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All Glory Is Fleeting

Insights from the Second Lebanon War

Russell W. Glenn

Prepared for the United States Joint Forces Command

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited



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Preface

On July 12, 2006, Hizballah attacked two Israeli Army vehicles during a raid along the Lebanon-Israel border. Three soldiers were killed, and another three were wounded while the raiders captured two others. Subsequent military operations were costly to antagonists and innocents alike prior to UN Security Council resolution 1701 halting combat operations on August 14 (UNSC, 2006). Debates over the relative advantages that the adversaries gained aside, Israel's military looked back on the war with recognition that there was need for considerable improvement of its capabilities. This book draws on insights provided during firsthand interviews with serving and former members of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), as well as available literature, to identify the source of that nation's concerns and contemplate what these observations offer in the way of lessons for today's militaries and their political masters.

This document will be of interest to individuals in the government, nongovernmental organizations, private volunteer organizations, and the commercial and academic sectors whose responsibilities include the study, planning, policy, doctrine, training, support, or conduct of insurgencies or counterinsurgencies in both the immediate future and longer term.

This research was sponsored by the U.S. Joint Forces Command Joint Urban Operations Office and conducted within the International Security and Defense Policy Center of the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community.

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Contents

Preface	iii
Figure	ix
Summary	xi
Acknowledgments	xix
Abbreviations	xxi
CHAPTER ONE	
Introduction and Background	1
Preliminary Notes	1
Historical Overview	2
Book Structure	12
CHAPTER TWO	
Israeli Postwar Analysis and Reaction	15
Inappropriate National Defense Strategy and Failure to Update Campaign Plans	16
Confusion Surrounding New Military Concepts and Doctrine	19
Preoccupation with Intifada-Type Operations to the Neglect of Warfighting Skills	23
Inadequate Synchronization of Joint and Combined Arms Capabilities	26
Excessive Concern Regarding IDF Casualties	28
Unrealistic Intelligence Expectations and Problems with Providing Intelligence of Use to the Field	31
CHAPTER THREE	
Responding to the Lessons: IDF Reactions in the Aftermath of the Second Lebanon War	35

CHAPTER FOUR

Additional Thoughts Regarding Lessons from the Second

Lebanon War	43
Misreading the Means and Ends Relationship	44
Misunderstanding the Nature of the Conflict.....	50
Implications for Israel's Application of the Operational Art . . . and for Operational Art Generally.....	59
Center of Gravity: A Fundamental Issue.....	59
Orchestrating Operations at the Three Levels of War.....	62
Surrendering Without a Fight: Giving Up in the Shaping War.....	64
Other Lessons	65

CHAPTER FIVE

Revalidations and New Considerations: Implications for the

United States and Other Nations	67
Revisiting Old Lessons	69
Clarity and Simplicity Are Essential to Military Thinking and the Guidance That Comes from That Thinking	69
There Is a Need to Broaden Understanding of What Constitutes an Insurgency	72
Militaries Must Be Capable of Operating Across the Spectrum of Conflict	73
Joint Operations Remain Essential	76
Leaders Need Training, Too.....	77
Virtually Every Moment of Every Day Is a Training Opportunity	78
Appropriate Location of Leaders on the Battlefield.....	78
Military and Political Leaders at the Senior Levels Require Educating No Less Than Do Those at Lower Echelons.....	79
It Is Important Not to Overreact to Failure	80
Know Thy Enemy; Know What Thy Enemy Knows of You	80

Less Familiar Lessons.....	81
Intelligence Boundaries Differ from National Boundaries	82
Balancing Casualty and Other Concerns.....	83
The New Front May Be the Home Front	84
Concluding Thoughts	84
Bibliography.....	87

Figure

1.1. Map of Lebanon 3

Summary

Preliminary Notes

As with many Arabic names, *Hizballah* appears with several spellings (e.g., *Hezbollah*). The former is used throughout for consistency with the exception of references in direct quotations.

A Hizballah raid along the Lebanon-Israel border on July 12, 2006, resulted in the capture of two IDF soldiers and others killed and wounded. The response from Jerusalem was both quick and violent, surprising Hizballah's leadership and triggering a monthlong conflict that, in retrospect, has been labeled the Second Lebanon War. (Lebanese tend to call the conflict the *July War*. The term *Second Lebanon War* is used throughout the following pages to avoid confusion.) The event left the IDF a chastened force and Israel an introspective nation. An independent commission charged with reviewing that military's performance soundly criticized the nation's prime minister, defense minister, and IDF chief of staff. The latter two lost their positions.¹ The prime minister's fate is undetermined at the time of this writing.

Israel was not alone in suffering the results of the conflict. The brief war damaged Hizballah's self-appointed status as Lebanon's protector. Casualties among its fighters were far higher than were those suffered by the IDF. Many of Lebanon's citizens lost homes; too many were killed. The nation's economy suffered yet another brutal blow. However, the difficulties that Israel and its military confronted are the primary focus of this book.

The IDF's efforts to learn from the war and correct recognized deficiencies began immediately. This book draws on information pro-

¹ "It Could All Soon Change" (2007).

vided by serving IDF personnel during a March 2007 conference held in Tel Aviv, interviews with active-duty and retired IDF officers, and written sources. The analysis first reviews identified shortfalls, then offers an external perspective to provide further thoughts on sources of difficulties and analyze what the conflict offers the U.S. military in the way of lessons that might assist it as it confronts operational challenges today and in the future.

Postwar Analysis

Israeli reviews of the Second Lebanon War revealed concerns that impact all three levels of war (tactical, operational, and strategic) and virtually every aspect of military operations. A strategy of relying on air power alone was universally condemned as wrong-headed. Campaign plans for operations in southern Lebanon were found to be outdated. IDF doctrine and the theoretical concepts on which it rested were thought to have been infiltrated by an “intellectual virus,” the consequences of which were guidance that was so obtuse as to be largely incomprehensible. The intifada operations that had dominated IDF concerns in the years before the war were allowed to take precedence over training for other types of missions, one effect of which was a loss of combined arms and joint proficiency, with crippling effects on the battlefields of southern Lebanon. The quality of officer training had atrophied as well. Commanders were consumed by a desire to avoid casualties in their ranks. Those leaders too often did not move forward to inspire and determine battlefield conditions, the result of which was, in part, conflicts among orders, which frustrated soldiers and exposed them to unnecessary risk. Lack of training and the failure to prepare for anything other than intifada tasks also led to some officers’ unrealistic expectations about the quality of intelligence they would receive

regarding the enemy and terrain. Further, Israel seems to have been unprepared to deal with the level of sophistication developed by its erstwhile enemy as a military force, perhaps assuming that little had changed in the six years since the IDF left Lebanon. This is in stark contrast to the care with which Hizballah trained and prepared its defenses in readiness for an attack by Israel.

The difficulties resulting from these various issues were compounded by a failure of political and military leaders at the highest echelons to properly employ the means available to them. Overreliance on air power is but one example. Combining bellicose pronouncements with attacks on Lebanese civilian targets, top Israeli government officials pursued a strategy of coercing the government in Beirut to force Hizballah to meet Israeli demands. It was a strategy based on a gross misunderstanding of the relationship between Lebanon's government and the leadership of the forces confronting the IDF. Attacks on Lebanese civilians had the negative effect of alienating groups that could have had some influence on Hizballah or that might have been able to wield desired influence in the years succeeding the conflict. Israelis, once masters of the operational art, seem to have miscomprehended the very nature of the conflict at hand. Military and political leaders did not correctly draw on their national assets in the service of strategic objectives, nor did those in top IDF positions confront their civilian overseers with the hard facts and difficult decisions that were essential to prevailing. Shortfalls were many; the failures were, at times, systemwide. That Israel has been its own harshest critic—and one willing to share its problems openly—offers hope for considerable improvement and opportunity for better understanding the modern conflict environment.

Implications for the Present and Future

The offerings that may be taken in the way of potential lessons learned are no less far ranging than the observations presented here. They seem, in some cases, obvious, but woe to the military or political leader who believes that his or her own country is somehow invulnerable to the difficulties harshly brought to light in 2006 southern Lebanon or for the Russians in Chechnya at the close of the 20th century. Other lessons are less apparent. A brief summary of these observations follows.

Clarity and Simplicity Are Essential to Military Thinking and the Guidance That Comes from That Thinking

The intellectual virus that many in the IDF fear has infiltrated their military's thinking has both domestic and international roots. Israel's own theorists seem to have overlooked the need to ensure that these ideas were accessible to those whom the armed forces must train. Imported concepts, such as effect-based operations, came under attack as having failed to meet the test of combat conditions. There is a need to recognize the inherent value of simplicity and clear prose when writing doctrine and developing ideas that ultimately will influence the men and women actually confronting real-world challenges.

There Is a Need to Broaden Understanding of What Constitutes an Insurgency

Israeli leaders seem not to realize that the situations in the occupied territories and southern Lebanon demonstrate many characteristics found in insurgencies. Representatives of the U.S. government have been accused of similarly not recognizing the rise of an insurgency in Iraq in late 2003 and early 2004. Granted, present definitions hinder identifying post-Cold War insurgencies, but the cost

of limited perception or ignoring telltale signs today is having to face a stronger, bolder, and better-established resistance tomorrow.

Militaries Must Be Capable of Operating Across the Spectrum of Conflict

Time is a resource always in short supply for a military leader. There are never sufficient hours to train for all the contingencies that might confront a unit nor even to fully prepare an organization for any one contingency. Recognizing commonalities among various mission types helps to address the challenge. Training for flexibility is another concern. No military can afford to rely on units so specialized that they deploy only to contingencies for which they are specifically tailored. Armed forces must instead be general practitioners familiar with the skills of the specialist.

Joint Operations Remain Essential

In the months prior to the July–August 2006 war, the Israeli Air Force unilaterally declared that it would no longer support Israel's ground forces in a fixed-wing aircraft close air support (CAS) role. Other strategic missions were thought to take precedence. That decision was found to be unsupportable when war broke out in July 2006. Today's operational environments are unavoidably joint ones. Rather than reducing emphasis on joint operations, there is a need to improve what are, in some respects, relationships still in their adolescent stage. Multinational and interagency workings likewise demand constant improvement.

Leaders Need Training, Too

Israel recognized that far too many of its difficulties during the Second Lebanon War were failures of leadership. The actions and judgments of the prime minister, defense minister, and many commanders

at echelons from IDF chief of staff to those below brigade demonstrated, in one way or another, that more attention to educating leaders and their staffs is necessary. There were tactical failures: It was reported that tactical-level commanders in too many cases never left their command posts to cross into southern Lebanon and gauge conditions at the front. There were operational-level shortfalls: Fears of soldier casualties first stopped attacks and later slowed them to the pace of bulldozers constructing new roads. There were strategic misjudgments: Expectations regarding what could realistically be expected of air power were naïve. A military has an obligation to train its leaders just as commanders at the highest echelons must mentor their political masters regarding the capabilities and limitations of the nation's armed forces. And those civilian leaders must be willing to listen.

It Is Important Not to Overreact to Failure

The IDF has dramatically increased its commitment to training for conventional warfare in the aftermath of July and August 2006. It has directed the purchase and fielding of an antimissile system to protect its vehicles, reevaluated its doctrine, and changed its command structure. These adaptations to the lessons taken from the Second Lebanon War are likely to provide benefits, but there is a need to exercise caution. Lessons from the past are of value only if molded to the needs of the future. A military that does not balance looking backward with constant glances at the future risks preparing only for the war last fought.

A Few Other Observations

Three other lessons merit note:

- National boundaries should not constrain intelligence responsibilities. Hizballah exemplifies the complexity of the contemporary intelligence arena: Itself a nonstate actor, it influences and is

influenced by Iran and Syria. National intelligence organizations must ensure that analysts are not limited by internal allocation of responsibilities that preclude their sharing vital information with each other.

- Concerns regarding casualties are but one factor influencing operations: Oversensitivity to friendly-force casualties is frequently a characteristic of units joining today's coalitions. That sensitivity can make such an addition more of a tactical burden than benefit. As political rather than military factors often dictate the composition of coalitions, political and military leaders alike need to compensate for the challenges that this oversensitivity imposes on U.S. leaders in the field.
- Today's armed forces must be ready to meet domestic as well as international defense responsibilities: Hizballah's rocket attacks on northern Israel caused civilian casualties and precipitated mass evacuations of threatened areas. Although the threats are of a different character, the lesson to be learned is a shared one: The U.S. military may be called on to assist domestic authorities during future disasters, natural or otherwise. Development of plans, the conduct of rehearsals and exercises, and other preparations should receive attention before rather than as a reaction to such eventualities.

Acknowledgments

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Those on the other side of the Atlantic who merit mention include our sponsors at the U.S. Joint Forces Command Joint Urban Operations Office. This offering would quite simply not be possible without their continued support of research that tackles the most difficult challenges that militaries face today. Duane Schattle, Scott Bamonte, Lori Evans, and Jon Natividad were particularly key to this effort. So, too, was Gayle Stephenson, my exceptionally able administrative assistant, who is ever fundamental to the preparation of these written efforts.

It was my good fortune to have two very professional colleagues review this document: Karla Cunningham, who has studied the Second Lebanon War in some detail, and Michael T. Chychota, who came through in the clutch when another failed to complete a review in a timely fashion. Thanks to both; it is good to have friends on whom one can rely.

Abbreviations

Aman	Agaf HaModiin, or intelligence section, Israel's directorate of military intelligence
C-2	multinational intelligence
C4	command, control, communication, and computers
CAS	close air support
COCOM	combatant command
COG	center of gravity
COIN	counterinsurgency
COS	chief of staff
CSB	communication strategy board
DJIOC	Defense Joint Intelligence Operations Center
EBO	effect-based operations
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
G-2	deputy chief of staff for intelligence
HMMWV	high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle
IAF	Israeli Air Force
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IDI	Israeli Department of Intelligence

IED	improvised explosive device
IN	Israeli Navy
IR	Islamic Resistance
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
J-2	joint intelligence directorate
JI&E	joint innovation and experimentation
JIOC	Joint Intelligence Operations Center
JIOC-X	Joint Intelligence Operations Center–Transformation
JTC-I	Joint Transformation Command–Intelligence
JTF	joint task force
METL	mission-essential task list
OODA	observe, orient, decide, and act
OPTAG	operational training and advisory group
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
S-2	intelligence officer
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Introduction and Background

Hizballah was ready; the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces were] not, and that is disappointing. . . . They were not ready on three levels—the tactical, operational, and strategic— . . . stemming from many reasons: budget, lack of time, being busy in the occupied territories. Still, you have to look at the tactical, operational, and strategic problems. Come on—We were confronting the equivalent of one commando battalion in the Syrian military. We have to do better.

—*IDF Major General (ret.) Uri Sagie*¹

Preliminary Notes

As with many Arabic names, *Hizballah* appears with several spellings (e.g., *Hezbollah*). The former is used throughout for consistency with the exception of references in direct quotations.

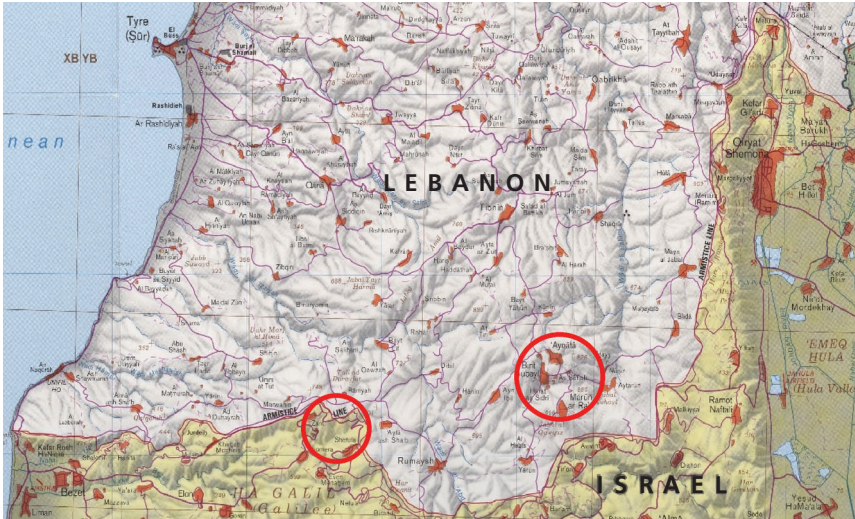
¹ Sagie (2007).

Historical Overview

The Hizballah fighters executed their July 12, 2006, attack with deadly efficiency. It was a limited tactical action with dramatic strategic impact. *Jane's Intelligence Review* concisely summarized the incendiary event and its immediate consequences:

At 0905 local time, two IDF armoured [HMMWVs, or high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles] were hit by at least one roadside bomb and rocket-propelled grenades fired by a squad of IR [Islamic Resistance] fighters hidden in dense undergrowth on the Israeli side of the border fence, 1.5 km northwest of the Lebanese village of Aitta Shaab. Three IDF soldiers were killed in the assault and three wounded, with another two abducted by the IR team. The ambush site was well chosen, falling into a “dead zone” at the bottom of a wadi between the border towns of Zarit and Shetula out of sight of nearby IDF posts, allowing the IR team to cross the border fence undetected. [See Figure 1.1, left circle.] The IDF had belatedly planned to erect a camera at the site the following week. IR fire support teams staged a diversionary bombardment of nearby IDF outposts and Zarit and Shetula with mortars and Katyusha rockets. The IDF discovered that two of its soldiers were missing some 30 minutes after the attack. At least one Merkava tank and an IDF platoon in armoured personnel carriers crossed the border in pursuit of the IR abductors. At around 1100, a Merkava tank struck a massive improvised explosive device (IED) consisting of some 200–300 kg of explosive, one of many IEDs planted by the IR at potential infiltration routes along the Blue Line [the border between Israel and Lebanon]. The tank was destroyed in the blast, killing all four crew members. An eighth soldier was killed in heavy fighting with local IR combatants, constituting the highest Israeli fatality toll in a single incident against Hizbullah since September 1997. Ehud Olmert,

Figure 1.1
Map of Lebanon



SOURCE: (U) CIA (1986).
RAND MG708-1.1

the Israeli prime minister, declared the abduction “an act of war” and blamed the Lebanese government. “Our response will be very restrained,” he promised. “But very, very, very painful.” A bewildered Lebanese government, which knew nothing of Hizballah’s plans beforehand, announced that it “was unaware of the operation, does not take responsibility for it and does not endorse it.”²

The magnitude of Israel’s response appears to have come as a shock to Hizballah’s leadership. The organization’s deputy secretary general later related, “We were expecting the Israelis would respond at

² Blanford (2006a).

the most by bombing for a day or two or some limited attacks.”³ The character of the Israeli military’s reaction also puzzled other observers but for different reasons. For example, reserve mobilization took place more than two weeks after the initial Hizballah raid. Significant ground action was delayed in the apparent expectation that air action alone could accomplish the country’s strategic objectives. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert made those objectives clear in his address to the Knesset five days after the July 12 attack:

The return of the hostages, Ehud (Udi) Goldwasser and Eldad Regev; A complete cease fire; Deployment of the Lebanese army in all of southern Lebanon; Expulsion of Hizballah from the area; and Fulfillment of United Nations Resolution 1559.⁴

Whether due to a belief that Hizballah’s military capabilities had changed little since the IDF’s 2000 withdrawal, failures of intelligence, or both, Israel did not expect the levels of resistance met when it eventually launched its ground offensive. Southern Lebanon’s terrain was in part responsible. It is rife with hills scored by steep-sided, deep valleys. These gorges are themselves cut by innumerable wadis that hamper dismounted and mounted ground maneuver alike or render it altogether impossible in some locations. Villages perch atop hills that dominate surrounding terrain, providing any occupying them with

³ “Scale of Israeli Attack ‘Surprised’ Hezbollah” (2006). In her review of this book, Karla Cunningham noted that Hizballah’s professed surprise could have been an effort at mitigating the antipathy directed at the organization in the aftermath of the destruction that the Lebanese people suffered.

⁴ “Address to the Knesset by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert” (2006). Among the seven primary elements of the resolution are “calls for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias” and support for “the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory” (UNSC, 2004).

excellent observation, superb fields of fire,⁵ and considerable protection against small arms and indirect engagement. These factors combined with some leaders' uncharacteristic sheepishness to make the July 17 attacks against the communities of Marun ar Ra's and nearby Bint Jbail far more time consuming than expected. (See Figure 1.1, right circle.) Initial stretches of road from the Lebanon-Israel border northward were heavily mined and covered by antitank weapons by fighters well trained in how best to engage Israeli military vehicles. Three Merkava tanks suffered missile penetrations; six IDF soldiers died, and another 18 were wounded before the army declared Marun ar Ra's secure after seven days of combat.⁶ Fighting for the nearby village of Bint Jbail was no less vicious.⁷

The July 28–31, 2006, period finally saw the mobilization of approximately 15,000 Israeli reservists as the army prepared for further combat in such villages as Aita el-Shaab, Taibe, Al Adisa, and Marjayoun. The IDF had reached the Litani River, commonly considered the northern border of southern Lebanon, by August 10 and surrounded many of the enemy. The bloodiest day of the war would prove to be its last, as the opposing sides struggled for control of ground that could be used as a bargaining chip during postconflict negotiations or to house defensive positions after the pending ceasefire.⁸

Combat in Wadi Salouqi provides insights regarding the extent of confusion that plagued Israeli operations during the war. On August 10, 2006, IDF leaders sent an armored column crawling down the steep banks of the ravine by that name to attack the town of Ghan-

⁵ Exum (2006, pp. 2–3).

⁶ Exum (2006, p. 9).

⁷ Pfeffer (2006); Moores (undated).

⁸ Moores (undated).

dourieh on its opposite side. Orders to abort reached the soldiers just as their lead vehicles reached the chasm's bottom. Unit members made a careful withdrawal back to their starting point only to be told that they were to once again attack along the same route two days later. Wise to Israel's approach, the enemy lay in wait, small arms and antitank weapons at the ready. An IED destroyed the column commander's Merkava tank as it reached the wadi floor. The explosion signaled initiation of the ambush. Missiles slammed into 11 other Merkavas. Eight crew members perished, dying with four of their comrades on foot or mounted in other vehicles. Ghandourieh nevertheless fell the next day, August 13, 2006, only to be abandoned when its captors departed less than 48 hours later after Israel signed UN Security Council resolution 1701.⁹

Hizballah's tactical success surprised most in Israel and many elsewhere. It did not surprise members of the group itself who had spent years preparing southern Lebanon for defense and training to fight on the rugged terrain. Attacks on the Israeli homeland were equally well prepared for. Short- and medium-range rockets destined for sites south of the border had been dug in and camouflaged so effectively that IDF soldiers literally walked across the top of the fake stone used to conceal them without detection of what lay beneath.¹⁰ Hizballah would ultimately fire roughly 4,000 rockets and missiles at military and civilian targets in Israel.¹¹ Fifty-three civilian dead would be among the casual-

⁹ UNSC (2006); Exum (2006, p. 11); Blanford (2006a).

¹⁰ Cohen (2007); Exum (2006, p. 4).

¹¹ Exum (2006, p. 5).

ties. Wounded ran into the thousands, and approximately 2,000 Israeli dwellings either suffered severe damage or were ruined.¹²

Other Hizballah weapons included AK-47 rifles, machine guns, rocket-propelled-grenade launchers, and anti-armor capabilities that included Sagger, Kornet-E, and Metis-M antitank guided missiles.¹³ It was these missiles that would prove the insurgents' most effective killers during ground combat. They would, in the end, destroy 14 Israeli tanks; mines would ravage another six.¹⁴ Even the IDF's most advanced model, the Merkava 4, proved vulnerable.

The fighters using these weapons were better trained, better led, and showed more discipline than many in the regular armed forces of countries Israel had confronted in earlier wars. This is less surprising when one considers how Hizballah develops its military proficiency. It recruits much like a national military, develops its own doctrine, and exchanges personnel with regional nation-states. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) representatives conduct surprise inspections to gauge Hizballah readiness, visits likely first and foremost motivated by a desire to ensure that Iranian funds and weapons are not being wasted. They also serve as forums for the passage of military lessons, often, one suspects, with the Iranians learning more than they offer. Hizballah's command structure provides centralized guidance, plans, and policies to subordinate units. Yet its tactical commanders are trained to operate in the absence of continuous oversight, a situation that complicated information gathering for the IDF. These commanders are equipped with sophisticated means of communication

¹² Rubin (2007). Casualty estimates differ. Mohamad Bazzi (2006) put the number of dead at 43.

¹³ Blanford (2006a); "Hizballah's Intelligence Apparatus" (2006).

¹⁴ "Israel Introspective After Lebanon Offensive" (2006).

that allow them to monitor even Israeli frequency-hopping radios.¹⁵ Leaders conduct postoperation debriefings and prepare after-action reports for improving training effectiveness similar to those in professional militaries.

Weapons and other systems provided by Iran and Syria included unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and rocket launchers in such quantity that Hizballah possessed greater numbers than Syria itself did.¹⁶ Another capability, the shore-launched C-802 antiship missile, killed four sailors aboard the Israeli Navy's *Hanit Sa'ar 5*-class corvette off the Lebanese coast on July 14, 2007.¹⁷ Israelis found Hizballah's internal security far better than what it was used to when dealing with Palestinian organizations.¹⁸

Hizballah tactical forces consisted of two general types:

The first was the full-time military force of experienced, well-trained, highly disciplined and motivated guerrilla fighters, aged from their late twenties to late thirties. Numbering a few hundred, the full-timers were deployed in the network of bunkers and tunnels in south Lebanon as well as other locations. These fighters, equipped with military uniforms, were split into teams of 15 to 20 and chiefly were responsible for artillery rockets, advanced anti-tank missiles and sniping. The second wing was the "village guard" units, many of them veteran guerrilla combatants from the 1990s when the IDF occupied south Lebanon. Although they share the same high degree of motivation and discipline as their full-time comrades, the village guards were an

¹⁵ Bazzi (2006).

¹⁶ Shapira (2007); Amir (2007).

¹⁷ "Israel Probes Naval Missile Defense Failure" (2006); Eshel (2006).

¹⁸ "Hizballah's Intelligence Apparatus" (2006).

irregular force of part-time personnel. The guards remained in their villages after most civilians had fled north. In the event of an IDF ground invasion, the village guards would provide successive layers of defence consisting of fresh, well-armed fighters able to take advantage of their intimate knowledge of the local terrain to interdict and frustrate the IDF advance.¹⁹

Not all those fighting were members of Hizballah. Some had other political affiliations or were not associated with any particular political group.²⁰

Israel's initial air strikes concentrated on Hizballah rocket and missile capabilities, particularly those medium- and long-range weapons with the potential to reach deep into Israel. Other attacks hit infrastructure targets throughout Lebanon: Thirty-eight percent of the attacks sought to deny Hizballah reinforcement and resupply via the destruction or damaging of bridges, roads, and other transportation infrastructure. It was an ineffective approach, given the foe's pre-stocking of supplies, arms, and ammunition.²¹ Hizballah units were also trained to operate without external support. Their command-and-control system was likewise structured for semi-autonomous operations:

Hizballah organized its fighters into small, self-sufficient teams capable of operating independently and without direction from higher authority for long periods of time. In general—but not exclusively—Hizballah's fighting units were squad-sized elements of seven to ten men. These squad-sized elements were afforded a great deal of autonomy during the fighting but were able to remain in contact with their higher units through a complex system of

¹⁹ Blanford (2006a).

²⁰ Exum (2006, p. 5).

²¹ Amir (2007).

communications that included an elaborate system of radio call signs as well as a closed cellular phone system. At the lower levels, fighters made use of two-way radios for communication within the villages and between isolated fighting positions. . . . Hizballah's tactical leaders not only were given the freedom to make quick decisions on the battlefield, but did so with a degree of competence that rivaled their opposite numbers in the IDF.²²

Air targeting also sought to punish Lebanese citizens for Hizballah's aggressions, perhaps in an attempt to bring its pressure to bear on Lebanon's elected officials. Israeli decisionmakers took for granted that applying pressure on the government in Beirut would force its officials into coercing Hizballah to meet Israel's strategic demands, this despite its also having not done so during conflict 10 years before:

Statements by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert indicated that Israel was holding the entire nation of Lebanon responsible for the kidnapping and that the Israeli response would be felt by all segments of the Lebanese population. Accordingly, the IDF targeted not only positions in southern Lebanon but also the Beirut airport, all roads leading out of Lebanon, and even neighborhoods populated by Lebanese uniformly opposed to Hizballah.²³

This belief that Beirut was responsible for—or at least could significantly influence—events in the south was confirmed in a formal release from Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "Israel views the sovereign Lebanese Government as responsible for the action that originated on its soil and for the return of the abducted soldiers to Israel."²⁴ The

²² Exum (2006, p. 5).

²³ Exum (2006, p. 9).

²⁴ "Special Cabinet Communique" (2006).

assumption was unsupportable. Hizballah operated with few restraints and much autonomy in southern Lebanon. A reasonable argument could be made that Iran and Syria more greatly influenced the organization than did a Lebanese government whose sovereign authority only notionally extended south of the Nahr el Litani river. Mark Heller of Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies concluded that Lebanon was not an enemy but rather "a theater in which the enemy operates."²⁵

The resultant air strikes inspired considerable anti-Israeli sentiment both within Lebanon and internationally. Among the most contentious was a July 30 bombing of an apartment building in Qana in which least 28 people were killed. It was a brutal reminder of the 91 civilians who died on April 18, 1996, in a nearby refugee camp when Israeli artillery fired at Hizballah targets during Operation Grapes of Wrath.²⁶ Perhaps responding to the consequent international outrage, Israel's Prime Minister Olmert apologized to the Lebanese people on July 31, 2006, stating that it was Hizballah rather than the country's citizenry against whom Israel was fighting.²⁷

The Second Lebanon War ended when all participants agreed to abide by UN Security Council resolution 1701 on August 14, 2006. To summarize, the 33-day conflict's legacy included the following:

- approximately 1 million displaced civilians
- more than 1,000 Lebanese dead, the majority of whom were civilians

²⁵ Erlanger (2007b).

²⁶ Sharp et al. (2006, pp. 42, 44); Shadid (2006). Shadid states that 106 people were killed in 1996 and cites the Lebanese government as reporting at least 57 individuals killed in the 2006 attack.

²⁷ Sharp et al. (2006, p. 42).

- hundreds of Hizballah insurgents killed
- thousands of Israeli and Lebanese homes destroyed
- other structures damaged, including much of Lebanon's transportation infrastructure targeted by the Israeli Air Force (IAF)
- IDF losses of 119 military personnel.²⁸ Approximately "50% of Israeli casualties can be attributed to anti-tank missiles, 25% to small arms and mines, around 10% to friendly fire, 10% to rocket fire, and 5% to accidents."²⁹
- Israel having been struck by roughly 4,000 Hizballah rockets and missiles, including 250 on the last day of the war.³⁰

It was with notable understatement that a senior Israeli officer concluded, "I cannot say we have deepened our deterrent image."³¹

Book Structure

Chapter Two reviews shortfalls in Israel's preparation for and performance during the Second Lebanon War as identified by serving and retired officers and written sources. Chapter Three follows with a summary of several IDF responses to these identified difficulties. Chapter Four steps back to consider what other areas might merit concern in addition to those identified in Chapter Two and whether the Israeli responses noted in Chapter Three are appropriate in light of these additional observations. The book concludes with an analysis of the Second

²⁸ Exum (2006, pp. 5, 7); Bazzi (2006); "Israel/Hizbollah/Lebanon" (2006). Some sources put the total at 120 killed; see, e.g., Ghattas (2006).

²⁹ Moores (undated).

³⁰ Exum (2006, p. 12).

³¹ "Israel Introspective After Lebanon Offensive" (2006).

Lebanon War's implications for the United States and other militaries now and in the years to come.

Israeli Postwar Analysis and Reaction

In my opinion, not many officers had a broad enough understanding of the overall situation. We lost all, aside from two accomplishments. The first was that we retained international recognition of the problem we have had along our border with Lebanon. The second was that we gained some respite from the Hezbollah in the areas nearest the border. But I am not sure that these are long-term gains.

—*IDF Major General (ret.) Uri Sagie*¹

Initial Israeli self-evaluations regarding the Second Lebanon War have been harsh. Major issues of particular concern to serving and retired Israeli military personnel include the following:

- An inappropriate defense strategy and failure to update campaign plans established the foundation for failure in July–August 2006.
- IDF confusion on the battlefield was at least in part due to unnecessarily complex new concepts and doctrine.
- Preoccupation with intifada-type operations to the neglect of warfighting skills left the IDF unready to fight effectively.

¹ Sagie (2007).

- Inadequate synchronization of combined arms and joint capabilities crippled battlefield performance.
- Excessive concern regarding IDF casualties made what should have been a war of maneuver one of grinding attrition instead.
- IDF performance was further hindered by unrealistic intelligence expectations and problems with providing intelligence of use to the field.

A brief discussion of each of these points follows.

Inappropriate National Defense Strategy and Failure to Update Campaign Plans

Historically, the Israelis have well understood the essential linkage between military might and political purpose. They have often used force to achieve certain immediate political goals. In Lebanon, however, something went wrong.

—*M. Thomas Davis*
*on 1982 operations in 40 km into Lebanon*²

On September 17, 2006, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's government directed that a committee headed by retired Israeli judge Eliyahu Winograd "look into the preparation and conduct of the political and the security levels concerning all the dimensions of the Northern Campaign which started on July 12th 2006."³ The committee—with the overarching mission characteristic of many such postconflict investigations—released its preliminary findings in late April 2007.

² Davis (1988, p. 2).

³ "Summary of the Winograd Committee Interim Report" (2007).

The performances of the prime minister, defense minister, and IDF chief of staff (COS) were particularly harshly critiqued. The committee blamed these individuals for many of the war's difficulties, concluding,

[O]n the political-security strategic level, the lack of preparedness was . . . caused by the failure to update and fully articulate Israel's security strategy doctrine, in the fullest sense of that term, so that it could not serve as a basis for coping comprehensively with all the challenges facing Israel. . . . If the response had been derived from a more comprehensive security strategy, it would have been easier to take into account Israel's overall balance of strengths and vulnerabilities, including the preparedness of the civil population.⁴

That there were problems linking campaign plans to strategic objectives—or in writing a campaign plan at all—should be no surprise, given the lack of political guidance. History further complicated matters. Memories of earlier operations above Israel's northern border were far from fond, despite the passage of nearly a quarter century. This may have affected the willingness to deal with the challenges there; it undoubtedly had an influence on military planning, as noted by an officer once responsible for Northern Command planning (Northern Command was the headquarters primarily responsible for operations in southern Lebanon):

We found as a society that we didn't want to go back to Lebanon. *Lebanon* was a dirty word. When I planned for operations in Lebanon, I was told that we would conduct planning with a very, very small group. Even the division commanders would not be

⁴ "Summary of the Winograd Committee Interim Report" (2007).

brought into it, as we didn't want anyone thinking that the IDF was looking at going back into Lebanon.⁵

This neglect of proper planning was reinforced by some senior political and military leaders having “reached the conclusion that Israel is beyond the era of wars” and that the IDF therefore need concentrate only on “low intensity asymmetrical conflicts,” such as those in the West Bank and Gaza.⁶ Retired Israeli Army Major General Uri Sagie was more succinct in making the same point: “Many IDF officers did not believe that they would ever confront conventional warfare again, and, as a result, they did not prepare.”⁷ Plans atrophied due to a lack of clear strategic guidance, senior leaders believing that Israel's military legacy was sufficient intimidation to preclude conventional military threats, and day-to-day intifada duties were allowed to override concerns regarding preparation for other commitments. The IDF therefore lacked coherent guidance regarding the types and size of forces needed, logistics requirements, command and control, cooperation between services, and the myriad other factors that even the most basic of plans provides. It is better to have a standing plan that can be adapted to a changed situation than to have none at all. If that plan is too long neglected, however, the assumptions underlying its guidance may no longer apply. Relying on such a plan is more dangerous than preparing for operations from scratch.

⁵ Ben-Reuven (2007).

⁶ “Summary of the Winograd Committee Interim Report” (2007).

⁷ Sagie (2007).

Confusion Surrounding New Military Concepts and Doctrine

The IDF has long been known for its innovation and willingness to explore new concepts. It is similarly comfortable drawing on other militaries' thinking and subsequently adapting the foreign concepts to meet its specific requirements. The Merkava tank is an example of both. It is an armored vehicle that possesses capabilities sufficient to defeat the tanks that Israel is likely to confront in regional conflicts and therefore represents much that characterizes typical concepts of armored warfare. Yet, at the same time, it sacrifices some speed and mobility in the service of an infantry-carrying capability that provides exceptional protection for dismounts without the logistical demands that a separate vehicle would entail, a requirement that Israel found particularly desirable for its unique strategic situation.

A considerable number of serving and former IDF personnel believe that the IDF became too enamored with overly intricate and perhaps convoluted thinking in the years leading up to the 2006 fighting in Lebanon. Both internal and external factors influenced this development. Some concepts promoted within the IDF lacked the clarity and simplicity essential to a military's need to train for broad understanding. There was also a too-ready acceptance of foreign concepts with questionable utility. The U.S. effect-based operations (EBO) concept, in particular, was noted in this regard. The IDF's Northern Command commander, Major General Gadi Eizenkot, used an expression that was repeated during interviews conducted in spring 2007: "A virus had infiltrated the IDF's basic doctrine."⁸ The officer who served as that command's operations officer during the war further concluded that EBO does not work from the perspective of translating effects

⁸ Ben-David (2007a).

from higher command to operational means. “We wasted too much time. People had to spend too much time on how to achieve this effect. We need to go back to the basics and start from there. . . . Old is not necessarily bad.”⁹ These concerns, in part, involved the IDF Institute for Campaign Doctrine Studies:

The institute developed an alternative “conceptual framework” for military thinking, replacing traditional notions of “objective” and “subjection” with new concepts like “campaign rationale” and “conscious-burning” of the enemy. The doctrine’s aim was to recognise the rationale of the opponent system and create an “effects-based” campaign consisting of a series of “physical and cognitive appearances” designed to influence the consciousness of the enemy rather than destroying it.¹⁰

The resulting confusion regarding how the IDF was to fight coincided with steep defense-budget cuts in the years before the Second Lebanon War. The previously mentioned belief that Israel was unlikely to confront conventional warfare in the near future meant that ground forces suffered the brunt of the reductions.¹¹ Interoperability between IDF air and ground forces suffered a dramatic setback when the IAF unilaterally decided that it would no longer provide close air support (CAS) with its fixed-wing aircraft, leaving that task to helicopters alone. (Unlike in the U.S. armed forces, the IAF is responsible for all helicopters in the IDF.) This decision was reversed during the war, though it

⁹ Cohen (2007).

¹⁰ Ben-David (2007a).

¹¹ Ben-Reuven (2007); Ben-David (2007a); Avidor (2007).

took 10 days of combat to regain desired levels of interoperability, in part due to the lack of prewar training between air and ground forces.¹²

This should not be taken to imply that the years leading up to the July–August 2006 conflict were without valuable advances on the conceptual front. Exchanges with the U.S. military, for example, included fruitful discussions regarding the types of challenges confronted in Gaza and elsewhere.¹³ IDF concepts presented during these sessions were frequently straightforward and elegant in their simplicity. *Maneuver*, traditionally understood in the context of “employment of forces in the battlespace through movement in combination with fire, or fire potential, to achieve a position of advantage in respect to the enemy in order to accomplish the mission” was expanded.¹⁴ *Operational maneuver* was proposed to account for the broader context of modern operations, in which advantage need not be the product of fire or movement alone. Instead, it could involve “deploying campaign resources (of all elements of national power and all forms of combat power) in time and space to achieve the desired end state,” or “deploying campaign resources of all elements of national power and all forms of combat power in time and space to achieve specified objectives.”¹⁵ Israeli Army thinkers also internally developed a tactical concept of maneuver (separate from that involving operational maneuver). Applying to the employment of tactical units of limited strength—popularly known as *bubbles*—this concept was envisioned such that the IDF would insert a considerable number of small ground-force

¹² Cohen (2007).

¹³ See, for example, the summaries of two IDF–U.S. Joint Forces Command conferences (Glenn, 2007a, 2007b).

¹⁴ U.S. Department of the Army and U.S. Marine Corps (2004).

¹⁵ For further discussion of operational maneuver and the development of the concept, see Glenn (2007a, pp. 22–23).

elements into an area to hunt rocket- or missile-launch teams. These elements would not hold ground in the conventional sense but would instead seek to control their areas of responsibility via their hunting. The 2005 concept was not tested during the 2006 war, however, due to a lack of evaluation or training in its use.¹⁶

What was arguably lacking in the Israeli doctrine and concept realm was not innovative thought, then, but critical debate that would provide an effective process for screening new concepts. Israel did not rigorously vet its new military ideas within the IDF, nor does the country have a sufficient number of independent think-tank organizations or other mechanisms through which to challenge or augment defense-community thinking.¹⁷ There had likewise been no significant conventional military challenges of note since the IDF fought in Lebanon during the early 1980s that might have stimulated recognition of the thinking as ill conceived. Retired IDF Major General Amiram Levin, author of a postwar evaluation of Northern Command's performance, believes that the concentration on intifada operations negatively affected readiness in the doctrine as well as the aforementioned training realm. According to Levin, "[C]ontinuous occupation in the territories has not only damaged training, procedures, [and] combat techniques, but has also damaged the IDF mentality" as the military's confidence grew despite the lack of serious challenges.¹⁸

¹⁶ Avidor (2007).

¹⁷ Avidor (2007).

¹⁸ Ben-David (2007a).

Preoccupation with Intifada-Type Operations to the Neglect of Warfighting Skills

The demands of the long, ongoing intifada were unquestionably a factor in the degradation of IDF warfighting skills, yet it is too easy to blame the security environment alone. Military and political leaders are constantly under pressure to balance national security with other demands when allocating resources. In developing nations, these decisions might involve finding an appropriate balance between training and committing soldiers to help harvest crops. In developed nations, the debate more often involves determining how to remain prepared for the demands of conventional warfare, on one hand, while confronting the challenges of irregular conflict and other contingencies on the other. Many of those interviewed and those on committees investigating IDF shortfalls during the Second Lebanon War concluded that the country's leadership failed to maintain a requisite balance, choosing instead to focus almost exclusively on day-to-day intifada activities.

Maintaining that balance is not easy for any military nor for its political masters. Operational requirements for constant vigilance against suicide bombers, rocket attacks, and other threats during the intifada, and the budget reductions resulting from the belief that Israel had seen the last of conventional war, all worked against maintenance of proficiency across the spectrum of IDF responsibilities. It was noted earlier that the Winograd Committee, in particular, condemned Prime Minister Olmert, Defense Secretary Amir Peretz, and IDF COS Dan Halutz for their failure to meet these responsibilities.¹⁹ (The prime minister and defense secretary have been widely condemned in the media and by retired IDF personnel for failing to understand military matters in general, neither having had the extent of armed-forces service that

¹⁹ "Summary of the Winograd Committee Interim Report" (2007).

characterized many of those who previously served in those positions. The COS has similarly been excoriated for his putting too great a faith in the capabilities of air power and favoring that arm during his tenure as COS.)²⁰ Leaders at lower echelons have also suffered criticism for neglecting training pertinent to conventional-warfare skills. Among the pertinent criticisms:

- Israeli military leaders “decided to decrease training based on the assumption that there would be enough time to retrain and regain the expertise” should they have to confront a regular force.²¹
- Commanders permitted even the most basic skills to atrophy. Tank-crew members, for example, staffed checkpoints as foot soldiers and did not receive the training necessary to maintain basic armor skills.²²
- Leaders were too enamored with new technologies, overly relying on well-resourced command posts, while failing to demonstrate fundamental leadership and management responsibilities. Criticisms in this regard included the following:
 - “Brigade commanders did not properly understand their missions. . . . They didn’t know what their goals were and how long they had to fulfill their missions.” Due to the lack of clarity in the orders, “military forces moved forward and then backward, forward and then backward.” Except for Paratrooper Brigade Commander Colonel Hagai Mordechai, all of the brigade commanders whose troops were fighting in Lebanon spent

²⁰ Kreps (2007, p. 72).

²¹ Erez (2007).

²² Morag (2007).

their time in war rooms set up along the northern border but did not step foot behind enemy lines.²³

- “This war underscored the limitations of plasma, especially when it is accorded disproportionate priority over training and discipline.”²⁴

The debate between those calling for greater forward presence of senior officers and those calling for reliance on command centers is decades old. IDF COS Dan Halutz debated arguments such as these, asking,

At what level is “Follow Me!” relevant? Does it mean the chief of staff? If so, that will return us to the days of Alexander the Great. At the level of platoon and company commander, there is no dilemma. In some cases, a battalion commander needs to be close, and in other cases, a brigade commander needs to be close. But remember, only the first two know if the brigade commander is in front; the rest are just assured he’s there.²⁵

These debates regarding the value of a commander’s presence on the battlefield reflect, in microcosm, differences in warfighting attitudes that some believe hindered the development of appropriate doctrine, effective training, and, therefore, Israel’s performance in southern Lebanon. These concerns are further evident in the following discussion.

²³ Comments by an unidentified “high-ranking officer” in Katz (2006).

²⁴ Major General (ret.) Matan Vilnai, former IDF deputy COS, as quoted in Opall-Rome (2006). *Plasma* here refers to computer or other screens providing data to the staff or commander.

²⁵ General Dan Halutz, quoted in Opall-Rome (2006).

Inadequate Synchronization of Joint and Combined Arms Capabilities

Inadequate cooperation influenced more than tactical operations on the battlefields of southern Lebanon. It also affected acquisition decisions. The situation in Northern Command provides a telling example. Equipped with more than 20 command, control, communication, and computer (C4) systems, most were not compatible with each other, and none was compatible with IAF systems.²⁶

IAF aircraft moving between fronts to provide timely support to Israeli ground forces characterized Israel's stunning victories during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Similar orchestration of assets was little apparent in the opening days of the Second Lebanon War. One IDF officer concluded that even IAF internal operations were poorly coordinated, observing, "Synergy was not a word we can use when talking about the air."²⁷ The air force was thought to have "operated under a different logic" from that of the army.²⁸ Aviation operations were more centrally controlled than ground commanders were comfortable with, and effective coordination between Northern Command and the IAF was virtually nonexistent early in the war. The result was a rift between and military leaders in Tel Aviv and the commanding general of Northern Command, the individual notionally responsible for coordinating operations. There was, as a result, no unity of command. Various headquarters fought over resources with the last to gain the ear of the provider too often emerging as the victor.²⁹ The consequences

²⁶ Cohen (2007).

²⁷ Cohen (2007).

²⁸ Cohen (2007).

²⁹ Cohen (2007).

of having no viable campaign plan and inadequate joint training were quick to appear and punishing in their impact.

Ground forces fared little better in their efforts to conduct combined arms operations in 2006 southern Lebanon. Tanks were distributed piecemeal in two-vehicle teams and attached to infantry units whose commanders had, in some cases, no idea how to employ them appropriately. The vehicles often advanced at a dismounted infantryman's pace to provide security for the foot soldiers. On other occasions, tanks sat stationary for hours during village-defense missions. Former armor officers in particular decried these as inappropriate employments of the Merkava; one noted that the only penetrations of tank armor were in the rear, the vehicles' most vulnerable spot and one difficult to strike if they maneuvered properly.³⁰ The arguments have merit. A stationary or slowly moving tank is far easier to engage than one moving at a rapid pace. Vehicles sitting in built-up areas are particularly vulnerable; the considerable concealment permits an enemy—one more familiar with the terrain than the infantry tasked with protecting the tank—opportunity to stalk its prey without detection. The consequences were severe, as noted by retired IDF Brigadier General Gideon Avidor: "Sixty-two percent of our tanks were hit. They were hit from villages that we 'controlled,' because we went in and just held a few houses rather than truly controlling the village."³¹ The bold maneuvers of 1967, 1973, and 1982 were little in evidence at either the tactical or operational level of war.³² Overcaution and static defense of hilltop vil-

³⁰ Erez (2007); Avidor (2007).

³¹ IDF Brigadier General (ret.) Gideon Avidor in comments during Morag (2007).

³² M. Thomas Davis (1988, pp. 78, 83) reported that "by the end of the first day [during 1982 operations in southern Lebanon], nearly all of the IDF's objectives had been secured although the advance in the west had been slower than anticipated." It is notable, however, that those forces numbered 58,000 personnel.

lage positions replaced the sweeping actions that were once the symbol of Israeli ground operations.

Excessive Concern Regarding IDF Casualties

It is a military tenet that “the mission comes first.” The reality is ever a difficult one. Every good leader seeks to minimize injury and death to those in his or her command while seeking mission accomplishment. Excessive casualty avoidance has become a signature characteristic of too many militaries. Israel was not thought to be one of them, but decisions made in the earliest days of the war pose a question in that regard. Those decisions played no small part in negatively influencing both the speed and fundamental nature of operations. The loss of a single Merkava tank and death of the vehicle’s crew in the immediate aftermath of the initial Hizballah raid that triggered the war, for example, was a tactical event with dramatic strategic consequences. The use of tanks was restricted in the aftermath of the losses. Orders went out directing that attacks not follow existing roads. Progress literally slowed to a walk. Engineers labored to construct roads along virgin routes, a time-consuming task given the difficult nature of the terrain.³³ As noted previously, the discarding of effective combined-arms maneuver, lack of CAS, and imposition of a requirement to stay off established roads resulted in grinding and costly attritional warfare, the antithesis of Israel’s historical approach to fighting. It is an unfortunate historical truth that mistakes are common in the opening days of most wars. Training can only approximate the stresses, horrors, and friction of combat. It cannot replicate its costs. Leaders and soldiers individually and collectively need time to adapt, to overcome, to “hit

³³ Avman (2007).

their stride.” Actions that are later routine and decisions that the more experienced will make with little thought will initially come with a natural hesitation inherent in confronting challenges for the first time. Retired IDF General Eyal Ben-Reuven recalled his own experiences with war in this regard: “It takes about a week for a unit to begin to operate as a well-oiled machine. You have to understand that you are going to take casualties. Unfortunately the [IDF] chief of staff could not understand this.”³⁴

Accusations of excessive sensitivity to casualties or overemphasis on the recovery of those killed due to enemy action can find exceptionally fertile ground in Israeli society. It is such sensitivity that, in large part, underlay Hizballah Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah’s depiction of Israel, despite its considerable military power, as “weaker than a spider web” in a now-notorious speech in 2000.³⁵ Author David Grossman likely knew that he was touching a raw nerve when, in his 2006 speech at the Yitzhak Rabin memorial rally, he accused Israel’s prime minister of “merely reacting feverishly to moves forced upon him by others,” just as a spider would react to pressure applied at any point on its web.³⁶

A primary factor in this plodding advance was “IEDs. We were not willing to pay the price. Second, all of us interpreted the situation wrong. Routes we thought would take three to four hours to clear took six to seven days [as commanders would not move forward due to the risk of casualties. One COS told his subordinates to] take the [necessary] time even if you have a time schedule.” Casualty avoidance dictated the pace of operations, despite the fact that many IEDs beyond

³⁴ Ben-Reuven (2007).

³⁵ Green (2006).

³⁶ Harel (2006); “David Grossman at the Rabin Memorial” (2006).

the immediate vicinity of the Lebanon-Israel border were not armed due to heavy IDF fires once hostilities began.³⁷

General Ben-Reuven was not the only retired officer taken aback by the excessive emphasis given casualty avoidance. Gideon Avidor questioned the wisdom behind decisions that slowed operations so greatly, noting that, in spite of the precautions, “they were losing soldiers and the rockets kept coming. . . . I realized [that there was a problem on] the first day of the war when a . . . brigade commander said that his main task was to bring all his soldiers home safely.”³⁸ Retired Brigadier General Ami Morag concurred, recognizing that, while minimizing casualties is always a desirable outcome, “once the government decides to go to war . . . you must win. You must achieve your [objectives] and you must win. . . . I felt [that] the army forgot the meaning of winning. . . . If somebody is killed, this is the price of war. . . . Make it short. Make it very, very aggressive, and achieve your [objectives].”³⁹ Morag’s understanding of war has long been a difficult one for some to grasp. Avidor recalled his Sinai experience during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, after the initial defensive stage of which, “we received orders from above: ‘Attack carefully.’ We laughed. How do you ‘attack carefully?’ We ignored it.”⁴⁰

Ben-Reuven believes that a principal factor underlying this concern regarding casualties is the role of the soldier in Israeli society. “Our main vulnerability is that casualties among soldiers are more sig-

³⁷ Cohen (2007). Yaakov Katz (2006) similarly reported that a postwar investigation “found that commanders were not devoted to their missions and in some cases even decided to ignore orders so as not to risk the lives of their soldiers.”

³⁸ IDF Brigadier General (ret.) Gideon Avidor in comments during Morag (2007) and Avidor (2007).

³⁹ Morag (2007).

⁴⁰ IDF Brigadier General (ret.) Gideon Avidor in comments during Morag (2007).

nificant than those among civilians. . . . Our soldiers belong to the whole society.”⁴¹ The army’s Colonel Oren Avman expressed a similar sentiment, noting that the “death of eight civilians in Haifa due to rocket attack had less impact on the media and population than the eight soldier deaths in fighting in southern Lebanon.”⁴² It would be incorrect to assume that deaths of civilians were not of concern, Ben-Reuven explained. Rather, there was a difference in social perception: “When you lose soldiers, it’s family. . . . This does not mean that the civilian is not important. . . . The firing on civilians is very, very significant. But after we begin to fight, the impact on our society, our media’s feeling on how to deal with soldier casualties is unbelievable.”⁴³ This perception of an “extended family” is at once poignant and a matter of concern. As General Morag observed, casualties are the inevitable price of war.

Unrealistic Intelligence Expectations and Problems with Providing Intelligence of Use to the Field

Excellent intelligence generally characterized the intifada operations that dominated IDF operations in the years preceding the Second Lebanon War. Military and other sources pinpointed targets in time and space with considerable precision. Excellent imagery of target areas meant that unpleasant surprises regarding the layout of buildings and streets were a rare exception, at least until soldiers entered those areas. The quality of intelligence was matched by its timeliness. The uncer-

⁴¹ Ben-Reuven (2007).

⁴² Avman (2007).

⁴³ Ben-Reuven (2007).

tainty that is normally part and parcel of conventional combat operations was a relative stranger.

This habitual provision of high-quality and timely intelligence during intifada actions raised unrealistic expectations among some officers. They looked to higher headquarters to provide the same level of detail and speed in delivering information on the threat in southern Lebanon. The expectations were, unsurprisingly, not met, nor was it realistic to anticipate that they would be. Nonetheless, that so many officers anticipated that they would be demonstrates the need to educate leaders regarding the uncertainty that typifies most military undertakings and counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in particular.

Yet unrealistic expectations cannot explain away all intelligence issues. Colonel Boaz Cohen recognized that there were serious deficiencies in getting products to users, deficiencies that influenced operations at all levels. “We failed to deliver intelligence down to the company level, [and] when they got it, it was usually irrelevant,” a condition that Cohen blames on the aforementioned incompatibility of many Northern Command C4 systems and inadequate bandwidth.⁴⁴ At the strategic level, a major information-processing failure meant that the IDF was unable to respond to Hizballah’s rocket attacks as successfully as it should have. The IAF reportedly had data on roughly 30 percent of launcher and bunker locations—data that were not translated into a form that would have permitted wartime targeting.⁴⁵ Here, too, hardware or software problems may, at least in part, explain the breakdown. Perhaps, however, they reflect on the training proficiency of both those responsible for providing intelligence and their counterparts at the receiving end. Intelligence is both a “pull” and a “push” process. Educating prospective users to ask the right questions of the

⁴⁴ Cohen (2007).

⁴⁵ Amir (2007).

right people in a timely manner—how to “pull” intelligence from the system—is crucial to operations at every echelon, just as is properly training intelligence specialists regarding how, to whom, and when to “push” their products.

Responding to the Lessons: IDF Reactions in the Aftermath of the Second Lebanon War

Israel's responses to what it considers an unacceptable performance incorporate every level of war and both the diplomatic and military arenas. Conclusions from the various panels that have investigated the event run the gamut from the highest echelons of the nation's decisionmaking to the lowest tactical levels. The reactions were as swift as the comments motivating them were blunt. Shortfalls, such as an armored battalion commander having never had the opportunity to move his unit in darkness until called upon to do it in time of war and junior leaders lacking even a single combat-training exercise in five years, were being addressed only a few months after the conflict.¹ The fielding of the Trophy antimissile system for protecting ground vehicles against surface-to-surface weapons was expedited. Key lessons learned, such as that regarding the effectiveness of five-submunition antipersonnel-tank ammunition against infantry under cover, are being disseminated throughout the force.² There has also been a reevaluation of IDF doctrine and concept development based on the previously men-

¹ Nuriel (2007); Cohen (2007).

² Finkel (2007).

tioned concerns regarding an intellectual virus. The presumption that conventional combat is no longer a concern has been discarded. Organizational changes based on that expectation have been discarded, e.g., the elimination of Northern Command. Other structural adaptations seek to redress command-and-control concerns. A reporter for *Jane's Defence Weekly* noted, "An immediate lesson from the war is the need to establish a General Staff-level HQ for special operations. . . . Some of those operations exposed difficulties in the units' ability to operate jointly; problems were mainly due to the different communications systems employed, combined with a lack of experience in joint operations. In the end, the IDF has decided to establish a Special Forces Command, dubbed the Deep Command. . . . It will become the IDF's eighth HQ authorised to operate forces, together with the IAF, IN [Israeli Navy], AMAN [Aman, short for *Agaf HaModiin*, the intelligence section, Israel's directorate of military intelligence], and the Northern, Central, Southern and Homefront Commands."³ Together with the retention of Northern Command, these mark major revisions of the IDF's higher-command structure. There are adaptations at the tactical level as well. A return of the CAS mission for the IAF's fixed-wing pilots means that the IAF will again have liaison officers on army brigade staffs.⁴

One conclusion seems to be that the fight against Hizbullah demanded conventional-warfare skills and that those skills had been allowed to greatly atrophy. The response at the lower tactical levels has been to emphasize training to rebuild those capabilities. The *Jerusalem Post* reported that the "IDF Armored Corps has changed its mode of operations and now intends to defeat the enemy using its two major advantages—speed and firepower. For the first

³ Ben-David (2006d).

⁴ Cohen (2007).

time in close to a decade, the brigade—which is traditionally the first armored unit to be called up to fight on Israel’s three fronts—is training for 12 weeks, spending time drilling urban warfare but mostly sharpening the skills needed for armored combat.”⁵ The armored corps is not alone. The renewed emphasis on individual and collective combat skills will be felt throughout the Israeli Army. Soldiers will find more time spent on ground-maneuver fundamentals and supporting skills, such as targeting and terrain analysis.⁶ Retired Brigadier General Gideon Avidor stressed that such branch training—e.g., that done by infantry, armor, engineer, or aviation units—must have combined-arms and joint counterparts if the IDF is to adequately address the synchronization shortfalls experienced during the war.⁷

Leaders at higher echelons also require enhanced preparation for the conflicts yet to come. This need for educating senior military and civilian leaders is readily apparent in the observations of the previous chapter. That education comes from three basic sources: operational experience, formal military education, and self-study. The first is undoubtedly highly desirable, but militaries cannot rely on conveniently timed conflicts for preparing their personnel. Even men and women experiencing war firsthand require training if they are to understand the broader context of what they have seen; relying on experience alone means that one would be familiar only with those events in which he or she has participated. The onus of providing a more expansive education falls on the military (or political) system and the leader him- or herself. Both are critical in the development of military knowledge. The indecisiveness shown in moving units up and back in southern Lebanon, the

⁵ Katz (2007a).

⁶ Brun (2007).

⁷ Avidor (2007).

lack of current campaign plans, the overreliance on information available at command posts in lieu of that gained via firsthand witnessing of conditions on the battlefield—these are reflective of a leader corps in need of better training. Fortunately, such needs can be addressed fairly quickly through adaptation of school curricula and guidance given in support of self-study. In some cases, they may involve little more than following previously established guidelines:

The comptroller has already added to the IDF's embarrassment with an early-December report on the professional training of senior officers. According to the report, 82 percent of major generals, 68 percent of brigadier generals and 76 percent of colonels had not even attended the National Defense College courses required for elevation to the top ranks since 2002, when then-chief of staff, Moshe (Bogey) Ya'alon set three benchmarks for promotion: graduation from the National Defense College and passing courses on campaign strategy and administration of large organizations. This standard . . . had never actually been enforced.⁸

Other issues will take more time to resolve. The lack of unity of command and a legitimate campaign plan will take extensive coordination and significant time to resolve. The two are, in fact, closely related. The training, exercises, and other means of synchronizing the actions of various organizations, and commands will have to look to the campaign plan that will guide their actions during future contingencies. At the strategic level, political and military leaders alike need to resolve the dilemma of how their military can train for war when the day-to-day operational tempo severely tasks its existing force structure. It must also contemplate whether current processes are appropriate for

⁸ Susser (2007, p. 12).

IDF and political leaders attempting to make the right choices when selecting commanders.

These and any other changes must be undertaken in a strategic environment that, at first glance, seems little changed from that confronted prior to July 2006. But to what extent do the lessons taken from the Second Lebanon War apply to ongoing and future contingencies, including those involving the Palestinian territories? That question was put to a number of IDF veterans and academics in the course of the research underlying this study, resulting in these responses:

In Gaza, I am sure that we are on the way to this kind of operation. . . . The only way to prevent it is by political means.⁹

In dealing with the Palestinian front, it was not primarily a military problem, but most of the ground forces were committed there, and very little time was left for training. In the little time and with the limited funds still left for training, commanders understandably focused on operations in the occupied territories rather than the conventional threat such as that confronting Northern Command.¹⁰

It's too risky to leave it to the IDF alone. They did it alone for 50 years. The first 40 they did okay.¹¹

We cannot deal with the problems here by relying on the military alone. This discussion should be held among the [Israeli] public. Hopefully, we will do it in the coming future. . . . You have a

⁹ Ben-Reuven (2007).

¹⁰ Ben-Reuven (2007).

¹¹ Avidor (2007).

wrong assumption. You believe that the Israeli politicians have a long-run strategy. They don't.¹²

I must tell you that, in most of the areas in which we fought, the civilians left. In Gaza Strip, it is different. I don't think that we can move Gaza civilians. There is nowhere to go. . . . We need to do a lot to prevent this type of operation in Gaza.¹³

Thus, while Israel's strategic situation might appear much the same as that of pre-July 2006, these comments provide warning that such is not the case. Israel's competitors—some members of the Palestinian community, Iran, Syria, and Hizballah among them—will conclude that Hizballah's formula regarding training, procedures, weapons, and selected state-of-the-art technologies may have application during other contingencies. There seems to be growing recognition that Israel can no longer rely on its armed forces alone to manage what should be whole-government responsibilities.

Two final observations regarding Israelis' self-evaluations and responses thereto merit attention. First, a considerable number of Israelis blame the poor performance during the 2006 war, in part, on their prime minister and defense minister lacking requisite military experience. Knowledge of military capabilities is unquestionably desirable in civilian leaders, but the assumption that electing or appointing veterans to key positions ensures success during a military campaign is a poor one. It would seem that having a prime minister with extensive irregular-warfare savvy and a renowned combat veteran as defense minister would be an advantageous pairing during a war against an irregular foe. Action in 1982 southern Lebanon provides fair evidence

¹² Sagie (2007).

¹³ Ben-Reuven (2007).

that success demands more than military experience alone. Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon both suffered criticism for their performances in those respective positions during the First Lebanon War, the latter being forced from his office the following year as a result.¹⁴

The second point warranting attention is that regarding a subtler consequence of the IDF's performance in 2006 southern Lebanon: the loss of dedicated and able junior officers. Seven of nine company commanders in one brigade alone opted to leave the army because of their frustrations with the conduct of the war.¹⁵ The loss of such talent complicates revitalization of the Israeli armed forces; officers at that echelon are especially vital to successful training and unit cohesiveness. Their departure reflects the extent of disenchantment that many in the IDF felt. It reinforces the need for adjustments. Yet there is good news even in the face of such loss. In stark contrast to the desire to forget the past after the military's previous experiences in Lebanon, the IDF and Israel at large seem committed to confronting and solving identified problems. The next chapter considers what additional lessons might have been taken from the Second Lebanon War and what they mean for the challenges that potentially lay ahead.

¹⁴ For more on Begin and Sharon's performances in Lebanon, see Davis (1988, pp. 65–68, 114–120).

¹⁵ Morag (2007).

Additional Thoughts Regarding Lessons from the Second Lebanon War

I don't think that we had a regular war in Lebanon. This is not the right definition. Lebanon is the kind of model that we will find more and more in the future. . . . It is preparing for the next war with Hamas.

—*IDF Major General (ret.) Eyal Ben-Reuven*¹

Israel's introspection and response to internally identified concerns as they appear in the preceding chapters have wide scope. There are others whose consideration is in its embryonic phases during the research that underlies this book or that seem to have been overlooked altogether and are perhaps yet to come to the fore as investigations continue. The following are among them:

- Important Israeli decisions were founded on a misreading of the relationship between means and ends.
- Israel's leaders seem to have misunderstood the fundamental nature of their struggle with Hizballah.

¹ Ben-Reuven (2007).

- The Second Lebanon War has notable implications for the operational art regionally and worldwide.

Misreading the Means and Ends Relationship

International conflicts are now, more than ever before, part of the public domain. Media and Internet assessments deny governments—and nonstate actors—any semblance of isolation from domestic, regional, and broader international scrutiny. Only disinterest offers some promise of anonymity, and—like those of the United States—Israel’s conflicts never rate disinterest. Given knowledge of its place in the spotlight, Israel could have better managed efforts to mold its relations with Beirut and worldwide public opinion during its 2006 conflict in southern Lebanon.

The IDF no longer has claim to underdog status as it did in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973. The reasons are several and not particularly relevant to the discussion here. Suffice it to say that much of the world accepted even preemptive actions as fully justified in those earlier conflicts. The same is not true of either the first or second Lebanon wars and certainly not of Israel’s operations in Gaza or the West Bank.

This change in international perceptions is relevant because public opinion influences and sometimes even dictates the character of today’s conflicts. National governments and international bodies respond to social pressures. They can, in turn, seek to address the conflicts underlying the pressures. Israeli leaders, at times, demonstrate surprisingly little concern with this fundamental truth. Marvin Kalb and Carol Saivetz noted that, during the Second Lebanon War, “Israel defended its military operations by citing two relevant articles in international law: using civilians for military cover was a war crime, and

any target with soldiers hiding among civilians was considered a legitimate military target.”² The marketability of those arguments aside, the IAF struck not only targets tied directly to Hizballah but others, such as Beirut’s international airport, communities whose residents opposed Hizballah, and transportation infrastructure that was of little if any military concern but of tremendous importance to civilians and Lebanon’s commercial infrastructure.³ Israel’s claims regarding the legitimacy of its targets unsurprisingly “fell on deaf ears. . . . ‘Disproportionality’ became the war’s mantra. . . . ‘And for what?’ [the] Lebanese asked. ‘For eight soldiers?’”⁴ High-ranking officials did nothing to allay Israel’s growing image as the regional bully. COS Halutz declared on Israeli public television, “We will turn Lebanon’s clock back 20 years [if the soldiers captured on that country’s borders are not returned].”⁵ Major General Udi Adam, leader of Northern Command, was equally bellicose: “This affair is between Israel and the state of Lebanon. . . . Where to attack? Once it is inside Lebanon, everything is legitimate—not just southern Lebanon, not just the line of Hezbollah posts.”⁶

Israeli leaders’ belief that Lebanon was responsible for—or at least could significantly influence—events in the south was confirmed in a formal release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: “Israel views the sovereign Lebanese Government as responsible for the action that originated on its soil and for the return of the abducted soldiers to Israel.”⁷ They apparently took for granted that applying pressure on the federal

² Kalb and Saivetz (2007, p. 9).

³ Exum (2006, p. 9).

⁴ Kalb and Saivetz (2007, pp. 9–10).

⁵ Labott (2006).

⁶ Labott (2006).

⁷ “Special Cabinet Communique” (2006).

government in Beirut would force its officials into coercing Hizballah to meet Israel's strategic demands. There was an additional expectation that widespread destruction would have the further benefit of tarnishing Hizballah's self-appointed status as Lebanon's protector against the enemy to the south.⁸ The latter expectation held some merit, though its validity was of dubious value, given that Israel's image would be the more greatly tarnished. The assumption that Beirut dictates to Hizballah, however, was virtually unsupportable. Hizballah operated with few restraints and much autonomy in southern Lebanon. A reasonable argument could be made that Iran and Syria more greatly influenced the organization than did a Lebanese government whose sovereign authority only notionally extended south of the Nahr el Litan river. Mark Heller of Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies concluded that Lebanon was not an enemy but rather "a theater in which the enemy operates."⁹

The previously discussed targeting of so broad a spectrum of civilian targets and the related presumption that the Lebanese government could dictate to Hizballah were not uniformly accepted in the IDF. There were at least two schools of thought on the issue. The first was that outlined above, which considered Beirut and Hizballah jointly culpable for the cross-border intrusion. Others recognized that the Lebanese government had no such influence. The IAF and Israel's COS held the former position. It was their view that ultimately prevailed and underlay Israeli policy.¹⁰ Major General Ben-Reuven, deputy commander of Northern Command during the Second Lebanon War recalled,

⁸ Amir (2007).

⁹ Quoted in Erlanger (2007b).

¹⁰ Brun (2007).

Our chief of staff of the Defense Forces had a different concept. He came from the air force, and he believed that we would achieve our objectives by fire and hitting targets. I . . . hoped it would work, but I must say that I didn't believe in it. I hoped because I didn't really want to have to conduct a ground-force operation. . . . But after a week, I realized that the fire concept, his concept, was not working. I tried to convince him that it wasn't working. But his main argument was that he would achieve his objective by influencing the Hizballah leadership, by hitting the Beirut airport, for example.¹¹

The initial, exclusive reliance on air power to (1) achieve Prime Minister Olmert's objectives of hostage release, (2) secure a ceasefire from an irregular force, and (3) complete expulsion of Hizballah from southern Lebanon was little short of fantasy. This is true not only due to the misreading of the Lebanese government's influence on Hizballah. Despite now nearly century-old debates, air power alone has never unilaterally settled a conflict, and history was no ally for those arguing that strategic bombing would bring about accomplishment of Israel's strategic objectives. Strategic bombing in England (by the Germans in World War II), Germany (by the allies in the same conflict), and Vietnam (by U.S. forces striking the north of the divided country) all ultimately proved ineffective in bringing about the critical combination of civilian intolerance and governmental resignation that could have brought about the outcomes sought. The coercive effects of bombing that precipitated the capitulation of Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic in 1999 are perhaps as close as possible to such an accomplishment. The truth is more complicated. The intimidation provided by NATO ground forces played a significant part in the outcome, as did other

¹¹ Ben-Reuven (2007).

factors, such as Russia's threats to withdraw its support for Serbia.¹² Decisions in Jerusalem seem to substantiate former Israeli national security advisor Uzi Dayan's observation that "the necessary awareness to the historical dimension in making decisions is missing in the Israeli policy system."¹³ An understanding and truthful explanation of military capabilities and limitations, and a campaign plan that properly linked objectives and means, were also missing. They very likely would have precluded the delays and waste of resources brought about by an overreliance on air power. Air power has a role during COIN and other stability operations. It may be a supporting role or a primary one; it has thus far not been sufficient in and of itself.

Predictably, the strategy failed. Reactions by Hizballah leaders had little, if anything, to do with compulsion from Beirut. The vehemence with which the Israelis applied their punishment did surprise those leaders and have some negative effect on the organization's image as guardian of the country. The strategic impact was minimal, however, and any benefits gained were overshadowed by the consequent negative international public and diplomatic consequences for Israel. Israel failed to achieve its strategic goals while alienating even those on whom it could normally rely for international support. The means were inappropriate for the ends sought. Brigadier General Gideon Avidor observed, "When the military thinks of psychological operations or influencing the population, they think in terms of force. Bombing the Beirut airport doesn't work, at least not in an insurgency."¹⁴

Too great a reliance on force perhaps helps to explain the limited extent to which Israel sought to employ information to shape Lebanese

¹² Kreps (2007, p. 74).

¹³ Honig (2007, p. 570).

¹⁴ IDF Brigadier General (ret.) Gideon Avidor in comment during Morag (2007).

and international public opinion. The arena was by no means completely neglected. There were a number of information-operation initiatives at the tactical level that sought to influence Lebanese attitudes. The *Los Angeles Times* related how Charles Harb, professor of social and behavioral sciences at the American University in Beirut, viewed one such effort:

Israelis have been calling, leaving messages. “This is the state of Israel. Hezbollah is your enemy. If you stay away from Hezbollah people, you will be safe.” The friendly sounding phone calls and text messages, Harb said, are a classic psychological ploy. The aim is to make it look as if Hezbollah, and Shiite Muslim refugees in general, is an “out group,” he said, while making recipients of the phone calls feel that they are part of the “in group” allied with the government against them.¹⁵

The IDF also extensively employed leaflet drops carrying much the same message. Unfortunately for the Israelis, their bombing of Lebanon nullified any positive impact such shaping efforts might have had. Harb recognized “that the rising number of civilian casualties, and especially the attack in Qana, Lebanon, that left dozens dead, many of them children, had the opposite effect, leaving a large number of Lebanese feeling like the ‘out group.’”¹⁶

Hezbollah was somewhat more effective in shaping public opinion, the international media sometimes assuming the role of accomplice. Kalb and Saivetz observed,

Rarely did the media use photographs to show that Hezbollah fired its weapons from residential neighborhoods in clear viola-

¹⁵ Murphy (2006).

¹⁶ Murphy (2006).

tion of international law. This was rare because Hezbollah did not allow reporters to film such military activity. Yet, on July 30, the Sunday *Herald Sun* in Australia did just that. It published photos that, in its own words, “damn Hezbollah” for conducting military operations in populated suburbs. In one photo of a “high density residential area,” Hezbollah was shown preparing launch pads for “rockets and heavy-caliber weapons.” In another men were firing an anti-aircraft gun “meters from an apartment block” where laundry was drying on a balcony. The newspaper said that the photos were “exclusive,” shot by a “visiting journalist and smuggled out by a friend.” The photos had to be smuggled out of Beirut, because Hezbollah would never have allowed them to be shot.¹⁷

The *Herald Sun* was not alone, but it was a minority representative in a commercial sector that likes to pride itself on objectivity and balance. Nevertheless, as these quotes corroborate, Israeli savvy in using the media to shape public opinion was wanting. Here, too, is a case of misusing means that could have provided very effective service in support of Israeli ends.

Misunderstanding the Nature of the Conflict

Mere survival is a political victory: it encourages and raises the popular opposition to the incumbent regime.

—*Robert Taber,*
The War of the Flea¹⁸

¹⁷ Kalb and Saivetz (2007, pp. 27–28).

¹⁸ Taber (1969, p. 24).

Many in the IDF view the Second Lebanon War as a fight against a predominantly conventional military force. It was, in their opinion, a “quasi-war” if not fully a traditional one. This perception influenced the approach to dealing with the threat: Hizballah, as a military force, had to be defeated using military force accompanied by diplomatic pressure applied against the government from whose territory it operated. What if, however, the assumption regarding the very nature of the conflict was as wrong as that regarding Beirut’s influence over Hizballah? What if Hizballah was neither a conventional military threat alone nor merely a terrorist organization but instead, in significant measure, an insurgent group?

Major General Ben-Reuven observed, “Hizballah’s military capabilities are very close to those of a [conventional] military. I was a little surprised with the capabilities in this regard. After four or five weeks of our fire, they continued to control their forces. The command-and-control equipment we found was very, very similar to ours, [but] with respect to other systems, they fought like a guerrilla force. Their rationale was a guerrilla rationale.”¹⁹ Analyst Anthony Cordesman also realized that Hizballah was more than merely a well-equipped irregular force. It was one shrewd in the ways of shaping the strategic environment:

Hezbollah did more than use more advanced technology. It used Lebanon’s people and civilian areas as both defensive and offensive weapons. Israel certainly saw this risk from the start, [yet] the IAF then conducted nearly two weeks of air strikes without a clear ground component in which it conspicuously failed to halt Hezbollah rocket attacks while it equally conspicuously hit Leb-

¹⁹ Ben-Reuven (2007).

anese civilian targets and [caused] extensive civilian casualties, serious collateral damage, and massive Lebanese evacuations.”²⁰

This combination of conventional and unconventional capabilities surprised and frustrated Israel’s military. IDF members were pained to find themselves inadequately prepared for the conflict that confronted them, an “asymmetrical warfare with a fearful symmetry.”²¹

Well trained, well led, well armed, committed, and employing a mix of conventional and unconventional approaches, this was an enemy unlike those confronted in the country’s previous wars. It was, however, ultimately an adversary with a “guerrilla rationale.” Hizballah leaders recognized that theirs should be a “*victory through non-defeat*,”²² which one analyst described in the following manner:

Hizballah’s mission during the July War was to remain intact as a cohesive fighting force while at the same time inflicting as many enemy casualties as possible. In short, it was a mission of survival. Because Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert initially stated [that] Israel’s goals in the conflict were to destroy Hizballah, cease the rocket attacks into northern Israel, and free the two captured soldiers, Hizballah’s strategy was simply to deny the IDF as many of those three goals as possible.²³

Israel’s strategic choices are bewildering, in retrospect. Cordesman was among those who wondered “why Israel did not combine its air campaign with an immediate ground invasion. . . . Israel’s

²⁰ Cordesman (2006, pp. 13, 27).

²¹ Peraino, Dehghanpisheh, and Dickey (2006).

²² Brun (2007).

²³ Exum (2006, p. 8).

highest political and military leaders appear to have been confident that air alone could achieve the majority of Israel's strategic goals in Lebanon—hard to believe considering [that] those goals at one point included the destruction of Hizballah as well as the return of Israel's two hostages."²⁴ We noted that others were bewildered at the IDF's delay in mobilizing the reserves, apparently a reflection of political and military indecision regarding whether the operation undertaken was truly a war or simply a security operation that fell short of that status.²⁵ As noted in the previous section, these are some of the areas in which the country's leaders failed to properly link means and ends. But this invites the question of why they did so.

These decisions are better understood when we remind ourselves that IDF leaders viewed the adversary as a conventional or quasi-conventional force. That assessment can be blamed, in part, on logic too constrained by traditional thinking. Both the understanding of the adversary and consequent responses rely on looking at the conflict from an almost exclusively military perspective. Accurately gauging a foe's capabilities is an essential part of bringing about its defeat. It is, however, only one component in developing a full understanding of the threat. It is, in and of itself, insufficient as a basis for developing a successful strategy. A more overarching perspective, one that recognized the insurgent character of Hizballah and thus the COIN aspect of July–August 2006 operations, would logically have driven operations in a direction considerably different from that taken. Recognizing the need to separate members of the population from insurgents should have spurred more cautious targeting, especially with respect to segments of the citizenry already prone not to favor Hizballah. This is notably true if Hizballah's use of military conflict is part of a larger

²⁴ Exum (2006, p. 9).

²⁵ Ben-Reuven (2007).

scheme to combine armed struggle with legitimate political processes to gain greater influence in Lebanon's government. While Israel would be hard pressed to unilaterally isolate Hizballah from its popular support (at least in the immediate term), gaining such separation was within in the realm of possibility were the country to work through the Lebanese government.

Israel would not be the only government to misread the nature of a modern insurgency. The U.S. military's definition of *insurgency* is largely reflective of outdated, cold-war conceptualizations: "An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict."²⁶ Insurgency is now rarely so simplistic in character. There remain movements that fit this traditional portrayal. There are many others, however, whose intentions and character do not. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC, or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) seems content to have asserted its authority over a significant portion of Colombia without any real intention of replacing the government in Bogotá. Hizballah similarly controlled the south of Lebanon; whether it will eventually seek to depose the government in Beirut via the means suggested by the U.S. military's definition is as of yet an open question. Only a few of the many groups vying for influence in Iraq profess a desire to replace the standing government and rule the entirety of the country. Kurdish interests in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran do not claim that they want to topple the governments in Ankara, Baghdad, or Tehran. They instead desire to establish an independent, autonomous, or semi-autonomous Kurdistan (the desired end depending on the group in question).

These are but a few of the many movements that encourage reconsideration of the narrowly circumscribed concept that is the basis for the current U.S. doctrinal definition of *insurgency*. Their very different

²⁶ USJCS (2007, p. 265).

motivations share one or more aspects of the standing definition. They seek the replacement of a constituted government but only over a limited extent of that government's sovereign territory. They may employ "subversion and armed conflict," but frequently they complement this with participation in and pursuit of their ends via the legitimate political process (the case of Northern Ireland being particularly applicable here). Reliance on outmoded concepts hinders today's understanding of insurgency and effective ways of addressing it. Insurgency merits consideration on a broader spectrum, to wit, a definition of *insurgency* as "an organized movement seeking to replace or undermine all or part of the sovereignty of one or more constituted governments through the protracted use of subversion and armed conflict."²⁷ Further, it is crucial to avoid the temptation of qualifying groups as *insurgent* with the underlying assumption that such organizations therefore spurn conventional warfare, legitimate political processes, terrorism, or other methods as arrows in their quiver. Insurgency may be but one of those arrows, making the task of countering a threat's activities all the more difficult. Yet it is clear that designing actions with an eye toward gaining popular support—or, at a minimum, not losing it—has limited costs in comparison the consequences of ignoring civilian welfare because the insurgency character of a conflict went unrecognized.

Do Hizballah's motivations and actions support its characterization as an insurgency (or an organization having a significant insurgency element), given this broader understanding? A considered response must have at least three components. In the case of the first component, the answer is undoubtedly "yes"; for the second, "perhaps"; and, with respect to the third, "unlikely."

Hizballah as "an organized movement seeking to replace or undermine all or part of the sovereignty of one or more constituted

²⁷ Glenn (2007c, p. 52) first presented this definition.

governments” is an accurate depiction of its status as the *de facto* ruling authority in much of southern Lebanon. Hizballah restricted movement, denied access, and used its military arm to control actions in the region prior to the 2006 war. Hizballah, in actuality, replaced the sovereign government of Lebanon as ruling authority in the south of the country. There is evidence that this remains the status quo in the aftermath of the war. The UN resolution ending the 2006 fighting did not require the disarming of Hizballah forces; it appears that neither the peacekeeping force in place along the international border nor the Lebanese armed forces has any intention of undertaking to do so in the immediate future. That there is no intention of Hizballah surrendering its ruling status is clear in Hassan Nasrallah’s pointed warning in a September 22, 2006, speech: “UNIFIL [the UN Interim Force in Lebanon] forces are welcomed as long as they abide by their mission. . . . They should not interfere in Lebanon’s internal affairs.”²⁸ The meaning is evident: There is to be no interference with Hizballah’s control of the nation’s south.

The second component of whether Hizballah seeks to undermine or replace a constituted government deals with the organization’s intentions “to replace . . . the sovereignty [of the Lebanese government] through the protracted use of subversion and armed conflict.” In this case, the response merits only a “perhaps.” Hizballah’s political arm had significant representation in the government in Beirut in mid-2006. We have noted that the organization’s leadership made efforts to portray Hizballah as the country’s defender against Israel. Nasrallah sounded more like an aspiring politician than militant leader with his September 22, 2006, praise of street demonstrations and elections as “peaceful democratic mechanisms” and his declaration that

²⁸ “Text of Hezbollah Leader Hasan Nasrallah’s Speech During ‘Victory Rally’ in Beirut” (undated).

he believed a “national unity government [to be the] solution to political division”²⁹ in Lebanon. It is unclear whether Hizballah desires to control the entirety of the country. If it does so, initiatives in support of that goal will likely employ the already-evident combination of subversion, armed conflict, and use of the legitimate political process. The lesson once again is obvious: Insurgency need not stand alone but rather may be one component of a process that employs multiple means in the service of its objectives.

Did Hizballah also desire to undermine the government of Israel in July 2006, perhaps in an effort to have it replaced with another? That is “unlikely.” Yet the possibility merits investigation both (1) because of the very real possibility of this coming about in the months following the war and (2) because of the insights it offers to an understanding of modern insurgency. One of several key elements in the new definition of *insurgency* is found in the passage “*one or more* constituted governments.” Hizballah did not explicitly highlight a desire to “replace or undermine” Israel’s national government as an objective of the Second Lebanon War. Yet the outfall of the Second Lebanon War unquestionably did much to undermine Ehud Olmert’s coalition and the nation’s military leadership. As noted, the IDF COS has already resigned, at the time of this writing; the minister of defense lost his bid for reelection. Martin Van Creveld posits that the July 12, 2006, seizure of two Israeli soldiers could have directly precipitated replacement of the government in Jerusalem had Olmert not responded with military force:

Suffice it to say that, since Israeli troops were not just killed (as had happened several times in the previous six years) but taken prisoner, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had no choice but to retal-

²⁹ “Text of Hezbollah Leader Hasan Nasrallah’s Speech During ‘Victory Rally’ in Beirut” (undated).

iate in force. Failure to do so would have brought down his government. It would also have led to new elections, and, by bringing about the disintegration of his Kadimah Party, recast Israel's political system in an altogether new and unforeseeable direction.³⁰

The difficulty of gauging how a subsequent government would perceive Hizballah, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran makes any conscious Hizballah intention to replace the sitting government a risky proposition. Chances are very good that any such replacement would take a harder line than that proposed by Olmert. This does not rule out the possibility that such replacement was not a goal. Nonstate actors are certainly no less prone to errors than national governments are. Regardless, it is valuable to recognize an element in the alternative definition that might at first glance go unrecognized, one not generally associated with the standing U.S. definition: An insurgency may seek to overthrow or undermine a government without the intention of the insurgents themselves replacing the government it attacks.

Given recognition that an adversary does constitute an insurgency—or that its strategy includes an insurgent element—how can Israel or a similarly confronted nation-state respond? Here is another, yet seldom-recognized, benefit to taking an interagency approach to conflict. Good “war gaming” demands an understanding of a foe's perspectives and motivations. While military analysts can do an excellent job of viewing an adversary's military capabilities and motivations, they are generally less able to represent the political, diplomatic, social, or other aspects that together constitute a strategy. The risks in failing to recognize an insurgent component in an enemy's quiver include not giving oneself a fair chance of understanding all aspects of the opponent's stratagems and policies.

³⁰ Van Creveld (2006, p. 41).

Implications for Israel’s Application of the Operational Art . . . and for Operational Art Generally

Hezbollah tried to avoid confronting the IDF at the operational and strategic levels because that is where Israel is stronger, instead focusing on the tactical and grand strategic levels, just as did the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] with launching rockets at the grand strategic level. It is very typical of insurgents to operate at the two edges of the levels of war.

—*Avi Kober*³¹

Conflicts involving Israel seem to have a disproportionate number of lessons pertaining to the operational level of war. The reasons are several—among them, limited maneuver space, the multi-front nature of its conflicts, the tightly interwoven threads of public and military responsibility, and the close links between tactical action and involvement by powers external to the region. The Second Lebanon War was no exception. Six such implications are particularly notable, three of which merit somewhat lengthy discussion and a second trio that are all but self-explanatory.

Center of Gravity: A Fundamental Issue

Israel’s leaders chose—by conscious decision or default—not to treat the July–August 2006 war and the wider conflict of which it was a part as one with a significant COIN component. The alternative of approaching the undertaking as a conventional or quasiwar should have immediately confronted them with the question, “What is the enemy’s center of gravity?”³² It is not clear from the manner in which

³¹ Kober (2007).

³² The U.S. military’s definition of *center of gravity* is “the source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act” (USJCS, 2007, p. 80).

the war was prosecuted that this question was answered, if it was, in fact, ever considered. IDF actions seem to support a conclusion that its planners (consciously or unconsciously) regarded Hizballah's center of gravity (COG) as either (1) the Lebanese government and its ability to force Hizballah to meet Israeli demands or (2) Hizballah's military forces in southern Lebanon. Previous discussion has discounted the former as an appropriate choice (though its appropriateness need not discount its having been ill-advisedly selected). The postconflict recognition that Hizballah's forces were semi-autonomous with respect to the perspectives of command, control, and logistics would, in retrospect, cast doubt on the second as a helpful selection (though it could theoretically still be a correct one).

The question regarding COG is a crucial one, given that Israel initially chose to rely on air power alone. Whether one turns to current doctrine, Clausewitz, or air theorist John Warden, guidance suggests that "the enemy center of gravity must be identified and struck" during an air campaign.³³ If it cannot be (e.g., were the COG in Syria or Iran and therefore physically, diplomatically, or for other reasons impossible to attack directly), appropriate decisive points must, as an alternative, be targeted in an effort to unbalance the foe's COG.³⁴ If IDF planners did conduct a COG analysis and if they did mistakenly identify it as the Lebanese government, there are at least two valuable lessons to take

³³ Warden (1989, p. 116). Interestingly, Warden (1989, p. 132) also advises that "the air superiority campaign (whether an end in itself or a means to an end) should not be waged with air assets alone."

³⁴ A *decisive point* is defined as "[a] geographic place, specific key event, critical factor, or function that, when acted upon, allows commanders to gain a marked advantage over an adversary or contribute materially to achieving success" (USJCS, 2007, p. 144).

from the example.³⁵ The first reinforces the aforementioned criticality of carefully analyzing the nature of the conflict in which an armed force is involved. The case of the Second Lebanon War demonstrates that misidentification in that regard—and an associated mistaken selection of COG—can have catastrophic consequences. Second, planners and leaders must avoid COG fixation. COGs may be directly unassailable for many reasons, political, moral, or otherwise. One or more of the critical points may be likewise, as was arguably the case in July and August 2006. Even if the Lebanese government had been a legitimate COG or decisive point, the immediate and longer-term negative consequences of bombing civilian targets should have precluded the IDF's attacking them regardless of status. Israeli target selection revealed a lack of understanding in this regard. The nature of a conflict with significant COIN character is likely to constrain the accessibility of access to COGs and decisive points more than is the case during one with lesser concerns regarding indigenous and other noncombatant populations. It is possible that the need to protect civilians and their property from undue harm will preclude effective attacks on a COG, direct or otherwise. In such cases, the initial decision to employ conventional means to attack such targets—and perhaps the decision to go to war—ought to be questioned.

So what was Hizballah's COG at the strategic level of war? There are several possibilities. They include the following:

- the support of the Lebanese population, or some part thereof (e.g., Shia citizens nationwide or those south of the Nahr el Litan river)

³⁵ A lengthy discussion of potential COGs and decisive points is peripheral to this analysis. It is worth mentioning, however, that another alternative is that Hizballah's forces in the field were the COG but that, due to the difficulty of attacking them effectively in a direct manner (because of their dispersed character), the Lebanese government was seen as a decisive point that offered a means of unbalancing the COG.

- support from Syria, Iran, or both
- Hizballah's military force in the field or some part thereof (e.g., its more highly trained corps of fighters)
- the organization's leadership.

What, in turn, were the critical points, those necessary to unbalancing the COG? Given that any one of the above (or some other entity) was determined to be the COG, the other possible COGs are all candidates. There may also be different COGs and critical points over time, e.g., one might posit that Hizballah's leadership was a COG in the short run if a sought-after objective was to halt ongoing military operations as soon as possible. It would be a less likely selection given a long-term objective; insurgent organizations tend to replace fallen leaders with considerable effectiveness, given the continued existence of the factors underlying the insurgent cause.

Arguments can be made in support of any of these or several other entities as COGs. Those arguments are peripheral to the purposes of the analysis here, but they remain pertinent to a force potentially facing a threat similar to that confronted by Israel in 2006.

Orchestrating Operations at the Three Levels of War

When initial military operations went badly, Israel needed to reconsider the way in which it was approaching the conflict. Such adjustments were not foreign to the country's history. The strategic situation had been far more dangerous at the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when the very existence of Israel was threatened. The October 6, 1973, Egyptian air attack and some 500 tanks successfully crossing the Suez Canal took the Israelis by surprise, just as did the raid in southern Lebanon 33 years later. Israel suffered considerable losses in its efforts to oust Egypt's attackers from Sinai. It was nearly a week after the beginning of the conflict before the IDF could report notable

success on the Egyptian front, a success in considerable part due to an ill-advised (from the tactical if not political perspective) attack by Arab forces seeking to relieve pressure on Syrian allies to the north and east. There, too, on the Golan Front, the Israelis had been surprised on October 6, the 188th Armored Brigade almost being destroyed in the first 24 hours. Thanks to stellar performances at the unit level, intelligent maneuver of limited assets at the operational level, and generally solid judgment at the strategic level of war, Israel recovered from its initial miscalculations and emerged victorious.³⁶

In contrast, Israeli adjustments made in 2006 were both delayed and limited in scope. The contrast was apparent to General Chaim Erez, an observer familiar with both conflicts:

If you want, you can compare this one to the '73 War—Yom Kippur—when the situation started much worse. But in 16 days, we were at the other side of the Suez Canal, 100 kilometers from Cairo and 70 kilometers from Damascus, very much unlike this particular situation. The outcome of [the Second Lebanon] war—the image that is captured in public's eyes both in and outside Israel—does not reflect IDF capabilities but rather the poor leadership and the poor decisionmaking of those involved.³⁷

General Erez's further observations are representative of frustrations that a number of IDF veterans expressed:

The concept proved wrong, but the main issue was how long it took them to realize it wasn't working. . . . I asked the commander of the Northern Command, Udi Adam—who thought that the

³⁶ The facts underlying this basic summary of the 1973 war are from Dupuy and Dupuy (1977, pp. 1235–1238).

³⁷ Erez (2007).

right way was to launch land forces into Lebanon—why he didn't call the minister of defense or the prime minister and talk with them about it. His reply was, "They wouldn't understand me."³⁸

Surrendering Without a Fight: Giving Up in the Shaping War

It seems that Israeli policymakers are less sensitive to internationally accepted norms. . . . They see norms more as constraints than as an asset or a value that should be upheld.

—Or Honig,
*"Explaining Israel's Misuse of Strategic Assassinations"*³⁹

Shaping indigenous public attitudes, winning the information war, operating within the enemy's information observe, orient, decide, and act (OODA) loop: These are all aspects of conflict with which professional militaries have struggled in the past decade and longer.⁴⁰ Such features of conflict are too seldom recognized as essential tools for the operational artist. Whether attempting to separate an insurgent group from the local population or educating an international audience, the capability to shape perceptions is a necessity. It is all the more striking, then, that Israel seemed to flaunt a disregard for the essentials of effective shaping during the Second Lebanon War. It can only be guessed that leaders' bellicose statements and the IDF's choice of targets for aerial bombardment were together part of the effort to coerce Lebanon's government to pressure Hizballah, a strategy that we have

³⁸ Erez (2007).

³⁹ Honig (2007, p. 573).

⁴⁰ The concept of the OODA loop is attributed to U.S. Air Force pilot Colonel John Boyd. *OODA* is an acronym for "observe, orient, decide, and act," the steps a pilot needs to complete more rapidly than his or her opponent to win aerial engagements. For further discussion, see Kettle Creek Corporation (2006).

already seen was wrong-headed at its origination. The sacrificing of longer-term advantages for a hoped-for immediate reward appears to support Or Honig's observation regarding the Israeli course-of-action selection: "What is still not given sufficient weight is the diplomatic and political side of the counterterrorism policy. This is partly a result of the deeply embedded structural imbalance between the military and civilian sides in the decisionmaking process and the significant bureaucratic autonomy that military bodies . . . enjoy."⁴¹

Other Lessons

When one considers the fundamental responsibility of the military professional, especially one of very senior rank, the failure of the key military four-stars, first, to appreciate the inadequacies in posthostilities planning and, second, to stand their ground over divided command in immediate postconflict Iraq is profoundly troubling.

—*U.S. Army Lieutenant General (ret.) John H. Cushman,
U.S. Army, U.S. Army War College*⁴²

The following are selected additional observations regarding the Second Lebanon War that have particular relevance to ongoing and future U.S. operations:

- **Funding.** Emphasis given to spending on aircraft and digitization was, in particular, targeted for negative comment when the topic of funding for the IDF was broached. That so much was spent on these big-ticket items to the detriment of basic needs

⁴¹ Honig (2007, p. 569).

⁴² Cushman (2007).

at the tactical level was particularly irksome: “It’s very attractive and tempting to spend money on high tech. It looks good in the papers. [It suggests that] you are progressing. . . . So they spend about \$400 million in digitizing the army and didn’t buy smoke grenades.”⁴³

- **Failure of leaders at the highest military echelons to speak out.** “The army leadership ‘bent to the side’ [failed to stand up for what they should have]. . . . [Thus] the government had no good opportunity to discuss important government issues.” In general, it was thought that too many officers were focused on their careers to the detriment of the best interests of the military.⁴⁴
- **Stove-piping of intelligence.** Although the interrelationships between Hizballah, Iran, and Syria were recognized, the IDF’s compartmentalization of Hizballah as a terrorist organization meant that the Israeli Department of Intelligence (IDI) section responsible for the organization was separate from other parts of the organization, including those responsible for monitoring the two countries, as they were considered conventional threats.⁴⁵

⁴³ IDF Brigadier General (ret.) Gideon Avidor in comments during Morag (2007).

⁴⁴ Morag (2007).

⁴⁵ Shapira (2007).

Revalidations and New Considerations: Implications for the United States and Other Nations

Japan's advantage lies in her great capacity to wage war, and her disadvantages lie in the reactionary and barbarous nature of war, in the inadequacy of her manpower and material resources, and in her meager international support.

—*Mao Zedong*
*on World War II Japan's forces in China*¹

Many of the world's militaries looked to Israel as an example to emulate after its stunning victory in the 1967 Six Days War. The Yom Kippur War of 1973 offered further lessons. Though not as overwhelming in its effects, we have seen that the latter conflict demonstrated that the IDF could adapt to overcome initial surprise and disadvantage, capabilities not lost on militaries confronting a numerically superior Warsaw Pact enemy in Western Europe.²

¹ As quoted in Taber (1969, p. 50).

² The Warsaw Pact is a colloquial reference to the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance Between the People's Republic of Albania, the People's Republic of Bul-

Some 40 years later, Israel stands accused of resting on its past military glory and allowing its capabilities to atrophy, thereby putting itself at strategic risk in a still-unfriendly security environment. In some areas, there seems little reason for concern on the United States' part as its military and political leadership view the lessons of July and August 2006. The U.S. military recognizes the need to maintain conventional warfighting skills in addition to its COIN capabilities, though no right-minded leader would claim that doing so is not a significant challenge. U.S. armed forces also demonstrate an understanding that all three elements of joint, multinational, and interagency operations still require hard work before the armed services and its partners "get it right." Third, while abhorring casualties, the United States has not fallen victim to an oversensitivity to losses in war. Yet there are lessons of value for the United States and its allies in studying the Second Lebanon War. The United States and its friends around the world can no more afford to rest on their apparent superiority than could Israel base its security on intimidation drawn from conflicts in 1967 and 1973. The remainder of this chapter considers matters of relevance to the United States drawn from observations in previous chapters. They fall into two general categories: those that remind us of familiar past teachings and others with a newer feel to them. Each group is considered in turn.

garia, the Hungarian People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Rumanian People's Republic, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Czechoslovak Republic. See U.S. Department of State, Historical Office, and U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (1957).

Revisiting Old Lessons

The past can both assist in making wise choices and cloud objective judgments. Past lessons are square pegs that do not fit perfectly into the round holes of the present and future. That does not mean that history should be cast aside as irrelevant but rather that there is a call for sharp intellect, clear reasoning, and innovative thought to shape what it offers to meet the challenges of the now and yet to come. The Second Lebanon War offers today's students of conflict a considerable number of square pegs with which to work. Among them:

- Clarity and simplicity are essential to military thinking and the guidance that comes from that thinking.
- There is a need to broaden understanding of what constitutes an insurgency.
- Militaries must be capable of operating across the spectrum of conflict.
- Joint operations remain essential.
- Leaders need training, too.
- It is important not to overreact to failure.
- Know thy enemy; know what thy enemy knows of you.

Clarity and Simplicity Are Essential to Military Thinking and the Guidance That Comes from That Thinking

Nine months after Israel's failed war against Hizbollah—damning details of which were published last week in an interim report from a government-appointed investigative board—the IDF is well on its way to rehabilitating its land forces. After a six-year infatuation with standoff, effects-based operations, it is refocus-

ing on basic ground maneuvering and traditional notions of battlefield decisiveness and victory.

—*Preface to interview with Major General Benjamin Gantz, Israeli Land Forces Headquarters*³

The IDF found that its doctrine had become difficult to understand in the years before the Second Lebanon War. The concepts underlying it were so esoteric that they confused students and practitioners instead of enlightening them. Those responsible perhaps forgot that simplicity, a principle of war, also has value when preparing the orders, guidance, and training for militaries that have to fight wars.

Complexity and quantity of prose do not imply wisdom. The contrary is more likely to be the case, as philosopher Blaise Pascal recognized in the 17th century: “I have made this letter longer than usual, because I lack the time to make it short.”⁴ So too should those responsible for doctrine and the concepts underlying them seek to make their wares as accessible as possible. Israel found the thinking behind EBO more harmful than helpful during its 2006 war. Such U.S. concepts and convoluted homegrown ideas confused IDF leaders and led alike.

The U.S. military might benefit from a step back to consider whether it, too, is self-inflicting a similar wound. Doctrine and doctrinal discussions too frequently offer layers of “concepts,” “capabilities,” “objectives,” “capability areas,” or other hierarchies of overlapping elements frequently accompanied by similarly echeloned checklists. Any logic underlying the whole can be difficult to discern. These flawed structures have dark company in the strained prose that, at times, accompanies the offerings. A recent draft joint-exercise summary included the following unfortunate wordings:

³ Opall-Rome (2007).

⁴ Wilson (2007, p. 228).

- “It satisfies a most pressing military issue of improving command and control for joint operations in a distributed environment that facilitates joint interdependencies.”
- “During [this exercise], one of the goals of the CSB [communication strategy board] was to harmonize civil-military activity and information initiatives and messages of the host-nation government, the interagency team and the JTF [joint task force] to the population (the center of gravity to be affected).
- “Joint Transformation Command–Intelligence (JTC-I) has established the JIOC-X [Joint Intelligence Operations Center–Transformation] to conduct JI&E [joint innovation and experimentation] and joint training, incorporate lessons learned, and produce assessments in support of the Defense JIOC [Joint Intelligence Operations Center] (DJIOC) and COCOM [combatant command] JIOCs.”⁵

These are unfortunately not exceptional examples of today’s U.S. military writing. Nor should they be taken to represent all joint or service offerings, many of which are far better written and simpler in presentation. They are, however, all too common. So great a gap between the nature of recent and emerging concepts and doctrine and the needs of the men and women in the field who have to apply them should be prohibited. It was said that Abraham Lincoln would study others’ perspectives “of every disputed question, of every law case, of every political issue more exhaustively, if possible, [more thoroughly] than [he would] his own side.”⁶ His is an example that those responsible for providing guidance to and developing concepts for U.S. soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen should follow.

⁵ The source is deliberately not identified.

⁶ Representative Schuyler Colfax from Indiana, as quoted in Wilson (2007, p. 126).

There Is a Need to Broaden Understanding of What Constitutes an Insurgency

The Saigon government had put itself under a severe handicap by refusing to admit, for some years, that significant armed opposition existed in the country. . . . Ngo Dien Diem, Washington's handpicked premier, was finally forced to concede the undeniable fact that a full-blown insurgency was in progress.

—*Robert Taber*
The War of the Flea⁷

Premier Diem, Israeli leaders in 2006, and those initially guiding coalition actions in Iraq all suffered a failure to understand the nature of the conflict that they confronted, though, in the last case, the shortfall seems more attributable to wishful thinking than any other cause. U.S. officials—among them Paul Bremer, director of reconstruction and humanitarian assistance in Iraq from May 2003 to June 2004—have been accused of refusing to admit that Iraq confronted an insurgency in 2003 and early 2004.⁸ Any delay in addressing an insurgency is unfortunate, given that the preferable time to interdict an insurgency's development is in its earliest phase, when it is building strength and support. Confronting difficult realities early can preclude greater difficulties down the line. Timely identification will be aided by developing COIN definitions, doctrine, and thinking that break free of conceptualizations rooted in the Cold War. The first steps are being taken in this regard. Many more lie ahead.

⁷ Taber (1969, p. 81).

⁸ For one example in this case, see Allawi (2007, p. 240).

Militaries Must Be Capable of Operating Across the Spectrum of Conflict

The Second Lebanon War offers an example perhaps without recent historical precedent: a military conducting conventional combat operations for which it was not prepared due to its having too greatly focused on irregular conflict. Examples of the reverse case—armed forces seeking to fight using conventional means in an unconventional-warfare environment—are numerous in contrast, the French in Indochina and the United States in the same theater among them. The lesson offered is nevertheless the same: Today's military forces must be capable of conducting operations across the spectrum of conflict.

Twenty-first-century conflict has thus far been typified by what might be termed *hybrid wars*. The Israeli portrayal of operations in southern Lebanon as a “quasiwar” begins to get at this heterogeneous character. There were elements of conventional warfare, guerrilla fighting, and terrorism, as well as insurgency, in July and August 2006. An IDF resultantly seeking to improve its readiness for conventional armed conflict will undoubtedly address a portion of its self-identified deficiencies. However, real progress in resolving security issues involving Hizballah—and those related to the Palestinian territories—is unlikely until those challenges are recognized as having a significant insurgent component that cannot be addressed by military operations alone, much less only conventional ones. Training a force for conventional war addresses but one aspect of what is needed to improve Israel's security situation. It is likely to prove beneficial if done in balance with other requirements. Granted too much emphasis, the IDF risks “preparing for the last war” to the detriment of being ready for the next—or the one ongoing.

It is human nature to categorize. Children perceive cartoon characters as good or bad. Politicians are cast as liberals or conservatives. We have noted that militaries tend to view a conflict as conventional war,

irregular warfare, stability operation, or insurgency. Viewing the world in terms of such sharply delineated “bins” can be helpful. Categorization helps the educator simplify in the presence of complexity. Military schools emphasize the types of tactics appropriate in conventional warfare, contrasting them with the more nuanced and constrained undertakings of unconventional conflict, in which the population often plays a more prominent role. This “binning” facilitates understanding and can be effective—given that trainers also inform students of its limitations. Bins are akin to cans of paint, one with a vibrant red, another with a thick, deep green, a third a rich blue, and so on. The world’s conflicts lack such purity. The struggles in Afghanistan and Iraq include an amorphous and ever-changing muddle of insurgent, conventional, guerrilla, and other overlapping elements. Such is the case with virtually every modern conflict, to a greater or lesser extent. Understanding the bins is helpful only if the implications of their contents spilling into each other are also part of the lesson. Unfortunately, the resulting product, whether from mixing paints or the contents of conflict bins, is the same: a murky gray, ugly to look at and even fouler to work with.

Unattractive and difficult as the reality might be, these offerings are examples from which to learn. The United Kingdom’s lengthy campaign in Northern Ireland provides one particularly valuable for Israel in its present security situation just as it does for other nations confronting insurgencies around the world. Recognizing that the British Army was primarily a facilitating capability rather than the decisive one in addressing unrest, London patiently employed judicial, economic, diplomatic, and other means of influence in conjunction with the military in an “all-of-government” effort to resolve longstanding issues. Granting that Northern Ireland is one of those square pegs in contrast to the round holes of insurgencies in the occupied territories, southern Lebanon, Iraq, and Afghanistan, there is little reason that the lessons learned in the United Kingdom cannot advise other govern-

ments seeking to resolve insurgent challenges. Yet a suggestion along these lines during a 2002 conference in Haifa, Israel, brought the frustrated response of “Israel cannot afford the time for such an approach.” After Israel’s nearly 60 years of intermittent conflict, a more appropriate response may be that it cannot afford to ignore its lessons.

Delays in recognizing (or admitting) the existence of an insurgency, the need to better orchestrate multinational and interagency capabilities, and myriad indigenous challenges are among the difficulties that plague progress during COIN operations. The need to meet the many demands inherent in such operations as well as those of conventional warfare poses truly extraordinary pressures on armed forces. Time for training is always in short supply. It is the more so when units rotate back to active theaters every one to two years, as is currently the case for some units deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan. The challenges were considerable when the enemy was the Warsaw Pact and the dominant theater was northwest Europe. Now, potential and actual theaters are distributed across the globe and the character of threats spans the spectrum from response to natural disaster to conventional warfare involving weapons of mass destruction. Yet neither the United States nor its allies can afford to specialize to the point that some units are exclusively prepared for COIN while others would deal only with points elsewhere along the spectrum of conflict. It is also insufficient for U.S. service personnel to maintain an understanding exclusively of their own branch or service. Individuals and units must be able to not only fulfill their duties as specialists but do so while working as part of a joint, multinational, and interagency team during deployments that will call on talents as negotiator and diplomat as well as those traditionally expected of the warrior. Training to these and other seemingly innumerable requirements is not easy. It requires education of grander scope and complexity than what those in cold-war militaries considered the norm. Yet attaining readiness is not impossible. Many

of the tasks demanded of today's fighter are equally valuable to the peacemaker. Well-designed training must capitalize on the commonalities while prioritizing the emphasis given remaining obligations.⁹ There may also be call for reconsidering the basic approach to training now employed in the U.S. military. Perhaps units could have multiple mission-essential task lists (METLs), one for "base-level training" encompassing tasks that span the entire spectrum of conflict, others for "predeployment training" with each likely contingency type having a supporting METL, and individual base-level training and predeployment METLs tailored to job assignments. Allies' proven approaches might provide insights of value, e.g., the British Army's use of its operational training and advisory group (OPTAG) to ready units for Northern Ireland rotations and the programs used to refocus those units once their deployments to that theater were complete.

Joint Operations Remain Essential

Jointness has been gospel for the U.S. armed forces since the time of Goldwater-Nichols.¹⁰ Yet the unilateral IAF decision to forgo its CAS mission to instead focus on strategic concerns reminds all that jointness, like marriage, requires constant work and commitment if the relationship is to prosper. Rare indeed is the U.S. operation that is single service. Transport to and from a theater, supply, fire support, and other requirements from one or more supporting services are inevitably a part of enterprises even in the exceptional instance when the unit at the sharp end of the spear is single service.

⁹ Though addressing urban operations training in specific, training approaches that have application beyond urban alone and that address this broad set of requirements receive attention in Glenn et al. (2006).

¹⁰ P.L. 99-433.

While this seems an unnecessary statement of the obvious, the truth is that the path to complete joint cooperation remains a considerably longer one than that thus far traveled. The IDF suffered not only from intraland-force communication-system incompatibilities within Northern Command but also from an inability to communicate ground to air. The same barriers continue to afflict U.S. services despite joint dictates. Interservice communication and means of sharing intelligence are still too often hindered by incompatibilities. One need look no further than the ongoing turf battle regarding control of UAV assets to realize that there is other-than-common ground in additional areas as well. More optimistic members of the U.S. defense community see a promising trend toward improved interoperability in the multinational and interagency realms as well as that joint. The case of the Second Lebanon War nonetheless should serve as warning that these are relationships still much in need of nurturing.

Leaders Need Training, Too

As noted, many have pointed to the leadership deficiencies as fundamental factors in the IDF's Second Lebanon War difficulties. Units were so committed to intifada operations that training was forgone not only for units and those led; leader training similarly suffered. Three observations related to leader training are of particular relevance to current trends in the U.S. military: (1) Virtually every moment of every day is a training opportunity, and much of what soldiers and leaders must know can be trained regardless of the environment; (2) The debate regarding the appropriate location of leaders on the battlefield is an eternal one, yet one worthy of further discussion; and (3) military and political leaders at the senior levels require educating no less than do those at lower echelons.

Virtually Every Moment of Every Day Is a Training Opportunity

It is true that commitment to active operations impinges on training opportunities. The example of the IDF during the intifada reminds us that—like units during World War II and Vietnam—time must be found to train even when units are committed to ongoing operations. Among these many individual and collective skills common to all contingencies, a good number pertain to leaders; their atrophy is less a matter of time and nature of duties than neglect by more senior supervisors. Staff skills, decisionmaking techniques, basic leadership considerations, and the need for decisiveness are but a sample. Just as a good noncommissioned officer always has a lesson or two in the pocket of his or her combat uniform for use during those unexpected but inevitable slack moments during operations, so too should leaders have discussion points ever ready to reinforce subordinates' leader expertise.

Appropriate Location of Leaders on the Battlefield

The appropriate location of leaders on the battlefield is one of the topics that a leader could discuss with an individual or group of junior leaders. The high-profile debate between the IDF COS and those who condemned commanders for not going forward into Lebanon has its roots in centuries-old staff college and officers' mess dialogues. Those favoring reliance on headquarters believe that computers and communications can provide any knowledge requisite to combat command. General Halutz's query of "At what level is 'Follow Me!' relevant?" reflects a lack of understanding regarding the multifaceted value inherent in trips to forward units. Retired IDF officers who made their marks while sharing the risks with those they led in 1973 and earlier wars were particularly pointed in commenting on the need to sense a battlefield firsthand. This group represents an officer corps that suffered particularly heavy casualties in its ranks in those wars, casualty rates that were themselves the source of considerable controversy in the

aftermath of the conflicts. They understand that the computer screen has yet to be built that can gauge a unit's morale or discern the difference between a leader in need of a few hours of sleep and one whose reserve of courage is exhausted. A commander's presence on the battlefield has impact in space well beyond those he or she sees face to face. That influence lingers long after he or she departs a unit. Word that the "old man" shared the dangers at the front with his soldiers passes mouth to mouth, magnifying the immediate effect of a visit. The same soldiers—those who shook hands with the leader and others who only heard of the event—remember the visits, just as they are quick to note when leaders have yet to be seen where the risk is greatest. A computer or radio is no better a means of building morale than of gauging another leader's ability to continue with his or her mission. IDF brigade commanders who never entered Lebanon missed opportunities to demonstrate fundamentals of leadership even as they failed to see the challenges posed by the terrain firsthand. That an officer corps with so notable a combat legacy as has the IDF forgot such a basic tenet serves as a caution to other militaries that might assume that the essentials of leadership do not need constant reinforcement.

Military and Political Leaders at the Senior Levels Require Educating No Less Than Do Those at Lower Echelons

A single joint assignment or a career of success based on a conventional-warfare focus is insufficient preparation for high-echelon responsibilities involving COIN or other, less familiar types of operations. Examples of topics meriting attention include leading or participating in coalition operations, interagency orchestration, and governing. Nor does the role of political leaders as the military's master preclude an officer from his or her responsibilities as a mentor to these seniors. Better understanding of how public statements such as those made in Jerusalem regarding the liability of the Lebanese government and the

country's people as a whole for Hizballah's actions offer an example for decisionmakers in Washington and other capitals of the world's leading nations. Political as well as military leaders may not realize how their remarks establish unrealistic and unintended expectations in audiences for which the comments were not intended, expectations that set the conditions for failure when they are not met. A military or other agency that is handicapped by ill-considered statements from its strategic leadership already has to deal with delays in the shaping OODA loop as it tries to overcome misguided indigenous preconceptions. These truths are not self-evident. The governments that do not teach them risk consequences evident with even a cursory glance at history.

It Is Important Not to Overreact to Failure

The IDF's internal consideration of what went wrong during the Second Lebanon War is commendable. Its efforts to sharpen conventional-warfighting skills will likely prove beneficial. Yet the security environment in which today's armed forces operate is forever evolving. Militaries must therefore be dynamic organizations. Steps taken in conjunction with tackling any errors made in a past war have to be viewed in light of what future conflicts will look like. Only then is there some hope that course corrections will steer a nation's soldiers in the correct direction for dealing with the future rather than readying them only for events of the past.

Know Thy Enemy; Know What Thy Enemy Knows of You

The previous pages make it apparent that Hizballah was better prepared for the conflict that transpired in July and August 2006 than was Israel. The reasons are myriad. Complacency, a fixation on operations in the occupied territories, overly convoluted doctrine, and inadequate leader training and selection processes are among them on the Israeli side. The ability to focus largely on a single enemy, careful study

of the foe, and lesser constraints regarding one's own casualties seem applicable to Hizballah. There is a reciprocal side to this: It also appears that Hizballah better knew what Israel knew (or did not know) about Hizballah than was the reverse case. Intelligence is a challenge regardless of the conflict. It is more so when a force imposes handicaps on itself. Of all the components of state structures, those dealing with intelligence should arguably be the most introspective. They should most often challenge themselves to take adversaries' views. It is these organizations that most need to retain a flexibility that permits evolution to meet the ever-changing demands of threats to the country's welfare. Reliance on a structure designed along geographical or functional lines, once effective, may no longer be most appropriate, as Israel's division of responsibilities for Hizballah and its Syrian and Iranian backers might imply. Israel is not alone. Bureaucracies are legendarily difficult to change, those larger to a greater extent than others of lesser size and complexity. Nation-states confronting insurgencies, terrorists, and other irregular foes should take note.

Less Familiar Lessons

It would be overstatement to label what follows as *new*, but, unlike the lessons of the previous section, those discussed here possess characteristics likely less familiar to some readers. They include the following:

- Intelligence responsibilities should not be contained by national boundaries.
- Concerns regarding casualties are but one factor influencing operations. They will often not be the preeminent one.
- Today's armed forces must be ready to meet domestic as well as international defense responsibilities.

Intelligence Boundaries Differ from National Boundaries

Counterinsurgencies both expand the scope and complicate the responsibilities of the intelligence community. Given that the population is, at a minimum, a critical component in any recipe for success during COIN, it is no longer sufficient for intelligence personnel to provide a commander merely the intentions and capabilities of an adversary. The intelligence officer (S-2), deputy chief of staff for intelligence (G-2), joint intelligence directorate (J-2), or multinational intelligence (C-2) must also identify holders of key civilian positions and the relationships among these and other critical social nodes in the area of operations. Understanding the terrain is still crucial, but so too is comprehending the physical and social infrastructures of local communities and the larger systems of which they are a part.

This increased intelligence complexity at the tactical level has operational and strategic complements. Analysts cannot afford to focus on such nonstate actors at the micro level alone. They must also be well versed in such matters as the nature of these organizations' relationships with nations, the types of support they receive, and the chinks in their interactions that might offer means of influencing their willingness to cooperate with friendly-force objectives. Much of the information key to such understanding will be in the possession of analysts other than those specializing in the group of concern. Ensuring that these individuals make their interests known throughout relevant intelligence systems is crucial, as is an ethic of analysts passing potentially valuable information to colleagues with a potential interest even in the absence of a formal request. Effective information exchange and analysis demands cutting across international boundaries. Introducing a more matrix approach to intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination—one able to account for geographic, functional, economic, social, motivational, and other factors overlapping—will aid in a broader and deeper comprehension of relevant issues.

Balancing Casualty and Other Concerns

Counterinsurgencies (and other conflicts in which COIN is a notable feature) confront military commanders with a constant dilemma: What is the appropriate balance of force and restraint? Use of increased force generally has the benefit of reducing friendly-force casualties but presents the disadvantage of potentially causing too many civilian deaths. This tension is problematic in virtually any military operation. Its significance is magnified during COIN operations, given the potentially pivotal role of the noncombatant population. The same civilians threatened with harm are those whose support of the friendly force and rejection of the insurgency is so desirable.

The example of Israel in 2006 southern Lebanon demonstrates another component of this tension: Fear of friendly-force casualties may unduly constrain operations. The United States has, of late, been fortunate in this regard. The U.S. public detests the loss of its own in armed conflict, but it understands that casualties are sometimes the unavoidable cost of defending U.S. interests and serving to preserve or bring about the welfare of others. Several nations that frequently join the United States share this robust approach to warfighting. It has not always been so. Overreaction to casualties was evident in some late-20th-century decisions emanating from Washington. Similarly, casualty avoidance has come to represent a dominating characteristic of some coalition participants today. At times, this so greatly influences those nations' military and political concerns that the country's forces are of little, if any, utility when conditions threaten soldier welfare.¹¹ Political and strategic considerations may make it desirable that such units be a part of a coalition despite these limitations. Coalition plans and force allocations need to account for these eventualities, includ-

¹¹ For examples, see Stewart (2006, p. 307 et seq.) regarding the performance of Italian troops and Etherington (2005) regarding Ukrainian forces in the vicinity of Al Kut.

ing coverage of contingencies when more robust militaries have to step in and assume the responsibilities of less committed members of a partnership.

The New Front May Be the Home Front

The likelihood of U.S. military forces being committed to support domestic authorities during a large-scale disaster has increased with the expansion of international terrorist group capabilities and antipathies. Israeli government officials had to deal with civilian reactions to Hizballah rocket attacks, including the internal displacement of citizens who fled by the thousands from the country's northern regions. How these challenges were met and what lessons were learned from them is outside the scope of this book, but it is worth noting that similar requirements are likely appropriate for, but seldom considered in, U.S. armed forces' planning and exercises. The related preliminary preparations are vast. They include requirements for intelligence organizations to build and maintain databases identifying key points of contact in relevant domestic agencies and practicing links with those agencies to build mutual understanding of each other's capabilities.

Concluding Thoughts

For over a thousand years, Roman conquerors returning from the wars enjoyed the honor of a triumph—a tumultuous parade. In the procession came trumpeters and musicians and strange animals from the conquered territories, together with carts laden with treasure and captured armaments. The conqueror rode in a triumphal chariot, the dazed prisoners walking in chains before him. Sometimes his children, robed in white, stood with him in the chariot, or rode the trace horses. A slave stood behind the

conqueror, holding a golden crown, and whispering in his ear a warning: that all glory is fleeting.

—*George C. Scott as General George S. Patton Jr.*¹²

The opportunity to learn from others' experiences is one it is wise to take advantage of. The situation is especially fortuitous when those experiencing difficulties firsthand dedicate themselves to sharing their hard-earned knowledge. The Second Lebanon War and the IDF's willingness to disclose its lessons from that event provide many square pegs better tailored to future U.S. round holes now than in the aftermath of crises sure to come.

¹² See Coppolla and North (1970).

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