

# Israel's War against Hizballah and Its Battle against Hamas

by [Shimon Peres \(/experts/shimon-peres\)](#)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Shimon Peres \(/experts/shimon-peres\)](#)

Shimon Peres was a leading Israeli statesman and Nobel laureate whose political career spanned seven decades and included service as president, prime minister, defense minister, and foreign minister of the State of Israel.



Brief Analysis

**O**n August 1, 2006, the Honorable Shimon Peres addressed the Washington Institute's Special Policy Forum to discuss Israel's political and military strategy in its war against Hizballah. Shimon Peres is the deputy prime minister of Israel and a member of Knesset from the Kadima Party. A former prime minister, defense minister, and foreign minister, he has played a central role in the political life of Israel for more than half a century and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994. The following is a rapporteur's summary of Mr. Peres's remarks.

**[Read an unedited transcript \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/documents/44d7361fc2685.pdf\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/documents/44d7361fc2685.pdf)** of Mr. Peres's remarks in PDF format.

Hizballah's attack on Israel, with the killing of eight soldiers and the abduction of two, precipitated a war between a democratic state and a terrorist organization armed and directed by other states. This conflict includes a variety of conflicts. As regional and international actors react, the future of the Middle East is in the balance.

Israel is not merely confronting Hizballah, therefore, but also arrayed against Israel is a "Quartet of Terror" including Iran, Syria, and Hamas. For its part, Hizballah is not just attacking Israel, but also the existence of Lebanon as it is currently constituted. While Lebanon and Israel have been previously embroiled in conflict, the fact that neither of them is ruled by a Muslim majority puts them both in a unique position in the region and vis-à-vis Hizballah. Lebanon's diverse religious and ethnic composition, as well as its political balance, has been threatened by Hizballah's policies. Over the past twenty years, Hizballah has succeeded in driving Christians from Lebanon and contributing to the diminished role in which Christians are no longer full partners in ruling that country.

In contrast to the traditional multiethnic character of Lebanon, Hizballah wants to turn Lebanon into a Shiite state that would negatively impact the regional order that has been predominantly Sunni. Moreover, Lebanon and Israel are both obstacles in Hizballah's ultimate aim to create a society ruled by fundamentalist ideology.

Another assault by Hizballah is that it is acting as the proxy of Iran, which seeks Persian dominance in the Middle East. While Hizballah and Iran share a common vision for the future of the Middle East, Iran has its own interest in getting involved. For Iran, the confrontation with Israel is also about confronting the United States, complicating efforts to stabilize Iraq, diverting attention from the nuclear issue, and demonstrating Iranian strength.

In response to these threats, American diplomatic involvement is crucial. While Israel will never ask the United States to send troops or financial support for this confrontation, American diplomacy could play a crucial role in leading a unified coalition against terror, freeing the Israeli soldiers abducted by Hizballah, and disarming Hizballah, leading to a ceasefire.

International involvement is also important for securing these aims. The deployment of a multinational force may aid in resolving the crisis, but it will be meaningless if it is not part of a ceasefire that includes the insistence that Hizballah disarm and not continue its rule over southern Lebanon. Israel's operations inside Lebanon aim at achieving these objectives.

Thus far, Israel's strategy in Lebanon has been to use air, naval, and ground forces to eradicate Hizballah's rocket arsenal and to dismantle its organizational capabilities through bombing its headquarters throughout Lebanon. Civilians casualties, exemplified by the civilians killed in Qana, are the unfortunate victims of war. There is no war without mistakes. It is worth recalling the accidental U.S. attack on the Chinese Embassy during the 1999 Kosovo War. Many more civilians were killed in Kosovo than in Lebanon today.

Israel is ready for a ceasefire. As long as Hizballah continues to attack Israel, however, the Israeli people will stand united. Israel will not be weakened by attacks against it, but will unify in the face of attacks for the sake of peace. While Israel will continue to defend itself, her main objective is not to achieve military victory, but to achieve peace. Israel will continue to pursue peace with Lebanon and the Palestinians. At stake is not only Israel's future, but that of the Middle East as a whole.

*Institute research assistant Sadie Goldman prepared this rapporteur's summary.* ❖

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