

# The Changing Threat

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The purpose of this conference is to try to understand the changes in the threat against the State of Israel that have taken place in recent years, and to examine the components of the optimal response to the threat. Today's seminar is organized within the framework of the INSS Military and Strategic Affairs Program, which aims to enhance the public discourse on subjects relevant to this discipline through conferences and the *Military and Strategic Affairs* journal.

The Second Lebanon War brought a complex reality to light. Israel, well trained for confrontations with conventional armed forces, found itself confronting organizations employing terrorist tactics on a large scale, their main tool being high trajectory fire of growing quantity, intensity, and precision. The change in the threat places several challenges before Israel, including:

- a. The enemy's use of civilians in order to defend its capability to continue launching high trajectory fire at Israel.
- b. The enemy's attempt to assimilate into the civilian population, thereby – in its perspective – making it difficult for the IDF to operate efficiently in order to damage its launching and fighting capabilities.
- c. The enemy's growing use of the international court system in order to minimize the IDF's freedom of operation to the highest extent possible and to damage the political legitimacy of the State of Israel.

These are significant challenges, requiring an inclusive, interdisciplinary security response, in which the military component is only one of several coping mechanisms.

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This threat developed in light of several trends, the first being the construction of a comprehensive response to the conventional political threat. The State of Israel succeeded in constructing a reasonable military response to the classical military threat, reflected in the use of large, maneuvering military frameworks. As a result, the enemy, which refuses to accept the existence of the State of Israel, began to seek alternative measures, one of which was the transition to a strategy designed to exhaust the citizenry and damage the state's political and legal legitimacy. Widespread use of high trajectory fire towards population centers in Israel has been the major tool for implementation of this strategy.

The second trend is the threat developed in light of the essential change in recent years in the State of Israel's security concept. Although Israel's security strategy is defensive, Israel over the years employed a military policy of offense to deny the development of the terrorist organizations' threat. This offensive approach kept the threat of terrorism under control. For example, when the fedayeen threat arose, the IDF developed an offensive approach based on retaliation, which precluded growth of the threat to major proportions. Similarly, when the terrorist organizations were expelled from Jordan in September 1970 and moved to Lebanon, the IDF developed a doctrine of offensive fighting. This was based on planned sequential operations against the terrorist organizations in Lebanon. These offensives succeeded in suppressing terrorism to a tolerable level and kept it from spiraling out of control.

While the offensive approach created a difficult reality for border settlements, its advantage lay in reducing the scope of the threat and maintaining it at a low level. The threat started to accelerate only once Israel abandoned the offensive approach and transitioned to a containment policy. Over the years this policy allowed the terrorist organizations to develop unhindered, and indeed, Hizbollah armed itself with many launching means. In the Second Lebanon War, Israel decided to abandon the policy of containment and was then forced to cope with a severe threat that had sprouted freely. By this point, not only were Israel's border settlements in the line of fire: the majority of the citizens of the state were exposed to the threat of high trajectory fire. Now that the new reality has been internalized, Israel must identify the optimal response to this threat. The essays in this volume deliberate the best ways of providing such a response.

Israel must currently tackle two types of threats: the physical and the legal/political. As for the physical threat, David Ben-Gurion laid the foundations for Israel's security concept on the assumption that Israel was not capable of ending the conflict using military means and therefore had to operate with a defensive strategy whose single objective was maintaining and fortifying the state's existence. Ben-Gurion found that the best way to implement this strategy was by deterring the enemy from using force against Israel. However, once deterrence failed and Israel was attacked, the IDF would have to achieve two main objectives.

The first and primary objective was to extend the periods between the rounds of confrontation. As long as the enemy refused to accept the existence of the State of Israel, every confrontation would be followed by another. Therefore, the supreme goal of the IDF was to create sufficient deterrence after every round of confrontation, which would enable postponement of the next round of fighting. The second (and secondary) objective was to reduce the length of each round of fighting and therefore, the damage caused. In other words, once a confrontation was forced on Israel, the IDF would have to find ways to minimize its duration and damages. This would allow the nation to return to its routine quickly and take better advantage of the period of calm to develop and fortify the state.

The question to be asked then is: what tools are available to the IDF to fulfill these objectives? Due to the large number of enemy launchers and the large amount of ammunition dispersed over wide areas, it is hard to see how the IDF could completely end enemy fire by attacking the launchers. Therefore, joint action containing four components – two offensive and two defensive – is necessary.

The first offensive component is destructive fire designed to render a severe blow to the enemy – both its military capabilities and its state or organizational infrastructure supporting its fighting effort. In the case of Lebanon, in addition to attacking Hizbollah, the state's infrastructures must also be attacked in order to leave the enemy with a clear, long memory of the damage it caused and postpone its next action by many years. Such a blow must leave the enemy with cumulative damages that require years of reconstruction. The second offensive component is the ground maneuver and the use of precision fire in order to reduce the scope of enemy fire against Israel. A decisive, rapid maneuver of major force would result in the conquest of territory from which the enemy

operates and thereby end the launchings and destroy the launchers and the combat infrastructure in these areas. Furthermore, the use of precision fire would damage launch capabilities before and after use.

The first defensive component is an active defense capability for intercepting launches. This is a supplementary component that can be operated to defend systems critical to the IDF's war effort and as defense of important national infrastructures whose survival is critical to the functioning of the state. One must not be under any illusions that this defensive component can supply a comprehensive defense against every enemy launch. The citizens must understand that launches will continue until the last day of the fighting and they will be required to defend themselves to the greatest extent possible against this sort of attack. Second, the state is required to develop capabilities to minimize as much as possible the damage to the quality of life on the civilian front during the time of a confrontation. Meir Elran of INSS has demonstrated the progress Israel has made in this area and has shown the need to continue to develop this critical component as a part of the overall response.

The second intifada and its aftermath, the Second Lebanon War, and Operation Cast Lead are all landmarks in the development of an appropriate response. Even if not all the layers of the response were implemented, the IDF has achieved cumulative success in the struggle against the resistance movement. The security response continues to develop, in terms of both its offensive and defensive components, and this development can enhance the cumulative success. In contrast, no systematic response to the legal/political threat has been formulated to date. There is a growing understanding that the physical and the legal/political threats are interwoven and together represent one integrated enemy effort.

The enemy's doctrine of war is to drag the IDF into fighting in the crowded civilian sphere in order to increase the number of civilian casualties. While the fighting is underway and even more so afterwards, the supporters can thereby act globally and invoke various legal means in order to accuse IDF soldiers of war crimes and thus continue the battle through alternative means. That is to say, the legal campaign must be viewed as an inherent, integral part of the military campaign, so that it is necessary to plan the legal campaign as part of the IDF's operational planning. The integration of legal consultants into the fighting force is

insufficient and cannot provide such a comprehensive response. It is the duty of the security establishment to develop a comprehensive doctrine of war to deal with this issue.

The legal/political threat cannot be the sole responsibility of the security establishment. It is necessary to enlist all the resources of the Jewish people and its friends in Israel and abroad in order to formulate the action that must be taken on the political front. Part of this action is the need to formulate and assimilate up-to-date analyses of the rules of war and to work systematically with decision makers all over the world who are familiar with enemy attacks in this field.