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Israeli Deterrence And the 2nd Lebanon War

by

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Biography

Lt. Col. Amiram Jakira Joined the Israeli Air Force in 1994. He graduated flight academy as transport aviator. He served in several field posts on different squadrons in the Israeli Air Force. He commanded operational support squadron as well as Gulfstream V and C-130 Squadrons. Lt. Col. Jakira fought and participated in the 2006 second Lebanon War and in 2014 Protective Edge war. Lt. Col. Jakira holds a B.S. degree in Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Lt. Col. Jakira is currently a student at the Air War College on Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.



Abstract

The Middle East has been boiling in the last ten years. In the face of chaos on various regions, there is prominent peace and stability on the Israel-Lebanon border. This stability owes to strong Israeli deterrence, whose roots stem at the 2006 war. This essay claims that the central pillar of Israel's deterrence is the will and commitment to launch widespread attacks towards Lebanon in retaliation to Hezbollah provocations, as demonstrated in July 2006. The massive response was in contradiction with weak Israeli retaliation to previous Hezbollah provocations. The "Operation between Wars" in IDF strategy, demonstrates the existence of a strong deterrence as well as contributes to it. Several alternative reasons to maintaining of stability in the area are discussed.



Introduction

Ten years have passed since the Second Lebanon War, a war that a great deal of the Israeli public perceives as a military and political failure. Members of the opposition, as well as many former senior military leaders, criticized the management of the campaign, and the military's performance and achievements. Under public pressure, the government appointed a commission of inquiry, headed by a Supreme Court judge, in addition to military's debriefings. The appointment of such a commission is a rare event, usually following a major national failure. Doing so indicates a lack of public trust in the military and political leadership. It can be argued, however, that the 2006 Israeli campaign created a situation of stable deterrence between Israel and Hezbollah.

At the same time, the Middle East has changed dramatically; The Palestinian are divided into two political entities. The Palestinian Authority rules in the West Bank, while Hamas is in power in Gaza Strip. Over the past decade, the latter organization has launched three serious violent campaigns against Israel. Egypt changed its regime, twice. Independent Iraq, without an American presence, is fighting for sovereignty. A bitter civil war in Syria is far from ending, and ISIS suddenly emerged to take great swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq. In the midst of this complex reality, one border remains peaceful and stable, the Israeli-Lebanese border. What are the causes for the peace and stability between the two countries, despite the formal state of war between them?

Deterrence is a very broad concept. During the Cold War, the researchers focused on nuclear deterrence. Post-Cold War era focuses the discussion on deterrence of rogue regimes and non-state actors. This article will lay a theoretical basis of deterrence in general and the Israeli deterrence in particular. Furthermore, the article reviews the main events during July 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. The outbreak of the war will be examined in light of the relationship between Israel and Hezbollah in the period before and after Israel's

withdrawal from Lebanon. The comparison will support the claim that Israel's willingness to escalate a border event into an all-out war was unexpected. The war outcomes, especially the massive damage to Lebanon, will be presented as key factors contributing to the Israeli deterrence.

In 2015, the IDF chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot, published the IDF's Strategy, for the first time in IDF's history. The strategy has been implemented and manages to establish deterrence against Hezbollah. According to open sources, in 2013-2016, Israel launched some offensive operations against Hezbollah targets in Syria. Most of them received only a limited response or no response at all. These actions, assuming the Israel Defense Forces did commit them, both contribute to deterrence and rely on it.

However, there may be other reasons for the relative stability of the Israeli-Lebanese border; the role of Hezbollah in the Lebanese government, and its involvement in Syria fighting alongside Assad's regime. Interests of Syria and Iran can contribute to the quite as well. As described by Lawrence Freedman "proving that strategic deterrence works is particularly challenging. It is obvious when it fails".¹

A theoretical discussion of deterrence

Deterrence focuses on using threats to prevent an adversary from changing the status quo. According to Mearsheimer, deterrence is about "persuading an opponent not to initiate a specific action because the perceived benefits do not justify the estimate costs and risks."² There are three elements to deterrence: a deterrer must have sufficient capability; the threat should be credible and; the deterrer should be able to communicate the threat to its opponent.³ According to Schelling, "coercion" includes "deterrent" and "compellent".⁴ Compellence stands for persuading an opponent to take action. For Schelling, it is easier to deter than to compel.⁵ This assumption, as I will argue later, is especially valid for the Israeli case in 2006.

Israel struggled to compel Hezbollah to stop firing rockets, but in retrospect, it achieved deterrence for a long time.

Deterrence requires understanding the opponent, its motives and objectives, and its decision-making⁶. Mearsheimer argues that deterrence is a direct function of specific military strategy.⁷ Deterrence should be specific to the context and the characteristics of the threat.⁸ Although Mearsheimer emphasis is on conventional deterrence between large armies, this argument can be applied to asymmetric warfare as well.

It is important to mention the well-known distinction between deterrence based on punishment vs. denial, "counter-force" vs. "counter-value". Snyder distinguishes between deterrence that results from the capacity to deny territorial gains and deterrence by threat and capacity to inflict nuclear punishment.⁹ During the Cold War, the punishment strategy was associated with targeting population, cities and industry, inflicting cost and pain. In contrary, when denial strategy was implemented. It focused on lessening the opponent capabilities in the battlefield, causing him to miss his goals.¹⁰

Another important principle of deterrence is to make sure it is well communicated and correctly received by the target audience.¹¹ That is making it believable and keeping it from "sounding like a bluff."¹² The "Art of Commitment", as described by Schelling, deals with "extended deterrence" and it is relevance especially to the Superpowers and their allies.¹³ However, this notion is relevant to Israel as well in the way it is committed to defending its borders from terror, by launching excessive retaliation. The way the aggressor perceives public support on both sides contributes to deterrence. Public support of the deterrer affects its credibility, and public support to the aggressor relates to the political cost it foresees.¹⁴

When does deterrence fail?

Decision makers operate in an environment with psychological effects such as stress, fear, exhaustion and incomplete information. Sometimes, there are language, political and religious differences between opponents that can lead the decision makers to see the enemy not as it is.¹⁵ One possibility for failure of deterrence is a mirror imaging that is making the decision makers see an opponent like themselves.¹⁶ Another reason for the failure of deterrence is a credibility gap developing between will and capability.¹⁷ Lack of response contributes to the formation of such gap between economic and military capabilities the will.¹⁸

Schelling argued that to be coercive, violence has to be anticipated,¹⁹ but he also recognized the importance of uncertainty.²⁰ Another obstacle to deterrence is too much ambiguity in policy that can send the wrong signal. A certain amount of ambiguity is necessary to deterrence. Too much of it, however, can erode the desired deterrence. Ambiguity works best when it concerns the scope and intensity of the response, not its existence.²¹ Often deterrence fails due to a combination of factors rather than one factor.²² Another complexity of deterrence in democracies is that leaders tend to focus on the short term and immediate threats and solution. Deterrence does not work well when responding but when planning and strengthening over time.²³

Deterrence of a Non-State Actor

Many scholars agree that it is possible to deter non-state actors.²⁴ However, the question how to best shape the situation is multifaceted. Violent non-state actors include both terror organizations and insurgent groups. Sometimes, the distinction depends on the perspective of the defender.²⁵ According to Wilner and Wenger deterrence may contribute to controlling terrorism but cannot be the keystone of counterterrorism.²⁶ There is a debate whether the pillars of traditional deterrence provide an appropriate framework to study counterterrorism.

Terrorism and counterterrorism are "concrete, dynamic and highly political."²⁷ Deterrence between two similar, symmetric, unified and usually status-quo oriented states is focused on high conflict and threat of extreme punishment. It does not fit the challenges of a counterterrorism campaign.²⁸ Wilner and Wagner argue for the ineffectiveness of deterrence focused on punishment and emphasize employing a variety of denial strategies.²⁹ Deterrence based on punishment is difficult because of several reasons: First, state and non-state actors differ in power, capabilities, intents, goals and motivations. Second, in case of low-intensity conflict, the threat may be not credible and therefore even counter-productive. Third, repeated use of limited force has at best an indirect deterrent effect at the tactical level.³⁰

On the other hand, Lebovic argues that there is an over-emphasis of the denial-based deterrence while the defender should carry out punishment-based deterrence.³¹ The defender ought to take an offensive approach by attacking terrorist leadership, financial centers, networks and support bases.³² Every organization has a center of gravity.³³ Non-state actors strive for public support, and its leaders protect what they value.³⁴ The weaker party may call the defender's bluff in hopes that there is insufficient will for retaliation.³⁵ Therefore, the defender has to create an image of it willing to go 'all the way' or 'go crazy.' The punishment is excessive or disproportionate in order to make the cost great enough to deter further terrorism.³⁶

There are multiple targets for terrorism deterrence. The choice of a target can range from acquisition of a particular weapon to its construction, its placement and its use in the theater; it ranges from the simple soldier to the terrorist leaders, the financial enabler or the state sponsor.³⁷ Retaliation toward the terrorists' host government signals that it is directly responsible for the action of terror group from its territory.³⁸ However, it is difficult to punish states for their alleged support of terrorist activity.³⁹ Retaliation against host government is especially problematic if they are weak, politically or militarily, relative to terror groups, particularly, if the terror groups have public support.⁴⁰ This approach emphasizes the pressure

on third parties who facilitate terrorism rather than on terrorists themselves.⁴¹ Excessive damage to the host government diminishes its ability to restrain the terror group in its territory,⁴² and provoke the public to empathize with the terrorist's struggle.⁴³ By punishment, the defender is trying to compel the host government to take actions towards the terrorist group. However, as described by Schelling, compellence is much more difficult than deterrence.⁴⁴

According to Lebovic, any offensive strategy to deter terrorist, whether punishment or denial, is very complicated.⁴⁵ Jeffrey identifies two indirect approaches to terrorist denial deterrence, both are constant defensive efforts. The first involves increasing the probability that the attack will fail. Better defensive measures contribute to deterring terrorists. The second approach is to ensure that even a successful terrorist attack will not cause a decisive effect, by improving social resiliency.⁴⁶

The "intra-war deterrence" is another complexity derived from the need to deter terrorists from an ongoing conflict.⁴⁷ One of the foundations of deterrence described by Schelling is the concept of "assurance," in which there is a clear line between action and inaction. Deterrence ought to succeed when the threat is not being executed in return to an opponent's compliance.⁴⁸ However, in most cases, counterterrorism campaigns stress continuing offensive actions toward terrorist groups.⁴⁹ This contradiction brings ambiguity and difficulties to communicate and clarifies intentions and expectations between the state and non-state adversaries. Therefore, a stable deterrence is constructed between the adversaries over time through mutual learning and during repeated and close interactions.⁵⁰

Israeli Deterrence:

Given the small size of Israel and its lengthy borders, Israeli decision makers recognized that it could not afford a war inside its territory; it would not be possible to absorb an Arab attack and then assume the offensive later.⁵¹ Also, Israel is a democracy, and as such, it tends

to punish leaders who take their countries to war too frequently. Therefore, deterrence is essential for Israel politics.

Has Israel achieved a robust deterrence capability? As the deterrence theory noted above indicates, deterrence is somewhat based on capacity. Israel has the most advanced military force in the region, a stronger economy than its neighbors, a scientific and technological base that supports an advanced military industry, and an alliance with the world's only superpower.⁵² However, specific deterrence aims to deter a specific adversary from a particular action. It depends on the readiness of the other side to take the punishment. Israel's specific deterrence failed many times, for example in 1969-70 when the Egyptians waged a war of attrition through Suez Canal, Or in 1973 when Syria and Egypt launched an attack on Israel.⁵³

Bar-Yosef describes the principle of cumulative deterrence, according to which Israel cannot impose peace on the Arabs through decisive military victory. It can hope to convince them to accept peace by their war weariness.⁵⁴ Gen. Doron Almog calls the accumulative military achievements over time "assets in a victory bank."⁵⁵ According to Maoz, military victories, needed to achieve cumulative deterrence, depend on the existence of military engagements. Such military engagements are the result of failure of both general and specific deterrence.⁵⁶ By Samaan, Israeli deterrence is not a final state but an incremental evolution that includes sporadic clashes, refreshing the rules of the game.⁵⁷

Escalation for means of deterrence exposes Israel to accusations of excessive use of force by the international arena and of using disproportionate reactions to Arab provocations. These are difficult accusations to deal with since by definition the pursuit of cumulative deterrence through escalation dominance requires a disproportionate response to any provocations.⁵⁸

IDF Deterrence Strategy 2015

Maoz's study published in 2004 shows that, in each of the first 56 years, Israel has been involved in military action against one of its neighbors, except in 1988. That same year, Israel was involved in the fighting of the first Intifada. Maoz calls this extensive military involvement, "the unlimited use of limited use of force."⁵⁹ Maoz is correct; constant use of force is part of the IDF's strategy document published openly to the general public for the first time in 2015.

Deterrence is one of the principles of Israel's National Security concept. Effective deterrence will provide extended periods of security calm.⁶⁰ IDF's deterrence will be maintained by creating a reliable threat regarding its willingness and preparedness to employ force in routine, emergency and wartime.⁶¹ The IDF's focuses on non-state actors, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, while also preparing itself for conflict with further states who have no shared border, such as Iran.⁶² One of the political and strategic goals of the use of force is to delay the next conflict using minor force during the routine. The routine includes limited protracted conflicts and Operation between Wars.⁶³ The IDF is ready to execute a campaign for a decisive defeat of the enemy, as well as a limited campaign. Such limited campaign has limited delineated achievements, usually to restore calm and provide future deterrence.⁶⁴ According to IDF's new published strategy, the general and primary deterrence of the State of Israel, which depends on the IDF's strength and advantage, still exists. However, due to the changing threats, its relevance is limited compared to the past. Deterrence has to be specific and adapted to each enemy.⁶⁵ At the same time, deterrence is general and cumulative over time.⁶⁶

During the Operation between Wars, the IDF shall carry actions intended to deter the enemies. "The logic of the use of force during the Operation between Wars is to intensify the

achievements of previous campaigns through a series of goals intended to delay the next war."⁶⁷ The notion in the use of offensive force in Operation between Wars is a combination of covert and clandestine operation on the one hand, and overt operation to create deterrence and demonstrate the limits of Israel's restraints on the contrary.⁶⁸

Background - The history of the Israel - Hezbollah conflict

1982-2000

The leaders of Hezbollah ("Party of God") left Amal, the oldest and more moderate Shiite organization, and established, with the support of Iran, a more radical organization. Israel's entry into Lebanon in 1982, and the expulsion of members of PLO has caused a void on the one hand and friction on the other that shaped Hezbollah.⁶⁹

The Taif Agreements signed in 1989 brought to an end 14 years of civil war in Lebanon.⁷⁰ By April 1991, all armed groups in Lebanon were dismantled, except Hezbollah and the Palestinian organizations. In 1992, after Israel assassinated Hezbollah leader Abbas Musawi, Hassan Nasrallah was appointed its leader.⁷¹

Israel retained a security zone in southern Lebanon for 18 years, partly because Syria refused to withdraw its forces from Lebanon, as Taif required. During this time, Hezbollah fought the Israel Defense Forces a war of attrition. Lebanese Public support of Hezbollah intensified for they were fighting an invader on Lebanese territory.⁷²

In 2000, Ehud Barak was elected Prime Minister of Israel. He promised to withdraw from Lebanon to the international border but preferred to do so as part of a peace agreement with Syria. After failed attempt to negotiate with Syria, the Israeli government decided to carry out a unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon. Barak estimated that without the support of the Lebanese people, and without the acceptance of the international community, Hezbollah could

not continue its attacks after the withdrawal. He predicted that without an Israeli presence in Lebanon, pressure to remove Syrian forces from Lebanon would increase. The second half of the prophecy fully realized while the first was only partly fulfilled. Israel spent millions of dollars in moving fences back to the exact lines mapped by the UN, after which the UN has confirmed that Resolution 425 of the Security Council from 1978, was honored in full.⁷³

2000 - 2006 - The failure of deterrence

Hezbollah and the Lebanese government disagree with Israel and UN's position on the territorial issue. Sha'aba Farm is located on the Western slopes of Mount Hermon. Until 1967, the farms were used mainly by the Syrians and Lebanese. According to UN maps, farms are part of the Syrian Golan Heights which were occupied by Israel in 1967.⁷⁴ Nasrallah and the Lebanese government held the Farms issue as proof that Israel did not come out from entire Lebanese territory, and therefore it is justified to continue the resistance.⁷⁵

Nasrallah continued his fiery rhetoric against Israel. Two days after the retreat, Nasrallah spoke in the village of Bint Jbeil, nearby Israel, and called Israel "weaker than cobwebs."⁷⁶ Journalists who met with Nasrallah before 2006 have indicated that he was focused on Lebanese politics, the return of Shebaa Farms, and the desire to release prisoners. Hezbollah's involvement in Lebanese politics is necessary to its survival. Dealing with resistance to Israel distracts the people from their low socioeconomic status.⁷⁷

Israel assumed that the withdrawal would create international legitimacy to strong military responses to any attack by Hezbollah, and thus create deterrence.⁷⁸ To understand the reasons for the collapse of Israeli deterrence, one must examine Israel's responses to these violent events initiated by Hezbollah after the withdrawal in 2000. Immediately after the withdrawal, in particular on the weekends, thousands of Lebanese were approaching the Israeli border and throwing stones at Israeli soldiers. On the one hand, stones can do damage, but on

the other hand, no one wanted those stones to rekindle the quiet border. Israel provided a technical solution to these events; the soldiers were removed, fences were raised at some places, the Lebanese have lost interest.⁷⁹ Barak announced that in light of the Syrian presence in Lebanon, Syria would be responsible for curbing Hezbollah attacks on Israel.⁸⁰ In this assertion, which eventually proved to be invalid, Israel essentially contracted a part of its own deterrence to Syria. While deterrence relies on perception of resolve, Israel may have unintentionally communicated a lack of resolve. Quiet four months after the withdrawal, Hezbollah attacked a routine border patrol on Mount Dov in the eastern sector of the border with Israel. The organization abducted three soldiers traveling in an unshielded vehicle. Israel responded with relatively minor artillery fire and air force attacks on the Syrian radar stationed in Lebanon.⁸¹

Prime Minister Barak declared that Israel reserves the right to respond in time deems appropriate; this response never arrived.⁸² There are two reasons for this lack of response. The first - the reluctance to start a second front of fighting in addition to the second intifada in the occupied territories. West Bank and Gaza Strip gathered most of the attention of the political and military leadership. A senior politician who was a minister in the government of Barak testified before the Winograd Committee that Israel's lack of response is the result of a lack of desire to convey a message to the Israeli public that the escalation on the northern front is due to the unilateral withdrawal.⁸³ No one on the Israeli leadership wanted to return to what has been called in Israel, the Lebanese quagmire.⁸⁴ Also, Israel was deterred by the arming of Hezbollah with thousands of missiles, which increased the risk of an Israeli response.⁸⁵

Commission of Inquiry headed by retired judge Eliyahu Winograd called this lack of response of Barak as the beginning of "the era of containment."⁸⁶ The main argument is that the lack of response to the abduction of 2000 brought the slippery slope that ended with the

conflagration in 2006.⁸⁷ Barak's term as Prime Minister was short; he was defeated in the elections of 2001 by Ariel Sharon.

If there was one politician who could not afford to be perceived as rushing to act extensively in Lebanon, it was Ariel Sharon. As Defense Minister in Begin's government during the first Lebanon War in 1982, he was accused by the Kahan Commission of misleading and deceiving the government and not preventing the Christian Phalangists massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila.⁸⁸ Sharon was restrained by his Image as a "bulldozer" and didn't want to rush again for war. For this reason, Hezbollah's penetration at Har Dov in July 2005 received only a minor response.

Several attempts to abduct soldiers occurred, the main one in November 2005 in the divided village of Rager. Dozens of Hezbollah members crossed the border into Israel on foot and in vehicles, and tried to attack Israeli strongholds. In May 2006, after the election of Olmert as Prime Minister, Katyusha rockets were fired at an IDF outpost on Mount Meron. The Israeli response included firing artillery and aircraft attacking near the border. The Winograd Committee summed up the chain of events leading to the events of 2006 - "the next abduction was just a matter of time."⁸⁹

The Second Lebanon War

On the morning of July 12, 2006, Hezbollah launched an effective attack on Israeli patrol moving along the border in the western sector. Hezbollah's plan worked wonderfully, including blocking security cameras. The location was chosen according to detected weak spots after preliminary intelligence. Hezbollah fired mortars diversion all along the front. An Israeli tank was sent forward, got hit by a mine, and four soldiers were killed. Another soldier was killed in the battles developed while securing the damaged tank. On the first day of combat, IDF suffered eight casualties and two hostages.⁹⁰

That same night, the Israeli government decided to escalate the response by attacking the medium and long-range missile storages. Although it was believed that Hezbollah would respond by firing rockets into Israel, no clear decision has been made by the Israeli government about entering a war.⁹¹

On operation "Mishkal Seguli" Israel destroyed some 59 rocket-launchers and medium and long-range rockets within 34 minutes, an amount was believed to be between half and two-thirds of the missiles and launchers of Hezbollah's possession.⁹² Israel did not attack pure civilian infrastructure, such as power plants, for reasons of allowing water supply and electricity to hospitals. It did attack infrastructures used by both civilians and military, such as cellular antennas, Beirut airport, bridges, Hezbollah's television station, fuel tanks and fuel dumps.⁹³ Israel systematically attacked Hezbollah's headquarters in the neighborhood of Dahiye.⁹⁴

The Outcomes of the war

It was the most expensive war for Lebanon of all other wars against Israel.⁹⁵ According to the Lebanese government, 1183 civilians were killed, 262,174 left their homes permanently, and another million, a quarter of Lebanon's population, left their homes temporarily.⁹⁶

William Arkin, who visited Lebanon immediately after the war, described a large-scale destruction. Most of the damage was found at the airport, seaports, TV stations, broadcasting antennas, gas stations, bridges and roads.⁹⁷ The southern part of Beirut suffered a level of destruction not compatible with any other example from the era of precision attacks. Between 150 and 200 buildings were directly attacked and completely destroyed. Alongside the complete destruction of Dahiye, large parts of Beirut remained untouched, proving precision attack capabilities. In south Lebanon, hundreds of towns and villages were destroyed in a similar manner, mostly Shiite villages on the border of Israel. Dozens of bridges and miles of

roads have been damaged or destroyed.⁹⁸ According to Arkin, Lebanon was not systematically destroyed, a goal definitely within Israel's reach. Israel has made decisions and took steps to reduce civilian casualties.⁹⁹ However, the precision and systematic attacks demonstrate capability and send a strong signal to the Lebanese population as a whole, not only to the Shiite.

The estimated financial damage varies among researchers. A year after the war, the Lebanese government estimated that Israel had caused damage of about \$2 billion.¹⁰⁰ Further Lebanese assessment issued a total \$3.6 billion in direct damage, up to \$7 billion total damage. The UN report is the most stringent, estimating the damages to approximately 15 billion dollars.¹⁰¹

Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot, who served as the head of the Northern Command in 2008, addressed the issue of damage on an interview with Yediot Aharonot: "What happened in the Dahiye quarters of Beirut in 2006 will happen in every village from which Israel is fired on".¹⁰² Thus, making Dahiye an unofficial doctrine. Eisencott continued, "We will apply disproportionate force on it (village) and cause great damage and destruction there. From our standpoint, these are not civilian villages; they are military bases".¹⁰³ This disproportionate use of force is one of the pillars of Israeli deterrence.

Hezbollah's political goal was to take hostages to negotiate with Israel a release of prisoners and win prestige and support from the Lebanese population.¹⁰⁴ Hezbollah has estimated that the Israeli response will be local and focused.¹⁰⁵ "The Lebanese Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora called for an urgent talk with Hussein Halil, chairman Nasrallah's closest advisor. What have you done? Siniora fumed." According to the Washington Post, Halil answered coolly, "Everything will quiet down in 24-48 hours".¹⁰⁶ However, after the war, in a television interview from 27/08/06 on the Lebanese NTV network, Nasrallah admitted he would not have kidnapped the soldiers had he known it would lead to war.¹⁰⁷

With the beginning of the war, Hezbollah was criticized from within and from the entire Arab world. The Lebanese government criticized the kidnapping and refused to take responsibility for its implementation.¹⁰⁸ Also, major Arab states, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, announced they were holding Hezbollah accountable for the situation, a reaction that surprised Nasrallah.¹⁰⁹ He should not have been surprised though, since all three are Sunni majority countries, who consider Iran and Hezbollah as enemies.

Case Studies - Opportunities to escalate incidents to war

The next section will cover some events over the last decade in which Israel and Hezbollah have clashed. In most cases, these are Israeli offensive initiatives, which received from Hezbollah no response or merely a minor one. The examples will demonstrate the existence of a strong Israeli deterrence against Hezbollah and use of force, referred as Operation between Wars, in IDF strategy.

On 2008, assassination of Emad Mughniya in Damascus was ascribed to Israel, though Mossad was not the only organization accused.¹¹⁰ Mughniya was chief of staff of Hezbollah and has been involved in serious attacks against Israeli, French and American targets. He was killed in a car explosion in Damascus. Israeli Hezbollah's avoided stirring up the border and sought other places to respond to Israel, such as the attack in Burgas, Bulgaria in 2012.¹¹¹

Ha'aretz Online reporter, Jack Khoury, quoted foreign sources and presented an overview of events of Israeli Air Force's attacks on Syrian targets.¹¹² The State of Israel does not officially confirm these claims in the foreign press. According to Khoury 's report, on 2013, five events spread throughout the year. In one incident on July, a Syrian military base near Quneitra in the Golan Heights was attacked, probably as part of the efforts to deter Assad forces from spilling over the fighting in Syria into Israel. The four other events, demonstrate Israel's attempt to prevent the transfer of weapons to Hezbollah through Syria.

According to the report, Israel attacked convoys around Damascus and in the northern region of Latakia, leading missiles and arms to Hezbollah.

Efforts continued into 2014, with further Israeli attacks in the Latakia area and near the border with Lebanon. In January 2015 an Israeli helicopter attacked a car in the Syrian Golan Heights. During the attack, Jihad Mughniyah, senior Hezbollah and the son of Emad Mughniya, was killed. Again, Hezbollah blamed Israel for the assassination.¹¹³ Gen. Mohammad Ali Allah-Dadi, the top commander in the IRGC, and the unit's "mentor," also died in the strike.¹¹⁴ The unit was establishing the infrastructure needed for fighting Israel from the Golan Heights. This attack was the only one to win the reaction of Hezbollah, whether because of the seniority of the casualties or because Hezbollah could not blame other sources or did not want to show weakness. About two weeks after the assassination, Hezbollah opened fire on Israeli border patrol. During the incident, two soldiers were killed.¹¹⁵

On 2015, the Russians deployed forces to Syria, to fight along with the Assad regime. This involvement could have restrained Israel from further attacks in Syria, avoiding the risk of a clash with Russian forces. However, Israel proceeded with the same strategy. In November of that year, weapon storages were attacked in the international airport of Damascus. On December 2015, Samir Kuntar was killed in an air strike in Syria. Kuntar was one of the prisoners released by Israel after the Second Lebanon War as an exchange for hostages. Hezbollah accused Israel of carrying out the attack.¹¹⁶ Activity to prevent arms smuggling continued in 2016 and in February Israel attacked Assad's military targets at Damascus. In November Hezbollah's convoy was attacked as well as weapon storages in Syria. According to Khoury, if it was an Israeli attack it is an unusual event in light of the significant Russian presence in the region.¹¹⁷

Additional explanations and support

There are several factors contributing to the stabilization of the border. Deterrence is all about changing the enemy's calculus, increasing costs while preventing benefits from considerable actions. Under this definition, the following factors are alternatives to the deterrence explanation and, at the same time, are additional reasons why Israeli deterrence works.

Internal politics - Hezbollah in the Lebanese government

On the elections to the Lebanese government held in 2008, 11 ministers out of 30 were Hezbollah's, giving them the essential veto power.¹¹⁸ Hezbollah maintains a social support system in the large Shiite population, which often replaces the government.¹¹⁹ Views are divided whether Hezbollah is first a Lebanese entity or an Iranian envoy.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, involvement in the Lebanese government requires Hezbollah to be responsible and concerned about the state and thus moderates hostile activity against Israel.

Hezbollah involvement in the fighting in Syria and Syrian interests

Syria did not recognize the French division after World War II. Old Syrian maps show Lebanon as part of Syrian territory. Syria sought to moderate the Israeli influence in Lebanon. In 2004, Syrian forces left Lebanon, but the Syrian intervention in Lebanese politics continued.¹²¹ Assad has made the Syrian-sponsored Hezbollah into a strategic partner.¹²² He delivered Russian-made advanced anti-tank weapons to Hezbollah and different types of rockets and missiles,¹²³ thus becoming a channel for Iranian supply passing through Damascus airport or international sea port.¹²⁴ Syria was concerned that a conflict between Israel and Hezbollah would endanger Syria. Hezbollah's aggressive actions against Israel could give Israel a pretext to attack Syria.¹²⁵

Hezbollah, on the other hand, is very much involved in the civil war in Syria, fighting alongside the Syrian army and against rebel groups. Hezbollah placed between 6000 to 8000 fighters in Syria¹²⁶ and suffered over 1200 casualties.¹²⁷ There are a variety of possible reasons for Hezbollah's fighting alongside the Assad regime in Syria; Its role in the Shiite-Sunni war, an order from its patrons in Iran or a battle of self-survival to preserve channel of supply through Damascus. In every one of these options, it seems that Syrian concentrates most of the attention of Hezbollah and thus mitigates the possibility of confrontation with Israel. Syria is a restraining factor against Hezbollah's responses, also against acts allegedly perpetrated by Israel against Hezbollah on Syrian soil. The Syrian regime has a clear interest to focus on its internal survival war, without Israeli involvement in a war against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Iran

Iran sees itself as the protector of Shiite population in the Middle East.¹²⁸ Iran has extensive interests in Lebanon: (1) to have a central influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict, (2) to position Iran as a leader in the direct struggle against the Zionist enemy, and (3) to export the Islamic revolution.¹²⁹ According to Harel and Issacharoff Iran set Hezbollah three goals:¹³⁰ (1) spreading the religious ideology of the Islamic revolution. (2) improving the social and economic situation of Lebanon's Shiite community, and (3) accumulating military power.

Tehran sees Hezbollah as its proxy who can deter an Israeli attack on its nuclear facilities.¹³¹ Iran views Syria as a channel for aid to the Shiite population in Lebanon and Hezbollah, and preserving Assad's regime in Syria is an Iranian interest. In the light of the fighting in Syria in recent years, it seems Iranian interests to continue construction of power

against Israel while maintaining a quiet front in order not to hurt the effort of fighting alongside Assad in Syria.

Conclusion

The Middle East has been boiling in the last ten years. In the face of chaos on various regions, there is prominent peace and stability on the Israel-Lebanon border. This stability owes to strong Israeli deterrence, whose roots stem at the 2006 war. It is almost impossible to prove that deterrence actually works, as one has to prove the negative. The central pillar of Israel's deterrence is the will and commitment to launch widespread attacks towards Lebanon in retaliation to Hezbollah provocations, as demonstrated in July 2006. The massive response was in contradiction with Israeli pattern of local reprisal to Hezbollah provocations since Israel withdraw from Lebanon in the year 2000. The weak deterrence before 2006, might have been a result of Israel being pre-occupied with Palestinian terrorism and the disengagement from Gaza in the year 2005.

Another explanation is that Hezbollah never intended to do more than kidnap several Israeli soldiers to exchange for Hezbollah prisoners held by Israel, and did not anticipate Israel's strong reaction. This kind of miscalculations takes place when the attacker estimates low risk of excessive retaliation. Thus, the new deterrence will avoid such actions in the future.

Many publications in Israeli and foreign media attribute to Israel a significant amount of offensive operations against Hezbollah assets in Syria in the last decade. If these reports are correct, they are an example of the Operation between Wars, as detailed in IDF strategy, first published in 2015. One goal of these actions is to reduce the arming of Hezbollah with Iranian and Syrian advanced weapons. Another goal is to preserve the deterrence. By

exercising power, Israel signals Hezbollah its willingness to take risks, and thus acts to reduce the margin of error of Hezbollah's use of force.

There are several other explanations to the short-term stability and to Hezbollah's reluctance to open a front against Israel. First, Hezbollah fights alongside the Assad regime in Syria. Syria and Iran are interested in maintaining the presence of Hezbollah in Syria and thus act as moderators. Second, Iran wants to retain Hezbollah as a proxy deterrent to Israel's attack on its nuclear facilities, though the new agreement signed with the West has temporarily lowered the pressure. The strengthening of Hezbollah in the Lebanese government is a moderating factor as well. These factors are not interchangeable to Israeli deterrence but rely on it. None of the actors is interested in seeing Israel activate more power and cause further damage to Lebanon as was carried out in July 2006. No military operation will succeed in bringing political achievements for Hezbollah that would justify the price of an Israeli response - that is the essence of Israeli deterrence.

To sum up, the Israeli-Lebanese border has been quiet due to deterrence created by the 2006 war as well as by other steps taken by the parties to strengthen Operation between Wars.

Notes

(All notes appear in shortened form. For full details, see the appropriate entry in the bibliography.)

- ¹ Freedman, *Deterrence*, 29.
- ² Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 14.
- ³ Paul, *Complex Deterrence: An Introduction*, 2.
- ⁴ Schelling, *Arm and Influence*, 71.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 100.
- ⁶ Lowther, "Framing Deterrence", 2.
- ⁷ Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 28.
- ⁸ Lowther, "Framing Deterrence", 3.
- ⁹ Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, 14.
- ¹⁰ Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 14.
- ¹¹ Lowther, "Framing Deterrence", 4.
- ¹² Schelling, *Arm and Influence*, 35.
- ¹³ Schelling, *Arm and Influence*, 35.
- ¹⁴ Codner, "Defining "Deterrence"" ,20.
- ¹⁵ Lowther, "Framing Deterrence",8.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Schelling, *Arm and Influence*, 2.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.
- ²¹ Lowther, "Framing Deterrence",9.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ *Ibid.*,10.
- ²⁴ Lebovic, *Deterring International Terrorism*, 2.
- ²⁵ One side freedom fighter is the other terrorist.
- ²⁶ Wenger and Wilner, "Deterring Terrorism: Moving Forward", 302.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 301.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 303.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 306.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 309.
- ³¹ Lebovic, *Deterring International Terrorism*, 3.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ Warden, " enemy as a system",4.
- ³⁴ Lebovic, *Deterring International Terrorism*, 106.
- ³⁵ Fortman and Von Hlatky, "Revolution in Military Affairs", 309.
- ³⁶ Knopf, "Terrorism Forth Wave Deterrence", 38.
- ³⁷ Wenger and Wilner, "Deterring Terrorism: Moving Forward", 307.

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- ³⁸ Lebovic, *Deterring International Terrorism*, 117.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 118.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 120.
- ⁴¹ Knopf, "Terrorism Forth Wave Deterrence", 22.
- ⁴² Lebovic, *Deterring International Terrorism*, 124.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 131.
- ⁴⁴ Schelling, *Arm and Influence*, 100.
- ⁴⁵ Lebovic, *Deterring International Terrorism*, 143.
- ⁴⁶ Knopf, "Terrorism Forth Wave Deterrence", 27.
- ⁴⁷ Wenger and Wilner, "Deterring Terrorism: Moving Forward", 306.
- ⁴⁸ Schelling, *Arm and Influence*, 74.
- ⁴⁹ Knopf, "Terrorism Forth Wave Deterrence", 23.
- ⁵⁰ Wenger and Wilner, "Deterring Terrorism: Moving Forward", 304.
- ⁵¹ Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 135.
- ⁵² Feldman, "Deterrence Israel-Hezbollah War", 279.
- ⁵³ Feldman, "Deterrence and Israel-Hezbollah War", 280.
- ⁵⁴ Bar-Yosef, "Fifty Years Israeli Deterrence", 2.
- ⁵⁵ Almog, "Cumulative Deterrence", 8.
- ⁵⁶ Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 15.
- ⁵⁷ Samaan, *From War to Deterrence?*, 6.
- ⁵⁸ Feldman, "Deterrence and Israel-Hezbollah War", 281.
- ⁵⁹ Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 231.
- ⁶⁰ IDF, *IDF Strategy*, 10.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Ibid., 9.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 19.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., 21.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 27.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., 28.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 29.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., 31.
- ⁷¹ Sorenson, *Global Security Watch- Lebanon*, 29.
- ⁷² Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 19.
- ⁷³ Ibid., 22.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., 38.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 38.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 38.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 37.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., 26.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 39.
- ⁸⁰ This decision likely contributed to the failure of deterrence, when a country turns its security over to a rival country. Barak tried to hold Syria accountable. However, there is doubt whether the Syrians could restrain Hezbollah and whether the Israeli threat was creditable.

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- ⁸¹ Feldman, "Deterrence and Israel-Hezbollah War", 279.
- ⁸² Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 40.
- ⁸³ Ibid.
- ⁸⁴ Feldman, "Deterrence and Israel-Hezbollah War", 285.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid.
- ⁸⁶ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 40.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., 41.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., 42.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., 8.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., 12.
- ⁹¹ Ibid., 86.
- ⁹² Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 27.
- ⁹³ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 81.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., 100.
- ⁹⁵ Al-Harithy, "Politics of Post-War Reconstruction", 2.
- ⁹⁶ Al-Harithy, "Politics of Post-War Reconstruction", 3.
- ⁹⁷ Arkin, *Divining Victory*, 75.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., 80.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., XXII.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 75.
- ¹⁰¹ Al-Harithy, "Politics of Post-War Reconstruction" 3.
- ¹⁰² "Israel warns Hezbollah war would invite destruction," Yedioth Ahronoth, October 3, 2008, available from <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3604893,00.html>
- ¹⁰³ "Israel warns Hezbollah war would invite destruction," Yedioth Ahronoth, October 3, 2008, available from <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3604893,00.html>
- ¹⁰⁴ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 26.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 75.
- ¹⁰⁶ Quote from Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 75.
- ¹⁰⁷ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 250.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., *34 Days*, 82.
- ¹⁰⁹ Sorenson, *Global Security Watch- Lebanon* 38.
- ¹¹⁰ Sorenson, *Global Security Watch- Lebanon*, 131.
- ¹¹¹ "Hezbollah linked to Burgas bus bombing in Bulgaria", BBC news, 02/15/2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-21342192>
- ¹¹² Jack Khoury, "Israeli Jets Attack Near Damascus" <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.756132>
- ¹¹³ "Hezbollah fighters killed in Israeli attack", <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2015/01/israeli-air-raid-kills-hezbollah-commander-2015118163236960984.html>
- ¹¹⁴ "Iran general died in 'Israeli strike' in Syrian Golan", BBC NEWS, 01/19/2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30882935>

¹¹⁵ " *Hezbollah Kills 2 Israeli Soldiers Near Lebanon*", NYTimes, 01/28/15,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/29/world/middleeast/israel-lebanon-hezbollah-missile-attack.html>

¹¹⁶ " *Commander of Hezbollah Freed by Israel Is Killed in Syria*", NYTimes, 12/21/15,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/21/world/middleeast/samir-kuntar-hezbollah-syria-israel.html>

¹¹⁷ Jack Khoury, "Israeli Jets Attack Near Damascus" <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.756132>

¹¹⁸ Sorenson, *Global Security Watch- Lebanon*, 106.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 108.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 114.

¹²¹ Ibid., 122.

¹²² Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 52.

¹²³ Ibid., , 47.

¹²⁴ Sorenson, *Global Security Watch- Lebanon*, 122.

¹²⁵ Ibid., , 123.

¹²⁶ In Hebrew - <http://www.haaretz.co.il/.premium-1.2651781>

¹²⁷ In Hebrew - <http://www.maariv.co.il/journalists/Article-553248>

¹²⁸ Sorenson, *Global Security Watch- Lebanon*, 131.

¹²⁹ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 29.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹³¹ Ibid., 47.



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