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HEZBOLLAH: OPERATIONAL ART IN FOURTH GENERATION WARFARE



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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

Fourth generation warfare, or the irregular warfare involving non-state actors, is becoming the new threat upon which the study of operational art should be applied. By applying the design elements from Joint Publication 3-0 to both Hezbollah and Israel in the Second Lebanon War, a real world case study can be made to these tenets. This paper starts with an examination of Hezbollah and the events precipitating the capture of the two Israeli reservists to find the motivation for their actions. By looking at their potential strategic objectives and desired end state, a regressive analysis will be applied to this non-state actor to support an operational planning construct. A select number of the operational design elements will then be applied to an analysis of Hezbollah's actions. This same methodology will also be focused on Israel's operation to this non-state threat. At this snapshot in time, a conclusion will be derived as to whether the conventional forces of Israel or the irregular militia of Hezbollah has better applied operational art through these design elements. Finally, lessons learned will be derived for future operations involving both traditional and fourth generation warfare threats.

INTRODUCTION

With only one day left of his annual commitment as a reservist in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), Ehud Goldwasser¹ was probably not thinking of starting an international incident. On 12 July 2006, he and another IDF soldier were kidnapped and eight others killed when their patrol was attacked across the Lebanese border by Hezbollah militia, resulting in the escalation of conflict which would lead to the Second Lebanon War.² This operation would involve a commitment from Israel of over 15,000 air sorties with 7,000 targets destroyed; a response of almost 4,000 Hezbollah rockets; and a combined loss of almost 1,500 killed.³ With the increasing global power of the non-state actor, a focus on this modern application against irregular warfare by the large, conventional forces of Israel is warranted. By analyzing this case study, the joint concept of operational art and some of its design elements can be applied to this new generation of warfare and lead to lessons learned. This review will demonstrate Hezbollah has applied the methodology of operational art in 4th Generation Warfare, while the established nation of Israel has failed to apply these design elements to their latest operations in Lebanon.

Fourth generation warfare has come to the scene with the end of the Cold War and end to the idea that warfare belonged only to the state and its armies. William Lind described this new phase of war, “In broad terms, fourth generation warfare seems likely to be widely dispersed and largely undefined; the distinction between war and peace will be blurred to the vanishing point. It will be nonlinear, possibly to the point of having no definable battlefields or fronts.”⁴ The themes of classic insurgency, which typified guerrilla operations of an irregular force against the conventional army of its own nation, are now reaching across borders to wage its wars. “Practitioners of 4GW focus on the political aspects of the

struggle. They neutralize superior military power and technology by disappearing into society as a whole.”⁵

With this new generation of warfare emerging, a review of operational art is warranted. From Joint Publication 3-0:

Operational art is the application of creative imagination by commanders and staffs — supported by their skill, knowledge, and experience — to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and organize and employ military forces. Operational art integrates ends, ways, and means across the levels of war.⁶

Simply put, operational art is the ability to use force across time and space to make a series of tactical actions achieve a strategic objective, and ultimately, a desired end state.

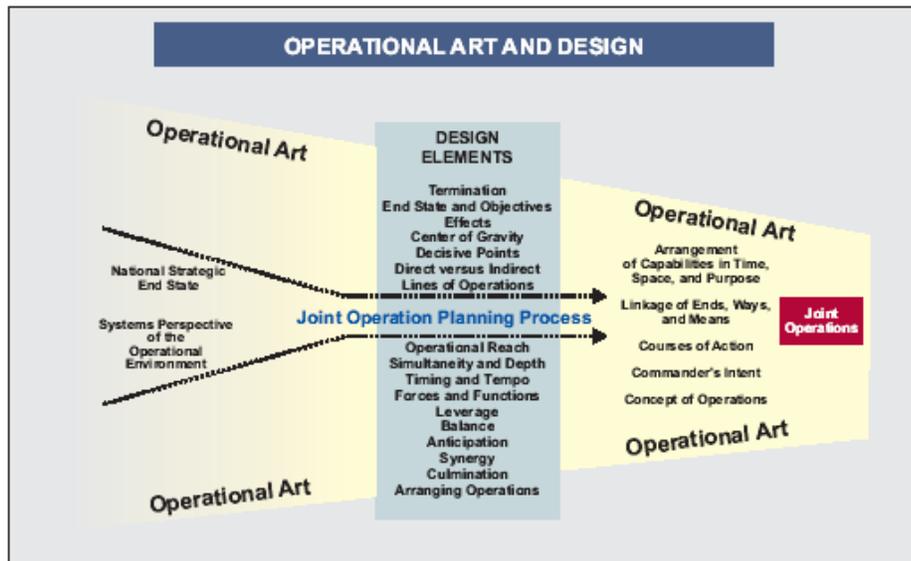


Figure 2: JP 3-0 Operational Art and Design Elements

In the new environment of fourth generation warfare, operational art is being applied by some of these warriors on a new battlefield. A revolution in the operational factor of space marks an era where the ability to hold ground or capture another’s flag means nothing. The new battle is being waged across the televisions, personal computers, and loudspeakers with the objective of influencing a populace to a course of action. Much like classic insurgency, today’s citizen is the center of gravity that the fourth generation warrior is

directing his efforts, and conventional armed nations should heed this trend for effective weapons in this war.⁷

BACKGROUND

Hezbollah, or the Party of God, has emerged from a fanatical militia of the 1980's following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon to eventually become a political party, social welfare construct, and military arm operating in Lebanon. Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the party's leader, has labored to gain strength from a diverse population through a policy of ideological ambiguity courting both religious and secular supporters. The continued support given by secular Syria and ideological Iran to the Hezbollah cause is proof of the external political success the party enjoys.⁸ In the 2005 elections following the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah won 14 seats in the 128 member Lebanese parliament giving legitimacy to its transformation. Hezbollah often outperforms the state- running hospitals, schools, orphanages, and its own television channel. Altogether, the party benefits an estimated 250,000 Lebanese and is the country's second-largest employer.⁹ Hezbollah has even created a sanitation company to be the only entity capable of cleaning the streets of Beirut, and to an extent is operating as "a state within a non-state."¹⁰ The Hezbollah leadership has demonstrated balance in their instruments of national power: diplomatic, informational, economic, as well as military, and this balance is a key element to their 4th Generation battlefield success.

ANALYSIS- HEZBOLLAH

With this background, we see the framework for a pseudo-state with the ability to generate a consolidated campaign to affect a strategic objective. Was the kidnapping of the two reservists a single act that accidentally precipitated into a 33-day conflict, or a carefully,

premeditated operation to further the Hezbollah cause? The ability for Hezbollah to plan the ends, ways, and means at the operational level to support a strategic desired end state is proposed with the following hypothetical construct:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Strategic Objective | Destabilize the Lebanese government while further legitimizing the Hezbollah party's power base internationally. |
| Ends/Operational Objective | Israeli Forces withdraw from Lebanese soil in a perceived Hezbollah victory. |
| Ways | Draw the Israeli forces into a protracted land battle causing extensive casualties. |
| Means | Upon building a sufficient military reserve, seize Israeli troops for bargaining power for prisoner exchange. Target civilian population with unrelenting rocket attacks throughout Israeli response. Use economic reserve and information operations to promote the Lebanese government's inability to respond to crisis. |

With some knowledge of the recent regional history, we will see that the above construct is a plausible representation of Hezbollah's planning process and represents the operational design element of **arranging operations**.¹¹

The events leading up to the conflict gave Nasrallah and his planners a good idea of the reaction that Israel would take following the tactical action of attacking and kidnapping their soldiers. Only a few weeks prior to Israeli operations in Lebanon, Hamas staged a similar raid on the Gaza strip where one IDF member was kidnapped and 2 others killed. On 28 June 2006, Operation Summer Rains resulted with Israel mobilizing thousands of troops in order to suppress rocket fire against its civilian population and to secure the release of a young kidnapped corporal. The Israeli Air Force conducted a selective bombing operation throughout Gaza and ground forces were deployed.¹² Nasrallah's claim of surprise to the Israeli response is not founded based on this very recent evidence, "We did not think, even one percent, that the capture [of the two soldiers] would lead to a war at this time and of this magnitude," said Nasrallah. "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."¹³ His shrewdness with information operations shows his balance in the instruments of power and hides his premeditation with the operational design element of **anticipation**.¹⁴

Anticipation and Hezbollah's joint intelligence preparation of the operating environment started in 2000 with the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Southern Lebanon security zone. Construction on a series of bunkers, tunnels, and arms caches directly across the border with Israel began a defense in depth.¹⁵ Through carefully constructed political design, the ability to fund and equip operations through Iran and Syria shows a strategic level of preparation for this event. The numbers and types of weapons employed would be designed to attack a very precise operational center of gravity, the Israeli population. With a rocket inventory consisting of mostly 122 mm Katyushas with a range of 19 km, Hezbollah also employed long-range variants for the first time. These included 220 mm Syrian rockets; the Fadjr-3, a 240 mm rocket with a 43 km maximum range; the Fadjr-5, a 333 mm rocket with a 75 km maximum range; and the Zelzal-2, a 610 mm rocket with a range of 210 km.¹⁶ The essence of operational art is being able to mass effects against the adversary's sources of power in order to destroy or neutralize them.¹⁷ Through continuously directly attacking the operational **center of gravity**, the Israeli citizens, Hezbollah was able to reach the decision makers, and ultimately force them to accept a UN brokered peace. "Hezbollah's strategy was to maintain its ability to keep inflicting casualties against IDF troops and to keep firing rockets into Israel regardless of the measures undertaken by the IDF. The Islamic Resistance followed the paradigm of asymmetrical warfare, in which it would win by not losing while the IDF would lose by not winning. Hezbollah Secretary-

General Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah said on 20 July: ‘When we are not defeated militarily, then this is victory.’”¹⁸

While anticipation sets the stage, **balance** in command and control of Hezbollah forces was the mechanism for success in fighting the Israeli ground forces. Balance of the force “preserves the responsiveness of component capabilities and is central to operational art.”¹⁹ The centralized command structure typified under previous Hezbollah administrations had evolved into a flexible, decentralized structure to allow for rapid response and encourage initiative. The central council of clerics provides solely planning guidance and direction for the overall objectives.²⁰ This construct allows a force to be capable of blending back into society while waiting out the initial days of the Israeli air campaign to reemerge with a cohesive effect. Coupled with the prepared battlespace and inviting the IDF to a visitor’s game, the Hezbollah lines of communication were practically invulnerable.

Throughout the Israeli air campaign, Hezbollah through their television network, Al-Manar (the Lighthouse) was able to send its message to 10-15 million viewers a day.²¹ This use of information operations for operational and strategic effect with today’s mass media and internet provides a new level of **operational reach**. One expert has been quoted, “the Israelis intended to empty and isolate the south in order to prosecute a ground war against Hizb’Allah combatants; but the first casualty of war are the old and the sick and the poor. Nasrallah knows this, he used it, he exploited it, and Israel walked right into it. Did he mobilize Hizb’Allah to get these people to safety? Of course not-he used them, and to great effect.”²² The ability to use the media as a cheap weapon to promote civilian casualties inflicted by Israel surely was a source of consolidating national power during the crisis and generating Arab sympathy to the Hezbollah cause.

With the ineffectiveness of the Israeli air campaign in stopping the rocket attacks, the Israeli Defense Forces were forced to switch from a series of raids to a dedicated ground campaign. Here, Hezbollah forces were able to use the operational design element of **leverage** through asymmetrical actions in attacking the IDF forces on predictable lines of operation.²³ Hezbollah had only one major line of fixed defenses on the border which provided practically worthless targets due to their depth for the heavy, conventional forces of Israel to concentrate their firepower.²⁴ By then trading space for time during the ground battle, Hezbollah forces were able to inflict extensive damage through their use of portable, anti-tank missiles (ATM's). Fifty Merkava battle tanks were hit with 21 resulting in penetrations and casualties. The real innovation was using antitank missiles against massed infantry, with attacks on housing structures causing the most IDF casualties of the war.²⁵

The most important operational design element that Hezbollah employed was preparing for **termination**.²⁶ Emergency services, water and food reserves, and crisp American dollars were supplied immediately at the end of hostilities, bringing the population closer in a nationalist movement to their cause.²⁷ With the Lebanese government's inability to respond to the domestic problems; the position of the current regime was weakened, and Hezbollah's bid for future power was strengthened. The proposed strategic objective for Hezbollah has been enabled with a dependency between the Lebanese people and the Hezbollah party more solidified.

ANALYSIS- ISRAEL

The Israeli campaign's level of **anticipation** and joint preparation of the operating environment were lacking before committing forces to battle. On 11 July 2006, IDF Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz was planning a family vacation in the north of Israel. Two

days before that, a security assessment lowered the level of alert along the northern border, raised two weeks earlier following the kidnapping in the Gaza Strip.²⁸ As recently as June, the IDF held an exercise based on a scenario involving the kidnapping of an IDF soldier that quickly developed into a combined air-ground response in Lebanon.²⁹ On July 12, General Halutz, the first-ever Air Force officer Chief of Staff, readied his forces, however, for an air-centric operation.

The Israeli government approved the launch of an aerial operation against Hezbollah to achieve three goals: to create the conditions of return of the abductees; to damage Hezbollah's military capabilities; and to push the Lebanese government to accept UN Security Council Resolution 1559 and assume sovereignty in southern Lebanon. Later, a fourth objective was added: to strengthen Israel's deterrent image.³⁰ A military operation, and specifically an air operation, would have had a tough time accomplishing these objectives. The wide variety in targets including lines of communication, rocket launchers, the Lebanese government, and the Hezbollah positions near the border shows a poor weight of effort against their opponent's strategic **center of gravity**, the Lebanese population.³¹

When the air campaign was unsuccessful in stopping the rockets, punishing raids using heavy armor were launched across the border.³² Heavy armor along predictable, well prepared paths made for easy targets for the Hezbollah anti-tank missiles. It is ironic that possibly some of the same Israeli TOW missiles traded to Iran during the Iran-Contra days would be returned at a high rate of speed back to their own forces.³³ With the rocket attacks continuing throughout the air campaign and these cross-border raids, finally moderate success against Hezbollah ground forces by the IDF occurred with their full scale invasion to the Litani River shortly before hostilities ended.³⁴ It can be said by concentrating forces in

this area of operations with light, mobile infantry as the supported force, a **synergy**³⁵ was achieved and Hezbollah forces were forced to withdraw north.

Timing³⁶ for the operation probably could have been better planned with noted logistics and reserve limitations. “Possibly one of the greatest disgraces of the war [was] the shortages in water and food described by reservists. Other soldiers spoke about shortages in equipment. Reservists from the elite Egoz unit were forced to collect donations from abroad after they were sent into battle without flak jackets. Others spoke about how they were left with no choice but to loot local Lebanese stores. One reservist said he knew beforehand that the IDF would fail to provide for its soldiers and brought US dollars with him, leaving bills in family homes where he and his comrades ate.”³⁷ These supply issues probably lead to the IDF’s offensive **culmination**³⁸ and their inability to cutoff the Hezbollah retreat.

The inability for Israel to put a desired end state to this operation resulted in a series of tactical achievements that ultimately lead to a probable a strategic failure. The air campaign focused on lines of communication that really were not a critical vulnerability for the Hezbollah militia; as their light, mobile arms were well-supplied nearby and portable to the fight. By the IDF Air Force targeting roads and bridges in the opening days of the engagement; they were only closing the proverbial barn door, unless the end state was a full scale invasion of the country, which we have see it was not. Most importantly, the collateral damage these attacks did on civilian infrastructure and casualties have polarized moderates and non-Muslims to the Hezbollah cause.³⁹ These tactical achievements have probably strengthened the ranks of Hezbollah providing new fighters to their ranks, while promoting the image of the first “defeat” of the Israeli army to other countries in the region.

One of the overall objectives of this campaign in restoring the credibility of Israeli deterrence has not been met.⁴⁰ Despite the application of technology including precise munitions and night vision devices, the image at the end of the day is of a retreating Israeli column heading south from the Litani River and flag-waving celebrations in the squares of Beirut.



Figure 3: Israeli Withdrawal



Figure 4: Hezbollah “Victory” Parade.

Perception does not need to reflect who scored the higher body count or took the most territory. The political goals of 4th Generation Warfare are ultimately the scorecard that must be used.

CONCLUSION

The ability to accomplish strategic objectives from operations is the essence of operational art and its construct mechanism of operational design. With the story of the conflict still playing out, the ultimate strategic end state will require time to really comprehend who was the winner of Israel’s latest Lebanese War. If the United Nations forces under UNIFIL can effectively disarm the Hezbollah military wing, Israel’s strategic

objective *may* have been accomplished. The real story will be how these operational objectives have supported a strategic end state. If the Hezbollah party has parleyed their operational “victory” into a true nationalist movement to their cause, their ability to gain control through a representative government may have been achieved.

With both sides claiming an operational victory, it will be operational art that will decide the victor in the Lebanon War. Israel has inflicted superior losses on Hezbollah forces with almost five times the level of fighters killed. Hezbollah, however, has managed to survive over 100,000 artillery shells; 15,500 IDF air sorties; and 3 Army divisions to gain the image of the Israeli retreat.⁴¹ An initial glance would indicate that by Israel focusing on the military threat, a series of tactical actions have left the country with a foe even more powerful than before operations. The center of gravity for Hezbollah is popular support, and the IDF’s unintentional targeting of civilians through collateral damage has brought the Lebanese population closer to the Hezbollah cause. With a sampling of several operational design elements, Hezbollah has applied operational art in fourth generation warfare reinforcing traditional fundamentals of warfare and elevating new questions for debate with operations against a non-state actor. Israel has demonstrated, that in not applying operational art, operations can be made more costly and possibly, even though an operational success, result in a strategic failure.

LESSONS LEARNED

The war between the Israeli and Hezbollah forces has brought a good example of the value in studying history and operations involving guerilla warfare. Hezbollah is still under the insurgency model, which makes it a political struggle, and their irregular forces require a different type of military solution. “So long as conventionally minded military

commanders fail to adopt organization, techniques, and tactics to meet the guerrilla challenge instead of trying to convert it to orthodox challenge, these revolutionary campaigns will prosper.”⁴² Military operations should be part of a combined solution with the other instruments of national power when utilizing operational art in fourth generation warfare. Many classic insurgency themes are brought to mind with the Israeli failure in dealing with their irregular foe. There are, however, some new lessons learned which should be applied to future non-state threats. Lastly, there are also lessons from the study of operation art that ring true for any operation. It was the Israeli failure to hold true to these basic design elements of operational planning that lead to what could ultimately be a strategic failure in the Second Lebanon War. With this in mind, the following are a summation of lessons learned from this operation:

1. The importance in addressing failed states in our National Security Strategy.
2. Operations with fourth generation warfare forces need a balance with the instruments of power- military, economic, political, and informational.
3. Light, mobile infantry and Special Forces should be the supported force in irregular operations.
4. Distinction in the *types* of targets selected should be maintained in the air campaign.
5. Information operations are an essential element in combating links between the population and the non-state actor.
6. The fourth generation warfare opponent can be a capable planner whose vision on long term strategic objectives warrants our attention.

7. Planning for post-conflict and the strategic end state should start in the beginning of planning.
8. Operational design elements do not guarantee victory, but the failure to apply them through operational art will surely lead to failure or higher costs in battle.

The Second Lebanon War is proof that failed states should be the focus of attention using all instruments of national power. The ability for Hezbollah to prepare its defenses for years, building arms inventories through international support, is a failure of Lebanon as a state and the international community to deal with a problem before it reached crisis. By enabling states to empower their governance; more costly military solutions may be forestalled. Emphasis on the “soft” sides of political and economic forms of power should play more of a role in future fourth generation warfare solutions.

When responding with military force, the proper structure to counter the fourth generation warrior needs to be assembled to separate its popular support. The supremacy of air power alone to punish populations to action does not work in this cultural context. The success that Israel achieved at the end of the war provides the method for attacking this fourth generation foe. History has repeated this theme in the study of irregular warfare: light, mobile ground forces are the key to countering this unconventional force’s ability to blend back into the population. Air power should be employed more in a close, supporting role like the Marine Air Ground Task Force construct, vice a deep interdiction role when countering such a foe. A force structure, which has light infantry or Special Operations as the supported force, is the proper design to counter the enemy’s critical strength of the “armor” provided by population centers.⁴³ By separating the enemy from its population, indirect attack on the center of gravity is achieved.

The distinction in the types of targets selected is one method of conducting this indirect attack and developing a perception of “proportionality.”⁴⁴ By striking strictly military-types of targets, a plan for proportionality could have been achieved which might have placed the Hezbollah in the position as instigators of the war forced upon the Lebanese people. Deep interdiction on rocket launchers alone, for example, would have sent a powerful, simple message to the Lebanese population, “Israeli attacks are a result of Hezbollah’s use of these offensive weapons in your state.” Precision guided munitions and an Information Operations campaign could have focused an attack on this seam to limit the media effects of collateral civilian damage. Targeting more obscure targets such as power plants, bridges, and roads only gives credence to the theme of a foreign power directly punishing the Lebanese people. Civilians utilize these same target sets, but obviously are not part of a rocket launcher target set. This psychological distinction is missing and is important for planners of fourth generation war. The perception of proportionality does not mean using equal force; it means attacking the right types of targets.

Information Operations should be a main weight of effort in fourth generation warfare. As Dr. Kilcullen points out in his Three Pillars Model for countering insurgency, “Information is the basis for all other activities. This is because perception and public opinion are crucial in developing control and influence over population groups.”⁴⁵ The center of gravity, once again, is the people; and the media is proving to be a more potent weapon in this new fourth generation warfare than any smart bomb or fielded force. The role of legitimacy is not only a part to impress on the population of the country, but to gain international support for the operation.

The focus on the last part of campaign phasing could be a good lesson to the planners of any conventional force. The Hezbollah party leaders had planned or were prepared for “stabilize” and “enable civil authority” phases before the start of combat operations. The Information Operations campaign was in place to promote their response to the Israeli incursion and deflect their own responsibility in starting the crisis. The Hezbollah economic side of their power was well financed to hand out \$12,000.00 in American dollars to the Lebanese citizens whose homes were destroyed as a result of the campaign. Social workers and the Hezbollah construction companies took to the streets at the end of hostilities, enabling the population’s dependence back to the party. Planning for war’s termination ultimately secures strategic victory.



Figure 5: The dollar-a sign of preparedness.

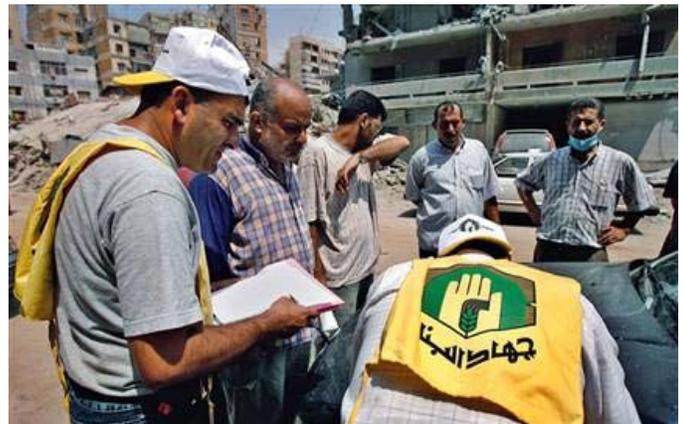


Figure 6: Hezbollah social workers

Lastly, the design elements of operational art are requirements to the success of all types of military operations. While there are some new twists that fourth generation warfare presents, these fundamentals also apply to planning operations in this domain. Fourth generation warfare also shows a requirement to study counterinsurgency. Irregular wars, or

small wars, are not new and there are many lessons that remain unlearned. The recent innovation at the operational level of fourth generation warfare is the role technology has played in the weapons of the enemy and the ability for the media to be one of these weapons. Emphasis on blending the other forms on national power in an interagency context will be fundamental in countering the fourth generation threat. David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, once commented that Israel could win fifty wars against the Arab enemies but had only to lose one in order to be destroyed.⁴⁶ As Hezbollah's perceived victory could unite the enemies of Israel, so could it empower other non-state actors to be heard in the global arena. Operational art will be necessary in planning against this growing threat.

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