Syria would view peace as a reorientation, as it was for Egypt away from the Soviet Union. Given Syria's close relationship with

13. In the aftermath of the Hizballah war, Kadima colleague, internal police minister, and former Shin Bet head Avi Dicter called for a peace with Syria based on full withdrawal. However, Olmert publicly disapproved, saying that Syria had to fulfill preconditions in fighting terror. Consequently, no Kadima ministers have backed Dicter's call.

Iran and its support for Hizballah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), this is no small matter. Some believe that for Damascus, the relationship with Iran is strategic. Other visitors to Damascus say its relationship with Iran is a "marriage of convenience."[14]

The answer to this question is likely to determine how Israel approaches Syria. If Israel is just being used as a fig leaf for Damascus to pursue radicalism while avoiding economic isolation, Israel does not have a stake in such an approach. Therefore, ways are needed to first test the proposition that a peace treaty for Syria is a "strategic decision," as the current ruler's father, Hafez Asad, used to say. The best way to test the proposition is to do what was not done in the 1990s: have Damascus take convincing steps before negotiations that would make unambiguously clear that it is willing to distance itself from Iran, Hizballah, Hamas, and PIJ. Such an approach would also facilitate genuine negotiations by disabling those groups who work on behalf of Iran and would like to gain a veto over Syria's peace moves. In other words, unless Syria suspends links with these rejectionist elements, Tehran is likely to determine the outcome of Israeli-Syrian negotiations. (Iran reportedly authorized terror attacks against Israel from cells inside Syria when the Wye negotiations between Syria and Israel were making progress during early 1996.[15]) Without Syrian behavioral changes, peace talks would have little hope of success, especially because the history suggests that such talks create protest movements that require Israeli governments to expend political capital. The past has demonstrated that Israel has a hard time in focusing on both Syrian and Palestinian issues simultaneously. Therefore, without the appropriate environment for negotiations, including steps to disable terrorists, talks are likely to fail.

Moreover, without such changes, the Bush administration is unlikely to even be interested in playing a mediating role. The United States has found Syrian behavior to be objectionable not just when it comes to Iran, Hizballah, Hamas, and PIJ, but also as it relates to anti-U.S. radicals entering Iraq and the rejection of any measure of democratization. Syrian movement on these fronts will be a prerequisite for active U.S. involvement, which is essential, because unlike Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinians, Syria has historically avoided direct, back-channel negotiations with Israel.

**A mechanism for Israel-Lebanon contacts.** Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made clear the U.S. desire that this war end not only with Israel's deterrence improved, but also with Lebanon's government intact. The United States views the democratically elected government as an achievement of the international effort to oust Syria from Lebanon in 2005. Neither the Lebanese nor Israeli government is contemplating a peace treaty between the two countries because of opposition from Hizballah and Syria, but the question remains whether the Naqura border-town talks involving at least Israeli and Lebanese officials to discuss security arrangements in southern Lebanon could be a framework for avoiding miscommunication and therefore be a force for stability in that area.

In his speeches during the war in which he laid out his peace plans, Prime Minister Siniora publicly offered that the basis of such talks be the 1949 Armistice Agreement between the two countries. Some terms of the Armistice Agreement could be modified by mutual consent, such as the mention of demilitarization on both sides of the border, which is not relevant in wake of UNSC 1701 and other contemporary realities.

To deprive Hizballah of a political card, Siniora has repeatedly called for Israel to yield the twenty-five-square-kilometer Shebaa Farms, or Har Dov, which is in an area that was part of Syria before Israel took the Golan Heights in the 1967 War.[16] Hizballah has never

14. Thomas Friedman, "Talking Turkey with Syria," *New York Times*, July 26, 2006. In a visit to Damascus during the war, Friedman wrote, "Syrians will tell you that their alliance with Tehran is 'a marriage of convenience.' Syria is a largely secular country, with a Sunni majority. Its leadership is not comfortable with Iranian Shiite ayatollahs. The Iranians know that, which is why 'they keep sending high officials here every few weeks to check on the relationship,' a diplomat said."
15. Moshe Yaalon, author interview, Washington, D.C., August 10, 2006. In 1996, Yaalon headed Israel's military intelligence branch.
16. When Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, the UN did not demarcate Shebaa as part of the "Blue Line," because its research left it unconvinced that Shebaa was part of Lebanon. In the report that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan filed at the time of Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, he said the Syrian foreign minister Farouq a-Shara verbally confirmed it was Lebanese. Israeli officials insist the Syrians lied to the UN, but that fact could not be confirmed.

viewed the "resistance" to "liberate" Shebaa as the final issue separating itself from Israel. Rather, Hizballah officials have made clear in the past that Shebaa is only the first of other demands. Therefore, disentangling the Shebaa Farms issue from the war seems important to prevent Hizballah from viewing it as a vindication for its actions. After the dust settles from this war and Lebanon makes explicitly clear that Shebaa is not a stalking horse for other issues—but rather a means to end territorial claims between the two countries—very possibly Israel will see Shebaa differently than it does today and may see its transfer as a means to cement a closer bilateral relationship.

**Refining Middle East democratization.** Ironically, during summer 2006, Israel was juxtaposed with two countries, or elements of those countries, that had undergone the first part of a democratization experiment. Although more comfortable with Middle East autocracies, Israel does not oppose Middle East democracy; rather it fears that a Middle East democratization process that consists of little more than an election is a sure-fire recipe for elevating and legitimizing the only organized nongovernmental elements of society—the Islamists. Therefore, Israel has had reservations about the Bush administration's approach. Instead, like others, it favors prior and gradual liberalization of political institutions as a precursor culminating in elections, thereby ensuring that liberal means do not lead to illiberal ends. Such Israeli reservations were exacerbated by this war, which highlights the danger of a political party allowed to maintain its militia.[17] The Israelis believe that the world has one standard for democracy outside the Middle East and another for balloting inside the region. Both Hizballah and Hamas have refused to disarm as a condition for their participation in the political arena, but ironically, no pressure has come from outside the region to say that political movements need to choose between ballots or bullets, between being a party or a militia.

Hizballah is an example of how a militia leverages its strength in both directions for optimal advantage. Casting its militia as the group who pushed Israel out of Lebanon in 2000, Hizballah received a political boost. Conversely, Hizballah used its political faction during the summer of 2006 to thwart robust rules to prevent its disarmament by the Siniora government. In short, the group leveraged its standing in both directions.

**Close U.S.-Israel consultations.** Because the instability along the Syrian-Lebanese border could lead to a second round between Israel and Hizballah and because Iran is likely to view Hizballah's missiles in Lebanon as part of an Iranian deterrent that prevents a broader effort to attack Iran's nuclear program by the international community, those issues add another layer of regional complexity to the already difficult dynamic in the Middle East. Although Israel has every reason to be grateful to the United States for its backing during the summer of 2006, the Hizballah war has demonstrated the shortcomings of U.S.-Israel dialogue that does not delve deeply enough when examining the link between military steps and political objectives. This outcome argues for a much more intimate dialogue in the future both to ward off crises and to deal with crisis management when one occurs. The regional stakes are very high.

Interestingly, the Syrians have publicly avoided making this assertion. To the contrary, in public remarks, Syrian officials coyly avoided the question. http://domino.un.org/unispal.NSF/5ba47a5c6cef541b802563e000493b8c/97bad2289146f58a852568e9006d99bd!OpenDocument.

17. Hizballah's incorporation into the Lebanese political system came in 1995, predating the Bush presidency.

# Conclusion

DEVELOPMENTS IN southern Lebanon might prove much kinder to the Olmert government for its handling of this war than current public opinion. The reappraisal will turn upon the success of the multinational force and LAF in eroding Hizballah's base for attacks in southern Lebanon and ending the violence that has marred the last three decades. In the meantime, this war has been a wake-up call for Israel on many levels. It is a wake-up call when it comes to the lethality of Iran's weapons, the ambitions of Hizballah's leadership, and the ability of a militia to operate like an army without being bound by the traditional rules of warfare as it turns civilian centers into the frontlines of the twenty-first century.

If the past is a guide, the aftermaths of wars usher in painful periods of self-examination for Israel, but these periods ultimately demonstrate Israel's adaptive ways. As the military analyst Zeev Schiff points out, faced with Arab surface-to-air missile antiaircraft batteries in 1973, Israel found the answer before its next confrontation in 1982. Ultimately, this resilience has enabled Israel to find ways of correcting its mistakes, whether that means finding a technological answer to the katyusha, correcting military-preparedness errors in its reserves, or better clarifying its decisionmaking—including clarifying objectives and the relationship of those wider goals with military tactics.

Undoubtedly more lessons will be learned as the fog of battle lifts. In 1973, for example, Israel did not envision the political agreements of subsequent years (1974, 1975, and 1979) that would emerge from that war. For now, however, Israel's period of self-examination is just beginning.

# PART II
# Military Implications of the Israel-Hizballah War

**By Jeffrey White**

# Executive Summary

THE THIRTY-THREE DAY conflict between Israel and Hizballah has been hailed as a major turning point in the region, heralding the demise of Israel's military superiority and the rise of Hizballah as the first Arab military organization able to inflict a serious defeat on the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Israel's open wrangling over the conduct of the war and its results, in contrast to Hizballah's limited public self-criticism, has reinforced the impression that Hizballah was the victor and Israel the loser. These impressions seriously distort the course and meaning of what was in fact a very complex event, one in which both sides had gains and losses and both sides made mistakes, and whose outcomes are still emerging.

In an era and region where discussion of strategy is increasingly dominated by the Iranian nuclear program, this war demonstrated the power of conventional weapons, skillfully employed, even by nonstate actors, to deeply affect the military and political situation in the Middle East. Hizballah used the period after Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 to expand and deepen its military presence in southern Lebanon. Hizballah's six years of preparation, aided and abetted by Syria and Iran, produced a formidable capability both to strike against Israel and to defend against any Israeli military response. For Israel, the years following the withdrawal were dominated from a security standpoint by the struggle with Palestinian terror and the emerging "existential" threat from Iran.

The possession of substantial military capabilities, along with flawed assessments of Israel's character and likely response, probably contributed to Hizballah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah's willingness to run the risk of provoking Israel. For its part, Israel went to war with an army that had spent the last few years dealing with the threat from the Palestinians and investing in concepts and high technology capabilities to deal with looming threats from beyond the horizon. As a result, it was not as well prepared to deal with the range of capabilities Hizballah presented as perhaps it should have been.

In this "Second Lebanon War," there was to be no decisive battle, no decisive winner, and no clear loser from the military perspective. Nasrallah probably understood that he could not win an all-out war with Israel, but he also understood that he could make the war extremely painful for an Israeli society he believed was weak and that international pressure would limit the scope and duration of any conflict. Nasrallah may also have felt that Hizballah would win by surviving, but this ignores both Hizballah's real losses in the war and the dramatically changed political-military situation in Lebanon in the wake of the war.

In the air and rocket war, Israel's air force scored important victories against Hizballah's long- and medium-range rockets but had no answer for the short-range katyushas. This led to the continuing bombardment of northern Israel throughout the conflict.

In the ground war, by the end of the fighting the IDF appeared to be gaining the upper hand. What began to make a difference was the combined weight of Israeli infantry skill and numbers and the firepower 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.

Both Israeli forces and Hizballah fought with determination, both displayed strong cohesion, and both accepted casualties. Religion, nationalism, and a sense of fighting for the home combined to make Hizballah a resolute opponent in the south. For Israeli soldiers, the sense that fighting in Lebanon constituted a defense of the population of the north acted as a motivator. Israelis also fought for their units and their comrades. There is a sense that Hizballah lost the deterrent power of the threat posed by its missiles. The menace of the rockets was exorcised to some degree by their use.

The IDF was fettered by the performance of senior political and military echelons. Reporting on the war reveals problems, or at least uncertainties, in high-level command performance at virtually every major decision point in the war. Nevertheless, along with the problems, there were successes in command. Even

at the highest levels some things were done well and quickly.

Both Hizballah and the IDF are adaptive and learning organizations. Consequently, there are likely to be changes in the shape or nature of the next round of fighting, if there is one; how much time passes between rounds will affect the scope of these changes. Both sides had the opportunity to see what the other could do. They have been inoculated to some extent, and what may have worked well in the last round may not work so well in the next. While Israel will have its own political, bureaucratic, and resource constraints on preparing for the next round, it is a state and can act essentially on its own. Hizballah is an organization within a state and has a more constrained ability to take action.

Hizballah did not fight in the same way as the Egyptian Army of June 1967 or the Palestinian fighters in Gaza in 2006. This has implications not only for any future round in Lebanon, but more broadly where nationalism, Shiite religiosity, and Iranian meddling meet, as they do in Iraq. Into this fight Israel sent its best and brightest soldiers; they did not have it all their way. Hizballah, at least in the early days, gave as good as it got.

Some have argued that this war, coupled with the inconclusive struggles in Iraq and Afghanistan, indicates that a new and superior form of "Islamic" warfare has emerged in the region. That is a misreading of at least the war in Lebanon, and more broadly of military history. No military is immune from failures in political direction, in command, and in execution by inexperienced troops. A halting war in Lebanon and an incompetently managed occupation of Iraq do not demonstrate that there is a now a superior "Islamic" form of war.

Hizballah put at risk its political and military position in Lebanon and its ability to act on Iran's behalf. It did not lose these, but it did suffer damage to all of them. Israel also risked much. By going to war in a rush, hesitating operationally, and then attempting to play "beat the clock," it undermined the operational effectiveness of its military and may have weakened its deterrent value.

The war did bring about a major, perhaps fundamental, change in the situation in Lebanon. The status quo before July 12, 2006, which was highly favorable to Hizballah and Iran, cannot be restored. If there is another round, it will probably be more intense and lethal, with a higher potential for escalation outside of Lebanon. These prospects are serious enough to demand serious diplomacy to prevent them—and serious preparation if diplomacy fails.

# Introduction

THE THIRTY-THREE-DAY war between Israel and Hizballah has been hailed as a major turning point in the region, heralding the demise of Israel's military superiority and the rise of Hizballah as the first Arab military organization able to inflict a serious defeat on the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).[1] Israel's open political wrangling over the conduct of the war and its results, in contrast to Hizballah's limited public self-criticism, has reinforced the impression, fed by intense and sometimes superficial media coverage, that Hizballah was the victor and Israel the loser.

Those impressions seriously distort the course and meaning of what was in fact a very complex event—one in which both sides had gains and losses, both sides made mistakes, and whose outcomes are still emerging. What is required is a sense of perspective, a framework for thinking about these recent events and their implications. As Barbara Tuchman stated in her book *A Distant Mirror*, about fourteenth-century Europe, time provides perspective on dramatic and recent events, allowing them to be placed in their proper context, and their relative importance better understood.[2] Both the passage of time and serious analysis will be required to arrive at firm conclusions as to what happened in this war, why it happened the way it did, and what the real meaning is.

Nevertheless, some conclusions can be made at least in preliminary form. This war was important. It occurred on complex physical, human, political, and informational terrain. It was modern in the sense of the technology and some of the concepts employed, yet old in the sense that it validated much of what has been known about war and the nature of combat for centuries. In an era and region where discussion of strategy is increasingly dominated by the Iranian nuclear program, this war demonstrated the power of conventional weapons, skillfully employed, even by nonstate actors, to deeply affect the military and political situation in the Middle East.

This war will be studied for a long time and on several levels of analysis—from the military-technical to the strategic and political. Because multiple narratives of the war will be written, one by Hizballah and its supporters and at least several by Israelis, and because much of what happened will remain secret, various interpretations of the conflict will remain in discussion and important issues likely will continue in dispute. This paper attempts to examine questions of what actually happened in the military arena and what the military implications are. It is based on publicly available information, discussions with Israelis in and out of government and the military, and the author's experience as a military analyst.

1. See for example, Steven Erlanger and Richard A. Oppell, "A Disciplined Hezbollah Surprises Israel with Its Training, Tactics and Weapons," *New York Times*, August 7, 2006.
2. Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).

# The Setting

ALTHOUGH THE PRECISE moment of the outbreak of crisis was unanticipated, the potential had existed virtually since Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000. This action had allowed Hizballah to move right up on the border, with Hizballah's military presence and activities becoming a routine, even "normal," feature of the situation. Clashes between Israeli and Hizballah forces along the border, especially in the Shebaa Farms area in the eastern sector, were a feature of the postwithdrawal situation, as Hizballah attempted to demonstrate its role as a Lebanese "resistance," rather than militia, organization. Acquiring, integrating, and emplacing significant offensive and defensive military capabilities, Hizballah used the period after Israel's withdrawal to expand and deepen its military presence in southern Lebanon. This effort included both the arms and the infrastructure to support them. From a military perspective, Hizballah's six years of preparation, aided and abetted by Syria and Iran, produced a formidable capability both to strike against Israel and to defend against any Israeli military response.

For Israel, the years following the withdrawal were dominated from a security standpoint by the struggle with Palestinian terror and the emerging "existential" threat from Iran. Israel's intense focus on Lebanon declined in the wake of withdrawal. This change of focus somewhat reduced Israel's ability to follow developments in the south, although substantial intelligence capability remained. The IDF did not go into Lebanon blind, but whether the implications of the existing intelligence were fully understood is not clear.[1]

## The Terrain

The importance of terrain, even in this period of modern warfare, was again demonstrated in the fighting in the south. Israel would fight Hizballah on intricate physical terrain that Hizballah understood and had organized in a sophisticated way for defense.

The physical terrain consists of a combination of broken or rocky ground, brush- and tree-covered areas, dominating hills, mostly dry wadis and gorges, and built-up areas from villages of a few buildings to small cities. Marun ar-Ras, one of the first locations of Israeli cross-border operations is a major land feature, dominating the terrain on both sides of the border as well as the approaches to Bint Jbeil. Bint Jbeil is a large town, or small city, with a variety of structures including multistory concrete buildings. The diverse types of terrain in the border area offered important advantages to the defender. Hizballah took advantage of these and improved on them. Even when Hizballah fought from outside its prepared positions, locating the enemy and avoiding ambush were major challenges to the Israelis operating on the broken ground. Hizballah fighters were "in the bushes" and were not easy to find, or kill once found.

## The Combatants

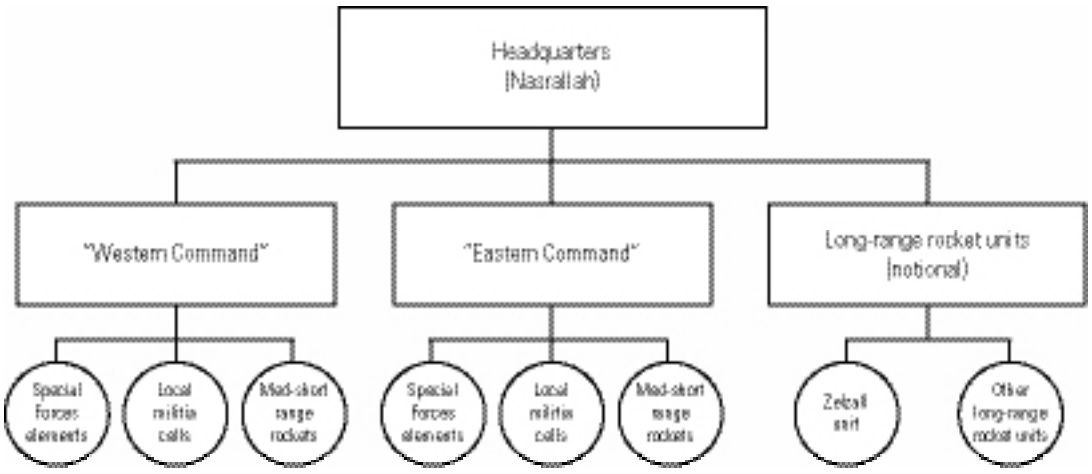
The combatants on this ground are both very different and in some ways similar. Both are products of their society, and both fought hard for goals and ideas they believe to be important. Both manifested skill and courage on the battlefield.

**Hizballah.** Hizballah was neither haphazardly commanded nor indifferently organized. Command and organization were mature and had been tested in the intermittent clashes with the IDF along the border.

Instruction and training had been received from Iran on a range of topics, including command and leadership, small unit tactics, and technical training on rocket and antitank guided missile (ATGM) systems, with select Hizballah fighters being trained in Iran.[2]

1. Discussions with and comments in the media by former and current Israeli intelligence officers indicate that Israeli military intelligence had a good, although not perfect, idea of the threat. It is not clear that operational and decisionmaking echelons of the military and government properly understood this threat.
2. Zeev Schiff, "Tehran's Role Is Extensive," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), July 18, 2006. Available online (www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=738728).

**Figure 1. Assessed Hizballah Military Command Structure, July–August 2006**




The command system was robust, relying on multiple means of communication (cell phones, low-power transmitters, and couriers). Although some Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps personnel were reportedly killed during the war,[3] no evidence exists that the Iranians exercised immediate operational control or influence over Hizballah's operations.

Hizballah deployed both rocket forces and guerilla fighters. Some rocket-launching elements, specifically the 100-plus-kilometer long-range systems (Zelzal and Nazeat variants), and perhaps some 45- to 90-kilometer medium-range systems (Fajr 3/5, 220/302 millimeter), were apparently under the control of Hizballah headquarters in Beirut. Some medium launchers and the 6- to 35-kilometer short-range systems (107-millimeter and 122-millimeter katyusha rockets) appeared to operate under the control of one of two "regional commands" for western and eastern sectors. Hizballah had in its inventory at the beginning of the conflict some 10,000 to 13,000 artillery rockets of various ranges and payloads. Most of these, perhaps 80 to 90 percent, were the short-range katyusha type (see figure 2, next page).

The regional commands also apparently controlled the ground fighters in the south. Militia cells of a few to several dozen men operated in the border area, along with "special forces" elements deployed to key locations, such as Bint Jbeil.

Although estimates of numbers vary, probably at least several thousand total Hizballah personnel were active in all the military aspects of the conflict: command and control, logistics, rocket operations, and ground combat.

Hizballah's forces in the border area were basically light infantry. The "special forces" are Hizballah's best trained and equipped elements, and they probably operated the more advanced ATGM systems (KORNET, Metis-M, TOW) that were reportedly used (see figure 3, next page) and had both night-vision equipment and flak vests.

They also likely provided tactical and operational leadership. They are professional, motivated, and disciplined soldiers; they are organized, fight as units, and are capable of tactical maneuver. According to Israeli accounts of the fighting in Bint Jbeil, most of the Hizballah casualties there were special forces sent to provide the local defenders with additional capabilities and a harder edge.[4] Hizballah militia, local men, were involved, probably providing the bulk of the fighters in

3. Aaron Klein, "Soldiers from Iran Killed in Lebanon," *WorldNetDaily.com*, August 9, 2006.
4. Ken Ellingwood and Laura King, "Warfare in the Middle East," *Los Angeles Times,* July 27, 2006.

**Figure 2. Hizballah Rockets**

| SYSTEM | RANGE (KILOMETERS) | WARHEAD WEIGHT (KILOGRAMS) | SUPPLIER |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Zelzal-2** | 210 | 600 | Iran |
| **Nazeat** | 100–140 | 1,300(6)/250(10) | Iran |
| **Fajr 3** | 43 | 45 | Iran |
| **Fajr 5** | 75 | 90 | Iran |
| **302mm** | 75 | 100 | Syria |
| **220mm** | 70 | Unknown | Syria |
| **122mm** | 20 | 30 | Iran/Syria |
| **107mm** | 6 | Unknown | Iran/Syria |

**Figure 3. Reported Hizballah Antitank Weapons**

| SYSTEM | RANGE | PENETRATION | GUIDANCE SYSTEM (MANUAL/LASER/WIRE) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Kornet AT-14** | 3.5 mi | 1,100–1,200 mm | laser |
| **Konkurs AT-5** | 75 m | 800 mm | wire |
| **Metis-M AT-13** | 80 m to 1.5 km | 460–850 mm | wire |
| **Sagger AT-3** | 3 km | 200 mm | wire |
| **Fagot AT-4** | 70 m to 2 km | 400 mm | wire |
| **Milan** | 400–2,000 m | 352 mm | wire |
| **TOW** | 600–3,700 m | 800 mm | wire |
| **RPG-29** | 460 m | 750 mm | manual |
| **RPG-7** | 500 m | 330 mm | manual |

the south. Although less well trained, they operated on their home ground and were well equipped with light-infantry-type small arms and antitank weapons.

Hizballah rocket forces had the capability, depending on how close they were deployed to the border, to strike area targets (essentially cities and towns and major military facilities, if they could be located) as far south as the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem corridor. Sustained fire could only be achieved on targets in the north, that is, those that could be reached by the short-range katyusha rockets. It is unlikely that Hizballah ever intended to deploy its long- and medium-range missiles close to the border, so the primary threat was to the civilian population and economic activity north of the Haifa-Tiberias line. The possession of several rocket types allowed Hizballah the potential to achieve different effects with its launch operations. The long-range rockets gave it a psychological weapon capable of striking into the heart of Israel; but limits in numbers would have restricted it to use as a terror weapon, with prob-

ably less effects than the Scud missile attacks of the 1991 Gulf War. The more numerous medium-range rockets were a serious threat because they covered the important population and economic center of Haifa and could be fired in a concentrated salvo from a single launch vehicle; some (the Syrian 220-millimeter and 302-millimeter rockets) had enhanced fragmentation warheads designed to kill and wound exposed personnel. By their very numbers and small detection signature, the short-range rockets posed the most difficult threat. Capable of being launched singly or in groups, remotely or with timers, difficult to detect prior to launch, and requiring minimal crew and logistics support structures, these World War II–era weapons posed a serious challenge.

Whatever the system, however, inherent limitations existed. The rockets were essentially inaccurate, needing to be fired in mass or over a sustained period of time to inflict real damage. Hizballah did not have the ability to adjust or coordinate its rocket fires in a more than rudimentary fashion, leaving results largely to persistence and chance. Although Hizballah rockets had no real tactical and operational value other than as bomb magnets, they were a psychological and political weapon with strategic affects, and that is how they were used.

The possession of substantial military capabilities, along with flawed assessments of Israel's character and likely response, probably contributed to Nasrallah's willingness to run the risk of provoking Israel. To some extent capability begets intention, and Hizballah undoubtedly had substantial military potential at the beginning of July 2006.

**The Israel Defense Forces.** Israel had the structures and forces in place or that could be mobilized to conduct a war with Hizballah in Lebanon. Northern Territorial Command at Safed had overall responsibility for ground operations in Lebanon. Control of ground operations in the immediate border area was the responsibility of the Galilee Division. As additional reserve forces were mobilized and deployed to the border area, Northern Territorial Command exercised operational control over them. These long-standing arrangements had been employed in previous conflicts with Syria and in Lebanon.

Israeli Air Force (IAF) headquarters in Tel Aviv controlled air operations over Lebanon and probably had overall responsibility for heliborne commando operations deep in Lebanon. The Israeli navy was responsible for operations off the coast of Lebanon and for coastal operations by the Sea Commandos, Israel's naval special warfare unit. Activity by all components of the IDF would have been coordinated by IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv, where major decisions on the conduct of the war would also have been made.

The IDF could call upon very large assets for the war, even while conducting operations on the second, Gaza Strip, "front." Even before mobilization, Israel had available several regular infantry and armored brigades in the north. It was able to rapidly bring additional regular units to the area, and after mobilization of reserves began several additional divisions were available. These forces provided Israel with all the potential ground combat power it might need for a large-scale operation.

Israel's air force, built for a major war with the Arab states, had more than enough capacity for its missions in Lebanon. Israel's navy was heavily committed to the Lebanon conflict, conducting the largest and most sustained operation in its history.[5]

The numbers of Israeli forces involved grew steadily over the course of the conflict, although they cannot be determined precisely. If, in fact, four divisions were used in one way or another, they would have amounted to some 40,000 soldiers; but the total could have been substantially less or more, depending on the actual numbers called up and the mobilization of support units. From the first days of the conflict, Israel clearly enjoyed a substantial numerical advantage over Hizballah in terms of available troops; however, the way in which Israel committed its forces, especially early on, limited the significance of this advantage.

5. Yaakov Katz, "IDF Report Card," *Jerusalem Post,* August 24, 2006. Available online (www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1154525936817&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull).

Israel had available some, perhaps most, of its best troops for the conflict. Elements of several elite reconnaissance and commando units were involved in the fighting virtually from the beginning of ground activity. All of the IDF's high-quality parachute and infantry brigades were eventually committed, as were several high-quality regular armored brigades. Much of the ground war would in fact be fought by those units, although reserve brigades performed major roles as the fighting wore on. In large measure the ground fighting would pit Israel's best against Hizballah's best.

Readiness problems were imposed by Israel's ongoing war against the Palestinians. Specifically, training was focused on preparing units for this counterterrorist and small unit war, not for conventional operations by large ground formations. This emphasis was reinforced by actual operational experience, which had become overwhelmingly based on fighting in Gaza and on the West Bank. Training and experience of this nature did not prepare IDF ground formations for either the enemy they would face in Lebanon or the kinds of operations they would have to conduct there. Decisions to concentrate on training, equipping, and sustaining the regular forces left reserve units short of modern equipment and even basic stores. Defense budget cuts also fell more heavily on the conventional forces and especially the reserve component.[6] After years of concentrating on the Palestinian threat and investing in high-technology warfighting concepts and means, Israel's capability to engage what in some ways was a conventional force, fighting from prepared defensive positions—a challenge for any army—was reduced.

6. Anshel Pfeffer, "The Defense Establishment's Financial Brinkmanship," *Jerusalem Post*, August 28, 2006.

# Dynamics of the War

ISRAELI-HIZBALLAH FIGHTING was precipitated by the July 12, 2006, kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers in a deliberate Hizballah attack into Israel near Aitaa al-Chaab on the western sector of the border. In the course of this event, which was a well-planned, small-scale military operation, and the Israeli reaction, two Israeli soldiers were kidnapped, eight killed, and several Israeli vehicles, including a Merkava tank, were damaged.[1] In this "Second Lebanon War," there was to be no decisive battle, no decisive winner, and no clear loser from the military perspective. One side fought as hard as it could. The other side fought in a muddled way.

Both sides had planned for war, although perhaps not this particular war at this particular time. In the event of crisis or war, Nasrallah apparently planned to deter Israel from deep attacks into Lebanon with his rocket forces and limit and exhaust any Israeli ground operation with his defensive system in the south, which was based on ATGMs and well-hidden and protected fighters. Nasrallah understood that he could not win an all-out war with Israel, but he also understood that he could make this war extremely painful for an Israeli society he believed was weak. Moreover, he knew that international pressure would limit the scope and duration of any conflict.[2]

Israel had also planned for this war. Although Israel's training and operations had become heavily oriented on combating Palestinian terrorism in Gaza and the West Bank, the situation in Lebanon was an active problem for Northern Territorial Command. Reportedly, the IDF conducted a major exercise or war game sometime in June 2006 based on scenarios of conflict with Hizballah, in which plans for a major operation including a ground advance up to the Litani River were tested.[3] This plan may have been the basis for the air campaign and the eventual rush to the north, but it was only partially and haltingly implemented, if at all.[4]

**Figure 4. Effects of Rocket Attacks**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Rockets landing in northern Israel** | 3,790 |
| **Rockets hitting communities** | 901 |
| **Civilians killed in action** | 42 |
| **Civilians wounded** | 4,262 |
| **Civilians treated for shock and anxiety** | 2,773 |
| **Civilians killed per rocket** | 0.01 |
| **Civilian casualties (all types ) per rocket** | 1.9 |

*Source:* Yaakov Katz, "IDF Report Card," *Jerusalem Post,* August 24, 2006. Available online (www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1154525936817&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull).

## Operational Dynamics

In war the opponents attempt to gain an advantage or offset one of their opponent's advantages in order to achieve their military objective and political war aims. This interaction, the notion that in war "the other side gets a vote," creates dynamics at the operational, tactical, and psychological levels. In turn, the outcomes of these dynamics determine the military, and sometimes the political, results of the war.

One of the major operational dynamics of the war featured Hizballah's rocket campaign and Israel's efforts to suppress and limit it (see figure 4). This contest was waged well from a military standpoint by both sides, with each side enjoying successes and failures. Israel's greatest successes came against the Hizballah long- and

1. Yaakov Katz, Herb Keinon, and the *Jerusalem Post* staff, "Eight IDF Soldiers Killed, 2 Kidnapped on Northern Frontier," *Jerusalem Post*, July 12, 2006. Available online (www.jpost.com/servlet/Satelite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1150885976658).
2. "Hassan Nasrallah," *YNET*, July 31, 2006. Available online (www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3284065,00.html).
3. Yaakov Katz, "IDF Report Card," *Jerusalem Post,* August 24, 2006. Available online (www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1154525936817&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull).
4. Ibid.

medium-range rockets. Conversely, Israel's greatest failure, and Hizballah's greatest success at the operational level, was its ability to sustain the bombardment of northern Israel with short-range rockets.

The high-technology capability of the IAF, which was very effective against the long- and medium-range launchers, was not an answer for the low-technology katyusha threat. Israel probably could have done better if it had launched its major ground operation earlier; but as the war was actually waged, Hizballah seems to have "won" this particular aspect of the conflict.

A second major operational dynamic involved Israel's campaign to clear the border area of Hizballah forces and positions and Hizballah's operation to defend the border area and inflict casualties on the IDF. Again neither side had it completely its way. Israel's ground raids on Hizballah positions proved costly in terms of casualties, particularly to some of its best paratroop and infantry units, and inconclusive, even while inflicting some number of casualties and damage on Hizballah in the border area. This lack of success led Israel to move to create a narrow border security strip, entailing the commitment of more troops, including additional infantry and armored units and the first reserve elements. This operation, employing eight or more brigades, was more successful, uprooting Hizballah's infrastructure and killing more Hizballah fighters. It did not completely eliminate Hizballah's presence in the border area, but Hizballah's hold on the border area seemed to be broken. Despite all the difficulties and especially Hizballah's defensive performance, Israel seems to have "won" in this operation.

The largest ground operation mounted by Israel was the rush to the Litani River in the waning hours of the war. Carried out earlier, this move could have been the decisive action of the war. In fact, it had only a small military payoff. Nevertheless, the operation showed that Israel could essentially dictate the course of fighting on the ground, even though Hizballah carried out a much-reported ambush of Israeli armor advancing across the Saluki gorge and fought hard on the approaches to the Litani. Israel was able to overcome these defenses and achieve its tactical objectives. This operation, along with a number of smaller engagements, established that where Israel combined the appropriate elements of ground and air power, Hizballah could fight hard and cause casualties, but it could not win.

Another operational dynamic involved Israeli efforts to interdict Hizballah's effort to resupply its rocket forces and fighters in the south. Israel had some success in this area but was unable either to stop arms from coming into Lebanon from Syria or to prevent Hizballah movement into the south. Hizballah had accounted for this Israeli operation by building up large weapons stores in the south before the conflict to minimize exposure to attacks on its supply system. Nevertheless, Israel succeeded in reducing the flow of arms to Hizballah and its ease of movement to and within the south. Israel did pay a certain political price for this operation, in that interdiction strikes inflicted well-publicized casualties on the civilian population, increasing diplomatic pressure on the Israeli government and the IDF.

A final operational dynamic involved the blockade of Lebanon's coast by the Israeli navy and Hizballah's efforts to counter it with coast defense missiles (see figure 5). This operation was a clear success for Israel, although the press gave much attention to Hizballah's single successful action, the C-802 attack on the INS *Hanit*. After that the blockade proceeded essentially unimpaired until it was lifted by Israel. Although unglamorous, the blockade brought pressure on the Lebanese government, probably increased the ire of some elements of the Lebanese population toward Hizballah for starting the war, and helped isolate Hizballah forces in the south.

These mixed operational outcomes suggest the true complexity of the war and how difficult it is to declare which side won. Both sides will be closely examining these dynamics as they prepare for another round.

## Tactical Dynamics

In addition to the operational-level dynamics, important tactical dynamics also existed. These, too, are likely to be the subject of much study by the combatants.

While Israel and Hizballah engaged in an operational-level struggle with their air and rocket forces,

**Figure 5. Israeli Naval Operations**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Steaming hours off Lebanon coast** | 8,000 |
| **Times guns fired** | 2,500 |
| **Types of targets engaged** | Rocket launching sites, launchers, weapons stores, roads, Hizballah infrastructure and radars, fuel depots, and the coastal road |

*Source:* Israeli Defense Force, "7,000 Targets in Lebanon," news, September 3, 2006. Available online (www1.idf.il/DOVER/site/mainpage.asp?sl=EN&id=7&docid=56765.EN).

this struggle also played out on the tactical level. At the tactical level Hizballah relied on hiding, moving, and dispersing individual launchers and launch vehicles. Israel countered with precision intelligence on the long-range rocket "hide sites" and rocket storage facilities, and the effective integration of sensors, command systems, and attack platforms to attack medium-range rocket launchers shortly after firing. This integration produced the widely seen video clips of the Israelis hunting down and destroying Hizballah launch vehicles shortly, sometimes immediately, after they fired. Even though such methods could not completely prevent the firing of medium-range rockets, they were probably on the way to neutralizing this threat when the war ended. Israel won this particular contest. Unfortunately for Israel, it found no similar solution for the short-range rockets.

A second much discussed tactical dynamic was that between Hizballah's modern, primarily Soviet-designed, antitank weapons and Israel's Merkava main battle tank. Initial commentary suggested that the outcome of these engagements proclaimed, yet again, the end of the main battle tank as an effective instrument of land warfare.

More sober analysis indicates that, as in almost all past conflicts involving heavy armor and missile-equipped infantry, from Agincourt in 1415 to Bint Jbeil in 2006, the outcome related more to the tactical use of the tanks by the IDF than to the innate superiority of Hizballah's antitank weapons or crews.

Key to operating tanks in difficult terrain (urban or rough) is their integration with infantry, engineers, and artillery units and fires. This integration apparently did not happen in all cases with the IDF's use of armor in Lebanon, especially in the early going. Nevertheless, although many Israeli tanks were hit, only some were penetrated, and a very few suffered catastrophic destruction (see figure 6, next page). At least some of the total losses were caused by large (500-kilogram-plus) mines planted on the approaches to Hizballah positions.[5]

On balance, Israel's armor was not defeated by Hizballah antitank weapons. Tanks could have been used more effectively by the IDF, but they still provided the infantry with precise mobile firepower and protection, and retained their ability to change the situation at the operational level by deep advances into Hizballah territory.

Unlike some past Arab-Israeli conflicts, this war featured substantial infantry fighting, as Hizballah and Israel slugged it out in the close terrain and built-up areas along the border. Infantry combat is personal combat, in which the character of the forces involved is tested in ways different from other kinds of fighting. In some very nasty small engagements, both Israeli and Hizballah fighters demonstrated a willingness to close with and kill the enemy, to stand and fight, not in some

5. According to a former Israeli officer, a 500-kilogram mine would lift a sixty-two-ton Merkava twelve feet in the air. Conversation with author, August 10, 2006.
6. One of the best reported examples of this fighting is the story of the ambush of Battalion 51 of the Golani Infantry Brigade in Bint Jbeil on July 13. This unit walked into a well-prepared Hizballah ambush, sustaining eight killed and twenty-two wounded. The unit rapidly recovered and engaged the ambushing force and, according to Israeli reports, killed many more Hizballah than it lost before withdrawing.

desperate or suicidal fashion, but with discipline and courage, maneuvering tactically, and skillfully employing their weapons.[6] Hizballah's determination to defend its chosen ground and Israel's determination to wrest it from them at the tactical level were impressive.

Although the sides appeared equally determined, what began to make a difference after Israel decided to clear the border strip and brought in additional forces was the combined weight of Israeli infantry skill and numbers, and the additional firepower provided by tanks, artillery, and airpower. Hizballah was able to offset some of its disadvantages by its clever preparation of the ground and by using antitank weapons in an anti-infantry role. Many Israeli infantry casualties were inflicted by antitank weapons, some fired at the range of several kilometers. These weapons, however, could only raise the cost to Israeli forces; they could not be decisive once Israel committed enough forces and used them in a tactically sound way. By the end of the fighting, the IDF appeared to be gaining the upper hand at the tactical level, although not without cost.

**Figure 6. Israeli Tank Losses in the Lebanon Conflict**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Tanks involved** | 400 |
| **Tanks hit** | 48 |
| **Tanks damaged** | 40 |
| **Tanks penetrated** | 20 |
| **Tanks destroyed** | 5+* |
| **Crewmen killed** | 30 |

*Author's estimate based on reports of a "few dozen" tanks hit.
*Source:* Yaakov Katz, "IDF Report Card," Jerusalem Post, August 24, 2006. Available online (www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1154525936817&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull).

## Psychological Dynamics

Just as the operational and tactical dynamics of the war were important, so were the psychological. The fighting was not just about kinetic operations and the physical destruction of targets. In war, as Napoleon said, "The moral is to the physical as three to one."

The issue of whose will prevailed on the battlefield is important. In combat one side seeks not only to defeat the other but also to dominate it, to drive home its superiority, and to leave the other side with the feeling that it was beaten by better men. This goal raises the question of why did they fight, and why did they fight the way they did—not at the level of the national or organizational leadership, but at the small unit level. These are complex questions in any war; the motivation of Hizballah and Israeli fighters is worth discussing. Both fought in a determined way; both displayed strong cohesion; both accepted casualties. But there were differences.

One of these differences is between those who are prepared to die and those who embrace death. In an illuminating passage in *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture*, John Lynn wrote: "During the Pacific War, Americans and Japanese regarded each other's values and behaviors as incomprehensible, even as less than human. On Saipan, Americans faced death to achieve military victory, while the Japanese chose death to elevate physical defeat into moral triumph."[7] Something like this characterized the ground combat between Israeli and Hizballah forces.

Some have argued that Hizballah's fighting in the south was the equivalent of suicide bombings by Palestinian terrorists. One member of the Israeli security cabinet stated in an interview: "We know Hezbollah. I did not see perseverance and courage but a desire to commit suicide. They want to die like Hamas operatives who blew themselves up in city streets and cafes."[8]

Although Hizballah has used suicide bombers in the past, they were not a significant feature of its operations in this war. By most accounts Hizballah fought like skilled infantry, not as individuals on one-way missions

7. John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003), p. 221.
8. Gideon Alon, "'We Failed in the Psychological War,'" interview with Eli Yishai, vice prime minister and minister of industry, trade, and labor, *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), August 24, 2006.
9. Stephen Farrell, "'Hezbollah aren't suckers, they know how to fight. You're scared all the time,'" *Times* (London), August 5, 2006.

to kill civilians. As one Israeli Nahal Brigade soldier put it after an action in Lebanon: "They are really well trained. They're not suckers; they know how to fight."[9]

The willingness, even eagerness, to die in the service of killing the enemy is not atypical of Islamist militants, but interviews with Hizballah fighters indicate that, at least for some of them, nationalism and defense of their towns and villages were important motives.[10] Religion, nationalism, and a sense of fighting for the home combined to make Hizballah a resolute opponent in the south. These motives may have been reinforced by bonds among Hizballah fighters, especially among those drawn from the same families, towns, and villages.

Determination combined with the apparent cohesion of Hizballah units. Although numerous accounts exist of Hizballah fighters being killed in the fighting, so far no stories tell of Hizballah forces disintegrating in combat. The fact that so few Hizballah were captured suggests these forces were motivated and committed.

The motivation of Israeli soldiers is also likely to have been complex. Although many questions have been raised in Israel, and among Israeli troops, about the way the war was fought, questions about the justice of the war have apparently been few. The perception that Israel had been attacked and that Hizballah was a threat that had to be dealt with was a powerful motivating factor down to the individual soldier level. The sense that fighting in Lebanon constituted defense of the population of the north acted to motivate Israel troops. No serious "war of choice" issue confused the Israeli soldiers.

As in past wars, Israelis fought for their unit and other members of the unit, "the man on the left and right, front and back."[11] Accounts of engagements reveal the determination to triumph over Hizballah fighters. Israeli members of a paratroop special forces unit recounting fighting in Bint Jbeil described this struggle of wills: "The force of their determination did not surprise us. The force of our resolution surprised them. It was obstinate fighting, they backed down, our resolution broke them. We beat them in places where they didn't feel threatened."[12]

Israeli troops also demonstrated a willingness to take mortal risk to retrieve wounded and killed comrades. Determination to win, "exhausting the mission," and taking risks for others are marks of highly cohesive units, and they were on display in Lebanon.

Finally, in terms of the psychological elements of the conflict, the effects of Hizballah's rocket-based terror attacks on the population of northern Israel came into play. Nasrallah clearly saw this element as an Israeli vulnerability and acted in the very first hours of the war to exploit it. He was almost certainly disappointed. While creating powerful media images of civilians under attack, driving thousands of civilians out of the north and into shelters, and paralyzing economic activity in the north, the rocket attacks did not bring pressure on the Israeli government to halt the fighting. Rather they increased pressure to bring a decisive conclusion to the war with the "defeat" of Hizballah.[13] The endurance of the northern population under fire was impressive.[14] A sense exists also that Hizballah lost the deterrent power of the threat posed by its missiles. The menace of the rockets was exorcised to some degree by their use, and Nasrallah's blustering about additional surprises and the expansion of attacks to Israel's center produced little.[15]

10. Lauren Frayer, "Hezbollah Guerrillas Reflect on Damage," Associated Press, August 18, 2006.
11. Victor Davis Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 26.
12. Yuval Azoulay, "Paratroopers Regroup on Kinneret Beach for Battle," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), July 30, 2006.
13. Over an August 10, 2006, dinner on the Golan Heights, the mayor of Kiryat Shmona told the author, "We will give the government and the army all the time they need. But they need to finish the job."
14. Meir Elran, "Israel's Home Front: A Key Factor in the Confrontation with Hizbollah," *Strategic Assessment* 9, no. 2 (Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, August 2006). Available online (www.tau.ac.il/jcss/sa/v9n2p3Elran.html).
15. David Horovitz, "Nasrallah Cornered but Still Dangerous," *Jerusalem Post*, July 17, 2006.

# Performance of the Combatants

THE MORE TIME THAT PASSES since the end of the fighting, the clearer the view becomes that the performance of the combatants was complex and mixed. Early impressions of Hizballah's major battlefield successes and the apparent fumbling of the IDF can now be seen in better perspective.

## Hizballah Performance: The Other Side of the Hill

In this war, much of the detailed reporting on the fighting has come out of the Israeli side, with only occasional glimpses of how Hizballah was actually faring in the combat. Hizballah attempted to limit this knowledge as much as possible, restricting and manipulating media access, and publishing only partial and distorted accounts of its side of the conflict.[1] Israeli and international media in contrast had a field day reporting on the errors of omission and commission committed by the IDF and the political leadership. This discrepancy in the way the two sides of the war were reported has permitted a number of ill-informed notions to emerge about the nature of the fighting and the successes and failures of Hizballah and the IDF.

Critical to Hizballah's successful prosecution of its war was the ability to exercise effective command and control over its forces. Without this control, the fighting and rocket attacks would have degenerated into small local fights and haphazard rocket firing. Hizballah's command-and-control system seems to have functioned adequately throughout the conflict, despite Israeli attacks on it.

Rockets were fired in response to higher direction, and Hizballah's defense against Israeli ground forces was coherent throughout the fighting, up to and including the final stages as Israel advanced to the Litani. One of the best demonstrations of this control was the surge in Hizballah's rocket firing into northern Israel on the last day of the conflict in response to Israel's ground advance and in anticipation of the ceasefire. All this does not mean that Hizballah's command-and-control system was sophisticated in a Western military sense. It does mean that the system was robust enough to survive attack and flexible enough to accommodate changing political and battlefield conditions.

Hizballah's long-range (100-plus kilometers) rocket force was essentially a failure. It was largely destroyed in the early hours of the war by the Israeli Air Force[2] and only marginally affected the war. Hizballah's mid-range rockets (45–90 kilometers) were more successful. Although the IAF succeeded in destroying some of these early in the war, and more as the war progressed, these rockets were used to conduct a number of attacks on towns in the north, especially Haifa. The Syrian heavy artillery rockets, with their enhanced fragmentation warheads, were responsible for a disproportionate number of Israeli civilian casualties.[3] The IAF refined its "sensor to shooter" capabilities as the war progressed, and these systems became a "fire and lose it" weapon. According to Israeli sources, launch vehicles were being destroyed very soon after firing.[4]

Hizballah's short-range (6- to 35-kilometer) rocket forces were a challenge for which the IDF had no ready answer. Mobile, dispersed, and with a very low signature, the short-range rockets proved elusive to IAF sensors until they were launched. They were fired, along with the medium-range rockets, from within built-up populated areas. In addition, the single launchers were fired from within buildings, including apartments and individual homes. The overwhelming majority of rock-

1. See, for example, Scott Anderson, "Besieged," *New York Times Magazine*, September 3, 2006. Available online (http://select.nytimes.com/mem/tnt.html?emc=tnt&tntget=2006/09/03/magazine/03lebanon.html&tntemail1=y).
2. For one account, see "Halutz: 'Mr. PM, We Won the War,'" *YNET*, August 27, 2006. Available online (www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3296031,00.html).
3. Zeev Schiff and Amos Harel, "IDF Leaves Bint Jbail; 6 Soldiers Hurt in Clashes with Hezbollah," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), July 29, 2006.
4. Conversations between former Israeli officers and author, Tel Aviv, August 2006.

ets fired into Israel were of this type.[5] The Israeli military recognized even before the war that dealing with this threat was going to be a difficult problem.[6]

In a comment by a former senior Israeli intelligence officer, Hizballah forces in the south were described as "an infantry brigade with modern weapons." Hizballah had "gone to school" on the IDF, understood the threat from IDF ground forces, and had absorbed the lessons from previous engagements along the border. Hizballah fighters had to be killed or wounded, with only a few captives (twenty to thirty) taken in thirty-three days of fighting. They were skilled at the small unit level, operating their weapons systems effectively, conducting ambushes, exploiting natural cover and manmade fortifications, and maneuvering on the local battlefields. They tenaciously defended their ground, and where they lost it made every effort to reestablish a presence. This strategy was important to their image as defenders of the south, and they appear to have had some substantial measure of success.

An important element in Hizballah's ability to wage war for over a month was its logistics and support system. This system proved adequate for its needs during the conflict. Enough weapons and munitions had been prepositioned in the south to reduce the requirement for dangerous resupply over distances. Nothing indicates that Hizballah suffered any shortages, other than spot shortages of food and water, during the fighting. Israeli accounts suggest that Hizballah had enough antitank weapons to engage in mass or salvo firing at single Israeli tanks and small infantry units.[7] Accounts also suggest that an at least rudimentary medical and casualty clearing system was in place and operating.[8] The ability to sustain its forces over thirty-three days of combat was an important Hizballah accomplishment.

Over time, more detailed information will likely emerge on Hizballah's performance. Already, that performance was clearly more complex than the initial reports indicated, and Hizballah likely had its share of failures and problems.[9]

## IDF Performance: The Temple Was Not about to Fall

The IDF was neither defeated in Lebanon nor victorious on the scale of the 1967 war. The military outcome was perhaps more like that of the October 1973 war. Then, as perhaps now, the finish on the ground was messy, with the results ultimately determined in the diplomatic and political arenas.

Clearly the IDF was fettered to some extent by the performance of senior political and military echelons, although the precise distribution of responsibility remains uncertain. Nevertheless, some analysis of the IDF's performance can be usefully performed.

**Command performance.** Israel's senior military commanders[10] appeared uncertain, indecisive, and compromising at upper levels, including the Northern Territorial Command. "The mistakes were in managing the war, not in force structure or technology," according to one former senior intelligence officer.[11]

Reporting in the Israeli press and conversations with former Israeli defense and security officials reveal problems, or at least uncertainties, in high-level command performance at virtually every major decision point in the war: going to war itself, selecting the plan that would be implemented, continuing the war after

5. Hannah Greenberg, "Most Long, Medium-Range Rockets Destroyed," YNET, July 31, 2006. Available online (www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3284302,00.html).
6. Conversations between former senior Israeli military intelligence officers and author, Tel Aviv, August 2006.
7. Greg Grant, "Hizballah Missile Swarms Pounded Armor, Infantry," *Defense News*, August 28, 2006, p. 8.
8. Anthony Shadid, "'It's Dangerous, but Hezbollah Is Strong': With Litani River's Bridges Destroyed, Lebanese Improvise to Supply the South," *Washington Post*, August 10, 2006, p. A01.
9. Few accounts exist of battlefield failings by Hizballah fighters. One of these states that some Hizballah fighters ran in the face of Israeli tanks. From other accounts of specific action, in close-quarters engagements the IDF appear to have killed or wounded most of the Hizballah personnel involved with few losses. This account is generally borne out by the roughly four to one ratio of Hizballah to IDF killed in the conflict. Most Israeli infantry casualties were inflicted by ATGMs fired at a distance.
10. This paper deals only with the uniformed chain of command, not the political leaders involved in the security decisionmaking process, such as the prime minister, the defense minister, and other members of Olmert's inner security cabinet.
11. Former senior military intelligence officer, conversation with author, Tel Aviv, August 9, 2006.

the first week, mobilizing the reserves, advancing to the Litani, and agreeing to the ceasefire. Although much remains to be revealed about these decisions, clearly they did not represent a smooth and coherent process.[12]

Command problems were not limited to the general headquarters level. A breakdown also occurred in Northern Territorial Command, where Maj. Gen. Udi Adam was in charge at the beginning of the war. General Adam was effectively replaced when a "personal representative" of the chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Moshe Kaplinsky, was assigned to the command to manage the war.[13] Even at division level, command performance was not without troubles. In one case a brigade commander criticized his division commander for being unaware of the realities of the battlefield and the state of readiness of reserve units for assigned missions in Lebanon.[14]

These judgments are harsh, and until the details of the discussions and decisions are known, they should not be accepted as the final verdict on what happened. Nevertheless, breakdowns or problems of various kinds were evident within the military command structure, and critical decisions on the conduct of the war were not just the responsibility of the civilian ministers.

Despite the problems, there were successes in command. Even at the highest levels, some things were done well and quickly. The IDF was able to initiate the air campaign very rapidly. The IDF adjusted swiftly to the nature of the war in Lebanon and adapted to the emerging realities on the battlefield. IDF forces were ready to launch the major ground operation at least two days, and probably much longer, before they were given permission to do so by the government.[15] The IDF senior command also managed a two-front war, with operations in the Gaza area continuing without interruption.

Related to the performance of the military command was the performance of the Israeli Directorate for Military Intelligence (DMI). On balance, its performance seems to have been good, although not without flaws. On the positive side, technical surprises appear to have been few in terms of Hizballah's weapons and capability to use them. Even the case of the C-802 missile that damaged the INS *Hanit* off the coast of Lebanon appears to have been more of an operational failure than an intelligence failure. The Hizballah ATGMs were also not a technical surprise. Their presence and performance were known, although possibly their numbers and the skill with which they would be used were not fully understood. The July 12 kidnapping event, but not Hizballah's intent to carry out a kidnapping, was a surprise. The DMI has been criticized for not understanding the political aspects of the situation—the internal politics in Lebanon, the capability of the Lebanese government, and dynamics within the Arab world and the United States—but this criticism was not directed against the intelligence service alone. In Israel the senior military and political echelons are expected to have an understanding of these things, not just the intelligence services. A possibility exists that the intelligence understanding of the situation did not convey properly to the operational and political elements.[16]

Arguably the greatest problem in the IDF's command performance was the gap between war aims and the operations as implemented, especially in the case of the short-range rockets. The IDF had an answer for the long-range threat and developed an effective response to the medium-range threat, but it had no answer for the short-range threat other than a large ground incur-

12. Ian MacKinnon and Stephen Farrell, "Israel Begins Its search for a Scapegoat," *Times* (London), August 15, 2006.
13. "In Controversial Move, Head of IDF Northern Command Is Pushed Aside Mid-War," *IsraelInsider*, August 8, 2006. Available online (http://web.israelinsider.com/Articles/Security/9103.htm).
14. Inigo Gilmore, "Israeli Colonel Attacks Army; Commander Says Reservists Were Ill-Prepared for Battle in Lebanon and Officers Were out of Touch," *Guardian Unlimited*, August 27, 2006. Available online (www.guardian.co.uk/syria/story/0,,1859362,00.html).
15. Steven Erlanger, "Israeli Officer Says Army Aims to Kill Nasrallah," *New York Times*, August 20, 2006.
16. When asked if Israeli commanders should have been surprised by Hizballah's capabilities, one former senior DMI officer replied: "They should not have been." The author has heard from other Israeli officers that field commanders were sometimes dismissive of intelligence briefings on the threat from Arab forces, believing that their operational and tactical skill would offset the threat. This attitude, combined with the limited experience in direct engagements with Hizballah, may have contributed to the shock some Israeli forces exhibited upon contact with Hizballah fighters.

**Figure 7. Israeli Air Operations**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Total sorties** | 15,500 |
| **Combat sorties** | 10,000 |
| **Combat helicopter sorties** | About 2,000 |
| **Reconnaissance flights** | More than 1,300 |
| **Transport flights** | About 1,200 |
| **Targets struck** | 7,000 plus |
| **Types of targets struck** | Headquarters, bases, rocket launchers (300), Hizballah-associated structures (1800), Hizballah-associated vehicles (270), bridges (350) |

*Source:* Eli Ashkenazi, Ran Reznick, Jonathan Lis, and Jack Khoury, "The Day After/the War in Numbers," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), August 18, 2006, and Israel Defense Forces. Available online (www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/750493.html).

sion. And this strategy it was unable, or unwilling, to implement until it was too late. What is most troubling about this failure from a command performance perspective is that the IDF understood the short-range rocket problem and knew what to do about it, had even planned for it.[17]

**Air force performance.** The IAF has received substantial criticism for its failure to end the Hizballah rocket threat and for promising too much to the political leadership. The rocket threat remained until the end of the war, but how much was actually promised is unclear. Some of the criticism seems to be based on personal assessments of Chief of Staff Dan Halutz, the first IAF officer to command the IDF, and criticism of the IDF's growing emphasis on high technology at the expense of traditional components of the ground forces. Maj. Gen. Benjamin Gantz, the Israeli Army commander, has stated that "there was absolutely no one in any military leadership position who claimed airpower alone could deliver the goods."[18] Clearly, the IDF leadership basically understood that airpower could not eliminate the short-range missile threat—that this could be dealt with only by a large ground operation in the south.[19] What is not clear is how the prime minister and defense minister understood the limitations on airpower, and how these limitations were presented to them. The press has speculated that Halutz oversold airpower or that Olmert and Peretz misunderstood what they were being told, but the truth of that remains to be demonstrated.[20]

Other things were not successes, or perhaps were only partial successes, for the air force. The air force did not compel the Lebanese government to do something, *what* was never clear, to bring Hizballah under control or accept "accountability" for its actions. The air force did not break or even significantly disrupt Hizballah's command-and-control system.

The air force did much that was right (see figure 7). It planned and executed a highly effective operation against the long-range rockets, claiming 90 to 95 percent success in the first day, and thereby striking a pow-

17. Maj. Gen. Benjamin Gantz, chief of the Israeli ground forces command, stated in a postwar interview: "We planned for a nine to ten week war. We would take control of the area in a week and a half, during which time enemy launch capability would be dramatically degraded. Between week two and week nine, we wouldn't have faced significant warfare on the home front, which would have allowed us to focus on eradicating Hizballah's efforts to threaten Israel. It also would have provided a week or two for a proper disengagement and return to the border area." Barbara Opall-Rome, "Interview, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Gantz, Commander Israel Defense Forces Army Headquarters," *Defense News*, August 28, 2006, p. 38.
18. Ibid.
19. Former and active IDF personnel, conversations with author, Israel, August 8–13, 2006.
20. "An Enduring Illusion—Air Power," *The Economist*, August 26, 2006.

erful terror weapon from Nasrallah's hand. The IAF learned very rapidly how to destroy the medium-range mobile multiple rocket launchers within a very short time after firing. The IAF effectively integrated reconnaissance, command, and strike elements for attacks on Hizballah leadership, infrastructure, logistics, and forces targets. It provided extensive support to special missions and forces, at least twenty of which were reportedly carried out,[21] and it had some success in interdicting resupply of rockets from Syria, including killing at least one senior Hizballah official involved.[22] These accomplishments are not trivial even if they fall short of a victory achieved by airpower alone.

**Performance of the regular ground forces.** Overall, the regular, or standing, Israeli ground forces appeared to have performed well, although again their performance was not flawless. Many of Israel's elite and high-quality regular units were committed (see figure 8), among them the Sayeret Matkal general headquarters and "Egoz" reconnaissance units; the 7th Armored Brigade; the 35th Parachute Brigade; the Golani, Givati, and Nahal Infantry Brigades; the Sea Commandos; and the Yael special purpose engineering unit. These units appear to have done well and adapted quickly to fighting Hizballah. Conversations with current and former Israeli officers and press reports indicate that at least at the battalion level and below, morale was high, tactical military professional skill was good, and a willingness existed to close with and kill the enemy in the face of Israeli casualties.[23]

Problems with the regular forces appear to be related to the way they were committed, inexperience at the battalion level and below, and improper training for the kind of fighting they were going to face. Especially in the beginning, troops were committed in small numbers in a raiding role. When they encountered greater-than-expected opposition, they suffered casualties, leading to local uncoordinated escalation in the form of rescue efforts, which also became entangled in the fighting and sustained casualties. These small-scale engagements negated Israel's superiority in terms of maneuver, numbers, and firepower and reduced the early fighting to a series of actions in which Hizballah's discipline, weaponry, and preparation of the ground were maximized. Below the battalion level, where much of the burden of the fighting actually falls, the Israelis were inexperienced in Lebanon and with Hizballah. According to one report, no one at the company level or below in the regular units had fought in Lebanon.[24] The IDF chief paratroop and infantry officer, on departing his command, stated that he had not adequately prepared the troops for the war:

> [D]espite heroic fighting by the soldiers and commanders, especially at the company and battalion level, we all feel a certain sense of failure and missed opportunity. . . . At times, we were guilty of the sin of arrogance. . . .
>
> I feel the weighty responsibility on my shoulders. I failed to prepare the infantry better for war. I did not manage to prevent burnout among professional companies and platoons. I feel no relief whatsoever in the face of the array of excuses.[25]

As with any army entering a new war, the IDF would have to purchase its experience with blood.

**Performance of the reserves.** If the regulars generally performed well, the performance of the reserves was more problematic, although much remains unknown.

Overwhelmingly, the reserves responded to the call-up. This response likely reflected the broad support for the war within the Israeli population—the sense that this was a just war. However, at least some reserve units were ill prepared physically, mentally, professionally, or logistically for the fight. For reasons budgetary, logis-

21. Yaakov Katz, "The War in Numbers," *Jerusalem Post*, Aug. 6, 2006. Available online (www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1154525814279).
22. "Senior Hizballah Operative among Those Killed," *Jerusalem Post*, July 31, 2006.
23. Conversations with author in Israel, August 8–13, 2006.
24. Kim Ellingwood and Laura King, "Warfare in the Middle East: Israel Wades into Bloodiest Day," *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 2006.
25. Quoted in Amos Harel, "Outgoing Infantry Chief Says Military 'Guilty of Arrogance,'" *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), August 22, 2006. Available online (www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/752774.html).

## Figure 8. Israeli Ground Order of Battle in the Lebanon Conflict*

| UNIT | TYPE | STATUS | OPERATIONAL AREA | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Northern Territorial Command** | Headquarters | Regular | Northern Israel, Lebanon, Golan Heights, Syrian front | Udi Adam effectively relieved of command during course of conflict |
| **Galilee Division** | Headquarters | Regular | Lebanese border | Controlled early stage of ground operations |
| **"Brigade 300"** | Infantry | Regular | Western sector | Subordinate to Galilee Division |
| **162nd Armored Division** | Armor | Regular* | Western sector | Fought at Saluki Gorge |
| **401st Armored Brigade** | Armor | Regular | Unknown | Subordinate to 162d Armored Division |
| **36th Armored Division*** | Armor | Regular | — | Golan Heights Division |
| **7th Armored Brigade** | Armor | Regular | Eastern sector of Lebanon front | High-quality armor unit; probably subordinate to 36th Armored Division |
| **"Barak" Brigade (188th*)** | Armor | Regular | Unknown | High-quality armor unit; probably subordinate to 36th Armored Division |
| **85th Armored Division*** | Armor | Reserve* | — | — |
| **Unidentified reserve armored brigade** | Armor | Reserve | — | — |
| **Golani Infantry Brigade** | Infantry | Regular | Lebanese border | High quality infantry unit |
| **"Battalion 51" 51st Infantry Battalion** | Infantry | Regular | Western sector | Subordinate to Golani Infantry Brigade |
| **"Battalion 13" 13th Infantry Battalion** | Infantry | Regular | — | Subordinate to Golani Infantry Brigade |
| **35th* Paratroop Brigade** | Paratroop | Regular | Lebanese border | High-quality unit |
| **"Battalion 890" 890th Paratroop Battalion** | Paratroop | Regular | Lebanese border | Subordinate to 35th Paratroop Brigade |
| **"Battalion 101" 101st Paratroop Batallion** | Paratroop | Regular | Lebanese border | Subordinate to 35th Paratroop Brigade |
| **226th Paratroop Battalion*** | Paratroop | Regular | Lebanese border | Probably subordinate to regular paratroop brigade |

* All unit designators and titles drawn from press or other open source reporting. Asterisks in table data indicate uncertainty regarding designator, honorific, status, or other aspect of unit identity.

## Figure 8. Israeli Ground Order of Battle in the Lebanon Conflict (cont.)

| UNIT | TYPE | STATUS | OPERATIONAL AREA | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **551st* Paratroop Brigade; the "spearhead brigade"** | Paratroop | Reserve | Lebanese border | High-quality reserve paratroop unit |
| **Nahal Brigade** | Infantry | Regular | Western sector of Lebanon border | High-quality infantry unit; Battalion 931 identified |
| **"Givati" Infantry Brigade** | Infantry | Regular | Western sector | High-quality unit; a Southern Territorial Command asset identified operating in southern Lebanon |
| **"Alexandroni" Brigade (2nd*)** | Infantry | Reserve | — | — |
| **"Brigade 609"** | Infantry | Reserve | Western sector | Alexandroni* |
| **"Karmeli" Brigade** | Infantry* | Reserve | — | — |
| **"Herev" Battalion** | Infantry | Regular | — | Druze*; possibly subordinate to Galilee Division |
| **Sayeret Matkal, General Headquarters (GHQ) Reconnaissance Unit** | Reconnaissance and raiding | Regular | As needed | Elite special operations unit subordinate to IDF GHQ |
| **"Sayeret Egoz" (Walnut) Reconnaissance Unit** | Reconnaissance and raiding | Regular | As needed | Elite special operations unit associated with the Golani Infantry Brigade |
| **"Shayetet 13" Naval Commandos** | Reconnaissance and raiding | Regular | Primarily coastal operations | Elite Israeli navy special warfare unit |
| **"Sayeret Yael" (Ibex) special purpose engineering unit** | Engineers | Regular* | As needed | Elite combat engineering unit; deep operations against infrastructure targets and fortified positions |
| **Northern Command artillery brigade*** | Artillery | — | — | — |
| **"Keren" Artillery Battalion** | Artillery | Regular | — | Possibly subordinate to Galilee Division |
| **"Eyal" Artillery Battalion** | Artillery | Reserve | — | — |
| **Unidentified Multiple Rocket Launcher System (MRLS) battalion** | Artillery | — | — | — |
| **847th Brigade*** | — | Reserve | — | — |

* Asterisks indicate uncertainty regarding designator, honorific, status, or other aspect of unit identity.

tical (current requirements for combating Palestinian terrorism), and doctrinal (a shift to high-technology war-fighting concepts), training and equipping the reserves had been deemphasized.[26]

In addition, leadership failures apparently occurred within some reserve units. In one case, a battalion commander asked to be relieved of command because he did not feel up to the task.

Despite these problems, and the protests after the war, some reserve units apparently fought well. Conversations with former and current IDF officers and media reports indicate that, generally speaking, there was no lack of willingness to fight or carry out orders, although a great deal of concern existed over mission confusion, poor logistics support, and lack of proper preparation.[27]

**Special forces performance.** The IDF has a long and successful history of using elite paratroop and infantry units on special missions during wars and periods of conflict. In the war in Lebanon it used these units, especially in the early period of fighting, in raiding actions along the border and later for actions deeper into Lebanon. Israeli press sources indicate that at least twenty special operations were carried out, most of which went unreported.[28] Many of the special units incurred casualties, especially in the raiding actions against Hizballah border positions, and Hizballah attempted to portray the postoperation extraction of the units as victories. Nevertheless, most units were able to complete their missions and withdraw.

Because of the secrecy surrounding most of these actions, evaluating their success is difficult in either a tactical sense or in terms of their overall effect on the war. The use of high-quality special units against a dug-in and alerted enemy is questionable unless major benefits are expected from the action. The deep operations did demonstrate that the IDF could attack Hizballah at its depth and that Israel was willing to run risks to attack high-value targets. On balance, the special operations do not appear to have significantly affected the war.

**IDF logistics and support.** Israeli media have made much of breakdowns in the IDF logistics system, especially in supporting reserve units.[29] Equipment and supplies missing from depots, old or inadequate equipment, and spot shortages of food and water for reserve units deployed into Lebanon were all reported.[30] Those problems reflected both conscious prewar decisions and local problems in providing supplies to units operating inside Lebanon, probably caused by poor leadership of commanders and supply officers, the difficult terrain, and uncertainty over the location of units during the complex fighting. Although these problems were real, no comprehensive failure of the IDF's logistical system occurred. Regular units do not appear to have suffered these problems in any substantial measure; tons of ammunition were provided to artillery units, and hundreds of armored fighting and support vehicles were transported to the front, many if not most of them by reserve transport units. Although the supply problems clearly affected the morale of some units, they do not seem to have affected the course of operations in any significant way. Nevertheless, the perception that the reservists got less than the best is something the IDF and defense ministry are going to have to deal with, given the reserve-based nature of the Israeli army.

26. Anshel Pfeffer, "The Defense Establishment's Financial Brinkmanship," *Jerusalem Post*, August 28, 2006.
27. See, for example, Amir Zohar, "Reservists: Why Should We Volunteer to Be Cannon Fodder?" *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), August 13, 2006 (available online at www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=749667), and Neta Sela "Reservists on Protest March in Jerusalem," *Jerusalem Post*, August 24, 2006.
28. Yaakov Katz, "The War in Numbers," *Jerusalem Post*, August 6, 2006. Available online (www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1154525814279).
29. Zeev Schiff, "Lessons of War/Logistical Failure Led to Crisis of Faith," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), August 28, 2006. Available online (www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/754994.html).
30. Ibid.

# The Next Round

ONE CRITICAL QUESTION for the next round, if one occurs, is who will learn the lessons better. Both Hizballah and the IDF are adaptive and learning organizations. Accordingly, changes are likely to take place in the shape or nature of the next round of fighting, with the scope of these changes relating at least in part to how much time passes between rounds—the greater the passage of time, the greater the change. Both sides had the opportunity to see what the other could do. They have been inoculated to some extent, and what may have worked well in the last round may not work so well in the next.

With respect to military operations, Israel is likely to go harder, faster, deeper, and with greater effectiveness. The critical problem it faced in this war was the halting execution of operations. That is not likely to happen in the next round. This change will also provide an answer for the short-range rockets, not an overnight answer but an effective answer. Increased attention and budget for the reserves and the home front are likely. Israel will need to take a close look at its tactics for dealing with the Hizballah ATGM threat to IDF armor and infantry. Arab soldiers have often proven to be tough in defense, and this war was no exception. Israel needs a tactical and technical response to this challenge, especially in light of Hizballah's probable view that it had success in this area and that this capability should be enhanced for the next round.

Hizballah faces the danger of believing the press reporting about its performance and not adapting for the next round. Given the quality of the organization's leadership and its Iranian advisers, this failure is not likely, but the danger exists. Hizballah is more likely to see the need, and act on it, to dig deeper, hide more cleverly, and strike deeper and with more destructive capacity into Israel. It cannot have escaped Nasrallah that as northern Israel suffered, the rest of Israel went about life as usual. Hizballah will also seek to better protect its high-value assets, including its leadership. Some of these assets may migrate or be kept in Syria until needed in Lebanon.

Although Israel will have its own political, bureaucratic, and resource constraints on preparing for the next round, as a state it can act essentially on its own in these matters. Hizballah has the attributes of a "state within a state" and has a more constrained ability to take action. The deployment of the Lebanese army and of UN forces, the need to exercise caution within the Lebanese political system—not least of all because of perceptions of its culpability for the war—and Hizballah's dependence on outside powers for its military capabilities make it less likely that Hizballah can dramatically improve its military position. It fired perhaps a third of its rockets of all types and lost still more through Israeli attacks on storage sites. Much of its infrastructure in the south, particularly the system of fortified posts and headquarters in the border area, has been lost and is unlikely to be rebuilt under the changed conditions. So while both sides will likely adapt, Israel and the IDF will likely adapt more thoroughly.

# Conclusion

ONLY A MONTH PAST the end of the Israeli-Hizballah war, conclusions should be cautious; but some things can be said. Hizballah was not the Egyptian army of June 1967 or the Palestinian fighters in Gaza. About Hizballah one Israeli elite unit officer said: "We found an enemy that had prepared a long time for battle. Very resolute, well equipped, skilled and coordinated, unlike what we encountered in Gaza and the West Bank."[1] That is a professional military judgment and should be taken seriously. It has implications not only for any future round in Lebanon, but more broadly where Shiite religiosity, nationalism, and Iranian meddling meet, as they do in Iraq. Hizballah's performance is a warning of what a Shiite militia can become under Iranian influence and tutelage.

Into this fight Israel sent its best and brightest soldiers. They did not have it all their way. Hizballah, at least in the early days, gave as good as it got. Some have argued that this war and the inconclusive struggles in Iraq and Afghanistan indicate that a new and superior form of "Islamic" warfare has emerged in the region, a type of warfare for which that the West does not have an answer.[2] In this author's view that is a misreading of the war in Lebanon, and more broadly of military history. No military is immune from failures in political direction, in command, and in execution by inexperienced troops, and a halting war in Lebanon and an incompetently managed occupation of Iraq do not demonstrate that a now a superior "Islamic" form of war exists. When the war in Lebanon, or at least this round, ended, Hizballah was losing militarily.

Much has been written about the surprises that Israel suffered in the conflict. These matters were not trivial, but Hizballah's surprises appear more profound. Hizballah was surprised by the scope of Israel's reaction to the kidnapping and probably the destruction of its long-range missile arm and multiple rocket launchers, the resiliency of the civilian population of northern Israel, and the willingness of the IDF to close with and kill Hizballah fighters. These are major surprises reflecting serious failings by the organization's leadership.

A great deal was at stake in this conflict. Although not intentionally, Hizballah put at risk its political and military position in Lebanon and its ability to act on Iran's behalf. It did not lose these, but it did suffer damage to them. Its situation in Lebanon is now more complex and constrained than before. The wartime exhilaration of "we are all Lebanese" has passed. Nasrallah may be able to reconsolidate his organization's political position, but Hizballah is very unlikely to be able to restore its military position south of the Litani. Attempts to do so will likely bring a crisis within the Lebanese government, with the UN, with the Israelis, or all three. Hizballah's risk taking, arrogance, and catastrophic "defense" of the state are likely to persist in the minds of many Lebanese longer than the defense of Bint Jbeil.

Israel also risked much. By going to war in a rush, hesitating operationally, and then attempting to play "beat the clock," it undermined the operational effectiveness of its military and may have weakened its deterrent value. Deterrence is in the eye of the beholder, so this outcome remains to be seen, but the war was not the finest hour of the IDF and its political masters, and it is risky for Israel to appear less than strong, confident, and sure-handed in a crisis. The internal Israeli dialogue about the war will help feed perceptions of problems within the IDF. Commentators in the Arab world, as well as some in the West, are already crowing about Israel's defeat and "resistance" as the path to victory over Israel. These notions are dangerous both for Israel and those who hold them, bolstering tendencies toward adventurism.

The question remains: who won and who lost? As a senior Israeli foreign ministry official told a group of visiting military analysts in August 2006, a few months

1. Yuval Azoulay, "Paratroopers Regroup on Kinneret Beach for Battle," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), July 30, 2006.
2. Andrew J. Bacevich, "No Win," *Boston Globe*, August 27, 2006.

will probably be needed to see what the outcomes have been.[3] From the military perspective, Israel seems to have been winning at the operational and tactical levels at the end of hostilities, but it had not yet won. Hizballah was losing, but it had not yet lost. At the strategic level, Hizballah precipitated the conflict in an attempt to improve its stature in Lebanon and among Islamic "resistance" elements by gaining the release of prisoners held by Israel. It then found itself in a real fight to preserve its position. The fact that it was not destroyed does not constitute much of a victory. Israel did not get everything it wanted from the war either, although it could hardly have expected to do so given the way it fought the war. Nevertheless, the war did bring about a major, perhaps fundamental, change in the situation in Lebanon and the south. The status quo before July 12, 2006, which was highly favorable to Hizballah and Iran, likely cannot be restored. From Israel and the West's perspective, this outcome is good.

The next round, if there is one, will probably be more intense and lethal, perhaps more concentrated in time, with a higher potential for escalation outside of Lebanon. Israel will press for a clear victory over Hizballah and will run greater risks of escalating the conflict to achieve it. This strategy will put additional pressure on Syria and increase the chances that Bashar al-Asad will make a mistake leading to an Israeli-Syrian conflict. Tehran will be loath to see its allies defeated. These prospects are serious enough to demand serious diplomacy to prevent them, and serious preparation if diplomacy fails.

3. Israeli foreign ministry official, discussion with author, Jerusalem, August 13, 2006.

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