

How Israel's Military Doctrines Have Changed

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On July 12, 2006, following rocket attacks on Israeli territory, Hezbollah sent a commando into Israel, killing eight soldiers and kidnapping 11 others. Despite the fact that Hezbollah was a member of the Lebanese government, and the military involvement of Iran, which supplied heavy weapons and soldiers from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, this attack triggered a military response that lasted 33 days.

The attack came at a time when the Israeli army had been conducting Operation Summer Rains against Hamas militants, starting on June 28, 2006. This had followed the kidnapping of the French Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit as well as the rocket attacks that had targeted the town of Ashkelon. The hostage was released in October 2011 in exchange for a thousand Palestinian prisoners, most of them Hamas military officials.

These two operations seem to have served as a dress rehearsal for the October 7 Pogrom. But amnesia, a certain form of arrogance, and the weakening of Israeli power in conflict with its civil society, had made us forget the lessons of 2006.

Israel wanted to avoid being drawn into a dynamic of permanent attrition on its northern border, similar to that along the border with the Gaza Strip. At the same time, they were preparing for a large-scale conflict, both in the north and in the Gaza Strip. Both challenges could be overcome by adopting the principle of a "disproportionate" strike against the enemy's weak points, while neutralizing the enemy's missile-launching capabilities.

In the event of the outbreak of hostilities, Tsahal was to act immediately, decisively and with exceptional force in relation to the enemy's actions and the threat it posed. Such a response was intended to inflict damage to an extent that would require a lengthy and costly reconstruction process. The strike had to be carried out as quickly as possible, prioritizing the destruction of assets over the search for individual launchers, targeting decision-makers and the powerful elite. In Syria this meant targeting the Syrian army, the Syrian regime, and the Syrian state structure. In Lebanon this referred to Hezbollah's military capabilities, the economic interests, and power centers which support the organization.

Israel did not wish to be drawn into a war of attrition with Hezbollah, and therefore did not wish to limit its response to actions in response to an isolated incident. On the contrary, it needed to make it very clear that the State of Israel would not accept any attempt at destabilization along its borders, but also had to be prepared for deterioration and escalation, as well as large-scale confrontation.

This approach also applied to the Gaza Strip, by hitting Hamas hard and refraining from playing cat-and-mouse with the Al Qassam brigades' rocket launchers by imposing a ceasefire on the enemy.

After days of hesitation, marked by stupefaction and anger, three operations now seem to be led by the war cabinet, more or less in agreement with the General Staff and the civilian and military intelligence services.

Operation Nily "Netzach Israel Lo Yeshaker" (The Eternal One of Israel does not lie, named after a Jewish espionage network which had supported the United Kingdom in its struggle against the Ottoman Empire in Palestine from 1915 to 1917, and whose aim is to physically eliminate the masterminds and perpetrators of the October 7th massacre, on the model of the hunt for Nazi criminals or Operation "Wrath of God" against the Munich hostage-takers in 1972) began with a single (provisional?) obligation not to intervene in Qatar.

Operation Amalek: an operation that was named after an enemy people of Israel, defeated by Joshua. According to the Bible, they were always fierce against the Hebrews, who regarded them as a cursed people. God ordered King Saul to exterminate them. After their defeat, he forgave Agag, their king, but his disobedience caused him to lose his crown. He was succeeded by David. The current operation is characterized by a methodical invasion of northern Gaza, with concentric movements and incursions. The question of intervention south of the Wadi Gaza still remains.

Operation Dahiya: named after the southern Shiite district of Beirut, Dahieh Janoubiyé, which was home to a Hezbollah stronghold before being razed to the ground by Israeli aircraft in 2006. It also reminds Muslims of the 10th of the month of Dzul hijja, celebrating one of Islam's greatest feasts, marked by the offering of "bloody victims". These sacrifices are known as dahaya, "immolation".

The doctrine of the same name was formulated by Israeli General Gadi Eizenkot, commander of Tsahal's northern front, in an interview with Reuters: "What happened to the Dahiya neighborhood will happen to all the villages that serve as a base for fire against Israel. [...] We will use disproportionate force [on these areas] and cause great damage and destruction. From our point of view, these are not civilian villages, but military bases. [...] This is not a recommendation, but a plan, and it has been approved. [...] Attacking the population is the only way to hold back Nasrallah".¹

1 Reuters, le 03 octobre 2008.

In the familiar fog of war, and its uncertain and often “flexible” laws, Israel is responding at the cost of high civilian and military casualties to a major and barbaric aggression. But it has not yet found the post-war mechanism. Quite the contrary, in fact.

Using mechanisms invented over fifteen years ago and which failed to prevent the 7th of October, Israel is avenging its dead in the same way that France, America, and Great Britain avenged theirs after the Bataclan or Nice, or 11/09...

Curiously, negotiations for the release of the hostages seem to be progressing in this context because, much to the chagrin of Westerners and their dominant cultural assumptions, both sides are speaking the same language, that of force.

But when the collateral damage far outweighs the main objective, when the time for vengeance has passed, what room is there for justice and peace to be built?

After all, we must save the main target - the Abrahamic Accords - from the great architect of these operations, Iran.

And allow the Palestinians to find a homeland, a state, and a reason to break out of the cycle of despair and hatred.

