FROM ASYMMETRY TO DISPROPORTIONALITY: THE FORMATION OF
THE IDF’S ‘NEW WAR’ DOCTRINE

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The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) has been combat-ready and fighting in various settings continuously since 1948. Almost inevitably, it had to consider fairly regularly adaptation to changes in the battlefield. IDF adaptations are indeed conspicuous, at least after perceived failures. However, IDF doctrine change—what Farrell defined as “a major change institutionalised in new doctrine”\(^1\)—proved far more elusive. It has not been analysed systematically, particularly not in the context of recent asymmetric campaigns, or what has been controversially dubbed “new wars”\(^2\).

This article is about the IDF doctrine change in the context of recent asymmetric conflicts. It explains how the IDF adapted its doctrine to asymmetric battlefield changes and challenges in the early 21\(^{st}\) Century. The task is challenging. Whereas regular military changes usually follow an orderly process involving investigative reports, reform initiatives, and debriefings after exercises, operations, and accidents, doctrine change often evolves over considerable time, cumulatively, and in anything but systematic manner. The IDF is no exception, as indicated for example in the remarkably slow adaptations of the IDF’s Intelligence Directorate (AMAN) to arising intelligence requirements of new wars.\(^3\)

In brief, in order to come up with a credible analysis of doctrine change one needs to assemble reliable data concerning the doctrine forming thoughts of command and officers, provide a fairly thick description, and cover a significant period of time. The doctrine change discussed in this study seems to have roots in the eighteen long IDF years of deployment in Lebanon (1982-2000) and the violent years of the Second Intifada (2000-2005). Yet, doctrine formation has accelerated sharply only after the Second Lebanon War (2006) and coalesced during the three following campaigns in Gaza (2008/9, 2012, 2014). Over this extended period, the IDF command adapted on the go and mainly through a heuristic process of retrospective inferences. Efforts to regulate high-end doctrinaire learning at the General Staff level—often successful at the lower unit- and even service-levels (the Israeli Air Force (IAF) is a good example)—have not proved particularly effective. Certainly, top IDF commanders found such efforts difficult, elusive, and frustrating.\(^4\) And yet, out of the disorderly heuristic adaptation process, a relatively clear doctrine of disproportional response emerged, though the term “disproportional” has been all but banned and purged, particularly from official IDF documents, apparently due to the sharp recommendation of legal officers and ethics’ advisors.\(^5\)
The article commences with a brief note on methodology, explaining the extraordinary value of rich data sources hardly used systematically in before. Section two discusses concisely the foundational principles of the IDF original battle doctrine. Section three analyses the understanding of IDF officers of their term the “new operational environment” (of the asymmetric battlefield), its defining characteristics, and the ramifications of the latter. Section four analyses the inadequacy of the original IDF doctrine in the context of the new operational environment; specifically, the irrelevance of battlefield decision, the erosion of deterrence, and the operational dilemma of whether to resort to manoeuvre or standoff fire. The fifth section presents the outcomes of long process of doctrinaire adaptation: the emerging doctrine of disproportional response. This section also discusses how aversion to Israeli casualties tactically enhances the disproportional effect. The conclusion peers into the future with reference to what IDF commanders are forecasting about the next asymmetric campaign.

A methodological note

The data for this article was collected from a review of 91 issues of the IDF journal Maarachot (i.e. “Campaigns”), 9 issues of the IDF journal Bein HaKtavim (henceforth Between the Poles), various issues of Biton Khei HaAvir (the Israeli Air Force Journal, henceforth IAFJ), and two publications of the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), Adkan Estrategi (English version: Strategic Assessment), and Tzava VeEstrategia (English version: Military & Strategic Affairs). With the exception of Military & Strategic Affairs (inaugurated 2009) and Between the Poles (inaugurated 2014), the study draws on articles published between 2000 and 2017. The data also includes references to key interviews and other items found in various media communication means.

Of all sources, Maarachot and Between the Poles prove the most valuable. IAFJ has interviews with the IAF Commander and a handful of officers in strategic positions—Chief of Air Staff, Chief of Aerial Operations, and Chief of Air Group—which often precede nomination to the top post. The two INSS publications include the views of retired IDF officers, who as such are presumably free of institutional shackles. Yet, Maarachot and Between the Poles are stand outs. Between the Poles was established as a platform for “research and articles on the strategic and operational issues preoccupying the community of top level commanders”6 and thus provides direct insight into doctrinaire thinking and planning of those designing operations and
leading campaigns. Regrettably, Between the Poles is relatively recent and thus sheds limited light on what occurred in the first part of the discussed period (2000-2010). Maarachot adds the essential depth and breadth. Having been published for long (est. 1939) it provides continuous insight into the opinions of serving officers in a variety of strategic positions from all arms. It includes authors starting with the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) and other top officers and ending with middle level officers who are involved in the process of military analysis, planning, adaptation, and operations (Major to Col. Ranks such as Heads of the IAF Campaign Planning, the Ground Forces Concept Development & Doctrine Department, and the Combat & Doctrine Division). These officers are the backbone of the IDF and from among them grows the top command. Last, Maarachot is the leading Israeli military journal and is circulate broadly within the IDF. Put simply, Maarachot is a primary venue of dissemination of operational ideas. Crucially, it is remarkably open for a wide variety of views, including critical.

Though the value of the primary sources seems self-evident, it is important to put their significance in context. Studies of operational behaviour and learning tend to rely on combat analysis, memoires, and interviews. Often, the time frame of such studies is relatively limited and they refer to a salient case as a cause or representation of adaptation. As revealing as these are, they offer a snapshot or a set of freeze frames that usually capture tactical adaptation. The sources informing this study permit more than that. They provide the thoughtful, reflective, distilled, and discursive body of opinions that officers in strategic positions, and in dynamic careers, have committed to print over a significant and events-dense period of 17 years. In this period the IDF fought five major asymmetric campaigns, of which the 2006 Second Lebanon War—Israel’s own “Vietnam”8—proved the most consequential.9 Obviously, this war did not shape alone the new IDF doctrine. It was preceded by a successful and long—if traumatic—campaign against the Palestinians and followed by three additional military campaigns in short 2-4 years intervals. In brief, it is the cumulative IDF combat experience 2000 - 2017 that consists of what Davidson, Levy, and others have discussed as a formative moment of “generational learning” with enduring impact.10 Indeed, the period should be studied in its entirety.

The reality of doctrinaire evolution over a considerable period has an important study-implication. The analysis can create a semblance of orderly time-lined adaptation. Yet as submitted, doctrine change seems to involve a fuzzy process. Officers often modify
behaviour in advance of doctrinaire change. Briefly, doctrinaire reasoning appears at times as reconstruction and post decisional rationalization of conduct that was at best employed heuristically. Still, despite fuzziness and off-notes in officers’ discourse, the overall doctrinaire evolution is unmistakably clear. Importantly, as such it meets the ultimate criteria of institutional learning—assimilation “into [the IDF], force development, and overall combat repertoire”\(^{11}\)—as documented throughout the fifth section of this article. Indeed, the doctrinaire elements I discuss left clear footprints in the seminal 2015 *IDF Strategy* document.\(^ {12}\)

**The original IDF doctrine**

The foundations of Israel’s national security strategy and IDF doctrine were laid out by the first Prime- and Defence-Minster, David Ben-Gurion. These foundations—assumptions on the nature of the Israeli security predicament and principles for managing it\(^ {13}\)—continue to reverberate within the IDF and inform strategic choices, especially vis-à-vis enemy states. In brief, according to Ben-Gurion, Israel’s security predicament emanated from Arab intentions and capabilities. On the one hand, the Arabs aspired to get rid of what they perceived a colonial Jewish entity, and on the other hand, their combined resources far outweighed those of Israel. Under the conditions of pre-1967 Six Day War geostrategic vulnerability (i.e., Israel’s narrow waist), the combination of Arab intentions and capabilities posed Israel an existential threat. Moreover, resource asymmetry meant that the Arabs could afford to lose recurring rounds of war, yet Israel could not afford to lose even one. Hence Ben-Gurion’s conclusion that the Israeli-Arab conflict would endure and yet time might work in Israel’s favour. Israeli tenacity, and a heavy cost imposed on every enemy aggression, could gradually convince the Arabs to come to terms with its existence.

Building on the above analysis, Ben-Gurion crafted the principles of Israel’s strategy and military doctrine. First, considering the fundamental imbalance of power, Israel should secure the support of a great power. Second, for the very same reason, Israel should invest in early warning capabilities and cultivate its qualitative edge. Third, considering Israel’s vulnerability and the existential nature of the threat, IDF doctrine would have to be offensive and the battle would have to be rapidly transferred into Arab territory. Fourth, because Israel’s long-term objective was to manipulate the enemy’s calculus and intentions, the war had to end in a decisive IDF battlefield victory. Fifth, as Israel’s predicament and resource-inferiority were bound to stretch its economy (and only more so in times of war, when much of the workforce would be
mobilized into the reserve), decisive victory must come quickly. Inevitably, seeking to transfer the battle into enemy territory and defeat it quickly meant that the IDF had to emphasize offensive doctrine, striking capability, and manoeuvre. In brief, the IDF cultivated a rational, potentially addictive, of a cult of the offensive,14 as was immortalized in CGS Dayan’s response to his Head of Operations complaint against Col. Ariel Sharon’s 1956 offensive subversion of commands, “it is true [that Sharon subverted], but I prefer gallant horses to lazy mules.”15

Considering the heavy burden involved in managing Israel’s security predicament for an indeterminate time, extending the periods between wars became a major objective. Long periods of relative tranquillity were perceived essential for recuperation and even more so as they permitted economic and technological development and thus advance of Israel’s qualitative edge and relative power. Yet, to extend inter-wars intervals, Israel had to demonstrate more than the futility of Arab aggression. It had to assure that the cost of aggression would rob perpetrators of their offensive appetite. Hence, decisive battlefield victory and deterrence were considered supreme interdependent objectives.16 Deterrence would gain Israel time; time would be exploited to improve the capacity to win quickly and decisively; and decisive victory would in turn boost deterrence.

IDF officers are profoundly familiar with the above logic and principles, which were reduced to the holy trinity of early warning, deterrence, and battlefield decision. Whereas for some officers these are time-transcending principles,17 for others evolving battlefield challenges require a limited adaptation.18 Be that as it may, the trinity and its founding rationale reverberate in strategic discussions and are evident in IDF texts, including the 2015 IDF Strategy document.19

The “new operational environment”

Originally, asymmetric fighting was pigeonholed in Israel within the “current security” (Bitahon Shotef) category and as such was far secondary to “existential security” (Bitachon Yesodi) in terms of attention and allocated resources. IDF interest in asymmetric conflicts increased significantly during the eighteen years of deployment in the ‘Lebanese quagmire’ (1982-2000) and as Israel confronted waves of Palestinian terrorism following the rapid collapse of the 1993 Oslo Accords.20

However, the rising significance of asymmetric conflict should also be understood against the background of regional changes, the general decline of conventional wars,
and the emergence of the “global war on terror”. By the end of the 20th Century Israel faced no significant symmetric threat. Egypt had signed a peace agreement (1979), the Eastern Coalition threat dissolved as Iraq battled with Iran (1980-1988), the Soviet patron of the Arabs collapsed (1986-1989), Desert Storm (1991) emasculated Saddam, and Jordan formally normalized relations with Israel (1994). Less then a decade later, American interventions resulted in enduring asymmetric wars in Afghanistan (2001- ) and Iraq (2003-), ushering in a presumed “new” form of war plaguing failed Arab and African states, and which Israel had already tasted in Lebanon.

IDF officers did not miss the phenomenological change by much. Following the 2006 Second Lebanon War, (res.) Maj. Gen. Eiland noted that war has changed its nature from high to low intensity, pitting states against non-state organizations. Two years later (ret.) Lt. Gen. Halutz submitted that “[t]he pattern of war in the modern era has changed ... most of the world’s confrontations involve nations waging war against terrorist or guerrilla organizations,” adding that “the nature of the threats Israel faces (since the 1973 War) ... has changed radically ... Israel started having to deal with terrorist groups.” By 2014, the perception that asymmetric conflicts assumed precedence over symmetric conflicts has become dominant among IDF commanders.

The first step IDF officers needed to take in order to adapt to what they perceived as a fundamental change in violent conflict, was to define the characteristics of what they termed the new “operational environment”, understand how these differed from those of the symmetric conflict environment, and consider the implications. The use of the term “operational environment” (rather than a reductive term such as “battlefield”) reflected the perception that “new” conflicts involved different factors and relationships. Most obviously, IDF officers could hardly overlook the fact that while the original IDF doctrine assumed unfavourable material asymmetry, the state of affairs in the new operational environment was reversed: Israel enjoyed an overwhelming superiority over asymmetric enemies. Officers could also not miss that in spite of the IDF unquestionable superiority, it did not achieve decisive victory nor robust deterrence.

The experience gained in 18 years of inconclusive combat in Lebanon and during the bloody years of the Second Suicide Intifada lead the command to believe that the defining factor of the new operational environment was its murky nature—that is, the inherent difficulty to distinguish between enemy combatants and civilians, especially in urban battlefields. Towards the end of the Second Intifada, CGS Yaalon wrote:
“[t]he current conflict with the Palestinians is ... fundamentally different in its characteristics and format ... presenting different challenges, including the need to deal with fighting in urban settings saturated with civilians.”

His successor, Halutz observed that during the 2006 Lebanon War, the IDF “we knew full well” that it “was not a warfare against armies and states, [but] rather against terrorism located in and operating from urban areas under the protection of civilian populations....”

Discussing the ‘war principles of asymmetric war’ following that war, (ret.) general Amidror observed that “[t]he most important difference between classical war and … asymmetric war, arises from the involvement of civilians who serve as passive or active partners of one of the warring protagonists.” (Ret.) DCSG general Harel, explained further, that “asymmetry between entities is measured not only in terms of force but also exists in every aspect in which there is difference in the nature of the conflicting sides, in their goals, power, methods of operation, and especially the rules of the game by which they play....”

**Ramifications of the murky battlefield**

Further analysis of the new operational environment led IDF officers to conclude that the murky nature of the battlefield generated two interconnected bundles of challenges, endogenous and exogenous.

The cause of the endogenous challenges was best defined by a metaphor (res.) IAF Col. Tira used in a *Strategic Assessment* article critical of the IDF performance in the 2006 Lebanon War. The effort, he wrote, was “similar to trying to break the bones of an amoeba—using force irrelevant to the circumstances, to the facts, and to the nature of the war.” In another defining statement on “enduring limited conflicts,” IAF Col. Lish argued that the use of limited capabilities and the settling for equilibrium were outcomes of fundamental attributes of such conflicts. Three years later, he explained that one reason for the failure of the IDF’s Effects Based Operation (EBO) in the 2006 war, was that Hezbollah adapted to the IDF battle plan by eliminating its centres of gravity: dispersing its forces, going underground, and assimilating into the civil population. In brief, IDF officers pointed to a structural problem: dispersed deployment among civilians—a fundamental feature of sustainable guerrilla war—made the enemy resilient to doctrines relevant for symmetric conflict encounters.

All considered, the failure to overcome asymmetric enemies, even when dispersed, remained puzzling for officers brought up on the standard view that overwhelming superiority guarantee battlefield success. Hence, IDF officers looked outside the
battlefield for the roots of unfavourable outcomes. Their conclusion was that the latter were due to operational constraints arising from a non-material dimension of asymmetry identified already in their analysis of the new operational environment: asymmetry of moral identities. The fundamental position of the IDF command has been that the army was bound by its operational ethics (“the ethical code”) and international legal standards. However, whereas the IDF’s identity compelled it to follow the Jus in Bello and its own principle of “purity of arms” (a term corresponding with ‘civilian immunity’), its asymmetric enemies’ identity made them unbound by moral considerations, be it in defence or offence. As one IAF officer wrote: “Israel seeks to reduce as much as possible the harm to civilians—hers and the enemy’s—whereas her enemies aspire to increase as much as possible the hurt to Israeli and [their] own civilians… the two sides submit to entirely different norms and values.”

However, it would be naïve to assume that Israeli restraint was motivated only by moral considerations. In addition to institutional values, the IDF conduct was also guided by a belief that unethical and certainly unlawful conduct would delegitimize its operations and possibly prove strategically counterproductive. As (ret.) Maj. Gen. Amidror explained: “it is obvious that war against terror requires domestic and international legitimacy, and this is even sharper and clearer when the state fighting terrorism is democratic.” In short, the IDF commitment to restraint had both moral and instrumental roots. Most importantly, IDF officers assessed that their enemies understood well the opportunity the IDF's relative restraint offered them. In the formers’ view, asymmetric enemies set up an effectiveness-legitimacy trap, hoping to lure the IDF into generating such collateral damage that would rob the Israeli operation of legitimacy. In the words of Lt. Col. Ortal, asymmetric enemies “present the IDF with a dilemma: taking extra care in order to avoid harming civilians limits very much the operational effectiveness of the IDF, provides the enemy its desired defensive mantle, and necessarily brings about a higher rate of casualties among our forces. In contrast, not taking extra care vis-à-vis the civilian population, is not compatible with the IDF combat values, brings about extensive harm to the uninvolved, and at the end of the day, serves the enemy.”

The retired IDF Advocate General, Maj. Gen. Mandelblit, offered similar insight: “if one avoids returning fire at the populated areas from where rockets were fired, the [asymmetric] organization scores an advantage, and if one returns fire and unintentionally harms civilians, the organization also scores an advantage (on the media/consciousness front, as in the [April 1996] Qana incident).” Or, as Col. Neuman, from Mandelblit’s office
summarised, asymmetric enemies try to exploit Israel’s commitment to international law (especially to ‘distinction’ and ‘proportionality’) in order to achieve tactical and even strategic advantage.\textsuperscript{39}

But, how precisely would “harming the uninvolved ... serves the enemy”? How could the enemy “achieve tactical and even strategic advantage” from an ethically and/or legally compromised IDF operation? And, what features of the operational environment and mechanisms serve the enemy’s \textit{effectiveness-legitimacy trap}?

According to IDF officers, more than anything, legitimacy was threatened due to the transparency of the battlefield, where operations and their consequences were reported in a false, distorted, or contextless manner to naïve and hostile constituencies, including in Israel, in the enemy’s civilian camp, and most importantly, in the international public opinion and media domains.\textsuperscript{40} Possibly in part due to the investigation and condemning “Goldstone Report”\textsuperscript{41} (September 2009), (ret.) general Amidror wrote that “I suspect that the main change (among those recorded recently) arises from the fast and wide exposure of every violent friction on the ground to the communication means world-wide ... the use of civilians by terror and guerrilla organizations and the significant change in the way events are exposed – require an addition of a new principle to the IDF war principles ... the principle of image and legitimacy.”\textsuperscript{42} Indeed, the assessment that operational freedom became hostage of tarnished legitimacy increasingly spread among the ranks, as revealed for example in an analysis by a junior intelligence officer.\textsuperscript{43} Or, as Rodnick suggested: “[t]he battle today is in large measure over the narrative of justice. In effect, it is a struggle over the awareness of different audiences concerning the justification of war and mainly the justification of the manner of warfare on your side, but also over the conceptualization of justice itself.”\textsuperscript{44} Indeed, discussing the elements of doctrine development, general Har-Even emphasised that the first tier of analysis of the “operational environment” should include an “understanding of the expectations framework of the state, government and society, concerning the boundaries of legitimacy of force operation and the risks the state is ready to take, while understanding that the consideration of the political level arise from both domestic needs and international legitimacy.”\textsuperscript{45}

Evidently the cumulative impact of international (and less so domestic) criticism of the use of force and collateral damage left its mark within the IDF. Officers concluded that battlefield operations spilled over to the legal and ethical fronts, where legitimacy, and consequently operational freedom were threatened by reports of the media and
social-networks. The fact that international (mainly Western) legitimacy and the means of communications affecting it became major concerns of IDF meant that both would be considered in planning. Hence, the conclusion of Col. Lish: “[t]he real battle is over the legitimacy space of operation. It must be conducted on the diplomatic plane between wars, and (we) should make the expansion of this space as an objective, during wars.” Hence also the perception of Col. Neuman that “the centre of gravity … in recent years… is the international legitimacy for IDF activity” and the conclusion of former IDF Spokesperson, Brig. Gen. Benayahu, that “in order to preserve the public confidence in Israel and international legitimacy, the operation of the IDF would have to be conducted within a framework of rigid communication constraints.”

The bottom line is clear. IDF officers identified legitimacy, mainly international, as a key factor affecting operational freedom. Moreover, they concluded that legitimacy was a function of perceptions formed among domestic and more importantly Western constituencies following media’ and social-networks’ reporting. Last, they decided that the ramifications of the peculiar characteristics of the “new” operational environment were responsible for the IDF’s inability to optimally exploit its overwhelming superiority. Hence the conclusion that asymmetric enemies tried to overcome inferiority by drawing the IDF into an effectiveness-legitimacy trap that would render its operations counterproductive on communication, ethical, and legal fronts. Not surprisingly, the new 2010 IDF doctrinaire manual *Ground Forces Operations* dedicated a full chapter to the ethical and legal aspects of warfare.

**Deficiencies in the original IDF doctrine: decision, deterrence, and manoeuvre**

Concerns over the relevancy of the original IDF doctrine emerged following the 1973 war and more significantly following Iraq’s 1991 missile attacks of Israel. However, it was the frustrating outcomes of new asymmetric conflicts, starting with long 18 post-1982 years of deployment in Lebanon that ushered in a surge of critical analyses.

The first conclusion officers drew from IDF asymmetric campaigns was that be it due to the lack of enemy’s centre of gravity, ethical and legal self-restraint, or cost-benefit calculations (mainly casualties), the IDF failed to achieve its ultimate doctrinaire objective: battlefield decision—i.e., destruction of the military capabilities of the enemy. Almost by definition, the absence of military decision carried temporal consequences. As CGS Halutz, reflecting on the 2006 Lebanon War, pointed out, “a
war of terrorism is by nature a war of attrition, and coping with it requires unique abilities as well as an extended period of time.” In short, the IDF concluded that asymmetric campaigns were destined to require extended periods of time and likely to end with inconclusive results.

The second IDF insight was that it did not achieve properly its second doctrinaire objective: a robust deterrence once hostilities ended. That deterrence, its loss, and the desire to resurrect it were primary reasons for using the IDF in the first place, can be learned from repeated statements of officers, officials, and analysts. For example, Shalom concluded that “the policy of restraint adopted by Israel following the withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 severely eroded Israel’s deterrence image ... the lake of an appropriate response in these circumstances [Hezbollah first cross-border attack and abduction of three soldiers (KIA) in October 2000], would have implied a critical blow to Israel’s deterrent capability.” Indeed, deterrence failure was a key motivation behind the Olmert government’s decision to respond in July 2006 with great force to Hezbollah’s second cross-border attack and abduction of soldiers. As Defence Minister Amir Peretz (2006-2007) suggested, the main objective of that war, was “to change the equation vis-à-vis the Hezbollah... be in a position where Hezbollah would not dare... to return to a state of affairs where it again attacks and impinges on Israeli sovereignty.” Moreover, deterrence was pivotal in the mind of IDF officers, because they assumed that deterrence-failure in any particular theatre of operation was contagious, emboldening enemies in other theatres. In line with this logic, officers also believed that successfully boosting deterrence in one theatre by penalising challenges harshly would deter enemies in other theatres. Most importantly, IDF officers concluded that deterrence—a mechanism to extend the time between campaigns—was not achieved in asymmetric campaigns precisely because these did not end in a clear-cut military victory.

As if fading battlefield decision and weakening deterrence were not challenging enough, officers also had to reconcile themselves with the depreciation of offensive manoeuvre in asymmetric campaigns. Indeed, the role of manoeuvre vis-à-vis its stand off fire alternative became the most divisive doctrinaire issue within the IDF. The original doctrine and offensive ethos of the ground forces clearly supported manoeuvre. However, in the decade and a half following the 1973 war—in part as a result of a debate within the US armed forces—tension was building between the
“manoeuvre” and “fire” camps. According to Maj. Gen. Heiman, such tension was “one of the greatest factors hindering learning” among the high ranks.60

Whatever divided IDF preferences, the politicians and at least initially the IAF—the main standoff fire contractor—clearly preferred fire.61 Their main arguments were that standoff fire had greater utility and that ground manoeuvre involved a high casualties cost.62 On the face of it, the arguments favouring standoff fire were compelling, as they rested on the IDF’s greatest relative advantage—air domination—and indeed promised to minimize IDF casualties (who would be expected to mount in the friction of ground battle in tripped enemy territory). Moreover, with no obvious enemy authority to bargain with over conquered territory, deep manoeuvre was potentially entangling, as Israel had learned during 18 bleeding years of deployment in Lebanon. As Netanyahu explained to the Knesset State Control Committee in “the weakness of conquest [of Gaza in 2014] is not only the cost [in terms] of our soldiers and their civilians, but [also in terms of] to whom would you deliver [the territory] and who will run it.”63 Hence, the logic behind the organizing idea of the 2006 Lebanon war: conduct a “standoff firepower-based war against the Lebanese Republic [which CGS Halutz recommended but was denied]….” and get involved in “as little friction as possible and applied intensive precision firepower against Hezbollah, based on the Shock and Awe and EBO ideas.”64

The problem with the preference for standoff fire was that theory and reality remained alienated. IDF asymmetric campaigns repeatedly suggested that standoff fire alone, no matter how powerfully applied, was less effective than assumed. First, as Col. Dr. Finkel suggested, the effectiveness of air force is reduced in campaigns against terror and guerrilla organizations precisely because of the ‘murky’ nature of the battlefield—i.e., the “law signature” of enemy operation from within civilian population.65 Specifically, the IAF quickly ran out of worthy targets, long before the enemy seemed beaten enough to end hostilities, as indeed an IAF officer all but confirmed concerning the 2006, 2008/09, and 2012 campaigns.66 The officer’s conclusion was unequivocal: “in most asymmetric campaigns time functions against air power: The latter’s effectivity in the battlefield is on the decline and the probability that it would cause death of uninvolved increases vastly – a matter that would harm the operational accomplishments it achieved until then.”67 Second, standoff fire proved of limited utility. It simply did not fully suppress the enemy rocket and mortar attacks on the Israeli civil rear. Third, standoff fire may have surprisingly had an inverse effect on
the fighting spirit of the enemy. It was interpreted, or at least depicted by enemies, as a sign of weakness and indication that the mighty IDF feared facing its enemies in the battlefield. Fourth, no matter how accurate standoff fire was, it was intended to be destructive and impressive—to “shock and awe”—and as such was bound to be perceived as brutal and non-discriminating. In brief, standoff fire was “less photogenic” than manoeuvre and thus counterproductive as far as international legitimacy was concerned.68

As (res.) IAF Col. Tira concluded shortly after the 2006 War, the exclusive use of standoff fire could not effectively eliminate the threat of trajectory attacks on the Israeli civil rear, threatened to embolden an enemy who believed that the IDF hesitated to meet its warriors “face to face” and thereby both prolong the campaign and risk ending the campaign prematurely due to legitimacy-destroying collateral damage.69

All in all then, the IDF’s initial choice to emphasise fire over manoeuvre, faced criticism within the army. Even before the 2006 War, retired officers suggested that “the use of counter-fire [i.e. standoff fire] can have less substantial deterrent capability than achieving those same objectives through direct contact.”70 Then, after standoff fire seemed to have failed to achieve the desired utility in 2006, officers—including in the IAF—concluded that the culprits were “over-zealous embrace of the American effects-based operations” and the mistaken thinking that “it is possible to wage a war with minimal friction and at a low cost.”71 They further concluded that “the worst possible error is to be dragged to a prolonged attrition war against revolutionary forces by way of standoff fire and out of wish to avoid casualties.”72 In fact, the additional 2006 massive use of standoff fire from the ground was also criticized sharply. Artillery Brig. Gen. Zigdon wrote that the IDF “tried to achieve the pretentious objectives of war… almost exclusively by application of firepower. The artillery—being available, convenient to use, cheap and less vulnerable—was put in a position where it filled up the large voids created between the high expectations from the army and the unwillingness to employ it for a large-scale manoeuvre.”73 Hence, the reincarnation of the pro-manoeuvre view as summed up (if inaccurately)74 by Col. Bazak: “a maneuvering move will always sow less destruction resulting from firepower than that used in the attrition approach, thanks to the … better ability to distinguish civilians from combatants. Furthermore, the ability to supply targets as the result of friction created during a maneuvering move together with intelligence and precision fire capabilities … may well reduce collateral damage significantly and result in greater effectiveness.”75 Indeed, the pendulum started shifting towards manoeuvre following disappointment with EBO in 2006; though the
ultimate result still left standoff fire in a lead role. Manoeuvre, specifically in Lebanon, was increasingly considered inescapable.\(^76\)

**From the physical to the perceptual environment: the rise of awareness**

Giving up battlefield decision and backing off a leading role for offensive manoeuvre were both outcomes of the revised IDF thinking on the effect of military power in the context of the new operational environment. They also indicated that the battlefield was no longer considered the exclusive realm of confrontation. First indications of a significant shift of the intended effect of military power emerged around 2000, in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In preparation for impending confrontation, the DCGS, Yaalon, developed with Central Command and the *Operational Theory Research Institute* the foundations for a new comprehensive approach to asymmetric conflict.\(^77\) The approach was guided by an assumption that “the main battle in this conflict is over the awareness—Israeli, Palestinian, and international.”\(^78\) Soon after Yaalon was appointed CGS, he reiterated his position from the top spot: “alongside the actual fight against terror, it is imperative to burn the price of resorting to terrorism in the consciousness of terror generators and the awareness of their supporting environment...”\(^79\) Indeed, as Brig. Gen. Gilady suggested, the IDF defined its Second Intifada battle-objective as “deterring the Palestinians from using force and *engraving in their consciousness* their inability to dictate political processes to Israel in accordance with their interests.”\(^80\) The notion that the awareness of three core constituencies—Israeli, Palestinian, and international—is pivotal in asymmetric conflicts has since become the bedrock of IDF’s asymmetric campaign planning.

In retrospect, it is evident that the 2006 War was the epitome of the IDF’s reconceptualization of fighting. The war was fought against enemy awareness, relying on punishing air power and shunning a major ground manoeuvre. Though IDF officers sharply criticised the choice of EBO, they remained convinced that the outcomes of asymmetric conflicts would be decided in the consciousness of the protagonists and spectators rather than on the ground. As a branch head in *AMAN’s* Centre for Awareness Operations wrote: “in the limited conflict ... the way the parties interpret events has immense significance ... this reality (in which battlefield victories do not secure victory and defeats do not prevent the loser from declaring victory) turns the awareness theatre to the arena where the campaign outcomes are decided and possibly even the whole conflict outcomes....”\(^81\) After five asymmetric campaigns since 2000, the IDF indeed seems convinced that domestic-, enemy-, and international-awareness
are increasingly important in the context of ‘new wars’ ‘limited conflicts’ ‘hybrid conflicts’ or ‘asymmetric conflicts’,\(^8^2\) and that “operating military force in order to achieve the strategic utility, is not in and of itself sufficient, but rather an additional effort is required in the dimension of awareness.”\(^8^3\) All, because “the objective [is] to influence opponents and other target audiences, to increase the IDF’s freedom of operation, and design the victory narrative.”\(^8^4\)

In summary, acknowledging the futility of chasing battlefield decision and being sceptical about the utility of offensive manoeuvre, yet still committed to deterrence, the IDF command and officer corps redefined the object of operation and locus of victory. If originally the IDF perceived the enemy’s military force as the exclusive object of operation, the centre of gravity as territorial, and the goal of fighting to be battlefield decision, in its understanding of the new operational environment the IDF focused on awareness. It is thus essential to consider how precisely did the IDF think military force could be applied effectively in order to manipulate enemy-awareness?

**The doctrine of disproportional response**

The doctrinal impact of the IDF analysis of the new operational environment and its implications cannot be overstated. The IDF concluded that the evasive, amoeba-like enemy, was immune to quick and decisive defeat; that efforts to achieve decision involved substantial casualties or resort to counterproductive levels of brutality; and, that even if decision was achievable, there was no enemy authority to relinquish the territory to. Ultimately, the IDF command concluded that the traditional objective of battlefield decision was elusive, costly, and with the prospects of ending up in a quagmire. At the same time, ending war without military decision was deeply problematic.

The formation of the new IDF doctrine should be understood against this background. Obviously, the command was frustrated by the army’s repeated failures to accomplish the mission, and only more so in light of criticism from among its ranks, the public, and politicians.\(^8^5\) Yet, the desire to craft an effective doctrine was also motivated by more mundane personal, parochial, and organizational motivations. On a personal level, no officer missed the chilling effect of the indecisive 2006 War. The perceived failure cost the careers of the Defence Minister, CGS, DCGS, Commander of Northern Command, and two Brigadier Generals. At the parochial level, the officer corps risked status-devaluation and demoralization. Finally, at the organizational level, questionable performance risked feeding the public debate over whether the generous
defence budget (increasingly financing salaries and pensions) was justified in times of
dissipating existential threats. All adverse consequences also suggested that
recruiting and retaining quality officers threatened to become more challenging. In
short, the consequences of the inability of the IDF to perform as expected could hardly
be ignored. Hence the roots of the remedy: the doctrine of disproportional response.

It should be emphasised that until the early 2000s, the IDF response to asymmetric
challenges was relatively measured or proportional. For example, only at the outset of
the Second Intifada, the IDF first resorted to using attack helicopters in the territories.
And yet, the strike took place only after the Palestinian authority was notified so that
inhabitants could be evacuated, and only after warning shots were fired near the target
to insure evacuation prior to striking. In fact, even after the re-capturing of
Palestinian cities in operation Defensive Shield (2002), officers prescribed proportional
force application. In 2003, for example, a former mid-ranking intelligence officer still
advised that “the desired scenario in low intensity war is [one] of focused operation
against terror operatives that live among the enemy’s civil population, while inflicting
the smallest possible collateral damage. This requires the use of small forces that apply
minimized volumes of fire … [and] much thought concerning the non-military
components of activity: civil population, warfare morality, relations with the media,
and international relations.”

At the same time, Israel’s preference for a measured response to Palestinian violence
and to Hezbollah's provocations after the unilateral 2000 retreat from Lebanon was
increasingly despised within the IDF. Former IAF Commander and CGS Halutz
describes Israel’s response to Hezbollah’s first cross-border abduction of three (dead)
IDF soldiers (October 2000), as “weak [and] contradicting our declarations before the
withdrawal when we committed ourselves to making Lebanon burn should Hizbollah
attack … a policy of restraint, moderation, and symbolic response … [that] simply
encouraged the other side to push the envelope farther and farther….” In other
words, the move towards disproportional response was growing roots in the late
from May 2000 and the more painful lessons from the Western Wall Tunnel events in
September 1996, it was understood that the intention was to reach a casualty ratio that
would demonstrate which side was stronger.” Towards the 2006 war, and most
certainly in its wake, IDF officers were not only hardening their retaliatory disposition,
but also forming new insight about the asymmetric operational environment and the
shortcomings of the original IDF doctrine. They realized that the doctrine could not achieve two of its three core objectives: battlefield decision and robust deterrence. They also concluded that because asymmetric conflicts irrupted unpredictably—as a result of miscalculation or spinoffs of tactical events⁹¹—achieving the third core objective of early warning was questionable as well, though since the threat involved was non-existent, it strategically less important anyhow.⁹²

Considering the shortcomings of the original IDF doctrine, the need for a new doctrine and its goal were obvious. It had to offer an alternative to military decision that would end hostilities favourably while augmenting deterrence, thereby extending the time between campaigns. In the words of Israel’s Deputy Director of the NSC, (res.) Brig. Gen. Bar-Yosef, the goal was “to bring the enemy to a state where it does not want or cannot continue to fight ... in a manner that would bring about calm on short order, and Israel’s deterrence capacity would be returned and established for the longest possible time.”⁹³ In effect, the new doctrine had to define a way to turn the IDF’s power advantage into a lever and achieve the desired effects without destroying Israel’s international legitimacy—a matter involving communications, legal and ethical considerations.

Hence, the first important observation about the new IDF doctrine concerns the subject of the effect. With significant portions of the enemy’s retaliatory capabilities and fighting force expected to survive the war, convincing asymmetric enemies to cease fighting meant that the IDF would have to manipulate their cost and gain calculations. Calculations, by definition, happen in the enemy’s awareness,⁹⁴ and thus the latter was the ultimate subject of operations, as was indeed defined by general Yaalon on the eve of the Second Intifada. Moreover, in such context, every round of violence is not only a test, but also a formative opportunity. The logic was unmistakably laid out by IAF Col. Lish: “in order to change the rules of the game” each party to an asymmetric conflict “needs to bring the other side to the edge of its escalation capacity and continue pressuring it beyond this point. This objective can be achieved by massive operation—which can be dubbed a ‘formative round’ ... the successful outcome of a formative round would ... be direct or indirect agreement on new rules of the game.”⁹⁵

Analysing the lessons of the 2006 War, CGS Halutz drew somewhat similar conclusions on the need for massive operation. “Another ramification,” Halutz submitted, “was the change in our own conceptual and behavioural worlds ... we have internalized the method of action beyond what the enemy expected. The Dahiya model
as a model of action...” Indeed, his observation reflects the change that took place after the IAF reduced to rubbles the Hezbollah Dahieh quarter of Beirut during the 2006 War. Quite simply, the punishing use of military power, including in urban and other residential settings, has become a substitute for military decision and dubbed the “Dahiya Doctrine” after the 2008 proclamation of the Commander of Northern Command Eisenkot, that “what happened in the Dahiya quarter in Beirut in 2006 will happen in every village [in Lebanon] from which Israel is fired on ... we will apply disproportionate force on it and cause great damage and destruction there. From our standpoint, these are no civilian villages, they are military bases ... this is not a recommendation. This is a plan. And, it has been approved.”

Importantly, whereas the IDF turned to a disproportional response doctrine that would achieve the result of confrontation through ‘submission’ rather than ‘decision’, it was also endorsed for its presumed deterrent effect. The logic was embedded in appraisals of the 2006 campaign and subsequent campaigns. Since every campaign was seen as feeding on previous one and impacting on the next one, each was perceived as already noted, as a ‘formative round’ or opportunity. Accordingly, the IDF acted “massively” not only in order to win, but also in order to affect the enemy's future calculations and boost deterrence. IAF Col. Lish made this logic plain when he proposed in 2010 to abandon the goal of military decision, though not victory. Rather, considering that the IDF's ground manoeuvre had proved of limited utility in the new battlefield (because of the enemy’s accurate anti-armour weapons, obstacles, lack centres of gravity, and the densely populated combat zones), victory had to be achieved “through the great damage inflicted on the antagonist by the end of war, as compared to reasonable damage sustained by [Israel].”

Hence, manipulating the enemy’s calculus by inflicting “great damage” has become a leading IDF objective. In 2012, before operation Pillar of Defence, DDNSC Bar-Yosef explained: the “application of much force in order to achieve (military) decision is consistent with Israel’s need to shorten as much as possible the duration of war and elongate as much as possible the periods of tranquillity between wars.”

Consistently, as Operation Protective Edge was reaching its conclusion, (ret.) Brig. Gen. Kuperwasser explained: “We a priori did not set an objective of eradicating Hamas… the goal was to bring about a essential change in the Hamas capacity to attack ... to serve the strategic goal of enduring peacefulness … to achieve this peacefulness one needs a sort of submission not decision...
intended to bring Hamas to … a mode of thinking [where a “utilitarian calculation” leads Hamas to conclude that “the cost the Palestinians pay for resort to terrorism is greater than the utility”].”

The arguments of IDF officers about the need to find a way to win wars without battlefield decision, and their wish to manipulate the enemy’s cost-benefit calculations, almost inevitably led to the doctrine of disproportional response. The logical thread becomes even clearer once the statements of IDF officers are reviewed on a time line. Already at the outset of the 2006 War, CGS Halutz recommended to initiate “a high intensity response, much beyond the scope expected by the enemy … [Israel] must be able to generate deterrence, act decisively, and at times even act outrageously.” In late 2007, (ret.) Maj. Gen. Amidror, analysing the principles of “asymmetric conflict” wrote that Israel “should [not] add the principle of restraint and limit on the use of force [to its national security doctrine?] … it would be a major mistake … Israel could successfully deal with terror and guerrilla organizations only if she would retain the option to respond in a disproportional manner.” By 2008, the idea of disproportional response was further developed in an article of (ret.) Col. Siboni, a close confidant of future CGS Eisenkot:

The current predicament facing Israel involves two major challenges. The first is how to prevent being dragged into an ongoing dynamic of attrition on the northern border … The second is determining the IDF’s response to a large-scale conflict both in the north and in the Gaza Strip. These two challenges can be overcome by adopting the principle of a disproportionate strike against the enemy’s weak points as a primary war effort. With an outbreak of hostilities, the IDF will need to act immediately, decisively, and with force that is disproportionate to the enemy’s actions and the threat it poses. Such a response aims at inflicting damage and meting out punishment to an extent that will demand long and expensive reconstruction processes… Punishment must be aimed at decision makers and the power elite … In Lebanon, attacks should both aim at Hizbollah’s military capabilities and should target economic interests and the centers of civilian power that support the organization. Moreover, the closer the relationship between Hizbollah and the Lebanese government, the more the elements of the Lebanese state infrastructure should be targeted. Such a response will create a lasting memory among … Lebanese decision makers, thereby increasing Israeli deterrence… At the same time, it will force … Hizbollah, and Lebanon to commit to lengthy and resource-intensive reconstruction programs. Hence, what followed the 2006 War, was a crystallization of the doctrinaire idea of “disproportional response”—a sort of conventional version of the American strategic concept of (nuclear) escalation dominance, gutted of exit opportunities but the final settling step.
To be accurate, in the absence of military decision option, the IDF already tried conflict resolution through pain in the 1968-1970 War of Attrition, as IDF pounded Egyptian cities on the western side of the Suez Canal and the IAF bombed military targets in the vicinity of Cairo and the Nile delta. The same approach was also taken during the long years of IDF deployment in Lebanon, once during operation Accountability (July 1993) and once during operation Grapes of Wrath (April 1996). However, these instances involved interstate war of attrition and two localized small-scale case of asymmetric conflict. They did not constitute a doctrinaire change, though they certainly informed the IDF later. It was only in 2006 and thereafter that doctrinaire change crystallized. Indeed, by 2011 Col. Bazak summed up the core logic of the new IDF's “operation approach” as “founded on the rationale of disproportionate response (“the boss has gone wild”), [which] was applied in Lebanon and Gaza...” In fact, if anything troubled IDF officers, it was that avoiding disproportional response would invite further rounds of violence. In a 2013 lecture, (res.) DCGS Harel argued that “in Pillar of Defence (2012) we restrained the military force too much, and thus there is a risk of another round.” In line with this logic, the eruption of violence in 2014, the massive pounding of Gaza in Operation Protective Edge, and the following calm, have all affirmed Harel's insight within the IDF.

What remains to be defined is who would be target of disproportional response and what form the latter would take. Almost by definition, asymmetric enemies who are perceived to be elusive or too costly to be destroyed could hardly be the exclusive targets. Moreover, destroying enemy forces could hardly be considered disproportional. Hence, the target and means of disproportional response must be other. The key to figuring out the puzzle seems to be in (res.) Col. Siboni’s 2008 words. Disproportional response, he explained:

Aims at inflicting damage and meting out punishment to an extent that will demand a long and expensive reconstruction processes… Punishment must be aimed at decision makers and the power elite … In Lebanon, attacks should both aim at Hizbollah’s military capabilities and should target economic interests and the centres of civilian power that support the organization. Moreover, the closer the relationship between Hizbollah and the Lebanese government, the more the elements of the Lebanese state infrastructure should be targeted. Such a response will create a lasting memory among … Lebanese decision makers, thereby increasing Israeli deterrence…. At the same time, it will force … Hizbollah and Lebanon to commit to lengthy and resource-intensive reconstruction programs....
At the end of the day, then, enemy citizens seem to be the ultimate conduits of the IDF’s efforts to affect enemy calculations. This logic hinges on two arguments. First, enemy civilians increase the capacity of asymmetric enemies to survive conflicts and are thus of interest from a military point of view. Second, civilians could form leverage on the ultimate addressee, the enemy state, which would substitute for the unaccountable and indifferent asymmetric enemy. IAF Col. Lish explicitly made the first argument:

The security doctrine of the terror organizations rests on the assumption that their population is safe and even serves as a shield against our attacks. If this tenet is removed, the doctrine of the terror organization collapses, as they would have to protect themselves, and since they are not strong enough, they would need to show restraint, and in effect would not be capable of acting efficiently against us—that is, they would remain deterred. On the other hand, the continuation of the reality in which we avoid acting so as not to risk the other’s civilians, would cause us mounting operational difficulties up to paralysis.\textsuperscript{111}

Other IDF officers made the complementary second civilian-leverage argument. Already during the 2006 War, CGS Halutz recommended to rebrand the Lebanese state as enemy and attack its infrastructure. However, his recommendation was declined and a limited disproportional response was applied only against the Hezbollah Dahieh quarter of Beirut. However, since then, Halutz’ recommendation gained traction. As Brig. Gen. Zamir, explained:

There is much injustice in that a people supporting terrorism and encouraging terror operatives, would not bear the responsibility for the hard outcomes of terror activity. From a moral standpoint, it is impossible not to also blame the civil population (not living under oppression) that functions as infrastructure and backs up and encourages violent acts ... actions that harm the interests of such a people might be an effective means to convince and pass on the message that it erred in the choice it made and would be better off changing its policy ... it is unjust that ... a population ... encourages terror, supports it materially and morally, but is immune to suffering.\textsuperscript{112}

Lt. Col. Ortal, suggesting hitting urban settings hard after warning, observed that the resulting destruction “also intended to achieve an additional longer-term goal: the destabilization of relations between the terror organizations and the population.”\textsuperscript{113}

General Eiland, looking into the lessons of the 2002, 2006 and 2008 campaigns, concluded that “once the dust has settled, the great damage to life and property caused by fighting in urban areas makes the local population, whether in Lebanon or in the
territories, start asking the terrorist organizations that set up shop in their midst some tough questions.”

Hence he recommended that “the right thing to do ... is to explain to the world (and Lebanon) ... that next time Israel is forced into combat with Hizbollah, the Republic of Lebanon will no longer enjoy any immunity....”

Expectedly, the idea that enemy civilians could be considered a proper target and leverage in asymmetric conflicts struck a chord with the right-wing crowd. Surprisingly, it was also accepted by moderate pundits, indicating that as far as IDF’s operational freedom was concerned, Israeli society become increasingly permissive.

Days after Eisenkot’s 2008 Dahiya proclamation, Left-leaning columnist Yaron London wrote in a Ynet op-ed column:

In practical terms, the Palestinians in Gaza are all Khaled Mashaal, the Lebanese are all Nasrallah, and the Iranians are all Ahmadinejad. Regrettably this doctrine did not take hold in the days following the [2000] withdrawal from Lebanon. Too bad it did not take hold immediately after the ‘disengagement’ from Gaza and the first rocket barrage directed at the northern Negev.... Had we immediately adopted the Dahiya strategy, we would have likely spared ourselves much trouble. Implementing the Dahiya strategy in Gaza would have made it clear to Hamas that we do not intend to hit them proportionally. The Dahiya strategy is the customary doctrine adopted by most Arabs.... I do not propose that we adopt the Arab way of thinking, but rather, only the conclusions stemming from the permanent situation whereby states and political groups that claim to be representative, shirk their responsibility for those whom they make pretences of representing. I am referring to the situation whereby Arab civilians grumble about being punished because of their leaders, while fearing their leaders more than they fear us. We need to make the fear we sow among them greater.

The tactical amplification of disproportionality

While the IDF doctrine of disproportional response emerged to address strategic objectives, its impact has been amplified due to a desire to keep IDF casualties down. Casualty-aversion was already evident during the years of deployment in Lebanon, after Hezbollah became the main enemy of the IDF their as of the mid-1980s. As ground forces Brig. Gen. Tamir, who rose through the ranks during the IDF’s deployment in Lebanon, submitted: “the understanding that nothing was as weighty as casualties, permeated all levels of command ... and the phenomenon of giving up [other military] values due to casualty concerns was deepened.” Already then and only more so thereafter standoff fire was preferred to high friction manoeuvre, precisely in order to avoid Israeli casualties. Moreover, for similar reasons, ground manoeuvre, no matter how limited, involved intense combat support from the artillery
and/or the air force. In short, disproportional effects occurred within and beyond areas of ground deployment, partly as a result of tactical considerations.

Indeed, during the 2006 War, the use of artillery in order to suppress rocket attacks on Israeli civilians and protect deployed forces enhanced the effect on enemy civilians. (Ret.) Brig. Gen. Zigdon, a career artillery officer, noted that in 2006 the IDF shot some 174,000 shells in 34 battle days. 84% of the projectiles (~146,000) were explosive and directed at some 4,000 targets. “Disruptive shelling”—that is, prophylactic—at a rate of 120-200 shells per hour, was applied to some 200 villages that were defined as sitting within the Hezbollah shooting zones (30% of Hezbollah fire was traced to villages). The plan was to force civilians out of 170 villages by firing first on the outskirts and then, after a pause, to the villages’ centres. As table 1 indicates, relative to the use of artillery in previous wars, and considering the limited territory and force of the non-state enemy, the use of artillery in 2006 was indeed massive.

### Table 1: IDF Artillery Munitions Consumption in War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War/Campaign</th>
<th>War type</th>
<th>Duration (days)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Per combat day</th>
<th>Per Barrel</th>
<th>Daily per barrel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Six Day 1967</td>
<td>Inter-state</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>78,812</td>
<td>13,135</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1973</td>
<td>Inter-state</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>307,583</td>
<td>16,189</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Lebanon 1982</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>81,230</td>
<td>13,538</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Lebanon 2006</td>
<td>Asymmetric</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>173,293</td>
<td>5,097</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The use of artillery and aerial bombing in the consequent 2008-09 Cast Lead campaign was no less punishing. Analysing the lessons of Cast Lead, Lt. Col. Ortal suggested that the IDF neutralised Hamas’ ‘defence systems’ “by using massive firepower support ... resembling somewhat the traditional method of a rolling fire screen—particularly in places where enemy ambushes and obstacles were expected.” Similarly, Dr. Bart describes the IDF method as “a kind of rolling fire-induced smokescreen [that] preceded the advancing units in order to protect them.” He further notes that “[a]s most of the fighting took place in a built up and populated areas, this policy caused a large number of casualties among the civilian Palestinian population. This [was] largely a new policy. In previous campaigns the IDF drove the enemy civilians out of the area (southern Lebanon) or abstained from using massive
firepower at the cost of casualties to its forces (Jenin, in Operation Defensive Shield).”¹²²

Following the 2006 War, close air support was also advanced. One of the main lessons the IAF drew from that war concerned the need to better integrate its operations with those of ground forces.¹²³ Indeed, in operation Cast Lead (2008/9), control of attack helicopters was already transferred from central command to the divisional level. “The command chain,” as a deputy commander of an attack helicopter squadron explained, “was considerably shortened, … permit[ting] immediate response to various needs that develop[ed] while fighting on the ground.”¹²⁴ After Cast Lead, the investment in interoperability and improved IAF accuracy (requiring use of smaller impact munitions) permitted greater reliance on more intense air power. Hence, in operation Pillar of Defence (2012) the volume of weekly air strikes was larger than both in Cast Lead and the 2006 War.¹²⁵ During the seven weeks of Protective Edge (2014), the IAF attacked over 5,000 targets in Gaza.¹²⁶ Following that campaign, IAF officers explained that they “decided to establish in the commanders of ground forces the realisation that a fighter airplane is a relevant tool (for) the current challenges of attacking targets at close range to forces… [as] was expressed in preliminary manner during Protective Edge … intending to improve the speed, survival, and lethality of the land manoeuvre, while preserving the security/safety of the forces.”¹²⁷

Indeed, the manoeuvring ground forces in Protective Edge enjoyed for the first time a truly close combat air support. Moreover, as the IAF Commander Eshel suggests, IDF ground forces would enjoy in the future “a powerful and ever better integrated pillar of fire ahead of them.”¹²⁸ Haaretz’s well-informed military correspondent, Amos Harel, describes one such incident during Protective Edge:

When the Golani Brigade fighters met stiff [Hamas] opposition and many casualties in the [20 July] battle … in the Shuja‘iyya neighbourhood … Within 50 minutes, the air force attacked 126 targets in the neighbourhood, the majority with one-ton bombs. The bombing left behind huge damage in the neighbourhood, from which most residents had fled, in line with the IDF demand. [The bombing] completely changed the landscape and permitted the ground forces to make progress and complete their mission.¹²⁹

In summary, the IDF doctrine of disproportional response was developed in light of the shortcomings of the original doctrine, in order to overcome the debilitating effects of the murky asymmetric battlefield. Because military decision involving manoeuvre
was perceived illusive, prohibitively costly, or of adverse consequences, the new doctrine was designed to affect the calculations of asymmetric enemies by other method: painful punishment. By inflicting massive damage on a large list of assets, officers assumed that subsequent social and political discontent would affect the calculus of recalcitrant asymmetric enemies, force an end to hostilities, and re-establish robust deterrence. Extensive destruction, however, was also the result of the wish to minimize IDF casualties, including by providing close combat support to ground forces, which was ever more available as a result of improved interoperability and targeting. The outcomes of strategic and tactical considerations, as far as the use of firepower was concerned, can hardly be exaggerated. General Haliva, Head of the Technology and Logistics Department, described a crucial indicative consequence:

in recent decades ... we are ‘surprised’ anew in every operation by the volumes of munitions we consume. We ‘update’ the models following each operation, go for procurement on the basis of new models, and then we are surprised anew in the consecutive operation ... the recurrent failure of munitions’ consumption modelling made us think that the problem possibly arises from our inability to monitor and control the volume of munitions’ consumed during fighting ... accordingly [we] established a centralized munitions management program and still it seems that every operation requires larger volumes of munitions than demanded and forecast before it.130

Conclusion: The next IDF campaign

The IDF was originally instructed to secure three interrelated objectives: early warning of pending attack, deterrence, and clear military decision in war. In hindsight, the wisdom of the original Israeli strategic analysis proved rewarding. The objectives of achieving warning, deterrence, and decision, guided the IDF well. Over time, Israel’s national strategy and military doctrine achieved their goals. However, the strategy and doctrine were tailored for a context of interstate conflict whereas the rise of non-state actors and “new” conflicts challenged the utility of both. Military decision proved elusive as asymmetric enemies had no clear centres of gravity, and problematic considering that it would provide favourable post-war operational environment for asymmetric enemies. Likewise, deterrence had also become harder to achieve in the absence of decisive military victory and since the enemies had limited accountability to their citizens. Last, early warning become secondary and less achievable because “new” enemies did not pose existential threat and campaigns seemed to have started erratically.
Armies, the IDF included, seem to learn best following perceived failures. In terms of the IDF’s observations, and even more so those of Israeli society and politicians, the IDF has not properly met expectations since 1973—perhaps with the exception of operation Defensive Wall (2002) and its aftermath. Between 1982 and 2006, the IDF command also learned that the three pillars of its doctrine have lost relevance in the “new operational environment.” In consecutive campaigns, the command heuristically addressed the shortcomings of the original doctrine, as officers developed a formula to address the emerging asymmetric predicament. Shortly after the 2006 war—the most formative experience since 1973—(res.) Col. Tira, suggested that fighting the Hezbollah again “could only be ... implemented instantly, swiftly, and with full IDF power ... [utilizing] maximum friction and military force—in all their forms.”131 Indeed, while Israelis were shaken by their (inaccurate) perception that the IDF ‘did not deliver’ in 2006, they nevertheless marvelled at the disproportional destruction of the Hezbollah Dahieh quarter of Beirut.132 In retrospect, the doctrinaire shift since 2006 indeed seems clear.

Yet, for disproportional response to be effective, the object of operations had to be responsive to pain. Asymmetric enemies, however, seem the least amenable to both direct military and subsequent social coercion. Hence the IDF search for addressees receptive to disproportional response and its conclusion that attacks should be directed at infrastructure targets and, when possible, states, as they are by definition accountable for the population’s suffering. In fact, CGS Halutz had recommended such a strategic approach already in 2006, though his proposal was declined. In 2008 General Eiland simply rephrased Halutz’ recommendation, as relevant for future conflicts:

There is one way to prevent the Third Lebanon War and win it if it does break out … make it clear to Lebanon’s allies and through them to the Lebanese government and people that the next war will be between Israel and Lebanon and not between Israel and Hizbollah. Such a war will lead to the elimination of the Lebanese military, the destruction of the national infrastructure, and intense suffering among the population. There will be no recurrence of the situation where Beirut residents (not including the Dahiya quarter) go to the beach and cafes while Haifa residents sit in bomb shelters. Serious damage to the Republic of Lebanon, the destruction of homes and infrastructure, and the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people are consequences that can influence Hizbollah’s behavior more than anything else.133

Across the board, the IDF command reiterated the same message, if in different versions. In July 2012, Brig. Gen. Herzi Halevi (commanding as a Maj. Gen. the
Southern Command as of 2018), told journalists: “Lebanon will sustain greater damage than that done during the Second Lebanon War ... the response will need to be sharper, harder, and in some ways very violent ... Without the use of great force, we will find it difficult to achieve our aim....”134 During operation Protective Edge, Haaretz military correspondent, Harel, wrote that should “another war with Hezbollah ... irrupt, the firepower Israel used in the (Gaza) Strip, would look minor in comparison to the force that would be used in Lebanon. The whole war would start at a much higher level and no one would discuss warning signals or ‘real estate attacks’ on empty offices....”135 In late 2014, echoing the Eisenkot’s Dahiya doctrine, the IAF Commander, Eshel, suggested that a future war in Lebanon “would not be as sterile as [Operation Protective Edge] in Gaza. Hezbollah chose to operate its weapons from towns and villages, and we speak of large volumes that would require us to behave differently in the offense and the defence ... it will be entirely different and would necessitate a much larger and more aggressive application of force.”136 Shortly before these words, IAF Chief of Staff, Norkin (IAF Commander, 2017- ), submitted that since 2014 the IAF has been building “deeper strike capability against terror infrastructure” and was preoccupied with buying “large volumes of munitions.”137 More recently, CGS Eisenkot made clear that “in a future war the address would be obvious: the state of Lebanon and organizations acting with its consent and authorization.”138 In the case of Lebanon, alongside disproportional response, one should expect also a defensively motivated penetrating ground manoeuvre seeking to destroy Hezbollah’s short range rocket and mortar capabilities. By definition, such manoeuvre will be backed by close combat support and consequently enhance destruction of inhabited areas. As the Ground Forces Commander, General Barak submitted: “next time we will have to manoeuvre at high speed, because the magnitude of the [enemy] challenge applied to the Israeli rear will be enormous ... the manoeuvre will be launched strongly and quickly, with all force.”139 He added that “anyone who thinks that the next war will be clean … is wrong. In essence, war does not change: friction, power, fear, the wounded and the dead.”140

War with Gaza is not expected to be different, except for the absence of deep penetrating ground manoeuvre. The IDF Southern Command has already established, as a lesson from 2014, a fire centre designed to monitor Gaza continuously and supply targets in the event of war. The officer in command submitted that his subordinates “plan Operation Protective Edge II”, adding that “one of our lessons from the past is that, should we not prepare the fire operation in advance, it would be very complex
and difficult to locate targets when we get to an operation … the preparation stage mainly involves the building of a bank of targets.... The second thing we have done here … [is] the whole issue of interoperability.”

All in all, then, the doctrine of disproportional response has won over the IDF at all levels of engagement with asymmetric enemies. In March 2017, CGS, Eisenkot told the Knesset that “the IDF has run, since Protective Edge, a policy of offensive force operation … in some components, disproportional, so as to prevent a reality where they fire a rocket and we fire a shell.” Hence, due to the murky nature of the battlefield and the IDF's doctrinaire approach, future campaigns are expected to take a great toll on the uninvolved population. Three months before Operation Protective Edge, the IDF Advocate General, Maj. Gen. Efroni, submitted that while “[t]he IDF will continue to observe the laws of armed conflict… *it cannot ensure that collateral damage ... will consistently remain as low as it was during Operation Pillar of Defense.*” By implication, it seems that the IDF assesses that while its offense would hit enemy civilians ever more harshly, it can do so in compliance with international law and thus preserve legitimacy. From the IDF perspective, the doctrine of disproportional response has been improved, if not perfected. Importantly, the doctrinaire change may have significant consequences elsewhere. Having been repeatedly involved in combat and considered innovative, the IDF has become a reference for other, mainly Western, armies. By implication, the message for civilian caught in asymmetric battlefields in and outside the Middle Eastern conflict zone, is grim. Battlefield asymmetry generates disproportional response and the entrapped civilians are hostages and instruments of all belligerents.
NOTES


3 By AMAN’s account, diffused understanding of the nature of intelligence requirements in asymmetric conflicts had been forming for over two decades before it accelerated as a result of the 2006 War. Yet, a major methodical effort to define the “changes in the strategic environment” and their implications for intelligence work, was initiated only four years later (2010-2011) and applied after two more years (2013). Maj. Gen. Aviv Kochavi and Col. Eran Ortal, “‘AMAN Deed’: Permanent Change in Changing Reality” Between the Poles 2 (July 2014), pp. 12, 16, 18, & 34.


6 The Chief Editor, Col. Eran Ortal, “Prologue” Between the Poles 1 (February 2014).


17 For example, (res.) Col. Wagman, “Why the IDF Has Hard Time to Win?” Maarachot 419 (June 2008), p. 11.


20 One should note the impact on doctrine, particularly during CGS Yaalon’s tenure and until after the 2006 War, of (res.) Brig. Gen. Dr. Shimon Naveh and his small team in the “Operational Theory Research Institute” (OTRI, est. 1995)
23 Ibid.
25 The ‘new’ asymmetric urban battlefield was the subject of INSS simulation. See Gabriel Siboni, “Challenges of Warfare in Densely Populated Areas” Military & Strategic Affairs 5: Special Issue (April 2014), pp. 5-9.
32 Lish, “These are not the Targets,” p. 57.
39 Noam Neuman (Head of the IDF’s International Law Division), “Lawfare: Threats and Opportunities” Maarachot 449 (June 2013), p. 18, 19.
41 See http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf.


50 IDF Strategy, particularly p. 17 (article 17. H), p. 19 (article 22); and p. 21 (Article 34).


57 See The Author.


63 Haliva, “‘More of the Same’”, p. 17.
67 Ibid. [Italics added].
68 Bazak, “Responding to the Need for International Legitimacy,” p. 7.
72 Segal, “How to Win Against Revolutionary Forces,” p. 44.
73 Zigdon, “Much Firepower, Little Thinking,” p. 46.
74 The Author
80 Quoted in Ephraim Lavie, “Israel’s Coping with the al-Aqsa Intifada: A Critical Review” Strategic Assessment 13:3 (October 2010), p. 111, from Ben Caspit, Maariv, 2 January 2004 [italic added].
81 Rave, “Awareness and Existence,” p. 68.
84 Ibid.
85 For example, Bazak, “The Forming Factors in the IDF Force Build-up,” p. 79.
86 For example, General Haliva in “‘More of the Same’,” p. 13.
87 Liad Bareket, Anat Voshler, and Noam Keren, IAFJ 135 (1 October 2000).
91 For example, Tira, “Israel’s Second War Doctrine,” p. 155; and Brig. Gen. Oren Abman, “The Transition to Warfare from Routine and Current Security” Maarachot 441 (February 2012), pp. 15, 21
92 For example, Kochavi and Ortal, “‘AMAN Deed’,” p. 11.

94 See (res.) General Isaac Ben-Israel, “Technology and Decision – Contemplating the IDF in the Wake of Kosovo” Maarachot 371 (July 2000), p. 35.


98 Ibid. p. 10.


101 Halutz, “The Second Lebanon War,” p. 64 [Italics added]. In the Hebrew version Halutz’s term was “the landlord went crazy” rather than “act outrageously.”

102 Amidror, “The War Principles in Asymmetric Conflict,” p. 11 [Italics added].


109 Siboni, “Disproportionate Force” [italics added].


111 Brig. Gen. Eyal Zamir, “Moral Warfare on Terror” Maarachot 414 (September 2007), p. 35, see also p. 34.


115. Ibid. p. 23.


119. Ibid. p. 48.

120. Ortal, “‘Cast Lead’—Lessons for the Perception of Operation,” p. 27.


122. Ibid.


Ibid.


Efroni, “Challenges Posed by International Law,” p. 83 [italics added]. [HV, pp. 64-65]

The Author

Ibid.

The Author