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by

Gordon C. Griffin, Lt Col, USAF

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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Griffin is a student at the Air War College. A career acquisitions officer, he has had numerous technology development and management assignments in space, electronic warfare, and special weapons programs. He is a distinguished graduate of both Squadron Officer School and the Air Command and Staff College. He has earned a master's degree in electrical engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology, a master's degree in business from the University of New Mexico, and a master's degree in Military and Operational Arts and Sciences from Air University.

Introduction

During the summer of 2006, Israel conducted a thirty-four day war against Hezbollah in response to the abduction of two Israeli soldiers. Israeli forces caused significant damage to Hezbollah military capabilities and Lebanese infrastructure, yet Israel failed to achieve any of its primary objectives. The kidnapped soldiers were not released and Israel's deterrence posture was weakened due to regional perceptions of Israeli defeat. Hezbollah survived to fight another day, and their rocket attacks on northern Israel were never suppressed. The United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force has proved ineffective at disarming Hezbollah's fighters. During the fight, Israeli ground forces were bogged down by a well prepared enemy and, while their air strikes caused great damage in Lebanon, they failed to coerce the population to stop supporting Hezbollah. Hezbollah was able to use the damage to evoke widespread condemnation of Israel by successfully manipulating the media.

Israel developed a flawed strategy at the outset of this conflict and their leaders made many strategic and operational mistakes that led to their defeat. Some of these failures and flaws included poor leadership and decision making by the military and political leaders, over-reliance on airpower, delayed use of ground forces which when employed were extremely unprepared for the conflict, numerous intelligence failures, failure to prepare their homeland defense against Hezbollah's rocket attacks, and failure to use the media to wage an information battle. Israel's humiliation will likely have severe repercussions throughout the region and their inability to meet their objectives will probably lead to more conflict with Hezbollah in the future.

In this paper I will detail how Israeli strategy was developed and why their campaign failed to meet any of its intended objectives. I will summarize the key background events, including

the instability of Lebanese politics, the rise of Hezbollah, and previous Israeli conflict in, and occupation of, Lebanon. I will examine the Israeli strategy development process and military execution of both the air and ground campaigns. I will analyze the effectiveness of Israeli strategy and execution and discuss the operational and strategic breakdowns which led to a failure to meet any of their stated objectives throughout the war and its aftermath. Finally, I will describe the implications of the outcome, not only for Israel and Hezbollah, but for several other regional and worldwide actors with a stake in the Middle East peace process.

Background

The modern state of Lebanon won independence from France in 1943. The politics of post-independence Lebanon was defined by the National Pact, an unwritten understanding between the Sunni Muslims and the Maronite Christians who dominated the political process. The National Pact formalized the political system into sectarian communities called confessions. Each of the country's eighteen confessions was given certain political privileges.¹ Power was divided proportionally between the various religious communities in Lebanon based on the national census of 1932. This system stressed allegiance to religious communities rather than to national citizenship. Religion thus became the basis for national citizenship as the confessions were represented as political entities.

Sectarianism has inhibited the ability to build a unified national Lebanese agenda and perpetuated a fragmented society, and the system has been unable to resolve the internal conflicts that arise in Lebanon.² See Figure 1. Thus foreign powers have continually intervened to help keep the area stable. French colonial interests guaranteed the peace from the 1860s through the

¹ Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 11.

² Ussama Makdisi, "Understanding Sectarianism," in *The War on Lebanon: A Reader*, ed. Nubar Hovsepian (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), 26.

middle of the 20th century. In 1958 civil conflict and the rise of Arab nationalism caused the United States (US) to intervene to maintain stability, and in the 1970s, both Israel and Syria invaded Lebanon under the pretext of preserving stability and security in Lebanon.³

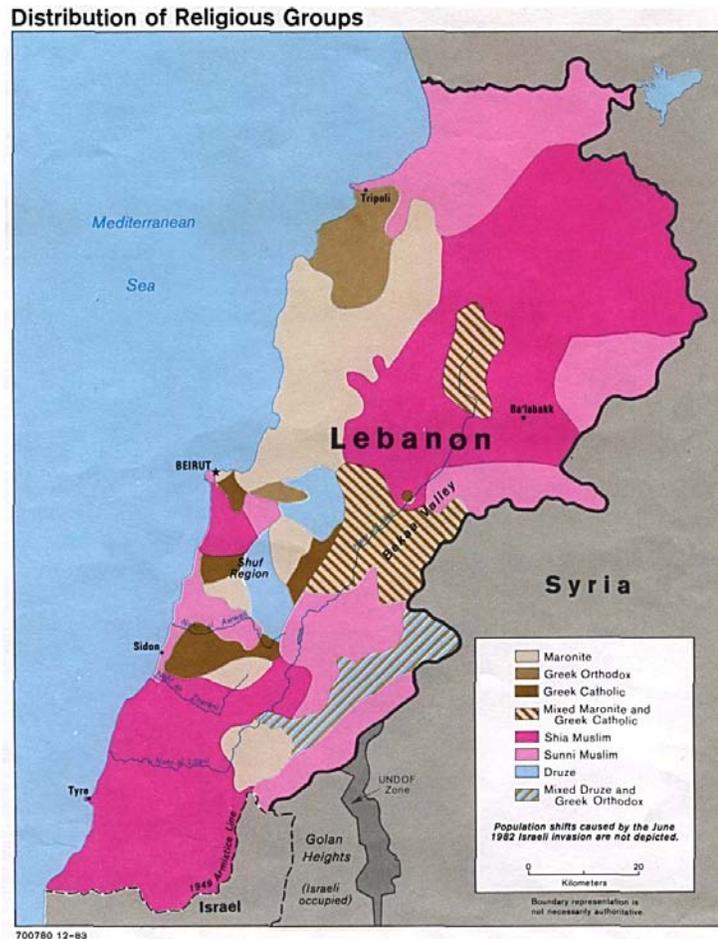


Figure 1. Religious Divisions in Lebanon.⁴

In 1975, civil war broke out in Lebanon. There were three main causes. First, religious inequity was one factor in the outbreak of conflict. The Muslim population of Lebanon had grown significantly, yet confessional division of power was still based on 1932 census data. In

³ Nubar Hovsepian, “State-Society Relations and the Reproduction of the Lebanese Confessional System,” in *The War on Lebanon: A Reader*, ed. Nubar Hovsepian (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), 36.

⁴ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 1.

the 1970s Muslim demands for greater parity in the political structure became more insistent.⁵ For example, in 1974, Shiites made up 20 percent of the population yet received less than one percent of the state budget.⁶ Second, the Palestinian conflict began to intrude into Lebanese politics. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had been expelled from Jordan in 1971 and had reemerged in Lebanon. They conducted guerrilla raids and attacks against Israel's northern border which only added to the instability and unrest.⁷ The third cause of instability was a rise in disparity between classes. An expanding economy in the late 1960s and early 1970s resulted in severe socio-economic inequalities. A rapidly growing industrial sector caused internal migrations as many poor peasants moved to the cities looking for work. This resulted in the growth of poverty belts around the large cities, especially Beirut. Economic protests and strikes ultimately led to violent conflict in 1975 and the outbreak of a civil war that lasted fifteen years. The two primary political factions in the war were those who sought to overhaul sectarianism and establish a secular democratic order and those who sought to preserve the provisions of the National Pact. Syria intervened in 1976 under the pretext of keeping the peace, which began a long period of Syrian intervention in Lebanese politics. However, Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1978 widened the war and the internal struggle for and against sectarianism was muted.⁸

The Israeli invasion in 1978 was known as "Operation Litani." This action was named after the river in southern Lebanon beyond which Israel tried to force the armed Palestinians who had moved into the area. Israel's goal was to create for itself a security buffer zone from the unrest in Lebanon. Israeli forces withdrew after a few weeks, giving way to the United Nations

⁵ Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005), 213.

⁶ Sami Moubayed, "Who is Hassan Nasrallah?" *World Politics Review*, July 17, 2006, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/Article.aspx?id=55> (accessed September 28, 2007), 1.

⁷ Bickerton and Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 213.

⁸ Hovsepian, "State-Society Relations and the Reproduction of the Lebanese Confessional System," 38.

Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The UN peacekeeping force was ineffective and in 1982 Israel again tried to settle its conflict with the PLO. On June 6, 1982, Israel initiated a massive military invasion and occupied Lebanon up to Beirut. The goal of this invasion, called “Operation Peace in Galilee,” was to protect northern Israel from Palestinian rocket attacks and incursions. The invasion gave Israel the hope of destroying the PLO as a political force in the region and of putting in place a friendly Lebanese government that would become the second Arab state (after Egypt) to enter into a formal peace agreement with Israel.⁹ However, Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon lasted for 18 years—until the year 2000. The fight against this occupation was one of the original motivations for the creation of Hezbollah and was the main source of its acquisition of considerable popular legitimacy.¹⁰

Despite the conflict and unrest of the civil war, Lebanese sectarianism survived. The Taif Accord of October 1989 effectively ended the Lebanese civil war; however, it propagated the confessional political system and resulted in only minor changes to the National Pact of 1943. Under the provisions of the Taif Accord, the president of the republic is to be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament a Shiite Muslim. However, the Taif Accord transferred power away from the Lebanese president and increased the power of the cabinet. Parliamentary seats are to be evenly split between Christians and Muslims, with the two sides further divided among various Christian and Muslim denominations according to predetermined proportions. This effectively excludes from government populations or parties that are outside the confessional system and continues the recipe for instability within the Lebanese state.¹¹

⁹ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 33.

¹⁰ Gilbert Achcar and Michel Warschawski, *The 33-Day War: Israel's War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 5.

¹¹ Fawwaz Traboulsi and Assaf Kfoury, “Lebanon on the Brink,” in *The War on Lebanon: A Reader*, ed. Nubar Hovsepian (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), 350.

Hezbollah, the “party of God,” came into being in the early 1980s as a result of the Israeli occupation. The early 1980s was a time of great enthusiasm and transition for the Shiite Muslims of Lebanon. The Shiite-led Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 combined with Israeli occupation beginning in 1982 radicalized the Shiite community in Lebanon. Lebanese Shiites are a majority in a Muslim community long dominated by Sunnis in the confessional system.¹² For Iran, Hezbollah represented an opportunity to spread the message of the Islamic revolution and, throughout the 1980s, Hezbollah aligned closely with Iran.¹³

Hezbollah did not exist as a coherent organization until the mid-1980s. In 1985, Hezbollah leaders published an open letter addressed to the “Downtrodden in Lebanon and in the World.” It urged the faithful to gather under the ideology of Islam and declared that the world was divided between oppressors and oppressed. The United States and the Soviet Union were accused of increasing their power and influence at the expense of the third world. The United States was identified as the main enemy of Islam and was charged with inflicting suffering on Muslims through its proxy, Israel. Hezbollah viewed any negotiation with Israel as an unthinkable compromise and as a validation of Israeli occupation of Palestine. In addition in Hezbollah’s view, the Lebanese government itself was powerless and full of corruption. Hezbollah therefore attempted to free Lebanon from the influence of evil outside powers through the justified use of violence. Its ultimate goal was to destroy Israel and liberate Palestine by fighting under the banner of Islam.¹⁴

The Open Letter was written during a time of great military and political successes for Hezbollah. They played an important role in forcing US troops from Lebanon through the terrorist bombings of the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 and had significant influence in the

¹² Moubayed, “Who is Hassan Nasrallah?,” 1.

¹³ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 34-35.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37-39.

failure of a US-brokered peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon. They kidnapped several foreigners (including American journalist Terry Anderson) and held them hostage for many years. In June 1985, a group associated with Hezbollah hijacked TWA flight 847 to Beirut to highlight the fate of 766 Lebanese prisoners held hostage in Israeli prisons. Also in 1985, Hezbollah forced a withdrawal of Israeli troops from most of Lebanon. Israeli troops retreated to the southern border regions where its security buffer zone became a magnet for Hezbollah attacks through the 1990s.¹⁵

By the early 1990s, the end of the Cold War, the US response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the end of the civil war in Lebanon caused major upheavals in Middle Eastern politics. Iran had to adjust to the new balance of power of a reduced Iraq and a unipolar world of US power. As a result, its support for Hezbollah wavered and Hezbollah's revolutionary fervor was replaced by a more realistic sense of the changing politics of the region.¹⁶

The first elections after the Lebanese civil war were held in 1992 and they caused significant turmoil for Hezbollah's leaders. The organization had to decide whether to continue its rejection of corrupt confessional politics or to compete within the system. After much debate, Hezbollah referred the question to Iran's Ali Khamenei whom they considered to be their supreme legal authority, and Khamenei gave his approval for Hezbollah to participate in the elections. The Shiites had always been under-represented within the Lebanese confessional system and so Hezbollah's decision was very popular in the Shiite community. Hezbollah also gained some additional benefits including legitimacy as a political institution, a public forum for projecting its messages, and influence in the political process to its constituents' advantage.¹⁷

¹⁵ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 41.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 99-101.

While continuing to resist Israel's occupation in southern Lebanon, Hezbollah began engaging in the confessional politics that they had previously denounced.¹⁸

For the 1992 election, the Lebanese parliament increased its number of representatives from 99 to 128. It is unclear whether this increase was based on demographic considerations or to serve the interests of certain parties, but in either case, Shiite representation grew from 19 to 27 seats.¹⁹ In the election, Hezbollah and their allies won twelve seats,²⁰ giving them the largest block in the 128-member parliament.²¹ In subsequent elections they won several seats at the expense of rival Shiite party, Amal, and controlled of approximately ten percent of all seats. However, in 2000, Hezbollah and Amal formed an alliance which resulted in their winning control of over 25 percent of all seats in parliament. Hezbollah's party platform emphasizes economic development, political inequalities, and personal freedoms while continuing to be centrally focused on resisting Israeli military occupation of southern Lebanon.²²

During the 1990s Hezbollah was very active in fighting Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon and costs for Israel became very high. Throughout the decade Hezbollah attacked Israeli forces and positions in the security zone and Israel routinely retaliated against these attacks. Hezbollah was dedicated to evicting the Israelis and occasionally the fighting escalated. In the summer of 1993, in response to a Hezbollah provocation, Israel conducted heavy artillery and aerial bombardment in "Operation Accountability," the goal of which was to stop further Hezbollah attacks. During this operation, their heaviest offensive action in over a decade, Israel struck over thirty suspected Hezbollah strongholds resulting in over half a million Lebanese

¹⁸ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 45.

¹⁹ Farid el-Khazen, "Lebanon's First Postwar Parliamentary Elections, 1992: An Imposed Choice," American University of Beirut, <http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/elections92.html>, 10.

²⁰ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 101.

²¹ Lara Deeb, "Hizballah and its Civilian Constituencies in Lebanon," in *The War on Lebanon: A Reader*, ed. Nubar Hovsepian (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), 65.

²² Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 102.

refugees. Hezbollah responded by launching over 250 Katyusha rockets against Israel before a cease-fire was brokered.²³

In April 1996, a 16-day war ensued between the two parties after Hezbollah stepped up its attacks in the security zone and launched numerous Katyusha rockets into northern Israel. Israel's response, called "Operation Grapes of Wrath," consisted of multiple air strikes against Hezbollah targets throughout Lebanon, including Beirut, causing great amounts of property damage and resulting in over 400,000 Lebanese refugees. This operation turned into a nightmare for Israel after they mistakenly bombed a United Nations outpost at Qana resulting in over 100 civilian deaths. This weakened Israel's position as the Lebanese population swung support towards Hezbollah. In addition, moderate Arab regimes and even the Israeli population viewed the operation as excessively disproportionate and devastating to Lebanon. Hezbollah's assertion of its right to fight the Israeli occupation of Lebanon was affirmed.²⁴

In addition to the armed resistance against Israel, Hezbollah's rise in popularity among Lebanese Shiites is the result of several factors. First was the development of the Hezbollah-owned Al-Manar television station, which continuously showed propaganda of Arab forces striking out at Israel and never showed Arabs in defeat. Second, with Iranian funding, Hezbollah developed and operated countrywide educational, health, religious, and charity organizations. Hezbollah provided a significant amount of economic aid to the poverty-stricken Shiite communities, subsidized housing, and provided direct stipends to needy Shiite families.²⁵ Finally, the rise to power of Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah has influenced public opinion. Many compare the charismatic Nasrallah to Gamal Abdul-Nasser, the former Egyptian President and father of Arab nationalism who conducted two wars against Israel in 1956 and

²³ Bickerton and Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 259-260.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 292-294.

²⁵ Moubayed, "Who is Hassan Nasrallah?," 4-5.

1967. He is a young, defiant, revolutionary leader with a great following in the Arab world and is viewed as selfless and uncorrupted, a true believer in his cause.²⁶

Due partly to Hezbollah's resistance, Israel unilaterally withdrew all of its troops from Lebanon on May 24, 2000 after eighteen years of occupation. Despite this withdrawal, a territorial dispute continues over the Shebaa Farms border region, which Israel continues to occupy. Lebanon declares that the land is Lebanese, but Israel and the United Nations declare it as part of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Since 2000, Hezbollah and Israel have conducted a low intensity conflict over this disputed area. This campaign against Israel was designed to maximize Hezbollah's political position, yet not provoke Israel into a greater conflict. Notably, in September 2004, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution #1559 which expressed concern over the inability of the Lebanese government to rule over its territory due to the continued presence of armed militias in Lebanon. The resolution called for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, as well as for the disbanding and disarmament of all militias within Lebanon.²⁷ As a result, Syria withdrew its forces from Lebanon in 2005. Hezbollah, however, did not disarm, claiming that they were a resistance movement and not a militia.

From May 2000 through June 2006, Hezbollah fighters conducted more than 20 rocket attacks and skirmishes along the southern border of Lebanon in which Israeli citizens or soldiers were killed,²⁸ and in the eight months prior to outbreak of war, Hezbollah tried five times to abduct Israeli soldiers.²⁹ Israel did not respond forcefully to Hezbollah provocations. Israel's restrained response encouraged Hezbollah to continue the attacks and bolstered Hezbollah's ability to exert influence in the Lebanese domestic political system especially after the Syrian

²⁶ Moubayed, "Who is Hassan Nasrallah?," 1.

²⁷ United Nations Security Council Resolution #1559, September 2, 2004, 1.

²⁸ "Hizbullah Attacks Along Israel's Northern Border May 2000 – June 2006," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2006, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/NR/exeres.htm> (accessed February 6, 2008).

²⁹ Ze'ev Schiff, "Israel's War with Iran," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 6 (November-December 2006): 25.

withdrawal in 2005.³⁰ Until July 2006, this conflict was governed by an unwritten agreement not to target civilians. Both Israel and Hezbollah conducted kidnappings with detainees used as bargaining chips in prisoner exchanges. A major prisoner exchange occurred in 2004, and in early 2006, Nasrallah announced that new prisoner negotiations would take place soon.³¹

War & Strategy

On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah, in a continuation of its low level attacks, executed a surprise raid in an attempt to kidnap Israeli soldiers to exchange for three Lebanese prisoners held by Israel. Hezbollah's "Operation True Promise" was successful in capturing two Israeli reserve soldiers.³² Nasrallah claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and said that the prisoners could only be returned through negotiations and a trade. He also claimed that Hezbollah had no intention of escalating or starting a war. However, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert called the kidnapping an act of war, held the government of Lebanon responsible, and said that the Israeli response would be very painful. Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) chief of staff Lt Gen Dan Halutz also warned that Israel's response would "turn back the clock in Lebanon by 20 years."³³

Later in the day on July 12, Israel responded with a series of preplanned air strikes into southern Lebanon. They attacked Hezbollah command posts and bases, roads, and bridges over the Litani River. The purpose of these strikes was to block Hezbollah escape routes which might prevent a rescue mission for the Israeli detainees.³⁴ At the same time, a limited number of IDF

³⁰ Gary C. Gambill, "Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War," *Mideast Monitor* 1, no. 3 (September-October 2006): 2-3.

³¹ Deeb, "Hizballah and its Civilian Constituencies in Lebanon," 61-63.

³² "Hezbollah-Israel War 2006," Center for Democracy in Lebanon, <http://www.democracyinlebanon.com/WAR/Hezbollah-Israel-War2006.htm> (accessed September 12, 2007).

³³ William M. Arkin, *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War (draft)* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2007), 4-5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

ground forces in tanks and armored personnel carriers pursued the kidnappers into southern Lebanon and waged a fierce fight with Hezbollah militia.³⁵

Throughout the rest of the day on July 12 and through the next day, Israel and Hezbollah traded rocket, artillery, and small arms fire in the border areas. Hezbollah conducted 60 rocket attacks on Israeli border villages. Israel responded in kind with its own rocket and artillery barrages against Hezbollah positions. In addition, Israel continued with its air assault, hitting bridges and roads to prevent the transfer of the abducted soldiers. Furthermore, they began to attack Katyusha rocket launching sites.³⁶ The most visible and important target struck by Israel on the first day was Beirut's International Airport. Israel justified shutting down the airport for two reasons: to prevent the export of the abducted soldiers and to prevent the importation of weapons and supplies to Hezbollah organizations. The Lebanese government charged that the attacks were unjustified, stating that the attack was against Lebanese economic interests by stifling the summer tourist season.³⁷

On July 13, Hezbollah further escalated the conflict by firing long-range rockets into the Israeli town of Haifa about 30 miles south of the border. This attack was the furthest south that rockets from Lebanon had ever hit. Nasrallah claimed that Hezbollah did not want to escalate the war; yet Israel called the attack on Haifa a major escalation.³⁸ By July 14, Hezbollah had fired 185 Katyusha rockets into Israel.³⁹ In retaliation, the IDF launched additional punishment strikes on Hezbollah leadership targets including the headquarters complex in Beirut, Nasrallah's home, and Hezbollah's Al-Manar television stations. Israel also attacked two military airfields as a warning to the Lebanese military to stay out of the fight. These first two days shaped the

³⁵ Hezbollah-Israel War 2006," Center for Democracy in Lebanon, 4.

³⁶ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 7-8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

entire 34-day conflict. Each side took actions they believed were necessary for their own safety and security, but neither was able to properly judge the capability or the will of the other side.⁴⁰

Israel's existing doctrine helped shape its strategy in the war against Hezbollah. Israel's doctrine was developed based on its long and costly occupation of Lebanon in the 1980s and 1990s. That experience convinced Israel that securing its border by physically occupying neighboring territory with ground forces and inviting guerrilla resistance was to be avoided in the future. Therefore, after the withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, Israel developed a new doctrine based on using airpower as an asymmetric advantage. The Israeli Air Force (IAF) would therefore be used offensively to attack the terrorists or guerrillas operating on its borders. This doctrine emphasized technologies such as jet aircraft, unmanned air vehicles, and precision munitions that would allow Israel to create overwhelming mass and concentration using airpower. In this approach Israel desired to use technology as a way to avoid heavy casualties. Ground forces were relegated to a defensive role in the border regions, and Special Forces were to be used for offensive action only when airpower was deemed inappropriate. As a result, the capabilities and readiness of the ground forces operating in the border regions deteriorated.⁴¹

At the outset of its actions of July 12, known as "Operation Change of Direction" (also called "Just Desserts" and "Appropriate Retribution"),⁴² the Israeli government highlighted four primary objectives to guide the development of Israeli strategy. These included: (1) securing the return of the two abducted soldiers, (2) inflicting as much military damage as possible on Hezbollah, (3) strengthening Israeli deterrent posture against external aggression, and (4) coercing the Lebanese government into a more effective rule over southern Lebanon.⁴³

⁴⁰ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 15-16.

⁴¹ Gp Capt Neville Parton, "Israel's 2006 Campaign in Lebanon: A Failure of Air Power or a Failure of Doctrine?" *Royal Air Force Air Power Review* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 82.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴³ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 39.

Some members of the Israeli cabinet desired much grander objectives including conducting major attacks on Lebanese infrastructure targets, attacking Syria directly for their support of Hezbollah, and seeking the complete elimination of Hezbollah as an organization. The IDF successfully argued that these larger objectives were not feasible. For their part, the military considered three options: to attack Hezbollah alone, to attack both Hezbollah and Lebanon, and to attack Hezbollah, Lebanon, and Syria. Lt Gen Halutz recommended the second option, an attack against both Hezbollah and Lebanon.⁴⁴

Concerning the option to attack Syria for its support of Hezbollah, Israeli leaders publicly announced at the outset of the war that they had no intentions of doing so. IDF officials announced that targeting Syria was not under consideration and Defense Minister Peretz even called for peace negotiations with the Syrians. These views in effect blessed Syria's proxy warfare against Israel when possibly a threat of attack could have coerced Syria into stopping its delivery of arms to Hezbollah. In addition, Israeli attacks could have eliminated Syria's long-range missile capability and enhanced Israeli security, but Prime Minister Olmert feared additional escalation of the conflict. The risk of regional escalation was minimal however as Iran would not have intervened directly since it wanted to avoid attacks on its nuclear facilities and programs. A strike against Syria would have significantly weakened Hezbollah and could have strengthened the Lebanese government. It also would have demonstrated Israel's determination to deal with state-sponsorship of terrorism and thus enhance Israeli deterrence.⁴⁵ However, Israeli leaders missed an opportunity to settle these regional issues.

On the other hand, Hezbollah's strategic objectives in the 2006 war were never clearly articulated. At various times Nasrallah stated a variety of different strategic goals including: (1)

⁴⁴ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 39.

⁴⁵ Efraim Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," *The Middle East Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 4.

to obtain the release of Lebanese prisoners detained by Israel, (2) the creation of an alternative to the failed Middle East peace process, (3) liberation of the contested Shebaa Farms area, and (4) the liberation of Palestine.⁴⁶ It is likely that all but the first were rhetorical goals for Hezbollah. However, given the asymmetric nature of the conflict, in order to achieve this negative objective, all Hezbollah needed to do to win was to retain the abducted prisoners and to survive Israel's military onslaught.⁴⁷ Hezbollah thus developed a three-pronged military strategy that consisted of the following elements: (1) force Israel into costly attacks versus well prepared and defended fortifications, (2) draw Israeli forces deep into Lebanon to extend their lines of communications, and (3) fight a prolonged insurgent type of conflict, from which Israel could neither withdraw due to continuous rocket attacks into Israeli territory nor endure due to mounting casualties.⁴⁸

Hezbollah was very well prepared for the outbreak of the 2006 war with Israel. They had assumed, based on the previous rounds of low intensity conflict, that Israel would be averse to casualties and therefore reluctant to deploy massive ground forces. They also correctly predicted that operationally the IDF fighting would be centered on air forces, artillery bombardment, and Special Forces. Based on these assumptions, Hezbollah built up its force structure with the operational objective of waging a war of attrition against Israel's home front. They therefore needed the capability to strike deeply and continuously within Israel itself.⁴⁹

On this basis, Hezbollah used two types of fighting forces. Rocket forces included short-range, mid-range, and long-range assets. The short-range rockets, consisting primarily of Katyusha rockets were intended to strike at Israel's northern borders. Mid-range formations of

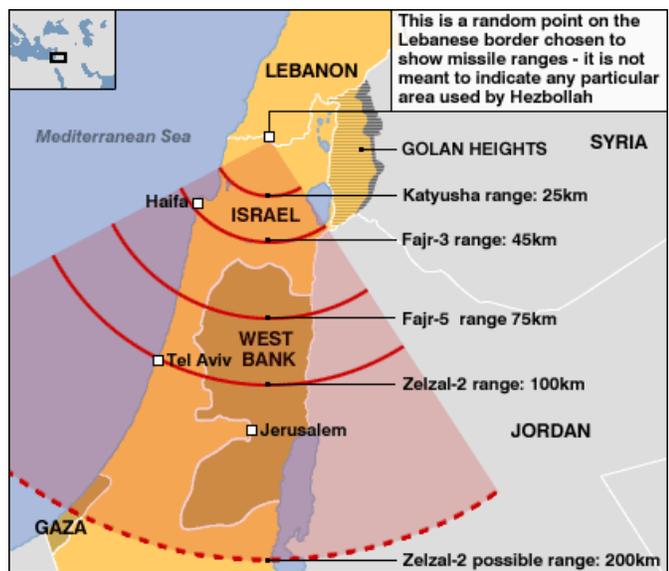
⁴⁶ Abdel Monem Said Aly, "The Sixth Arab-Israeli War: An Arab Perspective," *Middle East Brief: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University* 11 (October 2006): 5.

⁴⁷ Parton, "Israel's 2006 Campaign in Lebanon: A Failure of Air Power or a Failure of Doctrine?," 86.

⁴⁸ Christian Lowe, ed., "Inside Israel, Hez Ground War Strategies," *Defense Tech*, July 24, 2006, <http://www.defensetech.org/archives/002600.htm> (accessed September 28, 2007), 1.

⁴⁹ Amir Kulick, "Hizbollah Vs. the IDF: The Operational Dimension," *Strategic Assessment: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies* 9, no. 3 (November 2006): 2.

extended range Katyushas were set up south of the Litani to strike deep into Israeli territory, especially around the Haifa area. Long range rockets consisted of Zelzal and Fajr launchers and were intended to be strategic weapons that could strike down to Tel Aviv. Figure 2 demonstrates Hezbollah missile ranges at the outset of the conflict. In addition to the rocket forces, Hezbollah employed an array of ground forces that consisted of units dug in to underground tunnels and bunkers and employing anti-tank weapons. The ground units were intended to stall Israeli incursions, wear down the IDF forces, and inflict as many casualties as possible while allowing continued rocket fire into Israel.⁵⁰



*Figure 2. Hezbollah Rocket Ranges.*⁵¹

Hezbollah used three operational concepts in their conduct of the war. First, they saturated the area with rockets. They had stockpiled more than 13,000 rockets⁵² and they widely dispersed those rockets over the villages and open areas of southern Lebanon so that Israeli

⁵⁰ Kulick, "Hizbollah Vs. the IDF: The Operational Dimension," 3.

⁵¹ Parton, "Israel's 2006 Campaign in Lebanon: A Failure of Air Power or a Failure of Doctrine?," 83.

⁵² Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 30.

attacks would not prevent Hezbollah from sustaining rocket fire into Israel. Second, they used mobility to further increase the survivability of the rocket forces. Most of the mid-range rockets were fired from mobile launchers which allowed Hezbollah fighters to use “shoot-and-scoot” tactics. Third, the development of the ground defenses allowed them to wage a prolonged campaign of attrition. Weapons repositories, defensive bunkers, and shelters helped fighters survive in the face of Israeli attacks and allowed them to maintain their operations for extended periods of time.⁵³ Thus, when Hezbollah fighters captured two Israeli soldiers on July 12, 2006, it was well-prepared despite Israel’s swift and harsh response with airpower and a limited ground invasion. The following section will examine how the events unfolded in the 34-day war between Hezbollah and Israel.

Military Execution

Hezbollah’s attacks on IDF forces on July 12 came as a complete surprise. Just three days before the attack, IDF commanders had lowered their alert level on Israel’s northern border. However, the ferocity of Israel’s response to the kidnappings surprised Nasrallah and other Hezbollah leaders.⁵⁴ During the 34-day war, the IDF simultaneously conducted an air war against Hezbollah forces, rocket launchers, and Lebanese civil infrastructure, and a ground war using special operations and an invasion into Lebanon.⁵⁵ This section will explore Israel’s execution of both the ground war and air operations, as well as consider the cease-fire arrangements as approved by the United Nations.

Israel’s ground campaign was conducted in three distinct phases. In the first phase, from the outset of the war until July 31, the IDF used limited resources with cross-border raids against

⁵³ Kulick, “Hizbollah Vs. the IDF: The Operational Dimension,” 3-4.

⁵⁴ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 43-44.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

a well prepared and motivated Hezbollah opposition.⁵⁶ Israel's initial ground operations were limited to commando raids and reconnaissance missions as Israel wanted to avoid another ground occupation of Lebanon. These were temporary incursions into Lebanese territory with the goals of destroying Hezbollah forces and attempting to rescue the abducted soldiers. Initial struggles were characterized by Israeli forces fighting with small teams of infantry and armor against well-fortified positions with concentrated forces armed with anti-tank guided missiles.⁵⁷

On July 18 Israeli ground forces made a deep thrust into Lebanon, yet Hezbollah forces conducted a very effective defense. As the IDF advanced, Hezbollah fighters withdrew from fixed fighting positions into obscurity inside of villages. Hezbollah's forces were spread wide and thin which presented challenges for the IDF to effectively target them. They knew the terrain and the lines of communication which enabled them to streamline logistics and sustain rocket attacks while under fire. They also had gathered significant intelligence on Israeli capabilities and predicted where Israel would attack. In addition, they had carefully prepared defenses on the ground and had built an extensive network of tunnels and bunkers from which they were able to survive the Israeli onslaught. Yet, from inside the villages, Hezbollah used civilian cover against IDF attacks and took advantage of the urban setting to conduct guerrilla warfare and ambush tactics with great effectiveness.⁵⁸

Over the next two weeks, the ground war slogged on ineffectively. Major battles on July 24 and July 30, and the continued low intensity conflict with a guerrilla style foe, could not stop Hezbollah's rocket attacks on northern Israel. Within the Israeli ground forces, there was a great deal of confusion. Missions and objectives were unclear, units were advanced and withdrawn,

⁵⁶ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 53.

⁵⁷ Ben Moores, "A Preliminary Military Assessment of the Lebanon Conflict," Defense Aerospace, August 18, 2006, <http://www.defense-aerospace.com/cgi-bin/client/modele.pl?prod=72377> (accessed September 11, 2007), 3.

⁵⁸ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 47-49.

and momentum was not maintained. Conventional forces could not stay in contact with their guerrilla style opponents.⁵⁹ Furthermore, troops were sent to battle without adequate food, water, or supplies due to cuts in defense spending.⁶⁰ These factors limited the effectiveness of Israel's ground campaign in destroying Hezbollah fighting capabilities or will.

The second phase of the ground campaign began on July 31 with the commitment of significant forces to a larger invasion of Lebanon. The inability of the IDF to decisively win early battles, combined with the failure of airpower to suppress Hezbollah rocket attacks, caused Israel to make this strategic shift. Three divisions of Israeli reservists, an additional 15,000 troops, were mobilized and called into action to support the increased effort.⁶¹ On July 31, five brigades moved northeast into Lebanon to block the Syrian border and positioned themselves to move toward the Litani River in order to cut off Hezbollah forces operating south of this point. Heavy fighting resulted in significant losses, and Hezbollah rocket attacks were temporarily abated due to Israel's attack, but the IDF failed to effectively eliminate Hezbollah forces in the border region and therefore did not end the conflict or the rocket attacks.⁶² Figure 3 shows a summary of Hezbollah rocket attacks by day and demonstrates rocket attacks increased after Israel's commitment of large numbers of ground forces.

The third phase of the ground war began on August 10 as a cease-fire seemed imminent. That night Israel conducted its largest military airlift in 30 years as airborne forces moved on to the Litani River. This caused Hezbollah forces to maneuver and fierce fighting erupted along the entire front. By August 13, Israel had surrounded remaining Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon, and spent the final day of the conflict engaged in heavy engagements in an attempt to

⁵⁹ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 53.

⁶⁰ Gambill, "Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War," 4.

⁶¹ Parton, "Israel's 2006 Campaign in Lebanon: A Failure of Air Power or a Failure of Doctrine?," 84.

⁶² Moores, "A Preliminary Military Assessment of the Lebanon Conflict," 3-4.

gain as much advantage as possible before the ceasefire took effect. Israel managed to maneuver around Hezbollah forces and gave them no further advantages in continuing the fight.⁶³

As the UN mandated cease-fire approached on August 14, both Israel and Hezbollah increased the intensity of their strikes to cause maximum damage to the other. As the cease-fire approached, Israel occupied 16 pockets of territory in southern Lebanon, but they were unable to meet their military objectives of reducing Hezbollah forces and stemming the tide of rocket attacks into Israel. The IDF's decision to turn its focus away from conventional combat in general and from the northern theater itself after the 2000 withdrawal from Lebanon had severe consequences.⁶⁴

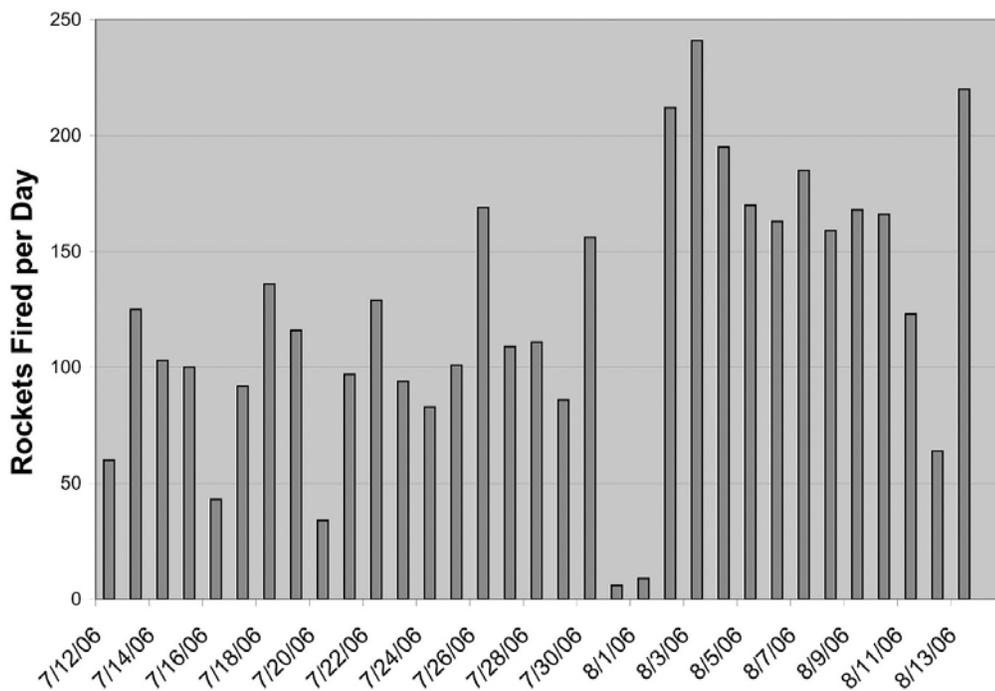


Figure 3. Hezbollah Rocket Attacks Per Day.⁶⁵

⁶³ Moores, "A Preliminary Military Assessment of the Lebanon Conflict," 3-4.

⁶⁴ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 53.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

Furthermore, the long delay in deploying the extensive ground operations limited Israel's flexibility and freedom of action. Until early August Israel was unprepared to conduct a massive ground operation. As a result, Israel was dragged into a ground operation without understanding the nature of the conflict and without an effective exit strategy. Therefore, the large ground operation did not achieve the goals of turning the tide of the war or stopping Hezbollah rocket fire. It also did not contribute to improving the diplomatic solution and did not affect the reactions of the Lebanese government to the ceasefire.⁶⁶

From the air war perspective, the IAF conducted sustained bombing against Hezbollah targets and Lebanese infrastructure during the 34-day war. Over 12,000 sorties were conducted by F-15s, F-16s, and attack helicopters. Strikes were also supported by 2,500 naval gunfire missions and another 140,000 long-range rocket and artillery attacks.⁶⁷ Air attacks struck Hezbollah targets throughout Lebanon including in the southern regions, in the Bekaa Valley, in Beirut, and even in northern Lebanon. All categories of targets were struck including transportation (roads, bridges, airports), petroleum distribution and storage, command and control sites, Hezbollah leadership, military forces, and Lebanese civil infrastructure.⁶⁸ The transportation and petroleum targets were struck to prevent Hezbollah movement and to stop the re-supply of Hezbollah's weapons. Hezbollah command and control targets were struck to degrade Nasrallah's ability to control his forces. Civil infrastructure strikes were intended to pressure the Lebanese government and people to stop their support for Hezbollah.

Hezbollah rockets, launchers, and weapon storage facilities were the dominant target set during the conflict.⁶⁹ Hezbollah possessed about 13,000 weapons at the outset of the conflict

⁶⁶ "English Summary of the Winograd Commission Report," *New York Times*, January 30, 2008. <http://www.newyorktimes.com/2008/01/30/world/middleeast/Winograd+web.html> (accessed February 4, 2008), 3-4.

⁶⁷ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 62-63.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

and fired approximately 4,000 rockets into Israel during the conflict, 90 percent of which were short range Katyushas.⁷⁰ However, Israel was unsuccessful in targeting these weapons because of Hezbollah tactics. Hezbollah fired from improvised firing locations hidden in homes or buildings, successfully dispersed the weapons using single barrel launchers, operated the rockets by remote control, and transported the weapons in normal trucks.⁷¹ Because of these concealment techniques, Israel's counter fire efforts often resulted in collateral damage which Hezbollah used in its propaganda campaign to turn the population against Israel.

Throughout the war, Israel attacked Hezbollah-related infrastructure all over Lebanon. International news media focused on the seemingly disproportional response, the civilian casualties, displaced persons, and collateral damage of Israeli attacks on civilian infrastructure.⁷² According to the Lebanese Council of Development and Reconstruction, the cost estimates of the damage associated with these attacks is over \$3.6 billion (USD). This estimate does not include indirect costs such as care for the one million refugees, cleanup costs, opportunity costs due to lost tourism, and overall damage to the Lebanese economy.⁷³ According to Arkin, most of the damage estimates and focus on civilian damage are exaggerated or patently false.⁷⁴ Yet Israel did conduct a coercive air campaign intended to punish Lebanon, to coerce the government of Lebanon with the possibility of even more damage,⁷⁵ and to separate the population from their support of Hezbollah.⁷⁶ Israel's bombing attacks damaged or destroyed 130,000 housing units throughout Lebanon. The most significant damage occurred in south Beirut and in southern Lebanon, areas which are populated by a majority of Shiites. In some areas up to 50 percent of

⁷⁰ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 56.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁷² Haneen Sayed and Zafiriz Tzannatos, "The Economic and Human Costs of the War," in *The War on Lebanon: A Reader*, ed. Nubar Hovsepian (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), 319.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 76.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷⁶ Sarah E. Kreps, "The 2006 Lebanon War: Lessons Learned," *Parameters* (Spring 2007): 76.

all structures were destroyed.⁷⁷ Lebanon claimed that over 900 commercial businesses and factories were attacked; however, only nine sites suffered significant damage, and those sites were targeted because they contained military goods or forces.⁷⁸ Financial institutions were specifically targeted because they were owned by Hezbollah individuals. Four port facilities were attacked because they housed Hezbollah military units. Israel also attacked the Jiyeh electric power facility, but chose to spare any long-term damage to the power plant by attacking only the plant's fuel tanks and sparing the electrical generators. Furthermore, the Israelis did not attack Lebanon's water or sewage facilities.⁷⁹ Thus, it appears that while Israel did specifically target civilian infrastructure, many of the attacks were on militarily useful facilities and thus represent lawful targets. Despite the predominate view that Lebanese civilian death and destruction was Israel's responsibility, Hezbollah used Lebanese society as a shield, by storing and launching weapons from civilian buildings and by blending into civil society. As a result Hezbollah was condemned as war criminals by Amnesty International.⁸⁰

Despite the significant damage caused by Israeli air attacks, the number of civilian deaths in Lebanon was a reasonably low figure of 1,100.⁸¹ In comparison, civilian deaths during the bombing of Kosovo in 1999 numbered around 500,⁸² and the air campaign during the first Gulf War directly resulted in about 2,300 civilian deaths.⁸³ However, almost 1 million Lebanese people were displaced by Israeli bombings in 2006.⁸⁴ One reason for the low casualties but high number of refugees was the information campaign conducted by the IDF. IAF aircraft dispensed

⁷⁷ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 79-82.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 90-92.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 93-97.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁸¹ Sayed and Tzannatos, "The Economic and Human Costs of the War," 318.

⁸² William M. Arkin, "Operation Allied Force: 'The Most Precise Application of Air Power in History'," in Andrew J. Bacevich and Eliot A. Cohen, eds., *War Over Kosovo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 22.

⁸³ Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey Summary Report* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1993), 249.

⁸⁴ Sayed and Tzannatos, "The Economic and Human Costs of the War," 318.

more than 17 million leaflets in Lebanon.⁸⁵ There were four primary themes in these leaflets that were targeted at both the Lebanese population and at Hezbollah fighters. Messages included: (1) warnings to the general population, especially in south Beirut and southern Lebanon, of impending Israeli attacks with recommendations to stay away from Hezbollah areas, (2) anti-Hezbollah messages directed at the general population stating that Hezbollah caused the war and that Nasrallah is a puppet of Iran and Syria, (3) messages to Hezbollah fighters stating that their cause is hopeless and that they should give up the fight, and (4) messages offering significant rewards to Lebanese people for information that would help the Israeli fight.⁸⁶

Beginning on August 11, as cease-fire negotiations were nearing their conclusion, the IAF initiated a final series of air attacks. Over the last 72 hours of the war, the IAF used over one million cluster bombs throughout southern Lebanon. The objective of this bombing was to inflict as much harm as possible on Hezbollah. However, with failure rates of over 10 percent, these cluster bombs left what amounted to a massive mine field over southern Lebanon.⁸⁷ At the conclusion of the war, UNIFIL mine clearing forces discovered over 100,000 unexploded cluster munitions in Lebanon, which in the month after the war had resulted in 18 deaths and over 100 injuries.⁸⁸ The unexploded ordinance slowed the repopulation of southern Lebanon and it wrecked Lebanese agriculture and its economy as farmers could not harvest or plow their fields.⁸⁹ Due to the war, Lebanon's Gross Domestic Product receded by 6 percent over the last half of 2006, and recent economic indicators point to a slow recovery due to continued

⁸⁵ Herbert A. Friedman, "Psychological Operations During the Israel-Lebanon War 2006," Psywar, <http://www.psywar.org/israellebanon.php> (accessed September 11, 2007), 2.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-11.

⁸⁷ Frida Berrigan and William D. Hartung, "US Military Assistance and Arms Transfers to Israel," in *The War on Lebanon: A Reader*, ed. Nubar Hovsepian (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), 247.

⁸⁸ Richard Falk and Asli Bali, "International Law at the Vanishing Point," in *The War on Lebanon: A Reader*, ed. Nubar Hovsepian (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), 221.

⁸⁹ Berrigan and Hartung, "US Military Assistance and Arms Transfers to Israel," 247-248.

instability.⁹⁰ After the war many human rights groups as well as the United Nations denounced Israel's use of these cluster munitions.⁹¹

On August 11, 2006, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution #1701 which resulted in a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah on August 14. The most important provisions of the Resolution include the following. First, it called for the immediate cessation of all Hezbollah attacks as well as all Israeli offensive operations. It also called for the Lebanese government to deploy its armed forces in conjunction with UNIFIL throughout the south as Israeli forces withdrew from the area. It emphasized the importance of the Lebanese government exercising full sovereignty and eliminating all weapons except those authorized by the government, and for Lebanon to secure its borders to prevent the entry of illegal arms into the country. It called on the international community to extend financial aid to the Lebanese people as part of a reconstruction plan. It called for Israel and Lebanon to develop a permanent security arrangement which would include full implementation of Resolution #1559 that required the disarmament of all non-governmental armed groups in Lebanon to prevent the resumption of hostilities. Resolution #1701 also called for the development of a plan to solve the border dispute with respect to Shebaa Farms and authorized a UNIFIL troop increase up to 15,000 so that it could monitor cessation of hostilities, support the Lebanese armed forces, and assist in the humanitarian relief efforts. Finally, Resolution #1701 stressed the importance of the need to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.⁹²

This section has examined Israel's execution during the three phases of the ground war as well as its continuing air operations. Despite having overwhelming force, Israel was unable to

⁹⁰ International Monetary Fund, *Lebanon: 2007 Article IV Consultation*, IMF Country Report Number 07/382 (December 2007), 6-7.

⁹¹ Irene L. Gendzier, "Exporting Death as Democracy: US Foreign Policy in Lebanon," in *The War on Lebanon: A Reader*, ed. Nubar Hovsepian (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), 129.

⁹² United Nations Security Council Resolution #1701, August 11, 2006, 1-4.

significantly degrade Hezbollah's military capabilities, prevent Hezbollah's rocket attacks into northern Israel, coerce the Lebanese government into taking control over Hezbollah actions, or separate Hezbollah from their source of popular support. In fact, Israel's overwhelming response to Hezbollah's aggression and use of cluster munitions resulted in claims of disproportionality throughout the international community. Active hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah ended on August 14 with the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution #1701. The following section will examine why Israel failed to meet any of its stated objectives.

Israel's Operational & Strategic Failures

At the outset of the conflict, the Israeli public overwhelmingly supported a strong response to Hezbollah aggression. According to a poll taken on July 17, 86 percent of the Israeli public felt the war was justified, 87 percent were satisfied with the IDF's performance, and Olmert's approval rate was 78 percent.⁹³ They viewed it as an overdue response to six years of Hezbollah rocket attacks against northern Israel. However, as the conflict progressed, media portrayal and public opinion became negative as Israel failed to meet its objectives. Israel's sense of failure was heightened by the fact that the war was fought under optimal conditions including internal public support and a broad international consensus that included the tacit approval of many Arab states. Therefore, Israel's optimism at the outset of the war raised expectations that only deepened the sense of failure when they were not achieved.⁹⁴

Numerous operational and strategic mistakes became evident as the war progressed. These included poor leadership and decision making; over reliance on airpower; delayed launch

⁹³ Dov Waxman, "Between Victory and Defeat: Israel after the War with Hizballah," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2006-2007): 36.

⁹⁴ Avi Kober, "The Second Lebanon War," *The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies*, Perspectives Paper no. 22 (September 28, 2006): 5.

of the ground offensive—which when finally begun was ineffective due to lack of preparation, equipment limitations, and unsuitable tactics; poor intelligence concerning Hezbollah capabilities; unprepared homeland defense preparation; and inadequate use of the media to present Israeli views.⁹⁵ These errors allowed Hezbollah to successfully fight and survive against the larger and stronger Israeli military forces.

Poor leadership and decision making were evident at the very top of the Israeli government. A month after the war ended, the government of Israel convened a commission to examine the causes of failure against Hezbollah. The Winograd Commission found several faults in both the decisions and decision-making processes. The Commission did exonerate the political leaders somewhat in their final report by stating that Israel’s leaders “acted out of a strong and sincere perception of what they thought at the time was Israel’s interest.”⁹⁶ However, the Commission found that in general the decision to respond to Hezbollah’s aggression with an intensive military strike was not based on a detailed analysis of the complex Lebanese environment. The ministers initiated a military campaign without understanding its nature or exit strategy. Thus, in deciding to go to war, the Israeli government failed to consider a range of options which could have included a continuation of containment policies, a military show of force, or diplomatic initiatives. Furthermore, the government failed to set achievable goals.⁹⁷ Israel’s objective to destroy and disarm Hezbollah was extremely unrealistic, and the objective of having Lebanon exert control over their southern regions depended on a foreign government over which Israel had no control.⁹⁸ In addition, even after hardships became evident, the military and political leaders failed to adapt their operations or objectives to reflect the reality of the

⁹⁵ Jeremy M. Sharp, et.al., “Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict,” *Report for Congress*, Order Code RL33566 (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, September 15, 2006), CRS-11.

⁹⁶ “English Summary of the Winograd Commission Report,” *New York Times*, January 30, 2008, 4.

⁹⁷ “Winograd Commission Submits Interim Report,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, April 30, 2007. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2007/Winograd.htm> (accessed October 29, 2007), 3.

⁹⁸ Kober, “The Second Lebanon War,” 5.

situation on the ground.⁹⁹ Israel's leaders failed to admit that the war was anything more than a limited military action. They never declared a state of emergency and did not enact wartime powers. This resulted in a delay in mobilizing the reserves.¹⁰⁰ Finally, the Israeli leadership failed to consider its own prior experiences in Lebanon or the lessons learned from the difficulties experienced by the United States and others in Iraq and Afghanistan facing similar types of guerrilla style operations in asymmetric conflicts.¹⁰¹

The Winograd Commission interim report specifically condemned the prime minister, the defense minister, and the chief of staff for their leadership failures. Prime Minister Olmert and Defense Minister Peretz both lacked military experience and some critics claimed that they may have been unqualified to head the state during wartime.¹⁰² The prime minister neglected to consult with others despite having limited experience in military affairs. He was responsible for the actions of his government but he failed to exercise good judgment, made hasty decisions, and misunderstood the nature of the war. He also failed to set achievable goals and lacked flexibility when Israel's actions failed to progress toward attaining goals.¹⁰³ In addition, Israel's large-scale attack may have been the result of the newly elected prime minister's desire to gain recognition as a hard-line leader similar to his predecessor, Ariel Sharon.¹⁰⁴

With respect to the defense minister, the Commission similarly found that Peretz did not have adequate experience in military or political matters and did not understand basic military principles. Despite this, he consistently failed to consider the opinions of his advisors and made many decisions without consultation. He also neglected to conduct an independent assessment

⁹⁹ Winograd Commission Submits Interim Report," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," 2.

¹⁰¹ Aly, "The Sixth Arab-Israeli War: An Arab Perspective," 6.

¹⁰² Sharp, et.al., "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict," CRS-12.

¹⁰³ Winograd Commission Submits Interim Report," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ O. Ozerov, "Hot Summer in the Middle East," *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy and International Relations* 53, no. 1 (2007): 34-35.

of the threat in Lebanon. Furthermore, he failed to check the IDF's operational plans and he did not reconcile the desired ends with the military means available for achieving them. The Commission found that Peretz "failed in fulfilling his functions...(and) impaired Israel's ability to respond well to its challenges."¹⁰⁵

In addition, Lt Gen Halutz, chief of staff of the IDF and former head of the IAF, played a critical part in the poor decision-making process. He had made too many appointments from the air forces to the general staff and was overly optimistic about the use of airpower.¹⁰⁶ He was unprepared for the capture of the two soldiers and when the abduction occurred he responded hastily. Furthermore, he ignored contingency plans for a ground offensive against Hezbollah and failed to see the need for a major ground offensive until it was too late. He also misled the civilian leaders concerning the readiness of the ground forces despite knowing that both the prime minister and defense minister lacked military expertise. The Commission found that Halutz failed in his duties as a commander and exhibited flaws in professionalism.¹⁰⁷

The second main cause of Israel's strategic and operational failure was its over-reliance on, and misuse of, airpower. At the outset of the war, Israel relied almost exclusively on airpower. Military leaders were convinced by airpower's effectiveness in the 1991 Gulf War and in the aerial bombardment of Kosovo. However, Israeli leaders had learned the wrong lessons from those operations. Halutz had observed the apparent connections between strategic bombing and victory and he sought to use that model in his operations against Hezbollah as a low-cost, low-casualty way to achieve success. In addition to the lessons of the Gulf War and Kosovo, this theory of airpower effectiveness was developed over the 1980s and 1990s from Israel's costly occupation of Lebanon which ended in 2000. Their experiences caused them to refrain from

¹⁰⁵ Winograd Commission Submits Interim Report," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁶ Sharp, et.al., "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict," CRS-12.

¹⁰⁷ Winograd Commission Submits Interim Report," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 5.

deploying ground troops back to the same region and Israeli leaders believed that a ground force was unnecessary as long as there were alternatives. However, the IDF failed to realize that no two wars are identical and the IDF faced a different situation in their war against Hezbollah.¹⁰⁸

Thus, the Israeli leadership believed that strategic bombing could win wars cleanly and that airpower was an effective way to defeat an enemy. The IAF was fixated on high technology warfare enabled by airpower and they assured the political leaders that airpower could be used to effectively deal with new security challenges.¹⁰⁹ Israel thought that stand off weapons could cause sufficient pain on the civilian population so that it would stop its support for Hezbollah and exert pressure on the government to curtail Hezbollah's aggression.¹¹⁰ However, in a survey conducted from July 24 to July 26 by the Beruit Center for Research and Information, during the height of Israel's punishment attacks, 87 percent of the Lebanese population, including Shiite, Sunni, Christian, and Druze respondents, expressed support for Hezbollah's confrontation with Israel.¹¹¹ Thus, Israel's punishment based coercion strategy was clearly ineffective.

Israel's military leaders also misapplied the tenets of an effects-based approach to operations resulting in a misuse of airpower that contributed to its failure to achieve its objectives. Israel failed to conduct sufficient analysis to link tactical actions to strategic effects. This resulted in the IDF servicing a list of customary targets without understanding the consequences of hitting these targets.¹¹² As a result, many operations had counterproductive effects. Examples include the attempts to coerce the Lebanese government and population as well as Israel's strikes on Hezbollah command and control targets. Had Israel conducted a detailed systems-based analysis, they would have realized that pursuing a Douhet-like strategy of

¹⁰⁸ Kreps, "The 2006 Lebanon War: Lessons Learned," 76-78.

¹⁰⁹ Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," 2.

¹¹⁰ Kreps, "The 2006 Lebanon War: Lessons Learned," 76.

¹¹¹ "Lebanese Public Opinion," *Mideast Monitor* 1, no. 3 (September-October 2006): 1.

¹¹² J.P. Hunerwadel, "Israel's Failure: Why?" *Air and Space Power Journal* XXI, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 22-23.

punishment against the Lebanese government and its people would not separate Hezbollah from its popular support. Furthermore, they would have realized that striking command and control targets would be ineffective due to Hezbollah's decentralized and autonomous fighting methods. Finally, Israel's goal of destroying Hezbollah's long-range rockets led them to execute a preplanned strike called "Hannibal" that was completed on the first day of the war. From then on, Israel operated without branches or sequels to their air plans and they reverted to the mind-set of simply servicing the target list.¹¹³ These failures in the application of effects-based principles led to an ineffective use of airpower.

Ultimately, Israel's air-centric strategy was incongruent with their political objectives. Achieving the goals of securing the return of the abducted soldiers and destroying Hezbollah's military capability required an integrated approach using both airpower and ground forces, but IDF leaders favored a casualty-averse strategy using airpower and were unwilling to conduct a high-casualty, land-based approach.¹¹⁴ Israeli strategy lacked jointness or an integrated air-ground campaign. There is no evidence of coordination between troops on the ground and airpower for close air support. Even interdiction missions against bridges and roads seemed to be a part of Israel's punishment strategy rather than in support of ground operations.¹¹⁵

Because they failed to understand the nature of the war, Israeli leaders were guilty of dogmatic adherence to what Avi Kober calls "post-heroic warfare," the need to avoid casualties in one's own forces and to limit enemy civilian casualties. Israeli forces had conducted this type of warfare for many years against the Palestinians, but in the war against Hezbollah it was necessary to sacrifice both troops and civilians in order to achieve the ambitious war

¹¹³ Hunerwadel, "Israel's Failure: Why?," 24.

¹¹⁴ Kreps, "The 2006 Lebanon War: Lessons Learned," 76.

¹¹⁵ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 122.

objectives.¹¹⁶ The preference for this type of warfare led Israel to rely initially on airpower to achieve a quick outcome, but the air campaign should have been conducted in concert with a large scale ground operation.¹¹⁷

Israel's over-reliance on airpower resulted in a delay in the start of major ground operations. This delay, combined with the general ineffectiveness of the ground forces, was another cause of Israel's failure in the 2006 war. After Israel failed to destroy Hezbollah with airpower, a ground offensive was launched after almost three weeks of fighting. At the outset, General Halutz resisted a large scale invasion except as a last resort and delays in executing the ground offensive allowed Hezbollah to continue its rocket attacks throughout the conflict.¹¹⁸

Previous Israeli leaders failed to prepare the ground forces adequately for this war against Hezbollah. The policies of prior military and political leaders led to shortcomings in readiness and training, doctrine, and organizational culture.¹¹⁹ Israeli leaders assumed that a large land war in Lebanon would be unlikely and planners had unrealistically assumed that any war with Hezbollah would be limited to minor skirmishes instead of a major military campaign. These assumptions and policies were derived from Prime Minister Sharon's legacy to not involve Israeli forces in Lebanon again. Since 2002, the IDF had reduced conscript service, had shortened the time reservists had to perform duty, and reduced the amount of training. Budget pressures led the IDF to cancel its latest tank development program, forced a reduction in size of tank formations, and eliminated the installation of the latest anti-missile system on most tanks.¹²⁰ Furthermore, for five years, the IDF was almost exclusively focused on suicide bombers and suppressing the second Palestinian Intifada which drew their thinking and resources away from

¹¹⁶ Kober, "The Second Lebanon War," 1.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁸ Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," 3.

¹¹⁹ "Winograd Commission Submits Interim Report," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 5.

¹²⁰ Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," 2.

preparing for conventional conflict. As a result, Israeli weapon stocks were depleted, plans were not updated, and the military was unprepared to deploy in Lebanon.¹²¹ The lack of planning and preparation seriously hampered military operations from the start.

Once major ground operations began, Israel misapplied its ground forces as well. As the fighting intensified, Hezbollah fighters melted into the population in the villages. Tanks, which comprised the main force of Israel's ground offensive, were not well-suited for urban combat where maneuver by mechanized forces is extremely restricted. The IDF failed to adjust its tactics to changes in Hezbollah's capabilities, specifically the abundance of anti-tank weapons. As a result, Israeli tanks moved into southern Lebanon along narrow, hilly roads where they were effectively hit by Hezbollah fighters with Iranian and Syrian anti-tank missiles.¹²² By the end of the war, 47 Israeli tanks had been effectively hit by Hezbollah anti-tank missiles.¹²³ Furthermore, campaigns against asymmetric adversaries cause unique challenges because massive force and technological advantages do not translate into battlefield success. Israeli tanks and artillery tried to strike fielded forces and weapons which were hidden among the population and difficult to hit. This caused significant civilian casualties and collateral damage, which had a counterproductive effect of rallying sympathizers against Israel.¹²⁴ Manpower-intensive infantry operations, boots on the ground, are necessary for success in this type of conflict and Israel realized too late the need for extensive infantry operations.¹²⁵

Israeli tactical and operational leadership also contributed to the poor performance. Mission orders were vague and did not have clear timelines for completing tasks. Frequent

¹²¹ Shai Feldman, "The Hezbollah-Israel War: A Preliminary Assessment," *Middle East Brief: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University* 10 (September 2006): 4.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Schiff, "Israel's War with Iran," 29.

¹²⁴ Kreps, "The 2006 Lebanon War: Lessons Learned" 79.

¹²⁵ P.K. Gautam, "Military Lessons of the Israel-Hezbollah War in Lebanon," Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, <http://www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/PKGautam190806.htm> (accessed September 11, 2007), 2.

changes in orders confused the troops and generally resulted in mistrust between commanders and their subordinates. The fact that most (7 of 8) brigade commanders spent the war at headquarters locations instead of leading troops at the front added to this problem. Furthermore, many units were broken up and dispersed between different forces resulting in a lack of overall unit cohesiveness.¹²⁶ Finally, logistics issues proved problematic for Israel during the campaign. Israeli troops were not supplied with proper ammunition or body armor, and lacked sufficient food and water to carry out a fight against well-supplied and prepared Hezbollah fighters.¹²⁷

The fourth major cause of Israeli lack of effectiveness was its failures in intelligence. Israeli intelligence did have some successes against Hezbollah, such as data about its rocket forces and their use of tactical unmanned aerial vehicles.¹²⁸ However, the IDF was unaware of the extent of defensive fortifications and positions that Hezbollah had constructed in southern Lebanon. Israeli intelligence was also not very clear concerning the quantities and capabilities of Hezbollah's anti-tank and anti-ship missiles, both of which were used successfully by Hezbollah fighters. In addition, distribution of intelligence information down to the lowest level was hampered by stovepipes and classification issues.¹²⁹

Perhaps the most critical failure in Israeli intelligence was their lack of information concerning Hezbollah's electronic warfare and communications equipment. As part of its fascination with high technology weapons, over the years Israel had built an extensive electronic warfare capability to eliminate enemy communications during a conflict. At the outset of the war, Israel attempted to jam Hezbollah's radio transmissions in the field as well as strategic

¹²⁶ B.C. Kessner, "IDF Did Not Recognize War, Slow to Transition Report Says," *Defense Daily International* 7, no. 44 (November 10, 2006): 2.

¹²⁷ Feldman, "The Hezbollah-Israel War: A Preliminary Assessment," 4.

¹²⁸ Col David Eshel, "The Israel-Lebanon War: One Year Later," *The Journal of Electronic Defense* 30, no. 7 (July 2007): 30-31.

¹²⁹ Feldman, "The Hezbollah-Israel War: A Preliminary Assessment," 4.

communications with Iran and Syria.¹³⁰ However, Hezbollah successfully countered IDF electronic warfare efforts by using Iranian-supplied communications gear with robust counter-countermeasures. They used disciplined communications security to allow their networks to survive and they used extensive fiber optic cables which were not susceptible to jamming. The result was that Hezbollah's communications network functioned throughout the war all over southern Lebanon. In contrast, Hezbollah effectively used their own electronic warfare systems to blind IDF radar and communications, and they monitored and exploited IDF communications, gaining useful strategy and tactics information.¹³¹

Yet another reason for Israel's strategic failure was their inability to develop or deploy an adequate missile defense system to protect their homeland against the Hezbollah missile threat. Israel's goals did not even consider defending their homeland, but the war demonstrated that northern Israel was extremely vulnerable to Hezbollah's rocket barrage. Existing Israeli air defenses were incapable of stopping Hezbollah rocket and missile fire. Israel possessed key air defense systems, including Arrow and Patriot PAC-2, but failed to engage any rockets because Hezbollah decided not to strike at Tel Aviv where these systems were located. In addition, the deployment of Israel's Mobile Tactical High Energy Laser system was delayed due to excessive development and operational costs.¹³²

Thus, the Katyusha rockets were effectively used as a strategic weapon by Hezbollah. The rocket attacks effectively reduced the time that Israel had to achieve its objectives. The war was perceived by Israeli leaders as a race between the patience of the Israeli people and the ability of the IDF to stop the rocket attacks. However, the IAF failed to suppress Hezbollah's Katyusha rocket and mortar attacks against Israeli cities as over 1,000 Hezbollah missiles hit

¹³⁰ Eshel, "The Israel-Lebanon War: One Year Later," 27.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³² Moores, "A Preliminary Military Assessment of the Lebanon Conflict," 2.

urban areas and paralyzed all of northern Israel. One million Israelis had to live in bomb shelters and about 300,000 refugees fled to the south. The effectiveness of the Katyusha rocket attacks was one reason that Hezbollah could claim victory in the conflict.¹³³ In addition, the state failed to play any role in the evacuation or protection of its citizens. Israel did not provide essential services to the elderly or sick who could not evacuate themselves. Public bomb shelters were not properly maintained and provisions of food, water, and medical assistance were not provided. Charitable organizations provided only partial relief. Furthermore, Israeli leaders failed to declare a state of emergency which would have committed the state to provide these essential services and to compensate individuals for their economic losses due to the war.¹³⁴

The final reason for Israel's strategic failure is that Hezbollah conducted an effective propaganda campaign that Israel could not counter. The media played an important role in determining the ultimate outcome of the war and Hezbollah leaders understood the importance of the communications revolution. They effectively used cameras and computers to manipulate the media to significantly influence public opinion. They knew that their struggle against Israel would be decided on the "information battlefield."¹³⁵ Hezbollah won a clear propaganda victory by successfully using the media that contributed to Israel's overall sense of strategic failure.¹³⁶

Hezbollah used the media as a force multiplier and generated sympathy for its cause by highlighting Israeli attacks against civilians and extensive damage in Lebanon. Throughout the war, media everywhere emphasized the theme of Israeli disproportionality. Israel defended its actions as legitimate in accordance with international law, stating that using civilians for military

¹³³ Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," 2.

¹³⁴ Yoav Peled, "Illusions of Unilateralism Dispelled in Israel," in *The War on Lebanon: A Reader*, ed. Nubar Hovsepian (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), 280-281.

¹³⁵ Marvin Kalb and Carol Saivetz, "The Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetric Conflict," *John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University* (February 2007): 5-6.

¹³⁶ Frida Ghitis, "How the Media Partnered with Hezbollah: Harvard's Cautionary Report," *World Politics Review*, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/ArticlePrint.aspx?ID=717> (accessed September 11, 2007), 2.

cover is a war crime and a target with soldiers hiding among civilians is considered a legitimate target, but their defense went unnoticed.¹³⁷ The combined coverage of the Middle East's two major television outlets, Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, depicted or referred to Israel as the aggressor over 88 percent of the time, while only 6 percent of the stories on Al-Jazeera's website portrayed Hezbollah as the aggressor.¹³⁸ In addition, Hezbollah used its own television station, Al-Manar, to spread its message Lebanese victimization. Al-Manar often times showed pictures of the tattered corpses of children, scenes that were so gruesome that other media outlets refused to publish them. They deliberately spread these photos across the Internet to discredit Israeli actions.¹³⁹ Surprisingly, American television and newspaper coverage also had an anti-Israel bias with over half of the stories focused on Israeli attacks and destruction in Lebanon.¹⁴⁰

In addition, the Arab media turned Nasrallah into a widely admired symbol of Arab resistance to Israeli aggression. Nasrallah was praised as a dedicated, intelligent, committed, and courageous leader in the victory over Israel.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, Hezbollah used the media as a recruiting tool to attract thousands of additional members from within Lebanon and from other Islamic nations. Hezbollah also used the media to build support from key regional actors. The media campaign helped limit opposition from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan which had initially been critical of Hezbollah's actions. The media also helped solidify support from Syria and Iran by depicting the war as part of the greater Arab-Israeli conflict. This led to the continuing supply of weapons and funding so that Hezbollah could continue to its resistance, thus raising the cost of victory for Israel.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Kalb and Saivetz, "The Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetric Conflict," 9.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 23-25.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁴² Kreps, "The 2006 Lebanon War: Lessons Learned," 80.

On the other hand, as the war continued, international support for Israel diminished with the portrayal of civilian destruction by the media. Collateral damage was inevitable since Hezbollah was fighting from within densely populated areas, but the media did not show the fact that Hezbollah forces and weapons were hidden in civilian structures. Therefore, the international community questioned the proportionality of the Israeli attacks and Israel was widely criticized. The media's depiction of scenes of destruction within Lebanon undoubtedly caused the United States to pressure Israel into shortening the war.¹⁴³ Media coverage was decidedly one-sided and rarely mentioned Israeli civilian deaths caused by Hezbollah's continual rocket attacks. Thus, Israel was caught in a dilemma. They could choose to not attack Hezbollah forces or rockets and allow Hezbollah to gain an upper hand militarily, or they could choose to attack these military targets and risk killing civilians thus subjecting themselves to a condemning propaganda campaign. Israel chose the latter but neither eliminated Hezbollah's military threat nor managed to prevent losing the information battle.¹⁴⁴

Media access also contributed to the successful Hezbollah propaganda campaign. On the Israeli side, officials tried to censor the coverage in the name of security but reporters found many ways around Israeli censorship. News networks set up their cameras on the border and did frequent live reports from the battlefield, and millions of Internet bloggers provided reports which influenced policy and public opinion.¹⁴⁵ This attempt at censorship may have contributed to feelings that Israel was trying to cover up its actions. On the other hand, Hezbollah allowed limited access for reporters but rigidly controlled its message. Hezbollah occasionally gave scripted, guided tours and reporters were only allowed to depict Lebanese civilian infrastructure damage and casualties. Many times scenes were staged to set up anti-Israel photo opportunities.

¹⁴³ Kreps, "The 2006 Lebanon War: Lessons Learned," 81.

¹⁴⁴ Kalb and Saivetz, "The Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetric Conflict," 9-10.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 20-24.

Journalists were not allowed to photograph Hezbollah fighters or any kind of military activity and were warned that cameras would be confiscated or worse if rules were not followed.¹⁴⁶

Therefore, Hezbollah was victorious in the battle of the media that shaped the outcome of the war. In a poll conducted by Zogby International in Lebanon in November 2006, 85 percent of the respondents identified either Hezbollah or Lebanon as the biggest winners in the war.¹⁴⁷ The media did much of Hezbollah's work by portraying them as bravely resisting Israeli ruthlessness. They not only told Hezbollah's version of the war, but contributed to the creation of that story by failing to offer much context. Hezbollah had crafted a successful strategy for manipulating the media and winning the information war against Israel.¹⁴⁸ In this type of asymmetric warfare, the media is a critical factor that should have been considered in the development of Israel's wartime strategies.¹⁴⁹

Finally, Israel's strategic and operational failures lead to a question of whether a different military strategy would have successfully met Israeli objectives. Hunerwadel suggests three different alternatives that could have been considered. A first alternative would have been to initiate a large ground offensive and occupation of southern Lebanon to destroy Hezbollah strongholds and rocket launchers. This alternative was rejected due to the desire to avoid a protracted battle and heavy casualties. The costly occupation of Lebanon during the 1980s and 1990s eliminated this option before it was ever considered. Secondly, Israel could have conducted short and painful retaliatory strikes against Hezbollah rockets using airpower and stand-off weapons. This would have given Israel more time to conduct proper analysis of the situation and understand the nature of the war to develop a more appropriate strategy; however,

¹⁴⁶ Kalb and Saivetz, "The Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetric Conflict," 19.

¹⁴⁷ Shibley Telhami, "Lebanese Security and Israeli Security in the Shadows of the 2006 War," *Current History* 106, no. 696 (January 2007): 22.

¹⁴⁸ Ghitis, "How the Media Partnered with Hezbollah: Harvard's Cautionary Report," 2.

¹⁴⁹ Kalb and Saivetz, "The Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetric Conflict," 16.

this course of action would have resulted in increased pressure on Israeli leaders to strike more decisively, and Israel still would have been left with an unpleasant end-state. A final alternative would have been a limited combined air and ground campaign versus Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. This would have given the IDF the chance to destroy Hezbollah forces and prevent the propaganda consequences of bombing Beirut. This could have prevented the perception that Israel lost the war but would have still left Israel the dilemma of occupying or abandoning southern Lebanon again.¹⁵⁰ The Winograd Commission final report also identified the first two of these options, short and painful strikes or a large ground invasion and occupation, but concluded that Israel went to war before deciding which option to select and without an exit strategy. Thus their actual actions fell between the two options and were very ineffective.¹⁵¹ Given Israel's strategic objectives, it is doubtful that any military alternatives would have met with long-term success.

This section has explored the major causes of Israel's strategic and operational failure during the 2006 war against Hezbollah. These failures included poor leadership and decision making by political and military leaders, over-reliance on airpower, a delayed and ineffective ground offensive, numerous intelligence failures, an unprepared homeland defense, and a failure to successfully use the media to win the information war. Despite these failures, Israel's options were limited. Alternative strategies appear problematic and would not have corrected the flaws in preparation and execution exposed during the war. The next section will discuss the outcomes of the war with respect to Israel's achievement of their stated objectives.

¹⁵⁰ Hunerwadel, "Israel's Failure: Why?," 26.

¹⁵¹ "English Summary of the Winograd Commission Report," *New York Times*, January 30, 2008, 2.

Strategic Outcomes

Despite Israel's numerous strategic, operational, and tactical failures, and despite the apparent victory by Hezbollah on both the battlefield and in the media, one of the biggest questions following the war was who won and who lost. The Israeli government declared victory soon after the fighting stopped despite negative public opinion of its performance. The Bush administration also declared that Israel had been victorious. On the other hand, in Lebanon and throughout the Arab world there was a sense of triumph by Hezbollah in its ability to stand up to and survive against a militarily superior foe. As noted above, in a poll conducted in Lebanon after the war, 85 percent of the population identified either Hezbollah or Lebanon as the biggest winners in the war.¹⁵² Despite such rhetorical claims, Israeli success or failure can only be evaluated with respect to the achievement of its stated political objectives.

Concerning Israel's first objective, their intense military action did not secure the release of the two abducted soldiers. At the immediate outset of the conflict, initial attempts by Israeli ground forces to rescue the captured soldiers were unsuccessful. As the war progressed, Hezbollah was neither coerced into releasing the captured soldiers, nor were they freed through brute force methods.

Israeli strategic and operational failures prevented the achievement of its second objective—to inflict as much damage as possible on Hezbollah. Israel's military performance fell well short of expectations. Hezbollah's military performance exceeded Israel's expectations in every aspect—including their defensive guerrilla style of warfare with anti-tank weapons in heavily fortified bunkers, their use of coastal defense anti-ship weapons, and the sophistication of their communications networks. Israel destroyed a significant amount of military assets with

¹⁵² Telhami, "Lebanese Security and Israeli Security in the Shadows of the 2006 War," 22.

over 500 Hezbollah fighters killed and most of their medium and long range rockets eliminated. However, there was little degradation of Hezbollah military capabilities and no loss of will. There was no reduction in short-range Katyusha rocket fire against northern Israel during the war. Since Israel was unable to effectively strike the Katyusha weapons, and given that Hezbollah only fired about 4,000 rockets into Israel, it is extremely likely that Hezbollah retained a significant portion of its rocket arsenal after the cessation of hostilities.¹⁵³ Also, nearly half of their prewar stockpiles of short-range rockets had been replenished by arms shipments from Syria within a few months after the cease-fire.¹⁵⁴

Results with regard to the objective of strengthening Israeli deterrence are mixed. At the outset of the conflict, Israel believed that its strong response would enhance Israeli deterrence against Hezbollah and other regional adversaries. Israel intended to raise the costs to Lebanon for Hezbollah's aggression by striking civil infrastructure and economic targets such that future provocations would not be wise. In this they succeeded for Nasrallah himself stated that "if I had known on July 11...that the operation would lead to such a war, would I do it? I say no."¹⁵⁵ Israel also enhanced their deterrence by demonstrating that Israeli objectives and actions would not be influenced by civilian casualties. Prior to the conflict, Hezbollah thought that Israeli leadership and society were casualty averse, but after sustaining a month of Hezbollah rocket attacks, Israeli citizens showed their endurance and will to make great sacrifices for national security.¹⁵⁶ However, Israel's initial reluctance to deploy troops may cause the rest of the Arab world to perceive that Israel is sensitive to casualties and this may invite further aggression.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 30.

¹⁵⁴ Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," 4.

¹⁵⁵ Gambill, "Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War," 5.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," 3.

On the other hand, Israeli deterrence suffered major setbacks due to their lack of military success and continued instability within Lebanon. Hezbollah was successful in destroying the myth of Israeli military invincibility. Hezbollah demonstrated that they could take the fight directly to Israel by its rocket attacks, inflict some pain and casualties on the IDF, and survive despite Israel's massive military advantage.¹⁵⁸ Other regional actors may be emboldened to take aggressive actions due to Israel's clearly lackluster performance.¹⁵⁹ For example, Syrian President Assad's recently threatened that Syria may strike Israel if it does not withdraw from the Golan Heights.¹⁶⁰ In addition, Dr. Hasan Abu-Hashish of the Palestinian information ministry on August 20, 2006 called for "the Palestinians to make maximum use of the Lebanese model for handling a crisis" against Israel.¹⁶¹ Palestinian fighters have apparently copied Hezbollah's rocket attack strategies. In 2006 and 2007, they fired more than 1,700 rockets and mortars into Israel, compared to an annual average of 130 attacks from 2000 through 2005.¹⁶² Also, according to Gambill, by demanding the release of the soldiers as a precondition for the cease-fire, and then dropping that demand, Olmert may have damaged Israeli strategic credibility. He may have damaged the perception of Israeli resolve and this may lead to further kidnappings and abductions.¹⁶³

In addition, growing divisions within Lebanon's sectarian system could impact Israeli deterrence. Clearly Lebanon is still a divided and unstable nation as Sunni, Shiite, and Christian constituencies continue to struggle for power. Lebanon's sectarian political system divides the

¹⁵⁸ Parton, "Israel's 2006 Campaign in Lebanon: A Failure of Air Power or a Failure of Doctrine?," 87.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Schiff, "Israel's War with Iran," 29.

¹⁶¹ Itamar Marcus and Barbara Crook, Nasrallah Superman: An Analysis of the War in Lebanon from the Palestinian Perspective," Palestinian Media Watch, August 2006. http://www.pmw.org.il/Bulletins_Aug2006.htm (accessed February 8, 2008), 4.

¹⁶² "Rocket Threat from the Gaza Strip, 2000-2007," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 16, 2007, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace.htm> (accessed February 11, 2008), 2.

¹⁶³ Gambill, "Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War," 5.

country and limits the ability of the government to effectively run the state. This weakened central authority has allowed Hezbollah to continue to threaten Israel resulting in a corresponding decrease in Israel's deterrent capability.¹⁶⁴

Israel's fourth objective was to coerce the government of Lebanon into more effective control over southern Lebanon. Prior to the war, the Lebanese government was too divided and weak to make policy decisions without Hezbollah's endorsement, and Israel attempted to change this through the course of the war by attempting to separate Hezbollah from the support of the people. The Israeli strategy for undermining support for Hezbollah within the Shiite community was to elevate its level of suffering. Israeli bombing caused massive destruction and drove a million Shiite residents from their homes. Hezbollah, however, was confident that massive damage from Israel's assault would bolster its public support. Israel also shot itself in the foot by bombing the town of Qana, the site of a previous massacre in 1996, which angered the entire Lebanese community. Thus, dissent against Hezbollah was marginal within the Shiite community despite its heavy suffering. Any public anger over Hezbollah's actions which led Lebanon into war was overshadowed by the outrage toward Israel for their indiscriminate bombing. Furthermore, most Shiites also stood by Hezbollah because of Nasrallah's promises to pay for the rebuilding of the homes and businesses destroyed by Israeli strikes. Hezbollah knew that it could afford to rebuild with Iranian backing, and Hezbollah distributed cash payments in excess of \$10,000 to each displaced family to help them through the reconstruction period.¹⁶⁵

In contrast to Hezbollah's efficient relief efforts, the Lebanese government lacked a plan to deal with the contingencies of the war and its relief effort was inept. It did little to help the displaced persons and this cemented Shiite feelings of longstanding neglect from the state.

¹⁶⁴ Telhami, "Lebanese Identity and Israeli Security in the Shadows of the 2006 War," 25-26.

¹⁶⁵ Gambill, "Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War," 7-8.

Relief aid was distributed according to political considerations and incompetence in the government hampered distribution. This contrast between Hezbollah's efficiency and professionalism and the government's incompetence solidified the relationship between the Shiite population and Hezbollah.¹⁶⁶ Thus, Israel's goal of separating Hezbollah from their means of popular support went unfulfilled.

In the medium to long term, Israel's actions have heightened sectarian problems in Lebanon. After the war, over 95 percent of the Shiite population had a more positive or unchanged view of Hezbollah. A majority of the other sects, Sunni, Druze, and Christian, however, had a more negative view of Hezbollah, blaming them for the consequences of the war.¹⁶⁷ The Shiite community has been strengthened by Hezbollah's performance and this causes concern among the Sunni population. The rise of militant Sunni fundamentalist movements is a concern for the long-repressed Shiites. Within the Christian community there is an anxiety over the possibility of a Muslim takeover of the country, yet the Christians themselves are divided and cannot present a unified front against the Muslims.¹⁶⁸ Lebanon is still very much divided by sectarian rifts which limit the government's ability to exert control over the country. Israel's goal of getting the Lebanese government to control Hezbollah in the south has become more difficult. The UN forces that have deployed to keep the peace could help, but also could be a double-edged sword.

Israel hoped that UN Security Council Resolution #1701 would help the Lebanese government secure control over southern Lebanon, but in reality it further limits Israel's ability to secure a lasting peace. In supporting UN Resolution #1701, Israel for the first time in its history sought a UN resolution to end a war. Israel's leaders thought that a UN arms embargo

¹⁶⁶ Gambill, "Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War," 8.

¹⁶⁷ Telhami, "Lebanese Identity and Israeli Security in the Shadows of the 2006 War," 23.

¹⁶⁸ "Lebanon After the War," *Military Technology* 30, no. 10 (October 2006): 10-11.

plus the deployment of an international peacekeeping force in south Lebanon could keep Hezbollah fighters under control. However, the UN forces have been reluctant to use force to implement Resolution #1701 and have been ineffective as a result of their desire to avoid conflict.¹⁶⁹ Soon after the cease-fire, the Lebanese government negotiated a deal with Hezbollah that allowed members in southern Lebanon to keep their weapons if they would refrain from displaying them in public. This was a clear violation of Resolution #1701.¹⁷⁰ The presence of UNIFIL has also restricted possible Israeli actions against Hezbollah and hampered Israel's ability to monitor movement of weapons into Lebanon as Syria continues to deliver weapons to Hezbollah.¹⁷¹ Therefore, the ineffectiveness of the United Nations in implementing Resolution #1701 will make another round of war between Israel and Lebanon inevitable.

Consequences and Implications

The consequences and implications of the war have affected all of the major actors including Israel, Hezbollah, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and the Palestinians. From a domestic perspective, the Israeli leadership has been fighting for their political lives due to the public perception that they failed in the conduct of the war. IDF chief of staff Halutz has resigned and Peretz has been replaced as defense minister by Ehud Barak. The current government is in serious jeopardy and as of the spring of 2007, Olmert's approval rating among Israeli voters had fallen to just 2 percent.¹⁷² Olmert's government will likely face major challenges in the next

¹⁶⁹ Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," 4.

¹⁷⁰ "Lebanon After the War," 10.

¹⁷¹ Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," 4.

¹⁷² "Cool Reception for Olmert 'Offer'," *BBC News*, April 2, 2007.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6519735.stm (accessed February 4, 2008), 2.

elections as the Israeli public will likely embrace politicians with more experience in military and security affairs due to a fear of a renewal of hostilities with Hezbollah.¹⁷³

In addition, Israel may have been fortunate that their strategic failures were not more consequential. Israeli civilian and military leaders must examine the deficiencies and address the lessons learned with respect to the IDF's force structure, readiness, training, and doctrine before the next conflict.¹⁷⁴ Specifically, the IDF needs to realize that airpower does not promise the quick and clean victory that some leaders desire. Strategic objectives must be matched with an appropriate military strategy and leaders must be willing to utilize all appropriate military means even if that involves the risk of casualties. Also, Israeli leaders must realize that no two wars are the same and take care to apply the right contextual lessons from previous conflicts. Finally, the IDF must realize that military force in general may have limited utility against an unconventional and asymmetric enemy such as Hezbollah. Military force should be integrated with a broader political approach to separate popular support for Hezbollah. Realizing that in such a conflict the media will play a significant role in shaping public and international opinion, Israel needs to develop methods to achieve success in the public relations battle.¹⁷⁵

The most serious implication for Israel is that the model of resistance demonstrated by Hezbollah appears to be extremely successful and is likely to gain adherents—especially among the Palestinians. As stated above, Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel have dramatically increased since the end of the war with Hezbollah. Therefore, there is little hope for renewing the peace process with the Palestinians. Thus, far from strengthening Israeli deterrence, the war with Hezbollah has eroded it.¹⁷⁶ Implementation of Olmert's West Bank convergence plan,

¹⁷³ Waxman, "Between Victory and Defeat: Israel After the War with Hizballah," 36.

¹⁷⁴ Feldman, "The Hezbollah-Israel War: A Preliminary Assessment," 4.

¹⁷⁵ Kreps, "The 2006 Lebanon War: Lessons Learned," 82.

¹⁷⁶ Waxman, "Between Victory and Defeat: Israel After the War with Hizballah," 32.

which called for the unilateral withdrawal of Israeli troops, is extremely unlikely. After the war with Hezbollah, the belief in Israel is that unilateral withdrawals endanger Israeli security by signaling weakness and ceding territory from which enemies can launch rocket attacks into Israel. Withdrawals are considered to be dangerous and so Israeli policy will likely shift to a stance of no more withdrawals.¹⁷⁷

Such a shift in policy with regard to the Palestinians may not be entirely negative. It may force the Israeli government to reexamine its options for renewing the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Such direct negotiations seem unlikely since the Palestinians are too fragmented to be a serious negotiating partner and the Hamas-led government in Gaza would be unlikely to bargain due to their fundamentalist ideology. However, the diplomatic process that followed the war in Lebanon may have a positive impact on the Palestinian situation. It may make it more likely that Israel would accept international troops, which it has long resisted, for peacekeeping within the framework of a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement.¹⁷⁸

The war's impact on Lebanese internal politics was significant. The confrontation with Israel increased the prestige and support for Hezbollah at the expense of the Lebanese government. In a survey conducted in Lebanon by the Beirut Center for Research and Information at the end of July 2006, 87 percent of the population supported Hezbollah's resistance against Israeli aggression, but only 34 percent of the population believed in the Lebanese government's ability to face the assault.¹⁷⁹ Hezbollah was widely praised for its military ability in standing up to Israel and for its ability to distribute humanitarian relief more quickly and effectively than the government of Lebanon. Nasrallah has gained political stature after the conflict due to his charismatic leadership. The key question is whether he will use that

¹⁷⁷ Waxman, "Between Victory and Defeat: Israel After the War with Hizballah," 36-38.

¹⁷⁸ Feldman, "The Hezbollah-Israel War: A Preliminary Assessment," 6.

¹⁷⁹ "Lebanese Public Opinion," *Mideast Monitor*, 2.

stature to increase his power within the current government by increasing Hezbollah's participation in parliament or whether he will mount a challenge to the current government that could galvanize opposition and drive the country into more instability. The interaction of government agencies in Lebanon remains complicated by the religious sects and political diversity. This continues to complicate the national decision making process and promotes instability within Lebanon.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the outcome of the war may result in a temporary equilibrium as Hezbollah recognizes that future conflicts with Israel may be too risky in the immediate future. Hezbollah is likely to concentrate on rebuilding its homes and civilian infrastructure and evading international efforts at disarmament.¹⁸¹

The recent war between Israel and Hezbollah also has broader implications, mostly negative, for Hezbollah's primary sources of support: Iran and Syria. Both Iran and Syria took some satisfaction and pride in Hezbollah's apparent victory against Israel. Prior to the war, Syria could count on Hezbollah to exert pressure on Israel. However, implementation of UN Resolution #1701 means that Syria can no longer apply indirect force on Israel by stirring up hostilities on that front. The deployment of an international force in southern Lebanon will make it more difficult for Syria to conduct a proxy war with Israel through Hezbollah. At the same time Syria is being pressured to avoid rearming Hezbollah, to resolve its border dispute in the Shebaa Farms, and to establish normal relations with the government of Lebanon. Furthermore, the outcome of the recent war continues a string of negative developments for Syria with respect to Lebanon that started with the adoption of UN Resolution #1559, which forced a Syrian

¹⁸⁰ Sharp, et.al., "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict," CRS-16.

¹⁸¹ Gambill, "Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War," 10.

withdrawal from Lebanese territory, and included the collapse of the Iraqi state as well as the completion of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.¹⁸²

Similarly, the war's consequences for Iran are mostly detrimental to its strategic interests. First, Israel destroyed a large part of Hezbollah's long range rocket forces. These long-range rockets were deployed to Lebanon with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards as part of Iran's deterrent against possible American or Israeli strikes against its nuclear facilities. This deterrent force has been eliminated. In addition, Israel demonstrated that they can withstand an enduring rocket attack of over 100 Katyusha rockets per day, thus the belief in the fragility of Israel's will has evaporated. Israelis demonstrated that they are willing to withstand significant punishment in the interest of national objectives. Therefore, since Tehran has adopted a defiant stance with regard to its nuclear programs, Hezbollah's provocation of Israel could provide a convenient excuse for an Israeli or American preventative strike against Iranian nuclear facilities.¹⁸³

From the perspective of the United States, the conflict resulted in a basic dilemma for the Bush administration by jeopardizing the long-term stability of the region. On one hand, the United States supported Israel's military action and its right of self defense against Hezbollah attacks. On the other hand, US efforts to build democracy and stability in Lebanon have suffered a significant setback. President Bush's two main political goals, the defeat of terrorism and the development of democracy, came into conflict with each other in Lebanon.¹⁸⁴

While the United States was able to gain strategic leverage over Iran and Syria, its unwavering support for Israel and its refusal to call for an immediate ceasefire drove anti-American feelings throughout the Arab world and weakened the Lebanese government it was trying to strengthen. The war also led to increased pressure from the US Congress to take

¹⁸² Feldman, "The Hezbollah-Israel War: A Preliminary Assessment," 5.

¹⁸³ Feldman, "The Hezbollah-Israel War: A Preliminary Assessment," 5.

¹⁸⁴ Sharp, et.al., "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict," CRS-27.

punitive actions against the Lebanese government as long as Hezbollah is represented in the cabinet.¹⁸⁵ The long-term goals of the United States could be seriously jeopardized if the Lebanese government disintegrates into civil strife or further aligns itself with Syria or Iran. All of the effort that the United States has exerted to make Lebanon a modern example of a state moving toward democratic ideals and economic reform could be lost if the situation in Lebanon returns to the chaos that was rampant during its civil war. Such a situation would likely promote terrorism, regional instability, and a militant stance towards Israel; prospects for long-term regional peace in the Middle East would be irreparably damaged.¹⁸⁶

Summary & Conclusion

The Israeli military campaign against Hezbollah in July and August 2006 was designed to meet grand strategic objectives in Lebanon and increase the security of the Israeli state, yet it failed miserably in meeting those goals and epitomized the misapplication of military power. This paper has described the political instability in Lebanon that gave rise to Hezbollah as a terrorist organization bent on eliminating Israel, how the conflict in the summer of 2006 was initiated, and the decisions made by Israeli political and military leaders in the development of their military strategy against Hezbollah. Israel's political objectives were limited to increasing Israeli deterrence, coercing Lebanon to exercise full control over its southern regions, destruction of Hezbollah, and the return of the captured Israeli soldiers. Their military objectives were also limited: to kill as many Hezbollah fighters as possible, to destroy their rocket forces, and to punish the Shiite population for their continued support of Hezbollah.

¹⁸⁵ Gambill, "Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War," 10.

¹⁸⁶ Sharp, et.al., "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict," CRS-27-28.

Initially, airpower was chosen as the best way to meet these objectives. The Israeli Air Force conducted heavy bombing against Hezbollah rocket forces as well as transportation and infrastructure targets. When it became clear that airpower was not achieving the intended effects, only then did Israel conduct a large ground offensive into Lebanon in an attempt to defeat Hezbollah forces. However, Israel's forces were unprepared for Hezbollah's guerrilla style of fighting and did not expect their well-fortified defenses. Israeli leaders chose this strategy without fully analyzing the complexities of the crisis in southern Lebanon. Israeli political and military leaders made several strategic and operational blunders and exhibited poor decision making throughout the course of the conflict. They set unrealistic goals for the conflict, failed to exercise good military judgment, and made hasty decisions about the application of force without considering any alternative courses of action.

However, two historical factors shaped Israel's military response. First, Israel's prior occupation of southern Lebanon from 1982 to 2000 had been costly in terms of blood and treasure. They were determined not to repeat another ground occupation of Lebanon and thus Israeli ground forces were unprepared when called upon to fight against Hezbollah. Second, Israeli leaders had digested the lessons of previous US military engagements in the First Gulf War and in Kosovo where airpower was dominant in achieving US objectives. Israel was drawn to this high technology warfare as a way to avoid the expected casualties of ground operations. Therefore, application of airpower became a major factor in Israeli military doctrine. Sadly, adherence to such doctrine without fully comprehending the nature of the conflict or the enemy led to a misapplication of military power and failure to meet the stated objectives. On the other hand, Hezbollah fighters were well-prepared and developed an asymmetric strategy based on guerrilla style warfare. Their leaders took advantage of Israel's devastating use of force to

influence the media into showing Lebanese suffering through an effective propaganda campaign which ultimately led to a perception of Hezbollah victory and Israeli defeat.

Although Israel possessed superior military power, it completely failed to meet any of its stated objectives. The two abducted soldiers were never returned and Hezbollah's ability to continue their rocket attacks on northern Israel during the course of the war proved that Israel had failed to destroy Hezbollah's fighting capability. Also, Israel's incessant attacks on civilian structures did not coerce the Shiite population to give up their support for Hezbollah and provided the opportunity for Hezbollah to cement public support as it responded quickly and effectively to the humanitarian crisis with financial aid to displaced persons. In addition, Israel's deterrent posture has suffered as a result of its poor military showing in the war. The Palestinians observed Hezbollah's success and have increased their level of violence and rocket attacks since the summer of 2006. Finally, the government of Lebanon remains unstable and Hezbollah is still an effective political and military force in southern Lebanon despite the United Nations peacekeeping force sent to disarm it. The implications are that another round of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah is likely and that near-term peace in the Middle East is not.

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