

Israel's Second War Doctrine

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On the shelves of the Israeli defense establishment lie many documents defining Israel's defense concept, most of them classified. The unclassified texts include the seminal writings of David Ben Gurion from the 1950s; a book by General (ret.) Israel Tal (Talik)¹ and the attempt by General (ret.) David Ivri to formulate a defense concept in the late 1990s; summaries authorized for publication from the Meridor Committee report; a book by General (ret.) Prof. Isaac Ben-Israel;² and publications describing the classified in-depth draft distributed by the National Security Council³ (hereafter – the NSC draft). A document entitled “IDF Strategy,” signed by the IDF Chief of Staff (hereafter – Strategy 2015), was also published recently. Although Israel's defense concept also concerns routine security,⁴ CbW,⁵ relations with allies, and other aspects, most of the publications deal with the question of how Israel fights in war, and in an even more focused way, its subjective doctrine for victory in war. These documents paint a clear and fairly consistent picture of IDF strategy and doctrine (at least until Strategy 2015 and the NSC draft, which indicate a change in trend).

However, over the course of the last six major campaigns beyond Israel's borders,⁶ the IDF repeatedly operated according to recurring patterns that were inconsistent with the official strategy and doctrine. Indeed, there is a broad common denominator between Operation Accountability (1993), Operation Grapes of Wrath (1996), the Second Lebanon War (2006), Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Operation Pillar of Defense (2012), and Operation Protective Edge (2014). In this article these six campaigns will be referred to jointly as Accountability-rationale campaigns (table 1). This rationale seeks to shape the rules of the game for the behavior of the parties

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in the routine times following the conflict by striking a blow or causing attrition using firepower, and by applying indirect leverage, while both curtailing the allocation of resources and taking limited risks.

Table 1. Six Accountability-Rationale Campaigns

| Name of Campaign | Year | Theater | Enemy | Duration |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------|
| Accountability | 1993 | Lebanon | Hezbollah | 7 days |
| Grapes of Wrath | 1996 | Lebanon | Hezbollah | 17 days |
| Second Lebanon War | 2006 | Lebanon | Hezbollah | 34 days |
| Cast Lead | 2008-2009 | Gaza Strip | Hamas | 22 days |
| Pillar of Defense | 2012 | Gaza Strip | Hamas | 8 days |
| Protective Edge | 2014 | Gaza Strip | Hamas | 50 days |

If we were witness to an isolated episode, it could have been claimed that it was a case of individual judgment in a specific instance, or a deviation from the doctrine, which requires investigation (as indeed occurred in 2006). But since Israel and the IDF have adhered to recurring patterns of operation in the course of six campaigns spread over two and a half decades, it appears that no error is involved, but the application of a second war doctrine – overt (because the events of the six Accountability-rationale campaigns are well known), but not officially written or institutionalized. The result is recurrent tension and dissonance due to the prevailing expectations within the IDF and in the public arena, based on the official documents and the divergence from what is prescribed in these official texts.

To be sure, the classical Israeli doctrine was designed first and foremost against invasion by state opponents, while the six Accountability-rationale campaigns were conducted against relatively weak sub-state opponents seeking, in general terms, to inflict damage on the State of Israel through high trajectory firepower from their own territory, rather than seeking to defeat the IDF or capture territory. Furthermore, it can be argued that there is no substantial political-strategic achievement in the Lebanese theater that Israel could realistically have expected to achieve, and consequently the political and strategic goal in Lebanon was essentially negative: reducing the need to deal with it to a minimum. It can also be argued that in the Gaza Strip theater, Israel's goal was to preserve the existing political and strategic situation, not to change it. Thus, together with the attempt in this article to group Israel's military campaigns together according to a

coherent doctrine, the decisions taken in each instance should be identified, taking into account the specific circumstances and distinct contexts of the respective cases.

The reference to the deviation from the classic Israeli doctrine is a statement of fact stemming from the attempt to analyze repeated characteristic patterns of action, and does not necessarily imply criticism. In the main, a decision to launch a large scale ground offensive (which did not take place in any of the Accountability-rationale campaigns) should result from an assessment that such an offensive will make a substantial contribution to achievement of the desired results in the unique circumstances and distinct context of each specific conflict, not out of a reflexive doctrinal commitment.

The Main Idea: Blow or Attrition versus Decision

In none of the six Accountability-rationale campaigns did the IDF aim to overthrow the opponent and reach a military decision; it sought to deliver a blow or to wear down the opponent, and concomitantly apply indirect levers that would put diplomatic mechanisms in motion, which in turn would facilitate a termination of the fighting and allow Israel to achieve its objectives. The IDF did not genuinely pursue a campaign theme aimed at eliminating the opponent's fighting ability or its ability to continue operating according to its plan to inflict damage on the State of Israel. This includes cases in which the official orders spoke of "removing the threat" and so on. Even when ostensibly far-reaching objectives were officially defined, such as "annihilating Hezbollah as an armed organization" and "enforcing the Lebanese government's sovereignty in South Lebanon," the IDF did not actually follow a campaign design that could have achieved these objectives, and it is therefore doubtful whether they can be regarded as true objectives. Similarly, three operations in the Gaza Strip within six years did not remove the threat that reappeared time after time.

While official IDF orders spoke of the need to conduct short campaigns, the IDF did not pursue a campaign theme that could have shortened the campaigns, and it is therefore questionable whether the IDF indeed sought to shorten these campaigns. This is especially true of the Second Lebanon War (in which the time dimension was almost unmanaged, and the decision makers found it difficult to comprehend the effect of time on the home front), and even more so of Operation Protective Edge, in which the prolonging of the operation and attrition of Hamas over time were part of Israel's "genuine" campaign design. Furthermore, in the Second Lebanon War, Operation

Cast Lead, and Operation Protective Edge, there were considerable stages that delayed between the completion of the airpower stage (attacking the targets that were known before the campaign began) and the beginning of the ground operations stage. The ensuing ground operations were of limited scope and were designed according to a rationale of small raids, special operations, general pressure (on the outskirts of Gaza City during Operation Cast Lead), or a specific need (such as neutralizing Hamas's offensive tunnels in Operation Protective Edge). No ground offensives were conducted according to a broader or more ambitious rationale, and no bold, large scale attack took place.

In practice, the IDF's "true" main objective was to cause the opponent more damage (quantitatively and qualitatively) than the opponent caused Israel in the same time span, and in this way to persuade it that the fighting was of no benefit to it, convince it to accept at least some of Israel's conditions for a post-conflict arrangement, and establish deterrence that would postpone the next round of fighting. In some of the campaigns, lines of operations were pursued that incidentally produced indirect leverage, such as evacuating enemy populations from threatened areas, a naval and air blockade, and attacks against dual-use infrastructure employed for both military and civilian purposes. In effect, the IDF "accepted" damage in Israel while simultaneously inflicting damage on the enemy (except for the defensive element in Operation Protective Edge, which deprived Hamas

of a substantial part of its offensive capabilities). In other words, the true main idea was to conduct a "parallel" campaign: to "permit" the enemy to carry out its planned campaign against Israel, while in tandem carrying out a campaign that would cause the enemy worse damage.

Overall, the Accountability-rationale campaigns had four stages. The first was a strike with firepower against the bank of targets that were known before the campaign began; this was followed by a stage delaying until the decision was taken to commit ground forces to the fighting; the third was the (usually limited) ground offense stage; and the fourth was the maintaining of pressure until both sides were ripe for a ceasefire.

Why has Israel chosen six times to operate according to such a pattern? Though there is little evidence, the answer may be simply because it could.

The Israeli decision maker believed that a modest operational result achieved at a modest cost and risk was preferable to potential for an excellent operational result achieved at high cost and risk.

Accountability-rationale campaigns reflect a preference for resource management and risk management, rather than risk-taking and a potential high price. The contemporary approach to risk and price is illustrated by the fact that while Operation Focus – the air campaign at the outset of the Six Day War – was considered a spectacular success, despite the fact that 10 percent of the attacking force was either lost or damaged, the airlift that concluded the Second Lebanon War was perceived as less successful, and in fact was halted after a single CH-53 helicopter was shot down. Other considerations may also have caused Israel to act according to this pattern, including the change in the national ethos from a close-knit “mobilized” society to a more extroverted society of affluence, and diplomatic, regional, and international considerations.

It is possible, however, that Israel could have afforded to develop greater sensitivity to losses and to give greater weight to diplomatic considerations because it faced lesser threats; had it faced an existential threat, it could not have afforded this. It can also be argued that Israel chose this pattern as a result of technological progress, which created the possibility of achieving more through standoff firepower. Perhaps, however, Israel was able to achieve much more with standoff firepower because it faced weaker opponents. It is possible that Israel could not have afforded to act according to the blow/attrition through firepower mode had it faced a high-competence opponent that was able to defend its airspace with some degree of success, able to disrupt Israeli intelligence’s targeting process or disrupt the functional continuity of Israeli air force bases, or capable of posing a more significant counter-threat that Israel could not afford to sustain.

The Accountability-rationale campaigns also reflect a preference for making significant decisions at a relatively late stage, out of an instinct to avoid commitment to specific (riskier and costlier) lines of operation before it is clear that such lines of operation are virtually inescapable.

In practice, the Accountability-rationale campaigns reveal that the Israeli decision maker believed that a modest operational result achieved at a modest cost and risk was preferable to potential for an excellent operational result achieved at high cost and risk (this, as noted, in addition to facing a situation where in Lebanon, there was no feasibility of a significant political-strategic achievement, and where in the Gaza Strip, Israel was aiming at the preservation of the status quo – in other words, it was doubtful whether an excellent political-strategic change could have been achieved in either theater). Such preferences are possible when Israel faces a relatively weak

sub-state enemy, and has the ability to choose a modest result achieved at modest cost. In the past, given the threat of invasion by an Arab military coalition with an order of battle many times larger than the IDF's order of battle, Israel had no choice other than to take risks and take early action that preempted its enemies. In the six Accountability-rationale campaigns, the threat was a lesser one, and the worst case scenario was not very grave. Indeed, while reality punished Israel heavily for any mistake made in the Yom Kippur War (and the effect of these punishments is still felt today), the punishments inflicted on Israel for mistakes in the Second Lebanon War, Operation Cast Lead, and Operation Protective Edge were minor and quickly forgotten – at least in part. Moreover, what was at stake in the six Accountability-rationale campaigns was not very significant – usually violent negotiations on the precise boundaries of the freedom of violent action to be exercised by the parties in routine times, or an incident that spun out of control (miscalculation) – so that the Israeli decision maker apparently believed, consciously or otherwise, that the ways and means did not have to be of great weight.

The Accountability-rationale campaigns also reveal a change in the attitude to territory: a ground offensive is no longer perceived as an opportunity for pushing the enemy off-balance or seizing territory as a bargaining chip; even the temporary entry into enemy territory is regarded as a liability, not an asset. Thus, out of concern for casualties, loss of public support in Israel, and loss of international credit – and in the absence of an opponent's operational-physical center of gravity at a specific geographic location – the Israeli decision maker refrained from ordering a major ground offensive, and confined himself to standoff fire, combined with relatively small ground raids, special operations, and ground offensives involving minimal friction with the enemy.

Entering the Campaign

In general, Accountability-rationale campaigns were born out of lack of agreement about the sides' freedom of violent action in the "routine" periods preceding them: both the boundaries of the "permitted" violence by Hezbollah or Hamas against the IDF and Israel in routine times and the boundaries of the "permitted" retaliation by the IDF. One of the sides no longer accepted the boundaries of the violence in routine times, and escalated from low intensity (exchanges of violence that are a permitted part of routine times) to medium-to-high intensity in order to conduct violent

negotiations over a redefinition of the boundaries of the permitted freedom of action. The NSC draft states, “The decision on the level of violence during routine times results in not only a slight change in the characteristics in action during routine times, but also [sometimes warrants] a transition to a period of emergency.”⁷ In most cases, it was Israel itself that adopted an escalatory pattern; hence the question of early warning from the classical Israeli doctrine was irrelevant.

The Second Lebanon War resulted from a border skirmish that spun out of control, with both parties insufficiently aware of the escalatory consequences of their actions (miscalculation). Eventually, however, it also became a contest over the boundaries of the parties’ freedom of violent action in routine times. It is possible that there was also some miscalculation on the road to Operation Pillar of Defense, with Israel not understanding the escalatory consequences of killing Hamas commander Ahmed Jabari.

The dynamics leading up to Operation Protective Edge were perhaps the most exceptional and complex of the six Accountability-rationale campaigns. The roots of the conflict lay in the estrangement between Hamas and Iran regarding the Syrian civil war, the estrangement between Hamas and Egypt following the el-Sisi coup, and the failure of the attempt at intra-Palestinian reconciliation, so that from Hamas’s perspective, lack of choice pushed it into a war that sought to shatter its isolation and alleviate the economic distress of the Gaza Strip. Operation Protective Edge was the exception that proved the rule, since it erupted because Hamas believed at the time that it had no alternative, rather than because it chose to conduct armed negotiations over the terms of routine times or because of a miscalculation. The exit from Operation Protective Edge was also more complex, because Israel sought to deal a substantial blow to Hamas’s military power, but not to detract from its status as the de facto sovereign of the Gaza Strip. Israel may also have sought to preserve Hamas as a counterweight against the Palestinian Authority and as an insurance policy against an internationally imposed settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The singularity of Operation Protective Edge’s termination is further discussed below. Nevertheless, many aspects of Operation Protective Edge dealt (not exclusively) with the boundaries of parties’ freedom of violent action during the ensuing routine times. In addition, there was

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miscalculation in the operation, because if both Israel and Hamas desire Hamas's continued rule, then Israel too is interested in allowing the Gaza Strip some minimal economic viability; hence an armed conflict fought over Gaza's economic viability is unnecessary.

The Exit from a Campaign

In none of the six Accountability-rationale campaigns did the end state result directly from the military situation. After a sufficient time passed, the two sides reached the conclusion that they had exhausted the measures they were willing to tap (which were not necessarily all the means at their disposal), and that time was no longer working to their advantage, and chose to exit from the conflict. In most of the Accountability-rationale campaigns, Israel's opponents agreed to a ceasefire before it did, and it was Israel that insisted on more time for fighting (Operation Protective Edge was the exception). It is possible that the insistence on additional time resulted from a lack of coherence on the part of Israel, which for some reason waited for a result according to the classic defense concept to emerge (military decision), while it operated according to a pattern of inflicting a blow or seeking attrition, which a priori is incapable of yielding a decisive result. It is possible that coherence on Israel's part could have brought most of the campaigns to an immediate end following the initial air strikes.

Operations Accountability, Grapes of Wrath, Pillar of Defense,

and the Second Lebanon War ended with an international termination mechanism leading to clear arrangements (some of which were written) regarding the military rules of the game for the routine times following each of the conflicts. Operation Pillar of Defense also ended in an arrangement for certain economic matters, such as offshore fishing and cultivation of agricultural plots adjacent to the Gaza border. Operation Cast Lead ended in an international termination mechanism, but without a clear arrangement for the ensuing routine period. Operation Protective Edge was exceptional in ending with a diplomatic process that involved mainly the

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regional players, with limited involvement on the part of the global powers and the UN, which led to some relief of the economic distress in the Gaza Strip.

The principal characteristic of the termination of most Accountability-rationale campaigns, however, is the difference between the formal arrangements ending them and the reality-shaping factors that emerged from those conflicts. Operation Accountability ended in the Accountability Understandings, which lasted for two years before Hezbollah returned to fire at communities in northern Israel. The Grapes of Wrath Understandings held for a number of years. UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the Second Lebanon War, included an ambitious arrangement resting on an enlarged multinational apparatus with the authority to use force. This resolution, however, was never enforced in reality (for example, the disarming of Hezbollah, the banning of its deployment in South Lebanon, a weapons embargo against Hezbollah, and a ban on Israeli flights in Lebanese airspace), and is in effect a dead letter. UN Security Council Resolution 1860, passed during Operation Cast Lead, also had no effect on reality. The arrangement following Operation Pillar of Defense lasted a short time, and part of it was never implemented. Some elements of the arrangement following Operation Protective Edge were also designed for declarative purposes only, while it was clear to all parties from the start that they would never be implemented (e.g., a port in Gaza, release of prisoners, demilitarization of the Gaza Strip).

What shaped the routine times following the conflicts was therefore not the formal arrangements, but the effect of each campaign, and the cumulative effect of all the campaigns combined – on Israel on the one hand, and on Hamas and/or Hezbollah on the other. The six Accountability-rationale campaigns made the equation between cost and gain in conflicts of this type clear to all the parties involved. The costs of the conflicts were what shaped the rules of the game and the boundaries of the freedom of violent action in routine times. Since these were operations of choice or miscalculations (except for Operation Protective Edge, from Hamas's point of view), and in general the parties were acting in defense of secondary interests, rather than existential or vital interests, the clarifying of the conflict economics (the costs of the conflicts according to the various criteria) perhaps constituted the main shaping factor emerging from these conflicts.

Both sides are somewhat deterred by the prospect of conflicts of this type. The deterrence depends on the context, since an adequate deterrent in the context of a secondary interest is not necessarily adequate for situations in which a primary interest is at stake. Furthermore, the fact that such conflicts have occurred six times means that the deterrence created by

them is limited, even in the context of secondary interests. Hamas and Hezbollah have learned the limits of their power against Israel (according to their capabilities at the relevant times), while Israel has learned the limits of its power – in the same situations in which it operates with partial commitment and without a willingness to incur substantial costs.

Strategy 2015

Strategy 2015 goes a long way to adapt the written doctrine to the practice prevailing over the past 25 years. It explicitly recognizes the question of conflict economics, and distinguishes between a war requiring a substantial mobilization of resources and a readiness to take risks, and an “emergency” (in other words, a limited operation) in which the mobilization of resources and the risks taken are limited. Strategy 2015 accordingly distinguishes between wars that require “a fundamental change in the situation that changes the strategic balance, manifested in the neutralizing of players,” and operations in which the political echelon confines itself to “maintaining or improving the strategic situation.” In such limited operations, it is sufficient to demonstrate the “uselessness of using force against Israel.” The new strategy also distinguishes between a contest against a state enemy and a conflict with a sub-state enemy.

In Strategy 2015, the IDF’s objective in a limited operation against a sub-state enemy is reduced to “utilizing military supremacy in order to achieve the operation’s objectives as defined by the political echelon” and “inflicting limited and defined damage on the enemy,” while the idea of military decision has been confined to the tactical sphere (military decision in “every encounter” with the enemy). Strategy 2015 establishes that a limited operation should “[highlight] to the enemy the magnitude of the potential damage it can expect... and the limited benefit of its action.” In the developing context (mainly following Operation Protective Edge), and like the Meridor Committee report and the NSC draft, Strategy 2015 adds the element of defense to Israel’s traditional defense concept.

Nevertheless, even in the context of a limited operation against a sub-state enemy, Strategy 2015 still talks about “victory,” “eliminating capabilities by destroying enemy forces,” and “effective defense against high trajectory weapons,” in part by “operational control of a large territory in order to suppress the fire from it.” The document states that the principal approach in the IDF is to surprise the enemy, although it can be argued that nothing surprising was executed in the six Accountability-rationale

campaigns (other than in limited contexts or at the low command levels). The document states that even in a limited campaign against a sub-state enemy, an “immediate maneuver” should be carried out, although in the Accountability-rationale campaigns, ground maneuvers (offensives) were carried out late because the decision making echelon sought to delay the (costlier and riskier) ground maneuver as much as practically possible. Or, limited maneuvers were carried out – such that made no significant contribution to achievement of the campaign’s objectives – if, indeed, any maneuver whatsoever took place.

It is possible that Strategy 2015 gives excessive weight to a limited conflict with a sub-state enemy, and as result gives too little weight to a conflict against an enemy with robust competences. The balance between preparation for the likely (recurring) scenario and preparation for the risky scenario should be optimized, and it may be that Strategy 2015 leans too much towards the repeating scenario. Even if it is difficult at this moment to outline an imminent conflict against a state enemy with robust competences, this reference scenario must be the guideline for IDF’s force buildup.

A Look Ahead to Future Conflicts

It is perhaps understandable why Israel has chosen to act by prioritizing cost-benefit patterns, in other words, achieving a modest result at a modest cost, and to postpone weightier decisions insofar as possible, in situations in which Israel faced weak sub-state enemies whose main capabilities lie in inflicting damage (and which did not threaten to defeat the IDF or to capture territory), and when the interests defended were of secondary importance. It is understandable in contexts in which Israel could afford to sustain damage from the opponent, knowing that the opponent at the same time suffered more substantial damage, without removing the threat or substantially degrading the opponent’s ability to make war.

It is risky, however, to apply these preferences beyond such contexts. First of all, it is questionable whether these patterns of operation are relevant to situations in which Israel faces strong opponents whose ability to cause damage to Israel is more substantial, or which are capable of operating effectively against the IDF. Furthermore, a sub-state enemy like Hezbollah acquires new capabilities that can cause more significant damage to the functioning of Israel’s military, civilian, and economic systems, which in turn requires a reassessment of the feasibility of acting according to Accountability rationale in the next conflict with Hezbollah. In view of the

qualitative change in Hezbollah's capability to inflict damage on Israel, the ability to conduct an operation in which each side carries out its plan simultaneously for many days and weeks with almost "no interference" from the other side, while concluding which side inflicted more damage on the other only after the dust settles, should be reconsidered. The feasibility of using defensive echelons against Hezbollah's redundant, saturated array of advanced firepower should be revisited. It is possible that in the next conflict against Hezbollah, it will be a mistake to delay and postpone weightier decisions. Decisions should be made early on, and a commitment should be made at an early stage to rapid and bold patterns of operation that incur a substantial risk and cost.

In any case, the IDF must at least maintain its competence to wage war according to the old school. Now that generations of commanders have been schooled to see warfare as not much more than a "technical" process of clearing the bank of targets, however, it is unclear to what extent the senior headquarters understands the full scope of war, which is more complex than merely servicing lists of 14-digit coordinates. It is unclear whether the current IDF culture still fosters the DNA for daring operations (at the campaign level, above the tactical or special operations level), or whether the DNA for risk management dominates at the high command levels. It is unclear whether today there is a commander fit to lead large forces in a bold and rapid surprise ground offensive, to conduct a dynamic battle that has not been planned in advance, and to cover dozens of kilometers in one day. It is unclear whether in the interface between the military and political echelons there is the ability to make early decisions, or whether the current organizational culture virtually mandates delay and making decisions late, and even then only limited ones.

From a broader perspective, it can be asked whether the fact that Israel chose a modest commitment to achieve a modest result six consecutive times has somewhat eroded the cumulative image of Israeli power – among its enemies, allies, and other parties. It is possible that had Israel adopted other patterns of action, it would not have reached a state in which it had to conduct six similar campaigns, or, for the past decade, to conduct Accountability-rationale campaigns on the average of once every thirty months. In at least some cases, such as the Second Lebanon War, Israel embarked on the campaign with the additional goal of sweeping aside the mutual deterrence equation,⁸ in other words, improving its freedom of action and thereby reducing that of the enemy. In general, this objective

was not achieved. Perhaps the fact that Israel began to be perceived as a risk-averse and hesitant actor hard-pressed to make early or weighty decisions has also had ramifications for more significant regional issues.

Conclusion: The Second Doctrine

It can thus be argued that since the 1990s, a second IDF doctrine has emerged, and while not official, has served as the principal guide for the application of force – overriding even the language of the official operation orders. Accordingly:

- a. The second doctrine applies in conflicts against sub-state opponents capable mainly of causing general damage that Israel is able to tolerate, and that are unable to defeat the IDF or threaten Israel's borders. These opponents use high trajectory weapons fire from deep inside their own territory, and lack an operational-geographic center of gravity (these are widely dispersed opponents). In the six campaigns, Israel did not aim to change the political-strategic situation because it could not or did not want to do so.
- b. The conflicts broke out due to disagreement about the characteristics of the "permitted" violence at "routine" times, or due to miscalculation, and constituted violent negotiations over the terms of the ensuing routine period. Israel was usually the one that escalated to medium-high intensity. The interests at stake were of secondary importance (except for the interest of Hamas in Operation Protective Edge).
- c. Israel has prioritized cost and risk management, preferring a modest operational result at a modest cost over a chance for a brilliant operational result with substantial risk and at a higher cost.
- d. Israel preferred to make late and limited decisions insofar as it was possible, without committing itself to early and costly courses of action, and without committing itself when making a weighty decision was not inescapable.
- e. Israel acted according to the rationale of a strike or attrition. It "accepted" enemy action against it (other than the success of the defense in Operation Protective Edge), and did not remove the threat, while at the same time causing greater quantitative and qualitative damage to the opponent and employing indirect leverage to exert pressure.
- f. Israel gave preference to firepower, and the ground operations were limited and made a limited contribution. The main value of firepower was in destroying the bank of targets known before the conflict erupted,

- and Israel therefore completed most of the damage inflicted on the enemy in the early days of the conflict.
- g. Israel was the party that insisted on continuing the conflict, even after its enemies agreed to halt it (except for Operation Protective Edge), thereby demonstrating the incoherence between unofficial doctrine and expectations: it mistakenly waited for a decisive result to emerge, while actually confining itself to inflicting a blow or attrition.
 - h. The conflicts ended when the two sides concluded that they had exhausted the measures they were willing to use, and that time was no longer working in their favor. They usually ended in an international mechanism leading to an arrangement for the ensuing routine period.
 - i. Usually, the formal arrangement for the ensuing period did not meet the test of reality, and what in fact shaped the ensuing routine were the conflict's cost-benefit ratios. Both sides were deterred – to a limited extent and temporarily, depending on the context – from conflicts of this type, and therefore accepted restrictions on their freedom of violent action at routine times.

The preparations for a conflict against a high competence opponent, or for a Third Lebanon War, are liable to require Israel to leave its new comfort zone, in which the Accountability rationale prevails, and to force it to act early and boldly, while incurring risks.

Notes

- 1 Israel Tal, *National Security: The Few against the Many* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1996).
- 2 Isaac Ben-Israel, *Israel's Defense Concept* (University on the Air, 2013).
- 3 Gur Laish, "Principles of the National Security Council's Defense Concept – for Routine and Emergencies," *Eshtonot* 10, Research Center, National Security College, July 2015.
- 4 IDF's jargon for the periods between the wars which is not peacetime as a certain "acceptable" level of violence is common in such times.
- 5 Campaign between Wars, which is the IDF's jargon for its operations to interrupt or frustrate enemy force buildup and enemy low intensity attacks.
- 6 In other words, excluding Operation Defensive Shield and other operations in Judea and Samaria.
- 7 Laish, "Principles of the National Security Council's Defense Concept," p. 36.
- 8 Winograd Commission, "Partial Report," p. 101.