



THE SABAN CENTER
for MIDDLE EAST POLICY
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ANALYSIS PAPER

Number 24, August 2011

THE NEXT WAR:

HOW ANOTHER CONFLICT BETWEEN
HIZBALLAH AND ISRAEL COULD
LOOK AND HOW BOTH SIDES ARE
PREPARING FOR IT

BILAL Y. SAAB

NICHOLAS BLANFORD

BROOKINGS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lebanon and Israel have enjoyed a rare calm in the five years since the August 14, 2006 ceasefire that brought an end to that summer's month-long war, the fiercest ever action waged between Hizballah and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Both sides drew sharp lessons from the 2006 conflict. Despite fighting the IDF to a standstill in southern Lebanon, Hizballah experienced substantial—but sustainable—losses and its “divine victory” came at a cost. Hizballah lost its autonomy over the southern border district, its battle tactics were prematurely exposed, and it had to abandon the military infrastructure of bunkers and firing positions that it had installed over the previous six years.

Israel suffered the humiliation of underestimating its foe, and achieved none of its overly ambitious war goals. The IDF's poor performance on multiple levels—leadership, coordination, logistics, and fighting capabilities—undermined Israel's much-prized deterrent factor, and led to the perception of defeat.

The prevailing peace along the Lebanon-Israel border in the intervening five years is a result of both sides absorbing the costs of the 2006 war and the risks inherent in another round of fighting. Yet, although this is the longest period of tranquility along the traditionally volatile frontier since the late 1960s, the calm remains precarious and could be shattered at any time. Neither Hizballah nor Israel believes that the 2006 conflict will be the last battle

waged between them, and both sides have been feverishly preparing for the next war ever since the last one ended.

HIZBALLAH'S POSTURE

Since the end of the 2006 war, Hizballah has undergone the largest recruitment and training drive in its thirty-year history, swelling its ranks with dedicated cadres and reviving its former multi-sectarian reservist units. In terms of weapons procurement, Hizballah has focused on acquiring long-range rockets fitted with guidance systems to target a list of specific military and infrastructure sites in Israel. Hizballah also is believed to have received training on more advanced air defense systems that could pose an increased threat to low-flying Israeli air assets, such as helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles.

With the support of Iran, Hizballah has made further advances in its signals intelligence (SIGINT) and communications capabilities. Hizballah is expected to use these upgraded weapons and SIGINT capabilities to play an offensive role in a future conflict with Israel, attempting to seize the initiative, rather than adopting the reactive and defensive posture of 2006. Among the new battle plans being prepared by Hizballah are land and seaborne insertions into Israel to carry out commando-style raids. Given the range of the missiles in Hizballah's possession, the battlespace in the next war will likely be larger than the traditional theater of southern Lebanon and northern Israel, encompassing large portions of both countries.

The war preparations notwithstanding, Hizballah does not seek nor want another conflict with Israel at this time. Its strategy is based on deterrence, striking a “balance of terror” with Israel through a concept of reciprocity. In a series of speeches in the past three years, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Hizballah’s leader, has warned Israel that it has the ability to inflict devastating blows against Israel on land and at sea in response to an Israeli attack on Lebanon.

Despite Hizballah’s jihadist instincts and ideological opposition to the Jewish state, it is beholden to two sometimes conflicting interests that have compelled it to honor the 2006 cessation of hostilities. First, Hizballah serves as a deterrent factor on behalf of Iran. Iran has invested millions of dollars in Hizballah since 2000 to boost its retaliatory capabilities, and as a result, planners of an attack on Iran and its nuclear facilities have to take into account the reaction of Hizballah. Second, Hizballah’s continued existence as a powerful force in Lebanon is dependent upon the support of its Shi’i constituency. No amount of Iranian funds would save Hizballah if it were to lose the backing of Lebanon’s Shi’i population. Therefore, Hizballah has to tread a fine line between following the edicts of Iran and respecting the interests of the Lebanese Shi’i community, the crushing majority of which does not want war with Israel.

ISRAEL’S POSITION

Israel also has been busy implementing the lessons it learned from 2006 in preparation for the possibility of another conflict with Hizballah. The IDF has instituted greater logistical autonomy and sustainability in its combat units, and has strengthened the ability of its ground forces, navy, and air force to carry out joint operations. It also has trained extensively in large-scale ground operations, employing rapid maneuver techniques and using more robust and flexible equipment to reduce tactical vulnerability. The IDF created several urban warfare centers shortly after the 2006 war, the largest of which, the Urban Warfare Training Center (UWTC),

simulates a variety of Lebanese villages, towns, and refugee camps.

The IDF has also introduced a number of new technologies that it is expected to use in any new conflict with Hizballah. These include a multi-tiered missile defense shield to intercept and destroy both Hizballah’s short-range and long-range weapons and Iran’s ballistic missiles. Also, all new tanks are now fitted with the Trophy defense system to protect against anti-armor projectiles. How these new systems cope in a war situation, and with Hizballah’s rocket barrages and anti-armor tactics remains to be seen.

Despite the IDF’s extensive military preparations, Israel still faces formidable challenges in another confrontation with Hizballah, and its options are less than perfect. A concerted attempt to smash Hizballah’s military capabilities once and for all would cause a large number of civilian casualties and infrastructure damage in both Lebanon and Israel, draw international opprobrium, and offer no guarantees of success.

The “Dahiyah doctrine” that Israel revealed in 2008, which calls for an intense bombing campaign against civilian infrastructure in Lebanon, serves as a factor of deterrence. But, its successful application is dependent on Hizballah quickly backing down and suing for a ceasefire, a most unlikely outcome. Instead, Hizballah is more likely to continue fighting in the hope of forcing Israel into a prolonged ground campaign, exactly the outcome the Dahiyah doctrine is supposed to prevent.

A FRAGILE CALM

Although mutual deterrence has prevented a repetition of the low-intensity conflict that existed along the Lebanon-Israel border from 2000 to 2006, the underlying factors that led to war five years ago still have not been addressed. The prevailing balance of terror is inherently unstable and even though both sides are aware of the risks of miscalculation, the

chances of one side misreading the actions of the other remain dangerously high. In that regard, the uncertainties of the popular uprising in Syria could play into the Israel-Hizballah dynamic. Specifically, if the regime of Bashar al-Asad, the Syrian president, feels it faces imminent collapse, it could ignite a limited conflict with Israel in the Golan Heights, which could quickly escalate and drag in Hizballah, even against the latter's will. If the Asad regime falls and the new leadership in Damascus decides to abandon its alliance with Iran and Hizballah, Israel may decide it is an opportune moment to attack Hizballah in the hope of permanently degrading its military capabilities and neutralizing the group as a future threat.

Ultimately, the likelihood of renewed war between Hizballah and Israel remains high in the mid- to long-term. It is critically important that as the Middle East convulses with the shockwaves engendered by the "Arab Spring," the international community continue to play close attention to the nascent conflict under preparation in Lebanon and Israel.

Given that an accidental trigger is the most likely cause of the next war between Hizballah and Israel,

diplomatic efforts should focus on ways to prevent misunderstandings from developing into conflict. In this context, the monthly tripartite meetings hosted by the UNIFIL commander which groups Israeli and Lebanese military representatives in Naqoura has proved to be an effective means of resolving issues linked to the United Nations-delineated Blue Line and a forum for advancing and addressing concerns voiced by either side. There also exists an emergency communications facility between the Lebanese Army and the IDF with the UNIFIL commander as go-between to resolve any pressing problems that cannot wait for the next tripartite session.

Yet, as long as the underlying political issues between Lebanon, Syria, and Israel are not negotiated, Iran continues to enrich uranium and build an extensive military infrastructure in Lebanon, and Hizballah and Israel aggressively prepare for another war, the chances of another, more deadly and destructive, conflict breaking out remains worryingly high.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the 2006 summer war between Israel and Hizballah, speculation has been rife about the possibility of another military conflict between the two sides. The 2006 war lasted thirty-four days, and caused large-scale death and destruction. Yet since that date, despite the deep animosity and history of past conflict that exists between the two parties, neither side has fired a bullet at each other, allowing the Lebanese-Israeli border to enjoy its longest period of calm since the 1960s.¹

Peace, however, might not endure indefinitely. Both sides are as worried about each other's intentions today as they were five years ago, and their military forces continue to be on alert and poised for renewed confrontation. Mutual fears and suspicions have in fact deepened due to increasingly threatening verbal exchanges and aggressive military buildups. Given the substantial military preparations undertaken by both sides, the next war between Hizballah and Israel will be far more destructive than any previous conflict between these two enemies over the past thirty years. As such, a new conflict between Israel and Hizballah will have

drastic, long-term implications for the politics and security of the Middle East.

First, a war—and the expected large-scale destruction that would result—would profoundly undermine Lebanon's already delicate balance and fragile stability, an outcome that would cause great harm to U.S. long-term interests and goals in the country. Specifically, a weaker and more unstable Lebanon would be unable to shield itself from foreign intervention and various threats at home and abroad, secure its borders, and provide a security alternative to Hizballah. Another destructive war against Hizballah, which would most likely fall short of decisively defeating the group, would undermine the project of state-building and deepen Lebanon's societal and sectarian divides, possibly leading to widespread political violence.

Second, another war between Hizballah and Israel could threaten to derail the process of democratization taking place in the region or, at the very least, strengthen the popularity of anti-U.S. factions. Instead of channeling their energy and devoting their

¹ The exception to this calm was the May 15, 2011 deadly clash between Palestinian protestors living in Lebanon and Israeli troops along the United Nations-demarcated Blue Line in Maroun al-Ras, which killed ten people and wounded over one hundred. See "U.N. Urges Steps to Prevent Repetition of Border Violence," *Daily Star* (Lebanon), May 23, 2011, available at <<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2011/May-23/UN-urges-steps-to-prevent-repetition-of-border-violence.ashx#axzz1NYwvCu7h>>. In addition, the previous year there was a brief cross-border clash on August 4, 2010 when an unknown sniper shot dead an IDF lieutenant colonel opposite Addaïseh in south Lebanon during an IDF operation to remove vegetation beside the border security fence. The IDF fired back at Lebanese Armed Forces troops and helicopters attacked a nearby LAF position. Two LAF soldiers and a Lebanese journalist were killed. The identity of the sniper remains unknown.

resources to governance and economic issues, Arab countries would likely focus on the war and some could seek to offer both material and non-material support to Hizballah. Moreover, another war with Israel would complicate the efforts of pro-democracy activists to achieve their goals because their autocratic leaders could use the excuse of war and the corresponding threat to national security to crack down harder and postpone reforms indefinitely. In countries where reforms have begun, such as Egypt and Tunisia, another major war against an Arab entity—Hizballah—in which the United States sides with Israel (or stands silently on the sidelines) could raise the popularity of nationalist and anti-U.S. factions and possibly help their candidates gain in the upcoming elections.²

Third, another large-scale Israeli military campaign against Hizballah that fails in its objectives would probably enhance Iran's strategic foothold in the region and strengthen its bargaining position in its negotiations with the West over its nuclear enrichment program. Hizballah's military arsenal directly

contributes to Tehran's leverage and bargaining power by serving as a potent deterrent against an attack by the West and/or Israel against Iran's nuclear infrastructure.

In short, a war between Hizballah and Israel would have devastating consequences for both sides, the region as a whole, and U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East. Indeed, given Hizballah's extensive military preparations and Israel's pattern of using heavy force in conflicts, the next war will likely be of a magnitude, lethality, and scope that would make the 2006 conflict pale in comparison. Because of its expected scale, the next war could easily spiral out of control and involve Iran, Syria, and other states or sub-state actors in the region. Indeed, the next war may end up being a "transformational" event in the Middle East.³ Therefore, understanding the drivers that could lead to another military confrontation is crucial so that parties who wish to try to prevent this outcome can design their policies accordingly.

² Paul Schemm, "Poll: Over Half of Egypt Wants an End to Israel Peace Treaty," Associated Press, April 26, 2011.

³ Jeffrey White, "If War Comes: Israel vs. Hizballah and its Allies," Policy Focus 106, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 2010, available at <<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=334>>.

POTENTIAL RETURN TO ARMS

The 2006 summer war ended inconclusively: Israel failed to achieve its declared objectives and Hizballah lost its pre-war autonomy over Lebanon's southern border district. After more than a month of fighting, sparked by Hizballah's cross-border attack and kidnapping of IDF soldiers, Hizballah and Israel reached a stalemate and agreed to a long-term ceasefire and the deployment of 15,000 multinational peacekeepers along the border, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1701. The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) currently stands at 11,873 total uniformed personnel.⁴

Israel had planned to crush Hizballah militarily and drive a wedge between the group and non-Shi'i members of Lebanese society. However, Israel was unable to achieve these goals in full and instead settled for more limited gains, including the destruction of what Israel claimed was all of Hizballah's stock of long-range missiles. This imperfect outcome had negative political implications for Israel, with domestic criticism of the conflict ultimately leading to a shake-up in Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's government.

Hizballah had a similarly mixed experience. The group suffered considerable—but sustainable—casualties⁵ and its headquarters in the southern suburbs of Beirut were razed to the ground. More important, the military infrastructure that Hizballah had installed in southern Lebanon over the previous six years had to be abandoned at the end of the war, and its battle plans and tactics were prematurely exposed in a war that neither Hizballah nor Iran had sought. On the other hand, the level of Hizballah's military performance stunned Israel, surprised the rest of the world, and allowed its leadership to proclaim a “divine victory” against its enemy. Moreover, Hizballah's survival allowed it to control the political process in Beirut, enhance its image and popularity in the Arab world, and attract more followers in the region.

Five years have passed since the end of the 2006 conflict. Neither Hizballah nor Israel currently wants another war, but both are preparing for one and claim they are ready if it happens. A reasonable case can be made that mutual deterrence has played an important role in maintaining the peace between the two. For example, despite Hizballah's strong

⁴ “UNIFIL Facts and Figures,” United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, available at <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unifil/facts.shtml>>.

⁵ According to Israeli estimates, Hizballah may have lost more than 530 fighters, but an exact number has been hard to confirm and verify independently. See Mitchell Prothero, “Hizballah Builds up its Covert Army: Villages Empty as Shia Militia Sends Recruits to Train in Syria and Iran,” *Guardian Weekly* (UK), May 2, 2008. Also see “Middle East Crisis: Facts and Figures,” *BBC*, August 31, 2006, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5257128.stm>.

desire and repeated calls to avenge the February 2008 killing of its iconic military chief, Imad Mughniyah (the group believes that the Mossad was behind the assassination), it has not retaliated (although Israel claims that it has foiled terrorist plots by Hizballah in Eastern Europe and elsewhere).⁶ Perhaps a more remarkable indicator of Hizballah's continuous sense of caution is its subdued reaction to Israel's December 2008 war in Gaza, what Israel termed "Operation Cast Lead." Its ideological affinity toward the Palestinian cause, and its past involvement in the Palestinian theater notwithstanding, Hizballah refrained from intervening militarily or offering material assistance to its Palestinian allies during Operation Cast Lead. The deadly clash on May 15, 2011 in Maroun al-Ras between the IDF and Palestinian protestors living in Lebanon is the latest example of Hizballah exercising restraint. Indeed, before the 2006 war, Hizballah would most probably have retaliated for the deaths of so many Palestinian civilians in keeping with its 2000-2006 strategy of needling Israel with periodic violence along the Blue Line. The group's decision to hold fire underscores its determination to avoid another costly war with Israel.

DETERRENCE AT PLAY

Deterrence is assumed to have so far prevented an outbreak of war. On the Lebanon side, deterrence has worked against Hizballah for several reasons, some due to domestic and regional constraints on the group, and some related to the consequences and costs that might ensue from another war with Israel. Domestically, Hizballah is well aware that there is no appetite for another war, not only among the Lebanese people in general, but also within the party's own Shi'i constituency. The 2006 war left nearly 1,200 Lebanese dead and 4,400 wounded,

and caused physical damage in Lebanon (mostly in the south) worth more than \$3.6 billion.⁷

Shortly after the war ended, the group's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, offered an unusual apology to the Lebanese people for the consequences of the kidnapping of IDF soldiers, claiming that if he had known Israel's reaction in advance, he would not have ordered the operation in the first place.⁸ Other than Hizballah's Shi'i constituency, most Lebanese were left unimpressed by Nasrallah's mea culpa, some even judging it as irrelevant and insincere. Iran stepped in to appease the Shi'i communities in the south and southern Beirut that bore the brunt of the conflict by dispensing up to \$12,000 per household in compensation and financing the reconstruction of damaged houses and apartments. Still, there were rumblings of discontent from those who questioned why their homes had been destroyed once more even though the IDF had withdrawn from southern Lebanon six years earlier. Nasrallah is sensitive to the sentiments of his Shi'i constituents and probably recognizes that if another devastating war is waged—one in which Hizballah is seen as the initiator—they will be even less willing to forgive the party. Another war would also strengthen calls by Lebanese political opponents of Hizballah to have the organization disarmed, causing renewed and unwanted political challenges to the group.

Regionally, the preferences and interests of Syria, and especially Iran, play a major role in deterring any adventurist instincts on the part of Hizballah. At present, neither Iran nor Syria would benefit from waging war against Israel and in fact have much to lose from such a costly enterprise. While it has been suggested that Syrian president Bashar al-Asad could resort to a diversionary war against

⁶ Bilal Y. Saab, "Israel, Hizb Allah and the Shadow of Imad Mughniyah," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, *Sentinel*, June 1, 2011, available at <<http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/israel-hizb-allah-and-the-shadow-of-imad-mughniyyeh>>.

⁷ "Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006)," United Nations Security Council, September 12, 2006, available at <http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2006/730>.

⁸ Robert Worth, "Hezbollah Answers Israel with Speeches," *New York Times*, January 4, 2009.

Israel in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights to distract from his troubles at home, this theory is not entirely convincing because the military balance still heavily tilts in Israel's favor, and the odds of a relative success for a regime grappling with a growing protest movement and armed elements at home are minimal. Furthermore, Iran would be unlikely to sanction Hizballah coming to Syria's aid (by igniting the Lebanon-Israel front) because the Iranian regime wishes, first and foremost, to preserve its deterrent capabilities in Lebanon and has no desire for a repetition of the 2006 war in which Hizballah's military assets were degraded and had to be rebuilt from scratch in the aftermath.

As for Israel, it has been deterred from launching another war against Hizballah primarily because of the group's credible intention and enhanced ability to inflict greater pain on Israel. In the next war, Hizballah will be concentrating more on targeting strategic military and industrial sites than firing rockets at urban areas, as it has done in the past. Because the next war will most probably be wider

in scope and involve other regional actors, Israel feels deterred from initiating hostilities for now. The possibility of another failure and the resulting political repercussions also weigh heavily on the minds of Israeli leaders.

The logic of the no-war option for both sides is straightforward though not definitive: Despite each party's preference to rearrange the status quo in its favor, the political and military risks for doing so are very high and the costs are enormous. Therefore, it is presently in the rational interest of both Hizballah and Israel to preserve the status quo and avoid war.

Given the current reluctance of both sides to initiate a new war, an accidental trigger would be the most likely cause of another conflict. However, should the balance of power tilt considerably in favor of one party in the future (perhaps in Israel's favor if the Asad regime in Syria collapses), the war option might become more attractive.

HIZBALLAH PREPARES FOR WAR

The likelihood of another war with Israel means that Hizballah has been reinforcing its military and organizational capability, albeit while refraining from overt acts of antagonism that could spark another confrontation. In this regard, Hizballah claims that its military readiness for the next war has reached its highest levels.⁹ The organization has expanded in size, installed sophisticated communications equipment for better coordination, strengthened its defenses, and rebuilt its command and control structure. In addition, it has procured intelligence on strategic targets inside Israel and integrated offensive strategies into its overall doctrine of deterrence. From a military point of view, Hizballah is much more powerful and resilient today than it was in 2006.

REBUILDING COMMAND, CONTROL, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Over the past five years, Hizballah has taken steps to rebuild and rearm. Hizballah military commander Ahmad Hajj-Ali told the authors in August 2009: “If war breaks out with the Zionists [Israel] tomorrow, we will be ready for it.”¹⁰ While declining to provide specifics on the kinds of weapons Hizballah

might have recently acquired, Hajj-Ali noted that the organization has regained, and even perfected, its ability to “talk, hear, and see,” meaning communications for command and control. This attention to coordination points to the importance the group places on increasingly sophisticated and complex capabilities. Hajj-Ali echoed others in the group’s higher military echelon when he said that Hizballah was more concerned with building communication than with procurement and rearmament following the 2006 war: “We have many friends, thanks to God, so we do not worry about arms coming our way. All we need to do is stay awake and be able to communicate amongst ourselves. You cannot go to war when you are blind. Today we are back to where we were in 2006 and I would say we are in an even better position.”¹¹

In terms of specific communications upgrades, Hizballah’s fiber-optic network has expanded since 2006 and now covers almost all the areas in which its forces are deployed. These areas include the southern suburbs of Beirut, the coastal region between Beirut and the south, the entire southern half of the country, and the Bekaa Valley up to and including the northern Hermel district. The fiber-optic lines

⁹ Bilal Y. Saab, “New Focus: Hizballah regroups after Israel conflict,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, August 2010.

¹⁰ Authors’ interview, southern Lebanon, August 12, 2009.

¹¹ Authors’ interviews with several military commanders, southern Lebanon, August 10, 2009.

are also reportedly hooked into a military communications network in Syria that links several signals intelligence (SIGINT) stations manned by Syrian and Iranian intelligence officers.¹² This fiber-optic network allows intelligence gathered by the Syrian-Iranian SIGINT bases to be passed to Hizballah commanders stationed throughout Lebanon. According to Hizballah's combat officers, the SIGINT section is the most secret component of the group, and its technicians are the most thoroughly vetted and trained of all the party's cadres.¹³ Iran has an extensive and advanced electronics and communications industry to which Hizballah has access, thus placing Hizballah's state-supported SIGINT capabilities in a comparable league to those of Israel.

PROCURING BETTER INTELLIGENCE

Since at least 2000, Hizballah, using public resources as well as networks of spies inside Israel, has amassed a comprehensive database of Israeli civilian and military infrastructure that can be targeted in the event of war. In July 2009, Hizballah combat unit leader with the nom de guerre Abu Iyad presented a map and said, "Here is a map of the enemy's civilian front. I pray to God we use it next time we fight the Zionists."¹⁴ On Abu Iyad's map (which he claimed to have obtained from the Internet) were some of the most strategically valuable and densely populated regions in Israel, including Gush Dan, Haifa, and Ashdod. "If they hit our bridges, roads, airports, or industrial centers, we will hit theirs, we know where they are,"¹⁵ Hizballah military liaison officer Youssef Harb said in July 2009, echoing his party chief's statement about a tit-for-tat military strategy against Israel.

Gush Dan, which covers the entire area of Tel Aviv and its surrounding towns and villages, stretches over an area of 1,500 square kilometers. The population of Tel Aviv alone numbers 392,000 people who live in a relatively small area of around fifty-one square kilometers. Haifa's population of approximately 270,400 people is another attractive target for Hizballah in a potential conflict. The city's petrochemical plant provides most of Israel's needs in terms of petrol and industrial gas, and is connected through pipelines to a larger refinery 130 kilometers to the south in Ashdod, home of Israel's biggest port and an economic gateway, accounting for more than 60 percent of the country's trade. Finally on Hizballah's national security map of Israel was the southern city of Beersheba and the surrounding area in the Negev region, which hosts the Negev Phosphates Chemicals Company complex at Mishor Rotem, located adjacent to the Dimona reactor, Israel's only acknowledged nuclear fuel cycle facility. While Hizballah is well aware that the Negev is the least-populated region of Israel, the group is still interested in targeting the area because it is rich in raw materials that are strategically vital to Israel's industrial sector and overall economy.

Because Hizballah's intelligence has become finer tuned, Israeli analyst Amir Kulick has argued that the next war between Israel and Hizballah is likely to be "more difficult and complex, especially in everything concerning Israel's rear [the region between Haifa and Tel Aviv]. The preparation of a systematic database covering Israel's rear in conjunction with improved fire capabilities significantly raises the probability that in the next war not only will Israeli population centers be exposed to harm but so will national installations and infrastructures in the heart of the country."¹⁶

¹² *Jane's Defence Weekly*, July 13, 2006.

¹³ Authors' interviews, southern Lebanon, summers of 2008, 2009, and 2010.

¹⁴ Authors' interview, southern Lebanon, July 2, 2009.

¹⁵ Authors' interview, southern Lebanon, July 21, 2009.

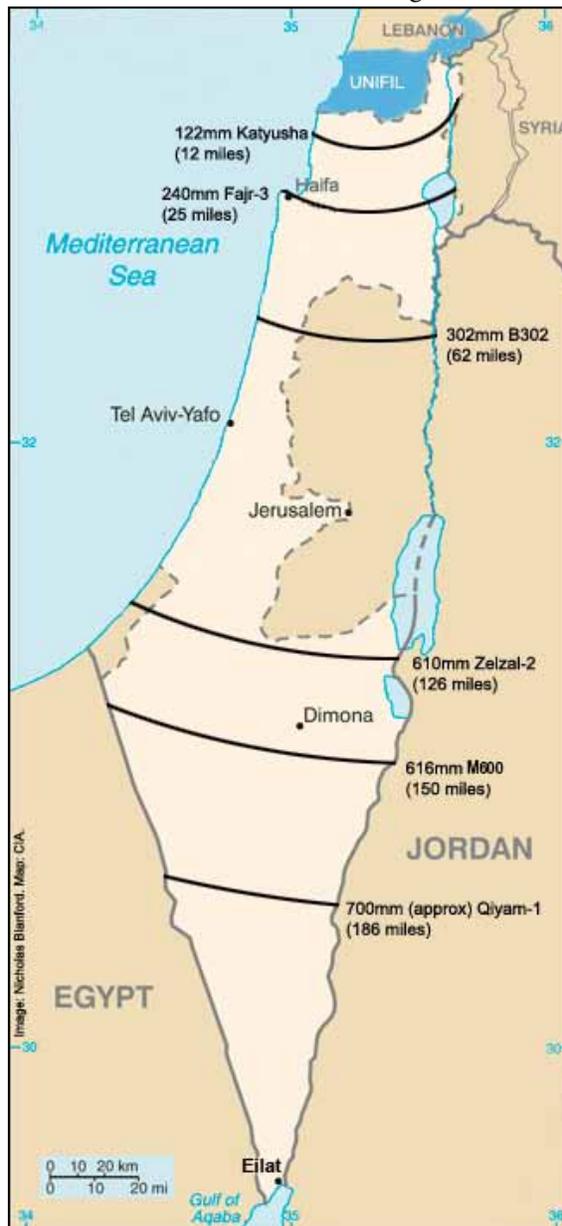
¹⁶ Amir Kulick, "Hizbollah Espionage Against Israel," *Strategic Assessment* 12, no. 3, November 2009, available at <[http://www.inss.org.il/upload/\(FILE\)1259664045.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1259664045.pdf)>.

UPGRADING THE GUNS

Since the 2006 war, Hizballah has acquired artillery rockets that are fitted with guidance systems and have sufficient range to strike targets throughout Israel. This new cache of rockets, believed to be either in Hizballah's Lebanon-based arsenals or under its control in Syrian depots, include the M600 short-range ballistic missile.¹⁷ Each M600 rocket can carry a 1,100-pound warhead, has a range of 150 miles (which is considered long-range in the context of the Hizballah-Israel conflict) and, according to some analysts, is fitted with an inertial guidance system that enables it to strike within 500 yards of a target at maximum range.

In April 2010, there were reports that Syria had transferred Scud ballistic missiles to Hizballah,¹⁸ and in July 2011, it was reported that a total of ten Scud-D missiles were now in Hizballah's possession.¹⁹ Possession of the Scuds presents formidable logistical challenges. Unlike the solid-fuelled M600, Scuds use liquid propellant that has to be stored and handled by trained operators, and launching the missiles entails a longer preparation time. The rockets are usually fired from dedicated Transporter-Erector-Launcher platforms, which have a higher signature than the smaller, disguised launchers used to fire lower-caliber rockets. Yet, despite these potential difficulties, there is an advantage for Hizballah in possessing the Scuds—their range is three times that of the M600, allowing the Negev area in southern Israel to be targeted from rocket launch sites as far north as the Hermel district of the northern Bekaa Valley.²⁰ Given the range and guidance capabilities of the M600 and Scud missiles, the combat theater in the next Hizballah-Israel war will

Hizballah Rocket Ranges



Note: The maximum ranges shown are based on launch sites in southern Lebanon. The longer range rockets, however, would be fired from central and north Lebanon. The Scud D rocket can reach all of Israel even if launched from north Lebanon.

¹⁷ Little is known about the M600—analysts are divided on whether it is an indigenous Syrian-designed system or a version of the Iranian Fateh-110 upgraded by the Syrians.

¹⁸ Charles Levinson and Jay Solomon, "Syria Gave Scuds to Hezbollah, U.S. Says," *Wall Street Journal*, April 14, 2010.

¹⁹ Richard Beeston, Nicholas Blanford, and Sheera Frenkel, "Embattled Syrian Regime Still Sending Missiles to Lebanese Militants," *Times* (UK), July 15, 2011. The flow of weaponry from Syrian stockpiles to Hizballah arsenals increased significantly when unrest broke out in Syria in March 2011. The smuggling of large quantities of weapons, particularly larger surface-to-surface rockets, may be a contingency in case the Assad regime falls.

²⁰ In August 2010, Iran successfully test-fired its Qiyam-1 ballistic missile which is liquid-fuelled and has an estimated range of 186 miles. There have been no reports that the Qiyam-1 has been transferred to Hizballah; however, it falls between the Fateh-110 and the Scud in terms of range and may be a suitable option for the Lebanese group.

no longer be confined to the traditional area encompassing southern Lebanon and northern Israel but will cover the territories of both countries.

In addition to the longer-range missiles, Hizballah has amassed large quantities of shorter-range rockets, Iranian reverse-engineered²¹ versions of Chinese anti-ship missiles, mortar rounds, and anti-armor weapons, the latter including advanced Russian systems, such as the AT-14 Kornet, which the Islamic Resistance first employed in the 2006 war. Hizballah has also increased its cache of out-dated weapons, such as 106mm and 73mm recoilless rifle rounds.

While Hizballah has made an effort to increase its offensive missile and rocket stockpile, it is less clear if and how Hizballah has upgraded its air-defense systems. Still, given the advances it has made in its other weaponry, it would be surprising if the group has not improved its air-defense systems as well. In March 2010, Brigadier General Yossi Baidatz, the head of the research division of Israel's Military Intelligence, told the Knesset's Foreign Relations and Defense Committee that Syria had recently provided Hizballah with the SA-24 Grinch shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile system, a more advanced version of the SA-18 Grouse which is believed to have been in Hizballah's arsenal since 2002. In June 2009, *Jane's Foreign Report* related that Hizballah cadres were receiving training in Syria on the SA-8 Gecko radar-guided mobile anti-aircraft system.²² Hizballah may also have acquired the Misagh-2 shoulder fired missile produced in Iran and based on Chinese technology.

Israel has considered Hizballah's acquisition of improved anti-aircraft systems a "red line" because it could threaten its aerial dominance in Lebanon. However the SA-8 is a relatively old system and is

unlikely to pose serious difficulties to the Israeli Air Force's fleet of F-15I and F-16I fighter-bombers and high-flying AWACS. However, the SA-8 and the shoulder-fired systems would pose a greater challenge for helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that fly at lower altitudes. In the 2006 war, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) made limited use of attack helicopters because of the threat posed by Hizballah's SA-18 missiles and, instead, for the first time, relied heavily on missile-firing UAVs. The 2006 war was mainly confined to the traditional theater of south Lebanon, which generally precluded the extensive use of troop transport helicopters (although a CH-53 "Yasur" was downed by an anti-tank missile as it took off after deploying a platoon of IDF troops, killing all five crew members). But because the next war is expected to encompass a larger theater—the full length of Lebanon—the IDF will probably depend much more heavily on troop transport helicopters, making the threat posed by Hizballah's anti-aircraft units that much more critical.

Hizballah did more than acquire upgraded armaments after the 2006 war, it embarked upon the largest recruitment and training drive in its thirty-year history. The ranks of Hizballah are swollen with new fighters who received basic training at camps in the Bekaa Valley and advanced training in Iran. Hizballah also revived the *Saraya al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniyya*, or Lebanese Resistance Battalions, a multi-sectarian reservist force composed of volunteers drawn from among Hizballah's political allies. The Saraya reservists, depending upon past military experience, could receive month-long training sessions in the Bekaa, split into three ten-day periods. The rate of recruitment into Hizballah's regular forces and the Saraya unit appears to have slowed from 2010, although refresher training courses continue uninterrupted.

²¹ Reverse engineering is often used by less developed militaries in order to copy other nations' technologies or devices that have been obtained by troops on the field or by intelligence operations.

²² *Jane's Foreign Report*, June 19, 2009.

HIZBALLAH'S DOCTRINE OF DETERRENCE

Hizballah can say all it wants about seeking to wipe Israel off the map, but in reality, its number one priority is survival. That does not mean, however, that Hizballah is not serious about its intentions or that it does not believe that it is capable of defeating Israel; it is and it does. But, to survive, its immediate goal is to deter Israel from waging war against it or Lebanon,²³ which may explain why it has been vocal in articulating its military doctrine.

Hizballah's military doctrine, as stated by Nasrallah, is one of reciprocity to achieve deterrence. At a rally in Beirut in August 2009, Nasrallah boldly declared: "Hizballah is able to hit every city in Israel, and I repeat: if they hit Beirut, we will attack Tel Aviv."²⁴ He reiterated his threat on February 16, 2010 when he stated: "I'd like to say to the Israelis today: Not only if you attack al-Dahiyah, we will attack Tel Aviv, but if you attack Beirut's Rafiq al-Hariri Airport, we will attack Ben-Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv. If you attack our ports, we will shell your ports. If you attack our oil refineries, we will shell your oil refineries. If you attack our factories, we will shell your factories. If you shell our electricity plants, we will shell your electricity plants."²⁵ Similarly, in May 2010, Nasrallah indicated that Hizballah now has the ability to target maritime shipping along Israel's entire coastline. "If you blockade our coastline, shores and ports, all military and commercial ships heading toward Palestine throughout the Mediterranean Sea will be targeted by the rockets of the Islamic

Resistance,"²⁶ he said. His most recent threat, on February 16, 2011, took the deterrence equation to the next level by calling upon his fighters to be ready to invade Galilee in case Israel wages war against Lebanon. He said: "I'm telling the fighters of the Islamic resistance: Be ready for the day, should war be forced upon Lebanon, where the resistance's leadership will ask you to take over the Galilee."²⁷

Nasrallah's comments confirm what Hizballah combatants have told the authors on several occasions: since 2006 their battle plans include staging raids into northern Israel.²⁸ With his vow to send fighters into Galilee if Israel invades Lebanon, Nasrallah has announced that Israel can no longer take for granted its long-established doctrine of fighting wars solely on the soil of its neighbors. Hizballah's statements and actions since 2006, therefore, suggest that in the next war, Israeli territory could become a front line for the first time since 1948.

Nasrallah's goal behind threatening to invade Galilee appears intended to increase the pressure on Israel, which is anxiously reassessing its external security environment in light of fast-moving developments in the region (specifically the collapse of the Mubarak regime in Egypt). Rightly or wrongly, Nasrallah sees these revolutionary changes as weakening Israel and, therefore, benefiting Iran and Hizballah. He likely believes that if Israel feels vulnerable, it will refrain from attacking Lebanon. Waging aggressive psychological warfare—of which Nasrallah is a master—augments that goal.

²³ The millions of dollars Iran has invested in Hizballah over the years (including armaments and intelligence capabilities comparable to a medium-sized European state) is also intended to deter against the possibility of an attack by the West and/or Israel against Iran's nuclear facilities. Architects of such an attack have to assess Hizballah's response, certainly a complicating factor in any plan to challenge Iran's nuclear ambitions. Nicholas Blanford and Bilal Y. Saab, "Hezbollah on Offense," *NationalInterest.org*, March 8, 2011, available at <<http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/hezbollah-offense-4982>>.

²⁴ "Lebanese Hezbollah Leader Delivers Speech, Threatens to Bomb Tel Aviv," *BBC Monitoring Middle East – Political*, August 16, 2009.

²⁵ "Lebanese Hezbollah Leader Threatens Retaliation if Israel Attacks – full version," *BBC Monitoring Middle East – Political*, February 18, 2010.

²⁶ Mariam Karouny, "Nasrallah Threatens Ships Going to Israel in Future War," Reuters, May 25, 2010.

²⁷ Roe Nahmias, "Nasrallah Threatens to Take Over Galilee," *Ynet.com*, February 16, 2011, available at <<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0.7340.L-4029675.00.html>>.

²⁸ Authors' interviews with Hizballah commanders and fighters, 2006-2011.

A DIFFERENT WAR

While it remains unclear whether Hizballah has the capability to wage both defensive and offensive warfare effectively against Israel for a relatively long period of time, the group claims it does.²⁹ In 2006, Hizballah fought primarily in a defensive capacity, reacting to Israeli operations, and hoping for a cessation of hostilities before Israel managed to inflict too much damage on its military infrastructure. In the next war, however, Hizballah is likely to go on the offensive by trying to dictate the pace of the conflict, rather than responding to Israel's actions.

Hizballah's overarching military strategy will remain largely the same as 2006—strike Israel with rocket fire while robustly confronting any ground invasion by the IDF. But new weapons and tactics are expected to be introduced in the next round. Hizballah will focus less on waging indiscriminate attacks on populated areas in Israel, as it did with the Katyusha assaults on northern communities in 2006 (and which it also did during the 1990s). Rather, it will likely employ its newly acquired guided missile systems to target specific military and civilian infrastructures, as outlined above, to cause economic damage, hamper Israeli military operations, and create psychological stress among the population. “What happens on the enemy's civilian front will have a bigger impact on the outcome of the next war than what happens on the military front,” Hussein Saleh, a Hizballah military commander, told the authors in August 2009.³⁰ At the same time, the shorter-range unguided systems are expected to pummel northern communities as in 2006.

For Hizballah, it is critically important to maintain a constant rate of rocket fire into Israel to effect a favorable outcome of the war. Like 2006, that requires the group to mount a formidable and coordinated defense of Lebanese territory against

IDF incursions to protect the rocket sites. If the IDF manages to destroy the rocket sites, Hizballah will have lost the war.

In the 2006 war, the relatively limited range of Hizballah's rockets meant that most of them had to be fired from southern Lebanon, which necessitated that Hizballah's defensive measures were confined to the south. In essence, Hizballah's defensive posture was comprised of two parts: 1) a sophisticated network of secret and well-camouflaged underground fortifications in rural terrain, providing a base and logistical support for squads of highly-trained combatants, including tank hunter-killer teams, who could deploy quickly using all-terrain vehicles, off-road motorcycles, or by foot to confront IDF forces; and 2) a village defense system in which urban areas were protected by part-time combat veterans who operated within the immediate environs of their home territory.

In the next war, Hizballah's defensive lines will need to stretch from the Blue Line all the way north to the district of Hermel. The southern border district where much of the 2006 war was fought is today patrolled by more than 11,000 UNIFIL peacekeepers and three brigades from the Lebanese Armed Forces, hampering Hizballah's ability to rebuild its defenses in the area. Therefore, Hizballah's initial lines of defense in the UNIFIL-patrolled south are today confined mainly to the villages, many of which have been well disguised, strengthened, and turned into bases of operations for combatants to fire short-range rockets into Israel, harass invading Israeli forces, and attack supply chains once the IDF moves further north.

The main bulk of Hizballah's defensive apparatus is to the north of the Litani River, the perimeter of the UNIFIL-patrolled zone. In the event of a future conflict with Israel, the group will likely confront

²⁹ Authors' interviews with Hizballah commanders and fighters, 2006-2011, as well as speeches by Hizballah leaders 2006-2011.

³⁰ Authors' interview, southern Lebanon, August 17, 2009.

helicopter-borne troop insertions the length of the country, as well as a full IDF armored thrust up the main avenues of north-bound advance: the coastal littoral, the mountainous backbone of Jezzine and the five main road routes into the southern Bekaa following the Litani and Hasbani river valleys and the Rashaya-Sheb'a axis.

Hizballah's acquisition of large quantities of relatively obsolete recoilless rifle rounds indicates that it will look to build upon the anti-armor tactics it used against the IDF in 2006.³¹ Since Hizballah first acquired anti-tank missiles in the early 1990s, it has developed "swarming" tactics against Israeli armored vehicles in which relatively large numbers of projectiles are fired with the intention of detonating the layers of reactive armor and exposing the steel skin of the vehicle. In 2006, Hizballah fired salvos of advanced and expensive anti-tank missiles, such as the AT-14 Kornet, at Israeli armored vehicles. In the next war, the tactic is likely to be used again, but with larger numbers of relatively cheap projectiles, such as rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and 106mm recoilless rifle rounds, in an attempt to overwhelm the IDF's newly introduced Trophy tank protection system (outlined in detail below). The 106mm recoilless rifle round is incapable of penetrating a modern tank's armor, but it is portable and can be operated by a two-man team and is accurate to up to 1,000 yards.

As for offensive operations, Hizballah has plans to infiltrate northern Israel by land and sea to conduct commando operations, which could include sabotaging civilian and military infrastructure, mining roads and bridges, taking hostages, and conducting assaults on military targets. The group will likely employ its amphibious warfare unit, whose cadres have been trained in seaborne insertions and underwater sabotage operations at the Iranian naval base in Bandar Abbas.

The principal effect of these cross-border operations would be psychological (almost none of the infiltrating fighters can be expected to return home alive), causing dismay to the Israelis while serving as powerful propaganda to the broader Arab and Islamic worlds. The latter is especially true if combat cameramen accompany the fighters and broadcast footage of Hizballah combatants fighting in Israeli towns and villages.

HIZBALLAH'S LONG-TERM GOALS AND OVERALL STRATEGY

Attempting to analyze Hizballah's long-term strategy is complicated by the fact that it encompasses two broad agendas—the pragmatic and the ideological—and seeks to satisfy two, not always compatible, interests—those of its domestic Shi'i constituency and Iran.

Hizballah presents itself to its domestic audience as a defensive force with Lebanon's best interests at heart. It argues that it must retain its weapons because only its unique style of warfare (sometimes dubbed "hybrid," meaning a blend of conventional and guerrilla warfare) can protect Lebanon from the possibility of future Israeli aggression. While there is an element of truth in these assertions, the source of its weaponry indicates something else at play. The principal reason why Iran has invested millions of dollars in upgrading Hizballah's weaponry and SIGINT capabilities since May 2000 is less an altruistic gesture to enable Lebanon to defend itself against Israel, and more to serve as a deterrent against a military strike against its nuclear facilities, though the two goals can be interrelated. Because Hizballah is heavily armed and highly skilled in overt combat and clandestine operations, planners of an attack on Iran must take into consideration the response, not only of Iran, but also of Hizballah along the Lebanon-Israel border. The stronger Hizballah becomes thanks to Iranian support, the more

³¹ Authors' interviews with Hizballah commanders and fighters, 2006-2011. See "Hizballah Prepares for the Next War," *TIME.com*, May 10, 2010.

³² Authors' meetings at CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa, FL with senior CENTCOM and SOCOM officers, June 2010.

formidable the potential retaliation, a factor of which U.S. strategic planners are perfectly aware.³²

Iran's calculated sponsorship³³ helps to explain why Hizballah has not staged a single attack against the IDF in the past five years, not even in the Sheb'a Farms, the Israeli-occupied mountainside territory running along Lebanon's southeast border. Before 2006, Hizballah staged sporadic "reminder" operations in the Farms, firing mortars and anti-tank missiles against IDF outposts. But, because Iran is looking to preserve its deterrent for the greater threat of an attack on its nuclear facilities, it is unwilling for now to indulge Hizballah's ingrained jihadist instincts by giving it the green light to resume the low-intensity-conflict with Israel which could inadvertently spark a full-scale conflict, as in 2006.

On the ideological level, Hizballah seeks the eventual destruction of Israel and the liberation of Jerusalem. Hizballah has never denied this broader ambition, although it plays it down for tactical reasons related to expanding its base of support within Lebanon's pluralistic society. Still, when new recruits begin the obligatory educational indoctrination process, they are not taught that they are a component of Iranian deterrence or that Hizballah supports the notion of a "consensual democracy" as the preferred political system for Lebanon. Rather, they are imbued with the raw ideology of the group—obedience to the *wali al-faqih*, the supreme leader of Iran, and hostility toward Israel. Through multiple conversations with Hizballah fighters since 2006, it is clear that many of them firmly believe that Israel's destruction is imminent and that the next war will be the last. (The cadres believe

their leaders' words that Israel's demise is inevitable and drawing near. This ideological and religious indoctrination has tactical benefits for the group—it is essential in shaping a dedicated, motivated, and disciplined combatant.)

Hizballah has expended much effort in building and sustaining its support base through the provision of social services primarily to its constituencies since the mid 1980s, thus creating a culture of dependency on the organization. But no amount of social services or Iranian funds will save Hizballah if it loses the support of Lebanon's Shi'i population. Hizballah has to therefore tread a fine line between following the edicts of Iran and respecting the interests of the Lebanese Shi'i community. The majority of Lebanese Shi'a, who make up the largest share of the population in southern Lebanon, do not want war with Israel. There have been numerous occasions since 2006 when nervous southerners have packed their bags and headed north in anticipation of a flare-up along the border. While Lebanon's war-weary Shi'a generally support Hizballah's defensive posture against Israel, they will have little sympathy for the group if it plunges Lebanon into another war with Israel for the sake of protecting the nuclear ambitions of a country lying 650 miles to the east.

In short, therefore, Hizballah has a complex set of goals: champion the domestic political interests of its core constituency, defend its military assets by force if necessary, deter an Israeli war against Lebanon, serve the deterrence interests of Iran, and fulfill the party's ideological obligations of confronting and defeating the Jewish state.

³³ Iran's supreme leader is also the ultimate leader of Hizballah, serving as the indissoluble thread binding the organization to the Islamic Republic. The Hizballah leadership and cadres are duty-bound to follow the ordinances of the *wali al-faqih*. However, Hizballah also is a Lebanese organization that owes its continued existence to the support of its Lebanese Shi'i constituency. Iran gives broad freedom of action to Hizballah's leadership on matters related to domestic Lebanese issues, recognizing that the likes of Nasrallah are far better placed to make such judgments.

ISRAEL PREPARES FOR WAR

If war were to break out, Israel's political leadership would likely avoid the mistakes made by the 2006 Olmert cabinet and make faster and more coherent tactical and strategic decisions. Specifically, Israel is expected to set clear and realistic war goals, promptly mobilize reserve forces, coordinate and communicate more effectively with the General Command, plan exit strategies in advance, and wage a successful media outreach and public relations campaign that leaves little doubt about how Israel is waging the war and what it intends to accomplish.³⁴

THE IDF AND LESSONS LEARNED

Israel's military and political leaderships were ill-prepared for a large-scale war with Hizballah in 2006. Moreover, lack of proper coordination between the military and political leaderships led to strategic mistakes, including an excessive reliance on air power and a late and half-hearted decision to commit ground troops. While the IDF claims that it successfully destroyed Hizballah's stock of long-range missiles, it failed to stop the barrage of short- and medium-range rockets against Israeli targets throughout the duration of the war. In addition,

reservist troops had received insufficient training to cope with the hybrid fighting technique employed by Hizballah. The logistical chain between the front line and the rear was badly coordinated, which meant troops often ran short of basic needs, such as water and ammunition. Poor intelligence prior and during the war prevented the IDF from knowing the exact locations of Hizballah's sophisticated and camouflaged bunkers. In short, the IDF suffered from both an inability to execute its own strategy and answer Hizballah's. Since the end of the 2006 war, the IDF has worked hard to regain the Israeli public's confidence by improving on several weaknesses and waging what was perceived by most Israelis as a generally successful war against Hamas in December 2008.³⁵

According to Israeli media reports, the IDF has trained extensively for another war with Hizballah, instituting greater logistical autonomy and sustainability in its combat units and strengthening the ability of its ground forces, navy, and air force to carry out joint operations. "For the first time, ground forces, navy, and air force officers have studied together in the Command and Staff College to strengthen their ability to carry out joint

³⁴ For more details about how Israel has learned from the 2006 war and set up a sophisticated press operation to make its case to the world, see "Learning from Lebanon, Israel Sets Up Press Operation," *Forward*, January 9, 2009.

³⁵ While Hizballah is opaque in media outreach when it comes to military affairs, the Israeli media regularly reports the changes made within the IDF based on the lessons learned from the 2006 war.

operations,” wrote Avi Kober of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.³⁶

Realizing that air power alone will not guarantee decisive victory, the IDF has worked over the past five years on developing military plans that seek “land dominance” in the next war.³⁷ Following the recommendation of the Winograd Commission, which investigated the failures of the Israeli military during and after the 2006 war, the IDF has trained extensively in large-scale ground operations, employing rapid maneuver techniques and using more robust and flexible equipment to reduce tactical vulnerability.³⁸

Preparing for potential urban warfare with Hizballah, the IDF’s Ground Forces Command has been training in several urban warfare centers that it created shortly after the end of the 2006 war (plans to increase the number of these centers by 50 percent by the end of 2011 have been recently approved by the Israeli government).³⁹ The Israeli media have reported that there are about fifteen different training centers scattered throughout the country, the largest of which (and the largest in the world) is called the Urban Warfare Training Center (UWTC), and is located near the Tze’elim Base in the Negev. Tzahi Biran, the chief editor of the IDF’s official website, reported that the UWTC “is spread out over 41,000 square meters and includes 600 structures such as mosques, high-rise buildings and underground passageways. The center also simulates a variety of civilian locations, including markets, alleys, refugee camps, Kasbahs and even tunnels. The facility allows for training in laser-shooting and subsequent investigations of shots using an advanced system of sensors.”⁴⁰

Should the IDF launch a major ground invasion into Lebanese territory in the next war, the first challenging urban environment it would face would be Bint Jbeil, the largest Shi’i-populated town in the southern border district that has great strategic and symbolic value to both sides. When Israel withdrew from Lebanon in May 2000, Nasrallah chose Bint Jbeil (which is often described by Lebanese commentators as the “capital of Hizballah” and viewed by the group’s commanders as Lebanon’s “Stalingrad”) as the site of his first “victory” rally. He then portrayed Israel as a “spider’s web” which is why six years later the IDF dubbed the ultimately unsuccessful operation to capture Bint Jbeil as “Web of Steel.” On October 14, 2010, Iranian president Mahmud Ahmadinejad visited Bint Jbeil, received a hero’s welcome, and gave a defiant speech in front of thousands of Shi’a.⁴¹

The IDF has painful memories of Bint Jbeil. During the Web of Steel operation in 2006, the elite infantry Golani Brigade lost eight soldiers in a Hizballah ambush along the town’s outskirts. The fierce battle for Bint Jbeil forced Israel to pull its ground troops out of the Lebanese town, giving Hizballah a huge morale boost. Since the end of the 2006 war, the Golani Brigade has sought to learn the lessons of Bint Jbeil at the UWTC and other urban centers by conducting simulations and military exercises. In late May 2011, the Golani Brigade joined forces with the Nahal Brigade on a two-day drill at the UWTC, training on how to cope with the difficulties and uncertainties of combat in Lebanese and Palestinian towns and cities.⁴² At the same time, Israel has been conducting training to cope with

³⁶ Avi Kober, “Clouds of Contradiction,” *Jerusalem Post*, February 15, 2011.

³⁷ Land dominance is where land forces perform a series of rapid and decisive operations, employing maneuver forces throughout the battle area, precisely, lethally, and effectively, to defeat the enemy.

³⁸ “Israel Seeking to Achieve ‘Land Dominance’ in the Battlefield,” *Defense Update*, November 2008, available at <http://defense-update.com/topics/afv/afv_archive_07-08.html>.

³⁹ Yaakoz Katz, “IDF Increases, Enhances Urban Warfare Centers,” *Jerusalem Post*, May 7, 2010.

⁴⁰ Tzahi Biran, “Five Facts about the IDF’s Urban Warfare Trainings,” Official website of the IDF, January 2, 2011, available at <<http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/News/today/2011/01/0201.htm>>.

⁴¹ Damien McElroy, “Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Lebanon: A Landlord Visiting his Domain,” *Telegraph*, October 14, 2010.

⁴² Tammy Habteyes, “Golani Playground,” Official website of the IDF, May 22, 2011, available at <<http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/News/today/2011/05/2202.htm>>.

attacks on the home front. In June 2011, the IDF's Home Front Command held a nationwide, week-long drill, dubbed "Turning Point 5," to test Israel's response to a large-scale rocket attack on Israeli territory. The home-front exercise, the fifth held since the 2006 war, included scenarios in which rockets strike national infrastructure assets such as the electricity grid and water networks.

Israel has also developed several armor defense systems to neutralize Hizballah's advanced anti-tank missiles. Beginning in 2010, the Trophy system was fitted on all new tanks coming off the production line.⁴³ The Trophy system fires a projectile from a targeted tank toward the incoming missile, destroying it in the air. Other systems fire a small missile that explodes in the path of an incoming projectile, or utilize electro-optical jamming measures. As discussed above, it remains to be seen how well they would cope with the swarming measures being developed by Hizballah.

With regard to intelligence, the IDF claims that the information it currently possesses on Hizballah's military installations is much better today than it was prior and during the 2006 war. A senior IDF officer recently told *The Jerusalem Post* that the IDF has identified thousands of Hizballah sites throughout Lebanon. According to the officer, "The IDF had approximately 200 pre-designated targets on July 12, 2006.... Today the [target] bank has thousands more sites...."⁴⁴ In March 2011, Israeli officials provided *The Washington Post* with a map showing 1,000 underground bunkers, hidden weapons storage facilities, and monitoring sites allegedly built by Hizballah in southern Lebanon.⁴⁵ The map was too small in scale to ascertain its accuracy, and its release was likely more of an attempt to wage psychological warfare against Hizballah and

Iran, but the possession of accurate intelligence of Hizballah's positions would be of great use to the Israeli military in the next war, especially during the first few hours of the conflict.

Finally, to protect against long- and short-range missiles, Israel has beefed up its investment in the development of a multi-layered missile defense system. The IDF hopes that the system will provide it with a strategic advantage, countering its enemies' lines of attack and enhancing the morale of the Israeli public. Israel's missile defense system received a great financial boost recently as the U.S. House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee "appropriated the highest levels of funding ever for a joint U.S.-Israel missile defense program in [the United States'] history" (the actual numbers have not been confirmed yet).⁴⁶

Israel's deployed missile defenses could theoretically alleviate some security problems and improve deterrence. Currently, Israel's missile defense capabilities center around the "Arrow II," "Arrow III," "Iron Dome," and "Magic Wand" (also known as "David's Sling") systems. The original Arrow interceptor became operational more than a decade ago, and the upgraded Arrow III and Magic Wand are expected to be deployed in the next two to three years.⁴⁷ But these systems are not necessarily a panacea for the threat posed by Hizballah's missiles and rockets due to technical limitations, unit costs, and uncertainties about their operational effectiveness. The effectiveness of the Iron Dome and Magic Wand systems notwithstanding, they cannot neutralize the primary problem Israel faces from Hizballah's rocket arsenal—the disruption to normal life for Israeli citizens living within range of the rockets (rather than actual loss of lives or physical damage).⁴⁸ In that sense, regardless of how many

⁴³ Alon Ben-David, "Trophy Active Protection System Passes IDF Tests," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, September 4, 2009.

⁴⁴ Yaakoz Katz, "IDF Identifies Thousands of Hezbollah Sites in Lebanon," *Jerusalem Post*, June 10, 2011.

⁴⁵ Map available at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/world/Israeli-military-information-on-Hezbollah.html>>.

⁴⁶ Ben Smith, "Israeli Missile Defense Gets Record Funding," *Politico*, June 1, 2011.

⁴⁷ "Israeli Missile Defense to be Completed by 2015, Officials Say," Reuters, November 15, 2010.

⁴⁸ Authors' interview with Brigadier General (ret.) Shlomo Brom, November 1, 2009.

Hizballah rockets are knocked out of the sky in the next war by Israel's interceptor missiles, Israeli citizens will still be required to seek shelter or evacuate the area, thus disrupting everyday life and causing political challenges for Israeli leaders.

The Israeli public may discover that in the next war the costly anti-rocket batteries will not be deployed to defend their homes and businesses, but will be installed around key strategic sites in Israel, such as industrial and infrastructure centers and army and air force bases that are expected to be the focus of Hizballah's newly-acquired guided missiles. Furthermore, despite U.S. funding and technological assistance, Israel's multi-layered missile defense system is enormously costly (for example, the price tag for a single Iron Dome battery is as much as \$21 million)⁴⁹ and could cause significant financial burdens for Israel's economy in the long run.

ISRAEL'S PREDICAMENT

Overall, despite the IDF's extensive military preparations and the amount of time and effort it has spent learning the lessons of the 2006 war, a positive outcome for Israel in another war with Hizballah will depend not only on the quality of its military and political strategies but also on its leadership's ability to effectively implement them and counter those of Hizballah. Here, Israel still faces formidable challenges and its options are less than perfect.

Israel's immediate security concerns about Hizballah continue to center on the qualitative and quantitative evolution of the group's military arsenal. While Israeli leaders are unified in recognizing the serious challenge posed by Hizballah, there is a lack of unanimity on how to deal with the threat.⁵⁰

Specifically, Israel continues to debate whether it can live with a Hizballah that is not completely

disarmed or militarily crushed to the extent that it no longer poses a serious threat to the Jewish state. Although it appears that Israel has not yet formulated a coherent policy for dealing with Hizballah, top Israeli military strategists recognize that the task of decisively defeating the Lebanese group is a near impossibility. They favor instead a variation of past "punishment" campaigns designed to inflict short and very sharp shocks to weaken Hizballah's domestic support, erode its military stockpiles and deter future flare-ups.

Both Israeli approaches—the maximalist destruction of Hizballah or the limited aims of a punishment campaign—have their advantages and disadvantages.

A MAXIMALIST POLICY

A maximalist policy seeking the total destruction of Hizballah as a military force would be politically rewarding at home if achieved; a victory would bestow considerable kudos on those Israeli leaders who presided over the war. But victory cannot be guaranteed, and a determined attempt to crush Hizballah would embroil Israel in a costly and debilitating war, inevitably incurring international opprobrium, economic costs, a high number of military and civilian casualties, and infrastructure damage. A maximalist policy would involve extensive military and operational requirements. The history of past conflicts with Hizballah demonstrates that air power alone would be insufficient. Success (defined here as the complete destruction of Hizballah's military power) would require a combination of air and ground operations, as well as the use of naval assets.

In terms of the air operation, the IAF would have to implement a multi-phased campaign that aims to destroy Hizballah's command and control structure, including Hizballah's headquarters in southern

⁴⁹ Joshua Mitnick, "Israel's Iron Dome Missile Defense System Not a Silver Bullet," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 20, 2010.

⁵⁰ Bilal Y. Saab, *Levantine Reset: Toward a More Viable U.S. Strategy for Lebanon*, Analysis Paper, Number 21, The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings, July 2010, available at <http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2010/07_lebanon_saab.aspx>.

Beirut and command nodes scattered around the country. In addition, the IAF would have to conduct campaigns against targets of opportunity uncovered by intelligence assets and supply lines between Lebanon and Syria.

Ground forces would have to penetrate deep into Lebanon to seek and destroy Hizballah's rocket launching sites. Given the expansion of Hizballah's rocket arsenal since 2006, both in terms of quantity and quality, such a ground operation could not be limited to southern Lebanon. Rather, ground forces would have to reach as far north as the Hermel district in the northern area of the Bekaa Valley, and areas adjacent to the Syrian border, (which could trigger a confrontation with Syrian forces). IDF commanders would have to decide whether that would best be achieved by a full-scale ground invasion utilizing armored and infantry brigades or a more focused campaign using airborne and special forces. Given the introduction in 2006 of several new systems designed to defend armor against anti-tank missiles, the IDF may opt for the former. In addition, Israel would have to impose a blockade along Lebanon's coast to prevent weapons shipments to Hizballah from the sea and to hamper movement along Lebanon's main coastal highways (a tactic employed by the Israeli Navy during several military conflicts with Hizballah, including the 1982 invasion and the 2006 war). A blockade, however, has inherent military risks given Hizballah's enhanced surface-to-sea weapons and new hidden fortifications in the coastal, southwestern Beirut suburb of Ouzai.

An extensive military campaign by the IDF against Hizballah would, by default, cause massive damage to Lebanon—both in lives and infrastructure. Absent a swift and decisive military victory by the IDF in the first few days of the war (a highly unlikely scenario),

Israel would likely incur heavy diplomatic costs regionally and internationally as the conflict unfolds.

Should Israel engage in strategic bombing against Lebanese civilian infrastructure, Hizballah would likely respond with force and speed, making even this aspect of the operation politically costly for Israeli leaders. Indeed, Hizballah's deterrent is not just that of denial, but that of massive retaliation as well. The impact of a more lasting and destructive rocket and missile campaign by Hizballah on Israel's economy and politics could be huge.⁵¹

Present and future Israeli governments are expected to learn from the mistakes of the Olmert cabinet in 2006 and the risks inherent in setting unrealistic war goals. If those goals are not achieved, then the perception is one of Israeli defeat, granting another aura of victory to Hizballah as well as humiliation and a political backlash at home. Frustrated with yet another negative war outcome and hurt by the economic losses and civilian casualties that might ensue from another large-scale conflict with Hizballah, the Israeli public could vote their leaders out of office.

A LIMITED AIMS STRATEGY

In October 2008, Major General Gadi Eisenkot, the head of the IDF's Northern Command, unveiled the so-called "Dahiyah doctrine" named after the southern suburbs of Beirut where Hizballah's leadership resides.⁵² The doctrine states that in a future war, Israel will flatten areas controlled by Hizballah in the same way that it inflicted damage on Dahiyah in the 2006 conflict. Israeli strategists, such as Gabi Siboni of the Institute for National Security Studies, have expanded upon that idea to advocate attacking Lebanese infrastructure in a short "punishment" campaign that would simply ignore Hizballah's military assets, including the rocket batteries.⁵³

⁵¹ The authors would like to thank Dan Byman and Ken Pollack for their comment which helped to clarify that point.

⁵² "Lessons Learned from the Lebanon War: The 'Dahiyah Doctrine,'" *Yedioth Ahronoth*, October 3, 2008.

⁵³ Gabi Siboni, "Disproportionate Force: Israel's Concept of Response in Light of the Second Lebanon War," INSS Insight No. 74, October 2, 2008, available at <<http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=25&incat=&read=2222>>.

Operationally, a limited aims strategy would largely be implemented by the IAF (to destroy enemy command and control) and the Israeli Navy (to impose a blockade) and would not necessitate a deep ground invasion. Despite the fact that ground troops would not have to be employed, there are considerable downsides to this strategy. The decision to destroy Lebanese infrastructure as “punishment” and as a deterrent against future Hizballah aggression would cause considerable loss of civilian life and economic harm, drawing the same international criticism as the maximalist policy.

In some respects, the Dahiyah doctrine is a throw-back to the air and artillery offensives the IDF waged against Hizballah in the 1990s—the seven-day Operation Accountability in July 1993 and the sixteen-day Operation Grapes of Wrath in April 1996. Both operations were intended to inflict punishment on Lebanese civilians and the government in Beirut for supporting Hizballah’s resistance campaign against the IDF in southern Lebanon. They both failed because Israel misunderstood the dynamics between Hizballah and the civilian population, and the realities of the Lebanon-Syria relationship in which Beirut was subordinate to Damascus and not in a position to block Hizballah even if it had wanted to.⁵⁴

Israel believes that if the Dahiyah doctrine is used in a war against Hizballah, the backlash by

Lebanese citizens against Hizballah would further erode the organization’s domestic standing. Hizballah’s popularity has declined since 2000, when it had the backing of most Lebanese to pursue its campaign of resistance against the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. Today, it is generally accepted that the Lebanese are evenly split between those supporting the organization’s desire to retain its weapons and those who want to see it disarmed. That diminished support could decline even further in the aftermath of another destructive war with Israel when Hizballah would face greater calls for disarmament.

The real utility of the Dahiyah doctrine lies in its powers of deterrence rather than its application. Israel regularly promotes the doctrine to alarm the Lebanese and to deter Hizballah. The flaw in the doctrine, however, will emerge if a conflict arises and Israel chooses to launch an overwhelming assault on Lebanese infrastructure. In such an event, Hizballah will not play by Israel’s rules and retire, chastened, when the IDF decides after a few days that sufficient punishment has been inflicted. Rather, Hizballah will likely press on with its attack and Israel will be forced to respond and risk being dragged into a ground campaign, with the resulting high casualties and uncertain outcome.

⁵⁴ For Damascus, preserving Hizballah’s military capacity is vital, both to give Syria strategic leverage against Israel and to increase the power of pro-Syrian voices inside Lebanon.

CONCLUSION

The inconclusive nature of the 2006 conflict means that many of the drivers that originally led to war remain in place and could facilitate renewed military action. This is not to say that conflict is inevitable. Certain deterrent factors have also increased over the five years since the last war, including the presence of a larger, European-heavy multinational force in southern Lebanon, which has raised the military and political costs of another war for both sides. While the security regime that UN Security Council Resolution 1701 has instituted in southern Lebanon is by no means perfect, the presence of sizeable Italian, French, and Spanish battalions in UNIFIL ensures that those countries have a vested interest in perpetuating the current calm.

Whether mutual deterrence can be a lasting solution to the state of conflict between Hizballah and Israel is doubtful. Deterrence can prevent military hostilities in the short term, but it does not address the underlying political issues that have led to war in the past. The prevailing balance of terror is inherently unstable and even though both sides are aware of the risks of miscalculation, the chances of one side misreading the actions of the other remain dangerously high. In that regard, the uncertainties of the uprising in Syria could play into the Israel-Hizballah dynamic. Syria plays an essential role as a geostrategic lynchpin connecting Iran to Hizballah. It serves as a conduit for the transfer of weapons to Hizballah and gives the Lebanese group strategic

depth and political leverage. If the regime of President Bashar al-Asad feels it faces imminent collapse, it could ignite a limited conflict with Israel in the Golan Heights in a desperate last gamble for survival. It would be difficult for Hizballah to stay out of a war between Syria and Israel, even though neither Hizballah nor Iran had sought the conflict.

On the other hand, if the Asad regime falls and the new leadership in Damascus decides to abandon the so-called “axis of resistance” with its Iranian and Lebanese allies (an outcome far from certain), it would represent a major blow to Iran and Hizballah. In such an event, Israel may feel emboldened to take advantage of the situation by attacking Hizballah in the hope of permanently degrading its military capabilities, knowing that it could not resupply itself as it did after the 2006 war. An attack could thus neutralize the group as a future threat.

The above scenarios point to the precariousness of the balance of terror between Israel and Hizballah. Nevertheless, in the absence of viable alternatives, the threat of immense damage and high casualties in both Lebanon and Israel in the next war is probably the only factor sustaining the peace.

Yet, as long as the underlying political issues between Lebanon, Syria, and Israel are not addressed, Iran continues to enrich uranium and build an extensive military infrastructure in Lebanon, and Hizballah and Israel aggressively prepare for another war, the

likelihood of military conflict remains high. Absent a more comprehensive solution to Lebanon's problems—which some argue would need to entail a set of strategic understandings between Iran and the United States—there are some measures that can be implemented to reduce the chances of accidental war.

Given that an accidental trigger is the most likely cause of the next war between Hizballah and Israel, diplomatic efforts should focus on ways to prevent misunderstandings from developing into conflict. In this context, the monthly tripartite meetings hosted by the UNIFIL commander that bring together Israeli and Lebanese military representatives in Naqoura has proved to be an effective means of resolving issues linked to the Blue Line and a forum for advancing and addressing concerns voiced by either side. There also exists an emergency communications facility between the Lebanese Army and the IDF with the UNIFIL commander as go-between to resolve any pressing problems that cannot wait for the next tripartite session. The cessation of hostilities following the 2006 war generally has been observed, so the liaison channel has not faced a test in the event of a flare-up of hostilities between Hizballah and Israel. However, the more informal liaison channel in operation before 2006 (when UNIFIL was a seventh of its current size) proved highly effective in defusing many moments of tension and violence.

Yet, there are still serious challenges. The emerging dispute between Lebanon and Israel over exploitation rights to fossil fuel deposits beneath the eastern Mediterranean seabed requires the urgent attention of the international community. There are accusations that Lebanon is deliberately creating a “maritime Sheb’a Farms” (meaning a contrived territorial claim to allow Hizballah to maintain a militant

posture toward Israel), but these are misplaced as Beirut, like Tel Aviv, has a justified economic interest in being able to exploit whatever oil and gas deposits lie beneath its sovereign waters.

The source of the problem is that the maritime boundary between Lebanon and Israel has never been demarcated. Presently, Israel maintains a unilaterally positioned line of buoys at about 291 degrees, which roughly conforms to the northern edge of its hydrocarbon exploration blocks. Both countries have warned against encroaching upon each others' exclusive economic zones. In December 2010, the Israeli Navy reportedly presented a maritime security plan to the government costing \$40 to \$70 million to defend the gas fields. In January 2011, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed that “Israel will defend its resources.”⁵⁵ Two months later, Nasrallah replied by saying that “should Israel threaten any Lebanese government that decides in the future to start oil excavation off the southern coast, only the Resistance would force Israel and the world to respect Lebanon's right.”⁵⁶ More recently, Nasrallah's deputy and the group's second in command, Sheikh Naim Qassem, reiterated that “[his organization] will continue to closely follow the situation in order to restore Lebanon's rights, at whatever cost necessary.”⁵⁷

Still, there is reason to hope that an acceptable final boundary can be reached through the mediation of the UN (Lebanon and Israel are in the process of submitting their respective maritime boundary proposals to the UN). Even if negotiations for a legally ratified maritime border fail, it is possible that an interim measure could be reached. Israel and Lebanon could recognize a “zone of dispute” consisting of the thin triangle formed by the two rival boundary proposals, which would allow both countries to pursue their oil and gas exploration interests away

⁵⁵ Nicholas Blanford, “The Next Big Lebanon-Israel Flare-Up: Gas,” *TIME.com*, April 6, 2011.

⁵⁶ “Nasrallah Says Ready to Aid Arab People: Arms Uproar Won't Affect Us, Resistance to Keep Arming,” *Naharnet.com*, March 19, 2011.

⁵⁷ Roee Nahmias, “Hezbollah: We Won't Let Israel Take Our Gas,” *Ynet.com*, July 14, 2011.

from that zone. Either way, a harmonious conclusion will require diligent diplomacy and mediation by the international community, spearheaded by the UN.

On land, UNIFIL, in coordination with the IDF and Lebanese authorities, is marking the UN-delineated Blue Line to prevent repeated incidents of Lebanese civilians straying across the boundary. Progress has been painfully slow due to a “lack of flexibility and pragmatism” by the Lebanese Army and IDF.⁵⁸ Marking the Blue Line in full will not prevent a war between Israel and Hizballah but it will help to dampen persistent minor

tensions involving misunderstandings by local Lebanese as to the path of the Blue Line, especially as the IDF’s border fence (often assumed by Lebanese to represent the frontier) deviates quite considerably in some places from the UN boundary.⁵⁹

Ultimately, the likelihood of renewed war between Hizballah and Israel remains high in the mid- to long-term. It is critically important that as the Middle East convulses with the shockwaves engendered by the “Arab Spring,” the international community continue to play close attention to the nascent conflict under preparation in Lebanon and Israel.

⁵⁸ Fifteenth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). February 28, 2011.

⁵⁹ A misunderstanding over the path of the Blue Line led to a skirmish between the IDF and the Lebanese Army in August 2010 in which three Lebanese soldiers, one Israeli lieutenant-colonel, and one Lebanese journalist were killed.

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