Israel's Wars of Attrition

Attrition challenges to democratic states

Avi Kober

Middle Eastern Military Studies

Israel's Wars of Attrition

This book analyzes the way Israel has coped with nine wars of attrition from the 1950s to the recent Second Lebanon War (2006), questioning the belief that Western democracy cannot sustain prolonged wars of attrition.

Challenging Israel with attrition has been compatible with the "Arab way of war," which emphasizes staying power, and with the belief that democracies cannot tolerate wars of attrition, either economically or psychologically. Israel for its part developed a self-image of incapacity to sustain prolonged wars, committing itself to a traditional offensive approach to *blitzkrieg*, whenever possible. The book offers an account of nine wars of attrition that Israel was involved in over almost 60 years, from Palestinian infiltration and *fedayeen* activities against Israel in the early 1950s, through to the Second Lebanon War in 2006. The author uses these cases to challenge the myth that Israel cannot afford to become involved in a draining war of attrition.

Focusing on central aspects typical of Western democracies engaged in wars of attrition: operational effectiveness; the societal staying power; the economic burden of the war; moral dilemmas; and conflict management problems – the book challenges the myth that Israel cannot afford to become involved in a draining war of attrition, while at the same time highlighting the fact that in its wars of attrition Israel has not always succeeded in avoiding undesired escalation.

This book will be of much interest to students of strategic studies, Israeli history, Middle Eastern politics, and security studies in general.

Avi Kober is a member of the Department of Political Studies at Bar Ilan University, Israel and is a Senior Research Associate with the BESA Center for Strategic Studies.

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Contents

Preface
Acknowledgments
Introduction
1 Attrition in modern and post-modern war
2 Israeli attrition aversion and the emergence of Israeli attrition conception
3 The operational aspect: the role played by offense and defense
4 Societal staying power
5 Economic sustainability
6 Fighting with one hand tied behind the back: bridging morality and effectiveness
7 Beyond staying power: escalation, deterrence, and war outcomes
Conclusion
Notes
Bibliography
Index

Preface

This book deals with the most important question of contemporary military strategy: how can democratic states fight protracted wars of attrition. For as advanced societies have either settled disputes or become too wary of the weariness of inter-state conflict, a new type of warfare has arisen called asymmetric in which a weaker, often ideologically motivated, side uses that fact to seek victory.

One of the main ways it does so is to deny the stronger side victory, in contrast to all earlier wars, by simply refusing to surrender or stop fighting no matter what the cost. Appeals to the conscience of the adversary, the use of its own civilian population as shields and martyrs, and manipulation of international media and public opinion are among the techniques in this strategic equivalent of judo.

Apparent experience has shown us the dominant thinking on this issue has tended to become that developed societies cannot long stand such wars of attrition – including wars involving the systematic use of terrorism by the other side – and therefore must lose them. The idea is that Western or developed societies are unwilling to pay the price – in cost, casualties, and stress to moral principles – that sustaining and winning such a war requires.

Avi Kober, however, takes the case of Israel to show that this is not the case. He points out that the economic cost of such wars is small given not only the overall fiscal strength of Western democracies but also compared to the cost of alternatives. Moreover, while the strategies of weaker parties employing asymmetric techniques try to take advantage of their technological inferiority, the use of proper technology by the stronger side – which is also stronger in its ability to develop and deploy more advanced methods – can also turn the tide.

Despite self-criticism, indeed perhaps in large part due to reforms and revisions of behavior built on self-criticism, Israel has adjusted to this situation. That this is no abstract question can be seen by the fact that both the war with Hezbollah in 2006 and that with Hamas in 2009 hinged on precisely these matters.

By examining Israel's experience with several such wars and long-term conflicts, Professor Kober points out lessons of the greatest value and immediacy. Consequently, this book is an important contribution not only to the academic literature on modern strategy and military history but also of the greatest practical importance. It is a welcome addition to our series on strategic issues in the modern Middle East.

Barry Rubin, series editor

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Introduction

This book uses Israel as a critical case for questioning the belief that Western democracy cannot sustain prolonged wars of attrition. The book refutes the commonly held myth that Israel's ability to withstand the price of attrition in terms of casualties and damage to the economy and society was clearly much lower than that of its enemies, and that Israel proved to be operationally inefficient and failed to live up to Western ethical standards when conducting wars of attrition, particularly in their low-intensity form.

Attrition has played a major role in modern and post-modern war,[1] as a result of two major developments: the pervasiveness of asymmetrical low-intensity conflicts (LICs), and the ascendancy of firepower over maneuver. In LICs non-state players possessing capabilities weaker than their opponents often employ attrition as a force multiplier against their stronger adversaries. The ascendancy of firepower has posed constraints on the stronger side's ability to apply *blitzkrieg* and even "regular" war, on the one hand, placing new capabilities at the weaker side's disposal for attacking the stronger side's civilian rear and military, on the other.

Different aspects of attrition have been addressed and analyzed in the literature. There is a significant body of theoretical discussion of the phenomenon of attrition by modern military thinkers – Carl von Clausewitz, Hans Delbrück, Basil H. Liddell Hart, twentieth century guerrilla thinkers (e.g., Mao Tse-tung, Vo Nguyen Giap, Che Guevara, Lawrence of Arabia, Regis Debray) and counter- insurgency doctrinaires and planners (e.g., Robert Thompson, Roger Trinquier)[2] – each reflecting the particular nature of attrition in his own time and his country's strategic circumstances. The more recent literature on LICs (e.g., Martin Van Creveld), Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW) (e.g., Thomas Hammes, William Lind), Complex Irregular Warfare (e.g., Frank Hoffman, Jeffrey White), Hybrid War (James Mattis and Frank Hoffman), and war weariness (e.g., David Garnham, Jeffrey Pickering, Jack Levy and Clifton Morgan)[3] – have all preoccupied themselves with Western democracies' ability to cope with LIC challenges, in which attrition plays a major role. Surprisingly, though, no comprehensive discussion of this important, pervasive, dynamic and nuanced phenomenon has ever been offered. Chapter 1 addresses the theory of attrition and undertakes to fill this void.

Are Western democracies really that vulnerable and sensitive when it comes to wars of attrition? After World War II, in particular, such wars have been perceived as an undesired type of war from the stronger side's point of view. The classical explanation for the latter's difficulties with it, particularly in its asymmetrical form, stressed the stronger side's inferiority in the balance of interests and the balance of resolve, its short-handedness in coping with guerrilla and terror challenges despite its conventional military power, and Western democracies' value constraints and lower societal staying power. This is why the stronger side, particularly Western democracies, almost never chose attrition as a preferred strategy.

This hypothesis can easily be challenged. As the book's theoretical chapter points out, empirical tests have shown that in today's reality of war, such players no longer necessarily suffer from these fatal weaknesses, and may rather enjoy greater sustainability in wars of attrition. As terror has become a major threat for a stronger side's society to the point of creating a sense of existential challenge, which usually brings about societal solidarity and perseverance, the stronger side can demonstrate greater staying power. As Western democracies engaged in asymmetrical wars of attrition seem to have found the way to bridge operational effectiveness

and morality by adopting a "post-heroic" policy, thereby easing domestic and external legitimacy pressures, particularly in cases where the stakes involved are not sufficiently high, they can enjoy stronger sustainability in wars of attrition. As the economies of Western democracies are both relatively prosperous and decentralized, the economic burden of wars of attrition tends to be limited and they cannot be expected to collapse even after 9/11-like blows on economic centers of gravity. Moreover, despite the fact that the weaker side is now also playing on the technological playground, which constitutes a new challenge for the stronger side's traditional technological edge, technology also opens up new opportunities for coping with terror challenges. All these factors compensate for vulnerability resulting from the protracted nature of wars of attrition and the delay between the commitment of armed forces and victory.[4]

At the same time, the weaker side's traditional vulnerabilities have not disappeared, and can still work in the stronger side's favor. For example, the more the nonstate player using attrition is committed to the well-being of its society and the more its military force and political and social agencies institutionalize, the more the weaker side has to lose and the easier it becomes for the stronger side to cripple its military and political power, and vice versa. Also, the stronger the interest of the government from whose territory insurgents operate to stop their activity, the more stable that government is and the tighter its control of the country's territory, the more constrained the insurgents become, and vice versa. The gap between successful conflict management and political gains has not yet been bridged, though.

The focus of the book is Israel's wars of attrition. Much has been published on Israel's *blitzkriegs* and "regular" wars, or particular wars of attrition, but no systematic comprehensive and comparative research has been conducted on its wars of attrition until now. Unlike its *blitzkriegs* (1956, 1967 and even 1982 – if one does not count the years between 1982 and the withdrawal from Lebanon), Israel neither initiated its non- *blitzkrieg* wars (1948, 1973) nor its wars of attrition. Having attributed to Israel difficulty in sustaining protracted wars of attrition, the Arabs in general and the Palestinians and Hezbollah in particular have often tried to impose such wars on Israel (e.g., 1969–70, post-1973, 1985–2000). Challenging Israel with attrition has been compatible with the so-called Arab way of war, which emphasizes staying power, and with the belief that democracies cannot tolerate wars of attrition, either economically or psychologically.

Israel, for its part, developed a self-image of incapacity to sustain prolonged wars, committing itself, as part of its traditional offensive approach, to *blitzkrieg*, if possible. Israeli security and military architects held the view that Israel's ability to withstand the price of a war of attrition in terms of both casualties and damage to the economy and society was clearly much lower than that of its enemies. In a series of declarations throughout the years, the Israeli political and military elite expressed its attrition aversion (see Chapter 2). For example, "Should war start again in the future, we should not base our war effort on staying power and defense" (General David Elazar, in the 1970s);[5] "We are not built for a war of attrition" (former Defense Minister Moshe Arens in referring to the Second Intifada);[6] "[Hezbollah is trying to drag Israel into a war of attrition, whereas Israel prefers] a short and forceful war" (Chief of Staff Dan Halutz in July 2006).[7] *Blitzkrieg*, on the other hand, was believed to enable the country to return to regular day-to-day life as quickly as possible, minimize military and civilian casualties, diminish the likelihood of superpower intervention, and preempt the arrival of Arab expeditionary forces in the battlefield to fight alongside the direct confrontation states.

A significant shift occurred, for the first time, during the early stages of the First Intifada of 1987, when Israel understood that the challenge could not be dealt with in one attempt, but rather

via a cumulative process of physical and economic exhaustion. Israel acknowledged the need to be prepared for attrition, although the preference of Israeli politicians, senior commanders, and the general public was towards *blitzkrieg*-style confrontations.

The book offers an account of the nine wars of attrition Israel has been involved in throughout almost 60 years, from the 1950s to the 2006 Second Lebanon War: Palestinian infiltration and *fedayeen* activities against Israel in the early 1950s; the Israel–Syria and Israeli–Palestinian pre-1967 conflicts; the post-1967 attrition in the Jordan Valley and the so-called war of attrition between Israel and Egypt; the post-1973 war against Egypt and Syria until the signing of the separation of forces agreements; the 1965–82 Israeli–Palestinian war on the Lebanese front; the Israel–Hezbollah war until the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, 1985–2000; the First Intifada, 1987–93; the Second Intifada, 2000–04; and the 2006 Second Lebanon War. All of these wars lasted between five weeks and a few years. Most of them were asymmetrical LICs, reflecting the shifting focus from HICs to LICs in war in general and in the Arab–Israeli conflict in particular, but some were of inter-state, symmetrical nature – the Israel–Syria war of attrition in the early 1960s, the 1969–70 Israeli–Egyptian war of attrition, and the post- 1973 war of attrition. Some were initiated by the Arabs, whereas others just developed by themselves (e.g., in the 1960s, the 1970s, the two Intifadas, and the 2006 Second Lebanon War), but were taken advantage of by the Arabs as a means of weakening Israel.

The book refutes Israel's own doubts and apprehensions regarding its ability to cope with attrition challenges. Israel repeatedly demonstrated a high degree of staying power in attrition situations. On the other hand, it also points to the fact that in its wars of attrition Israel did not always succeed in avoiding undesired escalation, deterring the enemy, and imposing its will on the enemy. Focusing on central aspects typical of Western democracies engaged in wars of attrition – operational effectiveness; the societal staying power; the economic burden of the war; moral dilemmas; and conflict management problems – the book answers two main questions: What are the explanations for Israel's successes in sustaining its wars of attrition, and what are the explanations for the conflict management difficulties it faced during these wars and the difficulty in ending them with favorable political outcomes?

The answer the book offers for the first question is fourfold: first, given Israel's attrition aversion, most of its wars of attrition were imposed on it, therefore almost never instigating a significant public debate regarding their legitimacy. The higher the stakes involved (e.g., the perceived existential threat during the Second Intifada), the higher the tolerance demonstrated by the Israeli society. The cost in terms of losses and quality of life was mitigated by the moderate economic cost inflicted as well as by the fact that the death toll was usually relatively limited. The more remote the attrition activity from the country's population centers and the greater the share of the lower classes among the periphery's inhabitants and in combat units, the less severely the threat was perceived by the Israeli society. Finally, the existence of a national unity government during the war of attrition of the late 1970s as well as during the First Intifada eased frictions within Israeli society and created a strong sense of solidarity.

Second, the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) cult of the offensive notwithstanding, in its wars of attrition, unlike its "regular" wars, it implemented a more balanced, offensive/defensive strategy, as required by the nature of wars of attrition. This mixed strategy strengthened its operational effectiveness in dealing with attrition challenges. During the Intifadas in particular, the conflict dictated the use of measures that did not belong to the domain of offense or defense in the strict military sense.

Third, many of the economic difficulties Israel faced during its wars of attrition were reflective

of a global economic downturn, arms races with the Arab states, or lack of gross national product (GNP) growth rather than attrition challenges. Drawing on existing resources and stockpiles rather than requiring new ones, Israel's wars of attrition entailed relatively low defense expenditures. Since the mid-1970s, a combination of economic growth, the peace process, American foreign aid, and other positive developments in Israel's strategic environment, such as the Iran–Iraq War, economic crisis in Syria during the 1980s, or the end of the Cold War – accounted for the decline in Israeli defense expenditures' share in GNP or gross domestic product (GDP), despite the fact that Israel was still challenged by Palestinian and Hezbollah terror in the territories and from Lebanon.

Fourth, since the late 1970s, Israel has been mobilizing technology (e.g., firepower, precision-guided munitions [PGMs], non-lethal weapons, information technology) in order to combine operational effectiveness and morality during its wars of attrition. With the exception of the 2006 Second Lebanon War, "post-heroic" conduct of these wars (i.e., avoiding being killed and avoiding the killing of enemy civilians) proved conducive, despite the fact that the enemy fought "heroically."

The answer to the second question regarding the difficulties Israel faced in controlling escalation and deterring its enemies or imposing its will on them is varied. The main reasons for these difficulties include: that in its wars of attrition of LIC nature Israel faced nonstate players; the weakness of Arab (particularly Jordanian and Lebanese) regimes, from whose territory insurgents attacked Israel; inter-Arab commitments that accounted for escalation, as happened with Egypt's assistance to Syria before 1967; and a patron–client relationship between the superpowers and the local players, which sometimes constrained Israel's freedom of action (e.g., Israeli fears from American reaction to their raids in Jordan in the 1960s and in Lebanon in the 1970s, and Soviet intervention on Egypt's side in the 1969–70 war of attrition). It should be noted, though, that in a number of wars of attrition Israel did achieve its war objectives (most of which were of thwarting nature), at least partially, and that vis-à-vis the Palestinians, and to certain extent vis-à-vis Hezbollah, there is a potential of cumulative effect that might develop into long-term Israeli achievements.

Methodology

Classifying war as war of attrition

The term attrition is often referred to as the amount of erosion effected among the forces of warring sides, incorporating losses in terms of both personnel and equipment ("attrition rates" or "attrition ratios"), and exhaustion of will/determination. To one extent or another, however, all wars erode *matériel* and morale. In the above sense, attrition is not a characteristic exclusive to "wars of attrition." What is unique to such wars is that the depletion is gradual in the true sense of erosion: i.e., progressing over a considerable period of time.

Furthermore, characterizing a war as being one of attrition requires that the cumulative nature of erosion over a protracted period be determined the most prominent characteristic of the conflict. The 1948–49 Israeli War of Independence or the 1973 October War had significant elements of attrition, but did not eat away the enemy's capabilities and will "like smoldering

embers,” a Clause-witzian expression.

In this sense, attrition is, to a great extent, the opposite of *blitzkrieg*. Both attrition and *blitzkrieg* can be defined in terms of the ratio between military achievements and time. However, with regard to this ratio they are opposites. *Blitzkrieg* aims at big achievements within an extremely short period. Attrition, on the other hand, to use Clausewitz’s assertion, is about “using the duration of the war to bring about a gradual exhaustion of his physical and moral resistance.”[8] Whereas the notion of quick battlefield decision lies at the center of *blitzkrieg*, in attrition, the name of the game is resilience.

War of attrition is protracted in relative terms. The duration of its protraction varies; it could last years or weeks. Compared to Israel’s *blitzkriegs* of 1956 or 1967, even the shortest war of attrition among the nine case studies analyzed in this book – the 2006 Second Lebanon War – was protracted.

Relevant IR approaches

The research is realistic in its orientation, stressing the players’ interests and capabilities, and assuming rationality. Neo-liberal and constructivist influence, however, is not absent from the analysis. For example, the neo-liberal approach, which stresses domestic influences and the impact of such factors as type of regime and norms, is relevant to the analysis of Western democracies’ way of war. Strategic culture shares with the constructivist approach to IR the focus on the impact ideational factors have on players’ behavior.[9] It has always been a determinant factor in Israel’s decisions and actions in military and security matters. One can easily identify on the Israeli side doubts regarding the ability to withstand attrition and preference for *blitzkrieg*, as opposed to the Arabs’ preference for wars of attrition, as a type of war that puts to the test societal staying power. Israel succeeded in overcoming the cult of the offensive, which had dominated the conduct of its HICs, and in adopting a balanced approach during its wars of attrition. In recent decades it has demonstrated a strong commitment to technology to the point of developing the cult of technology, and to post-heroic norms. These cultural aspects and their impact on the conduct of Israeli wars of attrition are discussed in more length in the relevant chapters of the book.

Measurement/evaluation criteria

In order to measure, or at least evaluate the impact of the factors accounting for success in wars of attrition, the following set of indicators is used.

Operational aspects

The evaluation of the operational aspect of coping with attrition challenges focuses on the relative role played by offensive and defensive measures in wars of attrition. At the same time, however, such evaluation must relate to the effectiveness of measures that do not fall into the category of offense or defense in the strict military sense, which typically characterize popular uprising situations.

Society's staying power

For material attrition two indicators were chosen: 1) Economic performance during wartime. Such performance could be measured by changes in GNP or GDP; level of unemployment; level of inflation; foreign direct investment; stock market performance; changes in the value of the local currency; government defense expenditure; and health of particular sectors of the economy. 2) Casualty rates.

As people under perceived threat can still function, the evaluation of psychological attrition focuses on behavior that may indicate deviation from a normal pattern of social life. To that effect three indicators are used: 1) deviation from former consumption patterns; 2) massive fleeing from homes in areas that have become targets for terrorist attacks; and 3) anti-war protests (demonstrations or conscientious objection) and public pressures on the government to pursue a political settlement that would put an end to the war.

Economic burden

The economic burden is dealt with separately from societal staying power, but is based on the aforementioned economic indicators. Measuring the economic burden of the wars of attrition suffers from the difficulty in measuring the economic burden of war in the territories. Since 1967 Israel has been operating in the territories both against insurgents and in defense of Israeli settlers. Expenditures in the territories are the dark side of the state’s defense budget, however.[10]

Ethical aspects

The ethical aspects are analyzed via legal and moral principles that define the legitimate reasons a state may engage in war (the concept of *jus ad bellum*), particularly the inherent right of self-defense, and the laws and principles a player already involved in war is expected to adhere to (*jus in bello*), particularly discriminate use of force, and proportionality. Another indicator, which is particularly relevant to war on terror, is the extent to which civil liberties are respected.

Conflict management and war outcomes

Conflict management and outcomes are analyzed by using the following criteria: 1) success in escalation control; 2) success in deterring the enemy, either by denial or by punishment; and 3) military and political achievements: battlefield decision, grand-strategic decision, victory (i.e., achieving the war objectives), and long-term achievements.

External validity

A question often asked when a political science researcher analyzes cases from one context – either sub-system/region, conflict, or country – is whether the research also has external validity.

As far as the Israeli case is concerned, the answer seems to be yes. First, it is representative of both Western democratic and high-tech countries waging asymmetrical wars of attrition against weaker enemies. Second, the number, nature and context of the wars of attrition Israel has been engaged in – nine different wars of attrition from the early 1950s to 2006, both during the Cold War and its aftermath, and consisting of asymmetrical, state-to-state and asymmetrical, state–nonstate conflicts – seem to constitute one of the richest experiences in post-World War II international system.

This study does not ignore the fact that although Israel can certainly be considered a Western democracy, it is neither a great power nor a superpower, but rather a small state, which has to be attentive to international constraints, and is greatly affected by patron–client relationships. Israel has also been fighting either in its own territory or in its proximity, which has often accounted for greater determination and mobilization during its wars.

In his book on alliance formation, Stephen Walt referred to the problem arising from the fact that the empirical basis of his theoretical model is composed of a group of cases drawn from one context and one region – the Middle East. The following arguments were put forward by Walt to justify his focus on the Middle East. First, he claimed, the region was of pivotal international, diplomatic, and strategic importance. Second, it provided a large number of cases of diplomatic and military interactions. While the first claim may be methodologically problematic, as the importance of a region does not make it representative, the second claim is indeed of merit.

Sources

The research uses both primary and secondary sources. Although data on the older cases is gradually becoming declassified, and research on Israel's early wars has been conducted and published in recent years, it is still much easier to collect data on the more recent cases, thanks to the myriad information available and accessible in recent decades – books, articles, internet sites and media sources. There is at least one attrition case that has hardly been related to as one of Israel's wars of attrition – the post-1973 war. Therefore it is rarely treated in the literature as such, and is almost always mentioned in relation to or part of the 1973 October War. In 1974 Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin justifiably referred to it as a war of attrition. "[After the Yom Kippur War] wars of attrition continued in the south and the north, and they have ended only with the attainment of the separation of forces agreements."[11]

Structure

The book opens with a theory of attrition, which covers four main aspects: the meaning, types, and characteristics of attrition; attrition as a chosen strategy and as a phenomenon that develops by itself; problems entailed in waging and winning wars of attrition; and the unique challenges Western democracies face while engaged in such wars, and their preferred way of conducting them.

It then turns to the Israeli case, starting with a description of Israel's attrition aversion and its emerging, though rather implicit, attrition strategy. The next chapters deal with operational, societal, economic and ethical aspects of Israeli wars of attrition, and their repercussions. The

concluding chapter points to some lessons that can be learned by Western democracies from the Israeli experience.

1 Attrition in modern and post-modern war

According to Sun Tzu, "there has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited."[1] Under the impression of protracted high-intensity conflicts (HICs) such as World War I, the 1969–70 Egyptian–Israeli war of attrition, and the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq War, in which the gradual exhaustion of moral and material resources was the most prominent characteristic, attrition has been associated in the West with a Goliath- type bloody and ineffective confrontation that is best avoided. Post- World War II attrition-dominated, low-intensity conflicts (LICs) have also earned highly negative connotations on the side of the stronger opponent. Engaged in such conflicts, the strong side often faced difficulty in translating its military power into political gains, which only strengthened the negative image of wars of attrition. The aforesaid does not, however, change the fact that attrition has played a major role in modern and post- modern war, and thus deserves to be treated more respectfully by both theorists and practitioners.

In this chapter, I will put forth the following main arguments. First, wars of attrition are not necessarily less sophisticated than *blitzkrieg* and can, to a great extent, be considered even more modern than *blitzkrieg.*

Second, wars of attrition have adapted quite flexibly to the changes in the nature of war, adjusting their form over the course of the years. Generally, wars of attrition have receded from the actual battlefield and have been transplanted to the civilian rear. They have become a combination of military engagements at the tactical level and confrontation at the grand- strategic level.

Third, although attrition as a strategy typically seems tailor-made to suit the limitations of the side that is militarily and technologically weaker, Western democracies have in recent years demonstrated greater sustainability in wars of attrition thanks to their ability to conduct them "post-heroically," i.e., with minimum casualties both among one's own troops and civilians and enemy civilians, thereby easing domestic and external legitimacy pressures, which is particularly valuable in cases where the stakes involved are not sufficiently high. Attrition as a strategy has also become more offensive than defensive.

Fourth, wars of attrition may also develop by themselves. This may happen as a result of the creation of a state of symmetry in capabilities between the parties due to operational or technological reasons; a state of asymmetry in destructive capability balanced by asymmetry in cost tolerance; or the existence of political constraints, which limit the military's freedom of action.

Fifth, battlefield decision is usually restricted to the tactical level. It is usually outside the actual battlefield, at the grand-strategic level, where wars of attrition are won.

In the ensuing pages I will discuss the meaning of attrition as opposed to *blitzkrieg*; types and characteristics of wars of attrition; attrition as a chosen strategy and as a phenomenon that develops by itself; problems entailed in waging and winning wars of attrition; and the unique challenges faced by Western democracies engaged in such wars and their preferred way of conducting them.

Most of the illustrations presented in this chapter are from the modern and post-modern periods. However, as resorting to attrition was highly popular with strategists during ancient times, and as ancient thinking and practice has inspired modern strategic thinking, I will permit

myself to accompany modern illustrations with references to ancient ones, as well.

Attrition in the literature

Attrition has often been presented in the literature as the opposite of maneuver. According to Richard Simpkin, Ralph Peters, T.V. Paul, Ernest Szabo, John Antal, Robert Leonhard, William Lind, and others, attrition focuses on firepower, destruction of forces and other assets, and connotes positional warfare. Maneuver, on the other hand, stresses movement of forces in a way that would lead to gaining an advantageous position vis-à-vis the enemy.[2] Yehoshafat Harkabi preferred to distinguish between attrition and battlefield decision, implying that in attrition, battlefield decision is irrelevant or unattainable. In this chapter I offer a different distinction, which I believe is more efficient – one between attrition and *blitzkrieg*.

There is a body of theoretical discussion by modern military thinkers of the phenomenon of attrition – Carl von Clausewitz, Hans Delbrück, B.H. Liddell Hart, twentieth century guerrilla thinkers (Mao Tse-tung, Vo Nguyen Giap, Che Guevara, Lawrence of Arabia, Regis Debray, and others) and counter- guerrilla and counter- insurgency doctrinaires and planners (e.g., Robert Thompson, Roger Trinquier)[3] – each reflecting the particular nature of attrition in his own time and his country's strategic circumstances.

Late twentieth and early twenty- first century literature followed in the footsteps of the more traditional works as far as the awareness of the central role played by attrition in war is concerned. The definition of LIC by the US defense establishment points to the protracted nature of such conflict, depicting it as involving "*protracted struggles* of competing principles and ideologies."[4] The so- called Operations Other Than War (OOTW) – to some extent the substitute of LIC as a dominant concept in American military thinking of asymmetric conflicts in the 1990s – confuses traditional missions fulfilled by the military, such as "support for insurgencies and counterinsurgencies," typical of modern LICs, and missions that do not require any combat, ranging from "support to US, state and local governments, disaster relief, nation assistance, and drug interdiction to peacekeeping, noncombatant evacuation, and peace enforcement."[5] It, too, refers to these operations as ones that are often "of *long duration*."[6]

The more recent the literature, the more it pretends to portray "new," even post- modern types of war or warfare that challenge traditional war. The notions of Non-Trinitarian War (Martin Van Creveld), Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW) (e.g., Thomas Hammes, William Lind), Complex Irregular Warfare (e.g., Frank Hoffman, Jeffrey White), or Hybrid War (James Mattis and Frank Hoffman), i.e., a combination of conventional and non- traditional wars[7] – are all reflective of this trend. They share the assumptions concerning the weakening of the nation- state, the obsolescence of inter-state wars, the dominance of state– nonstate or intra- state/inter-community wars, the ascendancy of non- military aspects of war and strategy, and the ability of the militarily weak, which in the past almost never used high- tech weapons, to play in the technological playground and expose the militarily stronger side's points of weakness. These approaches, too, point to the role played by attrition. 4GW is presented by its theorists as "politically, socially (rather than technically) networked and *protracted in duration*."[8] Complex irregular warfare literature treats non- traditional war as one that "will surely involve *protracted* and extremely lethal conflicts like the insurgency in Iraq."[9] And hybrid war theory states that

“adversaries [. . .] promote *protracted insurgencies* that employ ambushes, improvised explosive devices and coercive assassinations.”[10] Typical of both the more traditional LIC theory and the recent approaches is the theorists’ focus on Western democracies’ ability to cope with asymmetrical challenges.

One can identify four different models of attrition which have emerged over the course of the years, and are reflected in the literature. Delbrück and Liddell Hart, respectively, offered models which are very different from one another. The third model has been etched in the collective consciousness and in LIC doctrines since World War II without being explicitly suggested as a model. The fourth model presented here is a new one. It is inspired by Edward Luttwak’s notion of post-heroic warfare, and is tailor-made to Western democracies. I will elaborate on these models in the next section. The plethora of models risks creating the wrong impression that attrition is no more than an arbitrarily chosen framework that serves as an umbrella for a variety of disparate phenomena. It is important, therefore, to point out that attrition is indeed a multi-faceted phenomenon and that what is truly common to all of its models is the slow erosion of *matériel* and morale on both sides over a considerable period of time. To cite Clausewitz, “Like smoldering embers it needs time to be effective.”[11]

The growing awareness of the importance and centrality of attrition in strategic thinking notwithstanding, surprisingly no comprehensive discussion of this important, pervasive, dynamic, and nuanced phenomenon has ever been offered. Despite the “polymorphism of war” – to use Raymond Aron’s term[12] – a gap was created during the twentieth century between the increasing pervasiveness and importance of wars of attrition and their representation in general strategic thinking.[13] Nineteenth century military thinkers’ and practitioners’ focus on symmetrical, “regular” wars is understandable, given the fact that in their time wars of the latter type were still dominating the field. Later on, post-World War I strategic thinking was so preoccupied with the impact of the introduction of the tank and the plane on the nature of war and with *blitzkrieg* as a central form of warfare, that it failed to devote intellectual resources to attrition and asymmetrical conflicts.

With the pervasiveness of wars of national liberation and social revolutions during the post-World War II era, asymmetrical conflicts became a central phenomenon in war. It was only natural that the intellectual energies of the weak would be invested in attrition as a strategy, but the strong, too, could be expected to develop tactics that would counter these strategies effectively. Instead, the strong could not get rid of their tendency to think in terms of symmetrical, “regular” conflicts, and kept referring to asymmetrical ones as “a limited undertaking that required neither national mobilization nor an extensive commitment of resource.”[14] The result was that the French in Indochina, the Americans in Vietnam[15] or the Soviets in Afghanistan[16] fought with irrelevant and unsuitable doctrines.

The tendency to focus on symmetrical “regular” wars despite their decreasing pervasiveness seems to have six major explanations. First, militaries often are, or at least feel most *experienced* with and good at symmetrical, “regular” rather than other types of war.[17] Second, states, and more so militaries, are used to considering symmetrical challenges to be more *threatening* than asymmetrical ones.[18] Third, symmetrical, “regular” wars are associated with greater buildup budgets.[19] Fourth, symmetrical thinking lies at the heart of armies’ professional identity.[20] Fifth, “classical,” regular war-oriented military thought is simpler and more quantifiable. Sixth, militaries tend towards entrenched traditionalism,[21] which makes it difficult for them to adapt to a reality where many, if not all, are wars of attrition. Some of these explanations are likely to

disappear over the course of time. The more experienced with attrition militaries will become and the greater the perceived threat posed by asymmetrical challenges, the higher the chances of a reverse development, that is, too much intellectual effort and material resources invested in wars of attrition at the expense of "classical" wars.

What is meant by attrition?

The difference between attrition and blitzkrieg

As was pointed out in the introduction, the term attrition is often referred to as the amount of erosion incurred among the forces of warring sides, incorporating losses in terms of both personnel and equipment ("attrition rates" or "attrition ratios"), and exhaustion of will/determination. To one extent or another, however, all wars erode *matériel* and morale. In the above sense, attrition is not a characteristic exclusive to a "war of attrition." What is unique to wars of attrition is that the depletion is gradual in the true sense of erosion; i.e., progressing over a considerable period of time. Furthermore, characterizing a war as being one of attrition requires that the cumulative nature of erosion over a protracted period be determined the most prominent characteristic of the conflict.

Attrition could be considered the opposite of *blitzkrieg*. Both attrition and *blitzkrieg* can be defined in terms of the ratio between military achievements and time.[22] They are different from one another, however, with regard to this ratio. *Blitzkrieg* aims at big achievements within an extremely short period. It is close to Niccolo Machiavelli's idea of "short and big" war, according to which armies finish a war in a very short time.[23] Napoleon, too, expressed a similar idea in his maxim, according to which "the strength of an army, like the power in the mechanics, is estimated by multiplying mass by rapidity."[24] Attrition, on the other hand, to use Clausewitz's assertion, is about "wearing down the enemy in a conflict [which] means using the duration of the war to bring about a gradual exhaustion of his physical and moral resistance."[25] Whereas the notion of quick battlefield decision lies at the center of *blitzkrieg*, in attrition, the name of the game is resilience. Illustrative of the difference between the two molds was the name given by Israeli troops to the Palestinian Second Intifada that started in late 2000 – "The Six Year War," as opposed to the "[1967] Six Day War."[26]

The notion of fists of armor advancing rapidly onto enemy territory and practicing inter- arm and inter-corps cooperation while enjoying air and logistical support, aiming at bringing about the quick psychological collapse of the enemy while minimizing casualties,[27] has for many years caught the imagination of both theorists and practitioners. *Blitzkrieg* was considered the jewel in the crown of strategy. It has at least tacitly been agreed that only highly qualitative armies could successfully apply *blitzkrieg*, as it required the highest operational and logistical standards and skills. And indeed, *blitzkrieg* was employed by the Germans in World War II; by the Israelis in the 1956 Sinai War and the 1967 Six Day War; by the Soviets during the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan; and by the Western allies during the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the HIC chapter of the 2003 Iraq War (at least operationally, once ground operations were launched).

The image of *blitzkrieg* as a highly sophisticated modern strategy should not, however, blind

us from recognizing that, first, attrition is not necessarily less sophisticated than *blitzkrieg*, as, in most cases it, too, places emphasis on the adversary's willpower and morale, rather than his capability. Second, attrition is even more modern than *blitzkrieg*: whereas traditional *blitzkrieg* restricted itself to the military levels- of-war, attrition has often also related to grand- strategy, particularly to the societal and economical dimensions of war.[28] Since the nineteenth century, it has become clear that a sustained attempt to wear the enemy out cannot be confined to operations on the direct battlefield. It often spills over to the grand- strategic level, where it is aimed at the enemy's economy and society, with the civilian rear becoming the center of gravity. Attrition, as Liddell Hart put it, has become "especially tiring to the mass of the people."[29] The warplane and, subsequently, the missile as well as terror activities have served to bring war directly to the civilian rear, testing not only the resilience of the enemy's army, but also that of its society as a whole. In other words, war of attrition reflects the process wherein war has receded from its traditional battlefield fronts and is being increasingly focused on the civilian rear, which not only has become one of the targets, but sometimes is even the most important target.

Material and non-material attrition

Attrition may be material and non- material. At the military levels of war, material attrition is reflected by casualties in manpower and equipment. Non-material attrition may express itself in the adversaries' level of morale and determination to carry on the fight. Carrying on the fight despite high casualty rates or under conditions of inferiority in the force ratios would indicate resilience, whereas expressions such as refusal to serve, defection, deteriorating levels of obedience and discipline, or problems of mental health among troops would indicate psychological erosion.

At the grand- strategic level, material attrition would manifest itself in the economic cost inflicted upon the adversaries during the war, either at the national or local level, as well as in the overall death toll (both troops and civilians) claimed during the confrontation. Psychological attrition at this level often takes the form of a strong sense of insecurity. But as people under perceived threat can still function, the evaluation of psychological attrition should focus on behavior that may indicate deviation from a normal pattern of social life, such as deviation from former consumption patterns or entertainment habits, massive fleeing from homes in areas that have become targets for terrorist attacks, or anti- war protests and public pressures on the government to pursue a political settlement that would put an end to the war.

Modern and post-modern models of attrition

Modern and post-modern war has known four different models of attrition, from Hans Delbrück's model *à la* Frederick the Great, to B.H. Liddell Hart's model *à la* World War I's western front, to the post-World War II model, to the late twentieth century–early twenty-first century post- heroic model.

Delbrück à la *Frederick the Great*

The German historian Hans Delbrück, inspired by Clausewitz, stressed what he considered the most typical of the strategy of attrition: the gaining of limited achievements for the purpose of obtaining political bargaining power. Delbrück distinguished between two types of strategy. The first type is the strategy of annihilation (*Niederwerfungsstrategie*), pursuant to which one attacks the enemy's military forces with the intention of destroying them and imposing the victorious side's will on the defeated. This, in Delbrück's view, was characteristic of Napoleon. The second type is the strategy of attrition (*Ermattungsstrategie*).[30]

According to Delbrück's model, a war of attrition is a limited strategy as far as both the objectives and the military means employed are concerned. It is, furthermore, a gradual war, which also is economic in terms of force, combines military and non- military resources, and emphasizes, alongside the element of "battle" (what one would today call, firepower) the element of maneuver. The model is based on the Seven Years War (1756–63). Frederick the Great, whose forces suffered from enormous quantitative inferiority during that war because they were engaging an entire coalition of enemies, utilized a strategy of attrition. At the heart of it stood prudent maneuvering focused on trying to minimize actual direct military encounter with the enemy, severing its lines of supply and operations,[31] and waiting for changes to occur in the external political environment. Frederick's strategy, like the one Fabius Maximus ("the Cunctator") had adopted during his time, although applied in what nowadays would be referred to as symmetrical inter-state HIC, rather resembled guerrilla warfare.

Delbrück's interpretation of Frederick's strategy was incompatible with that of other prominent Prussian thinkers. Friedrich von Bernhardi and other Prussian historians characterized Frederick as a military leader with a style of combat resembling the one later employed by Napoleon and Helmuth von Moltke (the Elder), and portrayed his 1757 invasion of Bohemia as prefiguring Moltke's wars against Austria (1866) and France (1870–71). Others, such as Max Jahns, Reinhold Koser, and Colmar von der Goltz, did share Delbrück's interpretation of Frederick's strategy.[32] But even Bernhardi admitted that, under the conditions Frederick found himself in the Seven Years War, he had to try and gain time.[33]

Liddell Hart à la *World War I's western front*

The second model can be attributed to Liddell Hart. He, unlike Delbrück, regarded war of attrition as an unsophisticated, Goliath-type war, characterized by neither limits nor controls; focused on the battlefield and particularly aimed at destroying the enemy's military forces; being isolated from the political context; emphasizing firepower over maneuver and, as such, a static war which is also expensive and wasteful from both national and military standpoints.[34] In a war of this kind, neither side is capable of gaining anything, as the victor himself is ultimately exhausted and injured.[35] "To adopt the method of attrition is not only a confession of stupidity, but a waste of strength, endangering both the chances during the combat and the profit of victory," Liddell Hart concluded.[36] He crystallized this model under the impression of the trench warfare of World War I and was outspoken in his criticism of the form taken by that war, which he believed had been influenced by Clausewitz's notion of absolute war and had taken root in the minds and actions of German generals in the years preceding that war.[37] World War I, to use Liddell Hart's words, was a "progressive butchery, politely called attrition."[38] The strategy of Pericles, that of Fabius, and that adopted by Frederick, which Clausewitz and Delbrück would

have characterized as based on the idea of attrition, comprised what Liddell Hart termed "the strategy of the indirect approach." He reserved the term, "attrition" for war of annihilation. Liddell Hart's model is still rooted in the minds of some current military thinkers.[39]

The post-World War II model

The third, post- World War II model of attrition constitutes a kind of synthesis between attrition *à la* Frederick the Great, on the one hand, and attrition *à la* World War I, on the other. Attrition, according to this model, is a prolonged war in which the achievement of the political war objectives is more important and relevant than military achievements. It is limited in terms of theater; entails the utilization of a combination of military and non-military resources; is aimed simultaneously towards the military forces on the battlefield and the civilian rear; and places emphasis on breaking the other side's will, rather than capability.

The post-World War II attrition model has two versions: a symmetrical one, in which one would find regular armies on both sides (HIC), and an asymmetrical one, in which at least one side is a nonstate player using irregular forces (LIC). The main difference between the HIC and LIC versions of attrition is that, in the first one, firepower plays the major – sometimes the sole – role, whereas the second one entails greater sophistication, particularly by the weaker side, in the spirit of Confucianism's search of non-material force multipliers that could bring victory with minimal use of force,[40] and a combination of firepower and maneuver. As LIC has become the most pervasive type of conflict, and as attrition has – whether explicitly or implicitly – been acknowledged as the major characteristic of LICs, the LIC version has come to overshadow the HIC version.[41] The aforementioned "new" types of war – Non-Trinitarian War, Fourth Generation Warfare, Complex Irregular Warfare, and Hybrid War – fit quite nicely into the third model, due to their asymmetric, multidimensional, and protracted nature, and the emphasis they put on societal and political willpower as well as on other military and non-military force multipliers that are supposed to compensate for the nonstate player's weakness.

The post-heroic model

This model could be considered a version, or an extension of the third model, relevant to Western democracies engaged in asymmetrical wars of attrition, wherein the existence of the homeland is not at stake. It reflects a combination of demographic, societal and political constraints, on the one hand, and opportunities created by technological superiority over the enemy, on the other. Post-heroic war has two major rules. According to the first rule, which is derived from Edward Luttwak's works, one is not "allowed" to get killed.[42] A second rule has gradually accompanied it, according to which one is also not allowed to kill, at least not enemy civilians.

Although post- heroic warfare could easily be presented as a very inefficient way of conducting war, one should not disregard its positive aspects, particularly for Western democracies. It has enabled such states to combine effectiveness and morality, easing the decision to enter non-existential wars and strengthening their sustainability in such wars. Contrary to the belief that any protracted military engagement must become unpopular with democratic societies, thus being unsustainable, the post-heroic player would be able to wage a

war of attrition successfully. During such a war, he would usually prefer using firepower, instead of maneuvering on the ground, so as to inflict damage on enemy forces or infrastructure while avoiding civilian casualties for the enemy and for his own troops. This was exemplified by post-Cold War American intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s and in Afghanistan in 2001, and Israeli fighting against the Palestinians since the late 1970s and against Hezbollah since the 1990s.[43] The 2006 Second Lebanon War, however, revealed the limitations and shortcomings of a blind commitment to post- heroic conduct of war.[44]

The difference between the models is not merely reflective of different points of view of military thinkers as a result of different realities of war, but is also reflective of the shifting focus from HICs to LICs as a result of both the importance and pervasiveness of the latter in modern and post- modern war. Most of the conflicts in the international system – 80 percent during the Cold War and 95 percent in its aftermath – have been LICs, and their impact has reached beyond what is usually believed.[45]

Characteristics typical of wars of attrition

Wars of attrition seem to have some unique features in the way they originate and end, and the impact of their protracted nature. A difference may exist between asymmetrical and symmetrical wars of attrition with regard to the borderline between rear and front, the nature of the targets, the chances and effectiveness of escalation control and escalation dominance, the force structure required, and ethical dilemmas involved.

General characteristics

Emergence rather than eruption

Wars of attrition often emerge rather than erupt, escalate gradually, and make it difficult for the players to appreciate their character or scope until they are well advanced. Examples include colonial insurgency against Britain (the so-called revolts against the Crown), both before and after World War II; the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria in the early 1950s[;6] the series of armed attacks on Turkish military installations in the dominantly Kurdish-populated rural southeast region in 1984;[47] or Israel's wars of attrition with the Palestinians between the 1950s and the 2000s.

Variance of conclusion

Wars of attrition end in a variety of forms. They could end in a ceasefire (e.g., the Korean War, 1953; the Israeli–Egyptian war of attrition, 1970), or in another kind of agreement (e.g., the Geneva Accords on the Indochina War, 1954; the Paris Accords on the Vietnam War, 1973; the Geneva Accords on Afghanistan, 1988; or the separation of forces agreements following the

Israel—Egypt and Israel–Syria post- 1973 wars). Asymmetrical wars of attrition can deteriorate into large- scale operations and even regular wars (see below). Such wars can also end in a unilateral withdrawal or disengagement of one player without agreement and regardless of the military state of affairs (e.g., the Israeli pullout from south Lebanon in 2000). Sometimes they just fade away as a result of war weariness or hopes for improvement in the general standard of living or even reconciliation. For example, enmity in the two most active LICs in Western Europe – the Northern Ireland conflict and the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) struggle in Spain – has decreased over the recent decades owing to an erosion of social support for the continuation of the struggle. The First and Second Intifadas, too, just faded away.

Changes during the course of protracted wars

The more protracted a conflict, the more likely it is to undergo changes in scope, stakes and means.

Scope of the Conflict

Wars of attrition, particularly asymmetrical ones, can spread, usually unintentionally, in various ways. First, they can spread by diffusion across state borders. Diffusion occurs when internal conflict affects the stability of neighboring countries in various ways, such as refugees radicalizing ethnic populations abroad, rebel activities in neighboring countries undermining state control over its territory and provoking military clashes, hot pursuit operations and interdiction campaigns on other countries' territory, and success of insurgents or revolutionaries in one country encouraging further spread to other countries (the so-called demonstration effect). These have been typified by the Vietnam War during the Cold War era, when in 1970 it expanded to Cambodia and Laos, or the cases of Rwanda and Burundi and Kosovo in the post-Cold War era.[48]

Second, they can spread by escalation. Escalation can take on three forms: For one, deterioration into large- scale operations or wars. Examples of deterioration of wars of attrition to large- scale operations include the October 1952 largest French operation in Indochina with 30,000 troops attacking the Viet-Minh supply dumps; the 1965–68 American aerial bombardment campaign Operation Rolling Thunder against North Vietnam; the January–June 1968 Tet Offensive by the Vietcong and North Vietnam during the same war; or French search and destroy Operation Jumelles in Algeria from mid- 1959 to early 1960. Examples of wars of attrition that escalated to full-scale war are the pre-1967 war of attrition between Israel and Syria, which accounted for the escalation that ended up in the Six Day War; the war of attrition on the Lebanese border between Israel and the PLO before the 1982 Lebanon War; or the insurgency in Bangladesh that preceded the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971.

Another form of escalation occurs when other players are dragged into the war.[49] Examples include Egypt's direct intervention in the early-1950s Israel– Palestinian attrition in the Gaza Strip; Egypt's support for the FLN in Algeria in the 1950s; Soviet intervention during the Israeli–Egyptian 1969–70 war of attrition;[50] India's help to Bangladesh in 1971 during the Bangladesh liberation war against Pakistan; US support for the Contras against the Marxist regime in Nicaragua or for the *mujahedeen* in Afghanistan against the Soviets.

Finally, there is the possibility of escalation to a 9/11-like “mega- terrorism” event or a dangerous combination of sub- conventional and non- conventional warfare, i.e., the use of WMDs by nonstate players. For example, LIC in Kashmir always threatened to escalate to HIC between India and Pakistan, with the possibility of spilling over to nuclear confrontation, which both countries wished to avoid.

The Stakes Involved

The stake for which a player is engaged in a war of attrition, too, may change during the course of the war, reframing its attitude toward the war’s necessity, the war objectives, or the nature of the means to be used during the war. For example, in the 1960s, Vietnam was no longer perceived in the US in terms of the “domino theory.” And in the late 1990s Israeli military control of southern Lebanon was no longer perceived by the Israeli public as vital for the defense of northern Israel.

The Means Employed

Protracted conflicts also allow more time for trial and error processes regarding the means and methods employed by the parties during their course. For example, both in China in the 1940s and Indochina in the 1950s, the Communists switched from guerrilla warfare to regular warfare, in order to defeat their opponents (the Nationalists and the French, respectively) conventionally on the battlefield. The PLO was quite flexible in changing strategies and tactics during its wars of attrition against Israel, intermittently using guerrilla, terror, and civil disobedience. So was Israel’s reaction.

Developments and changes over time tend to reinforce both the unpredictable nature of wars of attrition and their likely outcomes. For example, Frederick the Great’s chances of ending the Seven Years War without defeat were practically nil. Ultimately, however, he succeeded in recovering from his situation, thanks to the dramatic turnaround in the war following the death of Czarina Elisabeta and the succession to the throne of Czar Piotr. Under the rule of its new czar, Russia withdrew from the war, followed by Austria. This event subsequently came to be referred to as “the miracle of the House of Brandenburg.”[51] After Charles De Gaulle assumed power in France in May 1958, it seemed that the FLN was weakening, that France was regaining control over Algeria, and that the Algerian masses were gradually accepting the idea of the country remaining an integral part of the French republic, with the Algerian people enjoying the status of equal citizenship. But the FLN was soon to recover and tip the scales, again.[52] When the Vietcong’s Tet Offensive failed in early 1968, its failure was not translated into defeat as the offensive had unpredictable political and societal repercussions, paradoxically marking the process during which the US’s perseverance was critically jeopardized.[53]

Characteristics typical of asymmetrical wars of attrition

Nonstate players are more elusive, not producing significant or easy-to-hit counter- force targets,

unless they “institutionalize” militarily. In asymmetrical wars of attrition where terror has become a strategy or tactic often used by the insurgents, the borderline between rear and front has disappeared. Guerrilla warfare, terror, and civil disobedience, which are typical strategies or tactics used by the weaker side in asymmetrical wars of attrition, often require response by specially trained units. In such conflicts the tension between morality and effectiveness plays a major role, particularly where Western democracies are involved. The stronger democracy is often presented as aggressor, occupier, or oppressor, waging unjust war, using excessive force, failing to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants, tending to hide behind the so-called doctrine of double effect (according to which the killing of civilians in war is acceptable as long as it is unintended or accidental), and violating civil liberties for the sake of security. Such an image could entail internal or external legitimacy problems. Laws and ethics of war focus on state-to-state context, often overlooking the prevalence of LICs. Four main ethical issues are of particular relevance to Western democracies engaged in asymmetrical wars of attrition: just cause, discriminate use of force, proportionality, and civil liberties. Western democracies engaged in asymmetrical wars of attrition can bridge operational effectiveness and morality and enjoy greater domestic and external legitimacy and sustainability in such wars by opting for a “post-heroic” policy. Applying a post- heroic policy without being aware of its limitations and readiness to abandon it when necessary could be counterproductive, though. All these aspects are dealt with in length in Chapter 6.

Attrition as a chosen strategy

Attrition might occur as a deliberately adopted strategy or as a form that develops by itself.[54] The discussion of the changes it has undergone as a strategy focuses on two main changes: attrition becoming a tool for achieving offensive objectives, and attrition becoming attractive for the strong.

From defensive to offensive

One must distinguish between the objective the use of force is meant to serve, on the one hand, and the way the force is applied, on the other. For Clausewitz, who tended to distinguish between offense and defense in terms of their purpose, as war of attrition in general and “popular war” in particular lacked any clear positive purpose, it belonged in the domain of defense.[55] Other nineteenth century thinkers, like Jomini and Moltke, basically shared this view. After World War II, however, “popular war,” with attrition as one of its main characteristics, became an independent phenomenon, rather than an auxiliary military activity.[56] At the same time, it became more offensive than defensive from a war- objectives perspective, as both preached and predicted as early as the mid- nineteenth century by Friedrich Engels, the pioneer of revolutionary war. Mao’s innovative contribution to attrition lay in his doctrine of turning guerrilla warfare aimed at gaining time via the conduct of a defensive attrition strategy into a revolutionary or liberation war conducted by a regular army on the conventional battlefield in the traditional manner. Such war, unlike the guerrilla form, was geared at attacking the enemy in order to achieve battlefield decision, which would later be translated into “positive,” offensive

political objectives.[57]

If one relates to the manner in which forces are usually employed during wars of attrition, however, one may find it difficult to identify, at any given point in time over the course of such wars, who is attacking and who is defending; who is initiating and who is responding. The reason is that military encounters in wars of attrition usually take place at the tactical level, where fighting is limited in terms of troops, theater, and time. As such, an encounter tends to resemble a skirmish. Military thinkers referred to this phenomenon years ago, although they did not discuss it in reference to wars of attrition. For example, eighteenth century French thinker Jacques Guibert[58] and twentieth century French theorist and practitioner Ferdinand Foch addressed it as being a characteristic of "parallel battle," as opposed to "battle of maneuver." The parallel battle, according to Foch, is nothing but "a chain of more or less similar combats," in which "attack develops everywhere with equal force, and ends by exerting a uniform pressure against a defender, who in his turn offers a uniform resistance."[59] The aforesaid applies not only to HICs, but also to LICs. Even in cases where wars of attrition develop into mutual targeting of societies, it is still difficult to distinguish between defenders and attackers.

Anyway, wars of attrition expose the dialectic nature of the relationship between offense and defense as strategies or tactics, which is extensively discussed in the works of Clausewitz and Mao. Offense usually has short- term effectiveness and it sometimes causes undesired escalation. As a result of its limitations, one often finds oneself relying on defense in order to protect one's civilians and troops. Defensive measures, in turn, may prove to be of limited effectiveness, leading, out of frustration, to attacks aimed at achieving compellence or deterrence-by-punishment.

A strategy for both weak and strong

Attrition has traditionally been a strategy tailor-made to suit the limitations of the militarily weaker opponent. As Clausewitz observed, "It is evident that this method, wearing down the enemy, applies to the great number of cases where the weak endeavor resists the strong."[60] And indeed, as early as ancient times, attrition was acknowledged as the weaker side's preferred strategy. During the Peloponnesian War, for example, the Pericles-led Athenian forces adopted a strategy of attrition because of their relative weakness on land vis-à-vis Sparta.[61] Fabius ("the Cunctator") also used this strategy against Hannibal's army, which was quantitatively superior to his own, so as to gain time and maintain his own forces as intact as possible.[62]

The cases of the Seven Years War, World War I's western front, and the Egyptian–Israeli war of attrition all serve as modern examples of attrition strategy adopted out of weakness in HICs. In other cases, a strategy of attrition was only considered, because of temporary weakness, but was eventually not implemented. For example, in 1913, the Russian General Staff considered implementing it in future wars against Russia's more developed European enemies. "Time is the best ally of our [weaker] military forces, and for that reason it is not dangerous for us to follow a strategy of attrition and exhaustion, initially avoiding decisive engagements with the enemy," explained Chief of Staff Mikhnevich.[63] A strategy of attrition was also considered by the British General Staff in 1938, following Nazi Germany's aggression against Czechoslovakia, because the quantitative and qualitative inferiority of Britain's ground forces prevented defeating the Germans on the continent. "We have no means of making [. . . the enemy] give it up, except by

killing him by a slow process of attrition and starvation," was the British conclusion.[64]

Attrition is a commonplace strategy in asymmetrical conflicts. True, during the nineteenth century, attrition employed by guerrillas was often perceived as doomed to fail, as exemplified by the misfortunes of guerrilla warfare directed against regular armies during the German uprisings in 1848-49 or Prussia's war against France in 1870–71. Nineteenth century military theorists, such as Clausewitz, Jomini, Moltke and Engels, were impressed by the phenomenon of "popular war," in which attacks were carried out by guerrillas in order to tie up enemy forces. They nevertheless expressed their belief that, given the weaknesses of the side employing guerrilla tactics, that side had no real chance when confronted by a strong, well-trained, disciplined, and highly motivated regular army.[65]

Twentieth century experience, particularly in the post- World War II period, was totally different. The small military achievements accumulated by the militarily weaker side during the protracted confrontation were supposed to bring about "death by a thousand small cuts."[66] And indeed, during numerous protracted national or revolutionary struggles, the weaker side often succeeded in compensating for its weakness in capabilities by eating away at the enemy's staying power and translating this success into political gains. Twentieth century guerrilla thinkers, such as Mao, Guevara, Giap, and others, some of whom took part as leaders in such struggles, identified the potential of attrition, addressed it in their thought, and influenced others' struggles through the doctrines they crystallized and practiced.[67]

Attrition used by the stronger side is no novelty. It was used by stronger sides in the past – both in HICs (e.g., by Montgomery, as a battlefield tactic against Rommel at al-Alamein[68]), and in LICs (e.g., the ancient Romans against Jewish insurgents – in the framework of a political—military strategy). In the aftermath of World War II, however, wars of attrition had the connotation of an undesired form of war from the stronger side's point of view. The classical explanation offered in the literature for stronger players' attrition aversion and the troubles they have faced in the wars of attrition they have been engaged in stresses their inferiority in the balance of interests and in the balance of resolve, their shorthandedness in coping with guerrilla and terror challenges despite their military might, and Western democracies' value constraints.[69]

Sometimes great powers were very efficient both against guerrilla and terror – for example, the British in South Africa, Palestine (1936–39), Malaya, Cyprus, Kenya, the Persian Gulf and Northern Ireland[70] – but had to withdraw from the conflict without translating their military achievements to political gains. This happened as a result of low societal or economical staying power, as happens to Britain, who, as a result of postwar economic crisis was unable to retain all of its overseas territories, or to France in Algeria and the Soviets in Afghanistan.

In today's wars of attrition, however, the stronger side no longer necessarily suffers from the above fatal weaknesses, and may enjoy greater sustainability. As terror has become a major threat for its society to the point of creating a sense of existential challenge, which usually strengthens societal solidarity and perseverance, the stronger side can demonstrate greater staying power. As Western democracies engaged in asymmetrical wars of attrition seem to have found the way to bridge operational effectiveness and morality by adopting a "post-heroic" policy, they can enjoy stronger sustainability in wars of attrition. As the economies of Western democracies are both relatively prosperous and decentralized, the economic burden of wars of attrition tends to be limited and the economies cannot be expected to collapse, even after 9/11-like blows on economic centers of gravity. Moreover, despite the fact that the weaker side is now also playing on the technological playground, which constitutes a new challenge for the stronger side's traditional technological edge, technology also opens up new opportunities for coping with

terror challenges.

At the same time, the weaker side's traditional vulnerabilities have not disappeared, and can still work in the stronger side's favor. For example, the more the nonstate player using attrition is committed to the well-being of its society and the more its military force and political and social agencies institutionalize, the more it has to lose and the easier it becomes for the stronger side to cripple its military and political power, and vice versa. Also, the stronger the interest of the government from whose territory insurgents operate to stop their activity, the more stable that government is, and the tighter its control of the country's territory – the more constrained the insurgents become, and vice versa.

Altering the nature of the conflict

A strategy of attrition, like any other strategy, is interactive in nature. The success for a given side in adopting it largely depends on the reaction of its enemy. Will the other side "cooperate" with the attrition effort being waged against it, or will it attempt to alter the nature of the conflict by switching to warfare of a different kind? Everything depends on the various constraints – military, political, economic, and other – within the framework of which each side is obliged to operate. The Spartans did not cooperate with Pericles's attrition strategy. The British tried hard to shatter the mold of the attrition featured by the World War I battlefield, but with little success.[71] During the war of attrition between North and South Korea in 1951–53, the US gave serious consideration to the option of putting an end to the protracted violence, which was costing so much in both human and financial terms. It even weighed the nuclear option, but was deterred from employing it.[72] During the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War, Saddam's strategy of attrition failed against the Allies, who were seeking quick battlefield decision. In any case, he who imposes attrition on the adversary may find himself the victim of attrition by the enemy, as happened to Egypt in 1969–70.

Almost needless to mention, a decision to abandon the attrition strategy can be implemented just as it was originally initiated. For example, it was the Romans themselves who effectively abandoned the Fabian strategy, despite the fact that it was successful, by replacing Fabius with the bold and aggressive Varro. The Mao- led Chinese Communists, too, suspended resorting to attrition as soon as they felt it had outgrown its usefulness. It must be stressed, though, that an attempt by a nonstate weak side to leapfrog the guerrilla- warfare stage and establish a regular army with aspirations of contending with an adversary experienced and powerful in classical, regular warfare will normally be doomed to failure, as happened with the Communist uprising in Greece following World War II[73] and the PLO in south Lebanon prior to the 1982 Lebanon War.

Attrition that develops by itself

Attrition need not necessarily be a deliberate strategy. A war that was intended to conform to an entirely different pattern may, on its own, deteriorate into a war of attrition. This is not a paradox, as there are logical explanations for this phenomenon. These explanations basically stress: first, the creation of a state of symmetry in capabilities between the parties, as a result of operational or technological factors; second, a state of asymmetry in destructive capabilities

balanced by asymmetry in cost tolerance of the respective societies; or third, the existence of political constraints limiting the military's freedom of action.

Symmetry in capabilities

Operational factors

Attrition can develop as a result of a phenomenon that Clausewitz, though not attributing it specifically to attrition, defined as "the diminishing strength of the attack"; i.e., the tendency of an offensive to expend itself and lose its effectiveness. This can occur as a result of a drawing-out of the operational lines along which the attacker is operating, a lengthening of its logistical lines, or a weakening in the resolve of its forces to continue fighting as they move increasingly further from their homes, as well as in consequence of a parallel strengthening of the defender for precisely opposite reasons.[74]

The less negotiable the territory – whether because of natural obstacles, such as mountains, water (e.g., the swamps in the Iran–Iraq War), forests (e.g., the 1939 Winter War between the Finns and the Soviets), jungles (e.g., Vietnam), and the like, or because of artificial obstacles – the greater the likelihood the attack will soon reach its "culminating point," to use another Clausewitzian concept. From the point of time at which the offensive loses its impetus, the confrontation may begin to assume the characteristics of wars of attrition.

Classic examples of attrition that developed out of a diminution in the strength of the attack are Napoleon's Russian campaign in 1812 and Nazi Germany's Russian campaign during World War II. A more recent example is the Iran—Iraq War. Two years after the late-1980 Iraqi offensive had expended itself, Iran launched a large-scale counterattack on Iraqi forces near the city of Basra. The strength of that summer 1982 attack diminished after a few weeks due to the Iraqi advantage in force ratios, the strong Iraqi defenses, and the muddy terrain. In late 1986–early 1987, Iran managed to transfer the war to Iraqi territory, but again failed to translate it into battlefield decision. The pattern of attrition continued to dominate the Iran–Iraq War.[75]

Technological factors

Since the Industrial Revolution, the technological factor has assumed increasingly greater importance and, more than ever before, affected the ratio between firepower and maneuver on the battlefield. The deterioration of a war into a pattern of attrition can sometime be a result of battlefield standstill created by the ascendancy of firepower over maneuver.[76] One could claim that German Chief of Staff Erich von Falkenhayn's strategy of attrition was adopted within a situation that already constituted attrition. Ever since the Battle of the Marne, in September 1914, the combination of trenches, barbed wire, machine guns, and artillery, together with the sheer volume of forces along the 450-mile-long western front – almost 5,500 French and British troops against more than 4,000 German soldiers along every single kilometer[77] – froze the battlefield. Only toward the end of the war did new technological conditions develop on the battlefield, i.e., the emergence of the tank that changed the ratio between firepower and maneuver, making it

possible to achieve battlefield decision.[78]

The increase in the range and accuracy of modern firepower has created battlefield density that might impede the scope for maneuver no less than the density stemming from the volume of force relative to space.[79] On a battlefield saturated with precise, long- range, and destructive fire – which is likely to characterize symmetrical wars between two or more highly technological adversaries – it will be more difficult to maneuver, attack, and achieve battlefield decision, especially within a short period of time,[80] and attrition is likely to develop.

Cultural factors?

Strategic culture, that is, a collective body of beliefs, attitudes and practices regarding the use of force that plays an important constitutive role in the design and execution of players' security policies,[81] can determine the decision to opt for war of attrition or to reject the idea, as well as the sustainability of each of the rival societies in protracted wars of attrition. It has been suggested, either implicitly or explicitly, that wars in which Third World armies are involved are doomed to convert into a test of perseverance, the reason being their "way of war." These armies are often presented as masters of evasion and delay and as a failure in taking advantage of opportunities for maneuver on the battlefield. Interpretations along these lines were offered with regard to the indecisive nature of the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88).[82] It was also claimed that the Asian and Near Eastern tradition of war should be distinguished from the Western way of war by its reliance on attrition.[83] The Arab way of war was also described as good at staying power but bad at striking power,[84] as compared to Israel's *blitzkrieg* skills. The difficulty in alluding culturally distinct strategic behavior to Third World countries and armies notwithstanding,[85] this theory may be true in LICs contexts, particularly in wars of attrition against Western enemies. But it was refuted when tested against cases where adversaries on both sides were Third World players. For example, how would it explain India's success in defeating the Pakistanis in 1965 and again in 1971, or China's battlefield decision against India in 1962?

Asymmetry in destructive capabilities balanced by asymmetry in cost tolerance

Friedrich von Bernhardi referred to the interplay between material and nonmaterial factors in war, relating to a situation wherein one side enjoys material superiority, expressed in the number of casualties, but this "does not at all imply that the side is victorious which has suffered the least loss. Rather that party is always beaten which suffers the greatest moral shock, and that does not depend merely on casualties."[86] And indeed, a war of attrition may result from a state of asymmetry in destructive power balanced by asymmetry in cost tolerance of the respective sides – to use Stephen Rosen's distinction.[87] As war has evolved into a matter in which entire nations are involved, societal cost tolerance has become just as important as the force ratios or destructive force. One can be militarily strong but socially and politically weak, and vice versa. The mid-1980s Weinberger Doctrine reflected awareness of the double balance, suggesting criteria that could help American decision makers avoid engagement in wars that would be difficult to win.[88] The recent Fourth Generation Warfare theory, too, sees this double asymmetry as inherent to fourth generation wars.[89]

Cost tolerance is affected by several factors. It is mostly sensitive, however, to four major ones. First, the stakes involved. The lower the stakes involved, the lower the resolve and cost tolerance, and vice versa. Second, operational effectiveness. The deeper the feeling that the security agencies are short-handed, the lower the resolve and cost tolerance, and vice versa. The greater the gap between the commitment of armed forces and victory,[90] which is typical of wars of attrition, the greater the political vulnerability of the strong. Third, economic cost and death toll. The more moderate the economic cost inflicted, and the lower the death toll claimed, the greater the staying power, and vice versa. Fourth, the center—periphery factor. The more remote the attrition activity from the country's populated areas, the less severely the threat perceived by the society as a whole. The distance is not merely physical, though. It may also exist between social classes. The greater the share of the lower classes among the periphery's inhabitants and in combat units, the more detached the military may be from the hearts and minds of the elite and the entire society, and the lesser the societal objection to the continuation of the war due to too many casualties.[91]

The existence during the war of a national unity government or a bi-partisan consensus (depending on the country's regime) – e.g., the national unity government in Israel during the 1969–70 war of attrition with Egypt and during the First Intifada or the bi-partisan support in the US for the war in Vietnam during its early years – is likely to create a stronger sense of social solidarity. Similarly, the opposite is true; the more divided the country, the stronger the voice of dissidence, such as the growing objection among Democrats to US continuing intervention in Iraq.

Political constraints

Deterioration into attrition may be the consequence of a deliberate political decision to restrict the scope of the war so as to avoid undesirable escalation. In the Korean War, the US administration imposed restrictions on its forces, for fear of escalation to global confrontation with North Korea's patrons. This led to the onset of a war of attrition between the North and the South lasting from 1951 to 1953.[92] In Kashmir, during the 1990s, not only did India feel that it lacked sufficient intelligence and precision-strike capabilities to target the Pakistan-sponsored Muslim insurgents or the capability to engage in a conventional war against Pakistan, it also feared escalation to nuclear confrontation, and great power involvement in the conflict in case of escalation to conventional war in an attempt to prevent its destabilizing impact, so it paradoxically preferred the continuation of a low- intensity war of attrition in Kashmir, which was a destabilizing factor in and of itself.[93]

Waging and winning wars of attrition

The management of wars of attrition is affected by their protracted nature, and achievements in such wars are characterized by a difficulty to translate military achievements into political gains. Battlefield decision is usually restricted to the tactical level, and it is usually outside the actual battlefield, at the grand-strategic level, where wars of attrition are won.

The prolongation of conflict and the impact on its management

Due to their protracted nature, in wars of attrition it is often possible to learn lessons, not only once the conflict is over, but, rather, during its course, adapting to changing challenges and correcting failures by applying improved, sometimes new strategies, tactics, and even doctrines and force structure. For example, the Soviets in Afghanistan changed their force structure, creating a greater balance between armor and infantry, and to be more effective against the *mujahedeen*, made some doctrinal and technological adaptations which included indirect approach, guerrilla- like counter- insurgency tactics, and the use of helicopters.[94] The Americans tried various strategies during the war in Vietnam. For example, unlike the sustained strategic bombing campaign against North Vietnam, which had been inaugurated in March 1965, they later on adopted a search and destroy strategy, which was more suited for counterguerrilla warfare, and was based on inserting ground forces into hostile territory in order to target enemy forces and withdraw immediately afterwards. During the 1969–70 Egyptian–Israeli war of attrition, the IDF turned to in- depth grand-strategic bombing, after having failed to compel the Egyptians to stop the war as long as its operations were restricted to the Suez Canal zone. Once the Soviets intervened in that war, however, Israel had to lower the profile of its operations in Egypt and eventually agree to ceasefire. During the first Palestinian Intifada Israel realized that popular uprising could not be dealt with merely by employing military means in one go, but rather via a cumulative process of economic and psychological exhaustion.[95]

Relevant levels-of-war: tactics and grand-strategy

Whereas “regular” war is usually waged across the entire range of the levels-of-war pyramid, from grand-strategy, to strategy, to the operational level, to tactics, in wars of attrition the levels most relevant to conflict management are at both extremes of the levels- of-war pyramid – grand-strategy, on the one hand, and tactics, on the other. In such wars, whether HICs or LICs, military encounters often take place at the tactical level, where only a small proportion of the force, generally, is actively involved in the fighting, and the fighting is usually limited in terms of forces, time, or place. The objectives of those engaged in such wars, and sometimes the targets they choose – often being the enemy’s society and economy – are beyond the direct battlefield, at the grand-strategic level.[96] Achievements or failures at the tactical level are often directly translated into achievements or failures at the grand- strategic level. For example, when President Nasser launched the war of attrition against Israel in 1969, he hoped that by inflicting ever-mounting casualties on Israeli forces during countless limited encounters along the Suez Canal, he would wear the Israeli society out, basing his hope on the conviction that the Israeli society would be unable to bear a war of attrition for a long period.[97]

Liddell Hart justifiably described guerrilla operations as limited operations of a tactical nature, the aim of which is to produce an effect beyond the actual battlefield. “A multiplicity of minor coups and threats can have a greater effect in tipping the scales than a few major hits, by producing more cumulative distraction, disturbance and demoralization among the enemy, along with a more widespread impression among the population,” he explained.[98] And indeed, operating at the two extremes of the levels-of-war pyramid while creating direct relationship between them has been typical of many LICs.

Offense versus defense

Once engaged in a war of attrition the adversaries are usually compelled by the nature of such war to apply a strategy which combines offense and defense. The weaker side attacks occasionally, only when it meets the enemy's weaker units or only part of its force.[99] For the stronger side defense is often unavoidable if it wishes to thwart enemy efforts to cross the border, to protect population centers, military bases, and lines of communications, to deter by denial, or to maintain a reasonable level of personal safety that would strengthen the society's staying power and enable daily life to continue at a level close to normalcy. Defensive deployment would usually require stretching the state's forces across the territory under its control.

Offense would complement defense for compellence or deterrence-by-punishment purposes. Offensive measures, however, often prove to have limited and short-term effect, and are likely to trigger escalation. Once they fail in delivering the goods, the military is tempted to resort to more force. The spiraling tendency of the conflict could express itself in various forms of escalation. The risks entailed in offensive measures notwithstanding, they often hold a powerful appeal for regular armies, which in most cases suffer from attrition aversion, tending to believe that with offense there are greater chances for achieving quick and decisive victory, reducing uncertainty, conferring initiative, and increasing the military's size, funds, prestige, and autonomy. A reinforced offensive bias could make militaries pursue an offensive strategy beyond reason.[100]

Similar versus dissimilar strategies

Ivan Arreguin-Toft offers an intriguing argument concerning the linkage between strategies used in asymmetrical conflicts and the chances of winning such conflicts. He contends that similar strategies employed by the adversaries – either direct ones aimed at destroying the resistance capacity of the enemy's armed forces (offense, defense), or indirect ones, which focus on the breaking the enemy's will ("barbarism," guerrilla warfare) – work in favor of the strong, whereas dissimilar strategies work in favor of the weak.[101] This argument suffers from four main weaknesses. First, it treats attrition as a direct strategy, ignoring the fact that attrition has long become an indirect one. Second, it is too vague on the meaning of losing and winning wars. Third, its typology is too dichotomous; in reality in general, and in wars of attrition in particular, players may employ a mixture of direct and indirect strategies. Fourth, one can find "barbarism" on both sides, which does not necessarily end up in the stronger side's victory despite the similarity; e.g., Palestinian and Israeli "barbarism" in the early 1950s or Israeli and Hezbollah's mutual "barbarism" in 2006.

From battlefield decision to grand-strategic decision and/or victory

Military thinkers have never excluded the possibility of achieving battlefield decision via attrition. According to Clausewitz, the very prolongation of war may gradually make the enemy lose its strength, to the point where that loss of strength would outweigh the political objective that motivated its resort to force. At that point, the enemy would abandon the struggle; i.e., face defeat.[102] John Mearsheimer is even more explicit about the chances of battlefield decision being

achieved in a war of attrition: "[It] follows a series of set- piece battles and is not expected to be quick. The process is protracted, and success ultimately comes when the defender can no longer continue to fight."[103]

In practice, however, in a war of attrition, decision will always be one of fairly "minor" scope; achieved "on points," rather than by a knockout, if at all. General Henri Navarre, commander of the French forces in Indochina in the early 1950s, described the situation he was facing: "The war simply could not be won in the military sense."[104] In contrast with the fairly slim chances of achieving battlefield decision via attrition, there are better chances of realizing grand-strategic decision, i.e., denying the enemy's ability to carry on the fight not merely from the military point of view, but also from non- military standpoints, such as economic, societal, or political. The guerrilla tactics and terror activities often employed in asymmetrical wars of attrition, let alone nonviolent civil disobedience, are not intended to achieve battlefield decision in the first place, as the weaker side usually acknowledges its extreme military inferiority. Rather, such activities are meant to wear the opponent – usually a nation- state with a regular army – down by demonstrating a higher cost tolerance.[105] It seems that it was precisely Mao's comprehension of the difficulties involved in achieving battlefield decision in a war of attrition that influenced him to regard attrition solely as a stage in an overall strategy vis-à-vis the enemy.[106]

Modern examples of grand- strategic decision include numerous post-World War II decolonization struggles, and Kosovo. It was in the Kosovo War, for the first time, that Giuolio Douhet's vision of hitting the civilian rear and achieving decision without any significant operation on the ground[107] at last materialized.108 Grand- strategic decision was reached after 78 days of grand-strategic bombings and more than 31,000 sorties, during which NATO forces destroyed counter-value targets alongside counter-force targets.[109]

An examination of Chief of Staff Erich von Falkenhayn's strategy of attrition during World War I will show that he was aware of the fact that battlefield decision was unattainable, given the conditions that had arisen on the battlefield. This had already been predicted many years before the outbreak of that war by the Polish banker Ivan Bloch, who based his analysis of future war on his comprehension of the nature of modern war, in general, and the impact of nonmilitary dimensions on its conduct, in particular.[110] Falkenhayn focused on grand- strategic decision – extracting a military, societal, economic, and political price so heavy as to be unbearable. And indeed, in November 1916 Herbert Asquith's government was prepared to examine the German peace proposals. Two developments, however, conjoined to frustrate realization of the German objectives: German all-out submarine warfare that led to the entry of the US into the war and the replacement of Asquith by Lloyd George, who opposed any concessions to the Germans.[111] By imposing a blockade on Germany and its allies during World War I, the Western allies, for their part, intended to starve their populations into submission. Were it not for deliveries of wheat from Rumania and the Ukraine, the intention might well have succeeded.[112] The Germans were eventually defeated on the battlefield, once they had lost their will following the battle of 8 August 1918.[113]

Translating military success into political gains

Alongside grand- strategic decision, it is also possible to realize one's war objectives via attrition. Since the mid-twentieth century, the previously clear linkage between military and

political achievements has been disconnected. During numerous protracted wars of attrition, the weaker side achieved its war objectives – usually national liberation – despite its military and technological inferiority and the highly asymmetrical loss ratios (including civilians) in the stronger side's favor – e.g., 6.6:1 in Algeria, 24:1 in Vietnam, dozens:1 in Afghanistan, 56 to 1 in Somalia.[114]

One of the Vietnam War's outstanding analysts referred to the frustrating gap between military success and political gains during the war on the American side: "On the battlefield itself the Army was unbeatable. In engagement after engagement the forces of the Vietcong and of the North Vietnamese Army were thrown back with terrible losses. Yet, in the end, it was North Vietnam, not the United States, that emerged victorious."[115] After the Vietcong's bloody Tet Offensive of early 1968, which ended up in their defeat, Walter Cronkite warned the American public that the only way out of the war would be to negotiate with the North Vietnamese, but "not as victors."[116] *Time* magazine, too, considered that "victory in Vietnam [. . .] may simply be beyond the grasp of the world's greatest power."[117] No wonder that one of Henry Kissinger's lessons from Vietnam pointed to the asymmetry between the strong and weak as far as the expected achievements are concerned: "We lost sight of one of the cardinal maxims of guerrilla warfare: 'the guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win.' "[118]

Conclusion: Western democracies in wars of attrition

It is true that Western democracies are less immune to attrition, particularly in asymmetrical wars, due to moral, societal, and political constraints. They are inclined to set the individual and his personal safety before the collective good, especially in cases where the stakes are not sufficiently high.[119] Their societies reject the use of harsh measures of suppression against civilians, let alone "dirty war" methods. Western democracies have developed economies, which furnish targets for terrorist attacks. Sometimes it is the lack of will on the part of politicians, misinterpreting societal resilience that accounts for the low cost tolerance attributed to democratic societies, rather than any chronic perseverance problem.[120] Leaders of democratic states often issue statements to the effect that their countries will never surrender to guerrilla and terror activities applied against them. But it usually requires little more than observation of what is genuinely felt by the societies of those countries, and by the elements that traditionally shape their public opinion – the media, politicians, and intellectuals in general – to detect that these are often only empty words. It is therefore understandable why the stronger side, particularly Western democracies, almost never chooses attrition as a preferred strategy.

Although the weaker side takes advantage of these sensitivities and vulnerabilities, none of the foregoing should be taken to imply that attrition in general, and attrition employed in asymmetrical wars in particular, will invariably end to the detriment of the strong side. When a Western democracy fights in its own territory and its proximity, it is more easily mobilized and is more determined to fight and win wars of attrition; for example, the British in Northern Ireland or Israel vis-à-vis the Palestinians. Terror, which has become a major threat for Western democracies, has created a sense of existential challenge that usually strengthens their societal solidarity and perseverance. As the economies of Western democracies are both relatively

prosperous and decentralized, the economic burden of wars of attrition tends to be limited. Despite the fact that the weaker side is now also playing on the technological playground, which constitutes a new challenge for the stronger side's traditional technological edge, technology also opens up new opportunities for coping with terror challenges. Western democracies engaged in asymmetrical wars of attrition also seem to have found the way to bridge operational effectiveness and morality by adopting a "post-heroic" policy.

At the same time, the weaker side's traditional vulnerabilities have not disappeared, and can still work in the stronger side's favor. For example, the more the nonstate player using attrition is committed to the well-being of its society and the more its military force and political and social agencies institutionalize, the more it has to lose and the easier it becomes for the stronger side to cripple its military and political power. Also, the stronger the interest of the government from whose territory insurgents operate to stop their activity, the more stable that government is, and the tighter its control of the country's territory — the more constrained the insurgents become.

Experience has shown that asymmetrical wars of attrition cannot be won merely by employing military means. For any state in general, and Western democracies in particular, winning such conflicts would require, first, a multidimensional, grand- strategic approach, combining military and non- military efforts; and second, a great deal of legitimacy- supported patience and persistence. Though guerrilla tactics and terrorism used by the weak might threaten the personal safety of the citizens of the state against which they are operating, thereby demoralizing them, they would generally not be capable of significantly endangering the country's national security, let alone its survival.

2 Israeli attrition aversion and the emergence of Israeli attrition conception

Having attributed to Israel difficulty in sustaining protracted wars of attrition, the Arabs in general and the Palestinians in particular have tried to impose such wars on it.[1] According to former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and other Egyptian officials, Israel, a state whose newspapers publish on their front pages the photograph and biography of each soldier who falls in battle, is unlikely to cope successfully with a war of attrition.[2] Nasser's friend and political ally *Al-Ahram* editor Mohammed Hassanein Heikal explained the Egyptian president's rationale:

> If the enemy succeeds in inflicting 50,000 casualties in this campaign, we can go on fighting nevertheless, because we have manpower reserves. If we succeed in inflicting 10,000 casualties, he will unavoidably find himself compelled to stop fighting, because he has no manpower reserves.[3]

Palestinian leaders have believed that the Palestinian society's cost tolerance was higher than the Israeli society's and that their greater societal staying power could balance their inferiority in military capabilities. In August 1968, shortly before seizing control of the PLO, Yasser Arafat urged "the transfer of all resistance bases" into the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, conquered by Israel during the June 1967 war, so as to launch a sustained terrorist campaign that would undermine Israel's way of life by

> preventing immigration and encouraging emigration, [. . .] destroying tourism, [. . .] weakening the Israeli economy, and diverting the greater part of it to security requirements, [. . . and] creating and maintaining an atmosphere of strain and anxiety that will force the Zionists to realize that it is impossible for them to live in Israel.[4]

The Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 only strengthened that belief. "If the [Israeli] enemy could not bear the losses on the border strip with Lebanon, will it be able to withstand a long war of attrition in the heart of its security dimension and major cities?" asked Islamic Jihad leader Ramadan Shallah rhetorically in 2001.[5] This belief was inspired by Hezbollah SecretaryGeneral Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah's spider web "theory." The theory, which was introduced in the early 2000s, claimed that Israeli society is constructed like a spider web, prone to tear when only stretched a little. In other words, Israel only appears sturdy but is in fact fragile, because the Israelis have lost the will to fight.[6] Another Hezbollah official called Israel a state "made of chalk," which will collapse as a result of Hezbollah's resistance and its own domestic problems.[7] In July 2007 a Syrian defense official assessed that "The next possible Syrian–Israeli war will be more like a war of cities rather than battles on fronts or in the fields. It'll be a war of attrition that Israelis are not good at," he explained.[8]

The anti-Israel "attrition until destruction" strategy adopted by Iran, Syria and Muslim extremists, which is more famous by the name *Muqawama*, given to it by Hezbollah, focuses on "persistent warfare," denying victory to the enemy rather than achieving a quick result; targeting and demoralizing the Israeli rear, taking advantage of its vulnerability and low cost tolerance; inflicting casualties on Israeli troops and neutralizing their freedom of action; and minimizing the insurgents' death toll by hiding and avoiding direct confrontation with superior forces.[9]

Challenging Israel with attrition has been compatible with the so- called Arab way of war, which has traditionally emphasized staying power,[10] and with the belief that democracies cannot tolerate wars of attrition, either economically or psychologically.[11] Gradual attrition of Israel has also become an Islamist vision. It has recently been claimed that should Iran acquire nuclear capability, the Israeli—Islamist conflict would enter a phase, in which periodic nuclear-alert crises could bring about the economic, political, and demographic attrition of Israel.[12]

The main argument put forth in this chapter is that two opposing tendencies – attrition aversion, on the one hand, and gradual internalization of the centrality of attrition, on the other – accounted for the emergence and crystallization of an implicit Israeli attrition conception over the course of many years, particularly since the 1980s.

Israeli attrition aversion

Israel behaved as if the Arabs were right. It developed a self- image of incapacity to sustain prolonged wars, committing itself, as part of its traditional offensive approach, to *blitzkrieg*, while developing attrition aversion. Israeli security and military architects held the view that Israel's ability to withstand the price of war in terms of both casualties and damage to the economy resulting from prolonged conscription was clearly much lower than that of its enemies.[13] *Blitzkrieg*, on the other hand, was believed to enable the country to return to regular day-to-day life as quickly as possible, minimize military and civilian casualties, diminish the likelihood of superpower intervention, and preempt the arrival of Arab expeditionary forces on the battlefield to fight alongside the direct confrontation states.[14] According to General (ret.) Israel Tal, the entire Israeli security doctrine could be reduced to one basic rule – preferring striking force [i.e., *blitzkrieg*] to staying power.[15]

Nothing reflects Israel's commitment to *blitzkrieg* more than Deputy Chief of Staff Haim Bar-Lev's promise prior to the outbreak of the 1967 Six Day War to defeat the enemy "quickly, strongly, and elegantly."[16] Earlier, however, even before the 1956 Sinai War, the *blitzkrieg* approach garnered strength under Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan,[17] and after that war the IDF was built as a mobile, armorbased army, capable of operating not only rapidly but also continuously, and its logistical system was adjusted accordingly. Up until the 1980s this approach did not change much, although it was based on unduly optimistic assumptions about the circumstances of a war, i.e., the ability to maneuver on the battlefield, as was painfully demonstrated by the 1973 October War. No wonder, therefore, that when Israel found itself engaged in wars of attrition, it tried to end them as quickly as possible. As one Israeli sociologist put it, "Armies are appreciated when they are victorious, and Israel is used to having very short wars and very big victories."[18]

Israeli aversion to prolonged engagements was expressed on various occasions. In the early 1950s Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan preached massive retaliation to infiltration and *fedayeen* activities from Egyptian territory against Israeli civilians, and even preferred war with Egypt to the continuation of low-intensity hostilities.[19] In the early 1960s Northern Front Chief General David (Dado) Elazar preferred escalation and massive retaliation on the Syrian front to the continuation of small- scale fire incidents and engagements along the armistice lines, quite aware that this might lead to war.[20] Assistant Chief of Operations, Colonel Rehavam Zeevi, believed

that both the IDF and Israeli settlers in the frontier areas could no longer tolerate Fatah insurgency. Fearing that the settlers might abandon their homes, he called for a “radical solution” in the form of war against Syria and the Fatah organization.[21] In July 1965 the Israeli General Staff discussed the situation along the borders. The general opinion among its members was that the IDF did not have any satisfactory answer to Fatah’s guerrilla and terror activities. Some of the members did not hide their hope that escalation in the conflict with the Palestinians would create an opportunity to launch a large- scale operation, maybe even war, against Syria.[22]

Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin admitted that his main concern was the IDF’s difficulty in coping with “small war,” which might overshadow Israeli achievements vis-à-vis Syria and Israel’s success in driving a wedge between the Arab players. Rabin believed that failure to react to terror and guerrilla activities from Jordan, attempts to sabotage the Israeli Water Carrier project, and Syrian efforts to divert the Jordan River’s water would critically erode Israeli deterrence. Being aware of the diplomatic constraints on Israeli freedom of action, he did not exclude the possibility that the IDF would “contribute” to escalation until such time as the political echelon understood that Israel could no longer afford to restrain itself. He even called for preparing Israeli public opinion for the outbreak of war, not for the sake of the Jordan River’s water but rather for saving Israel’s deteriorating deterrent image.[23]

In a speech she held before the Knesset on 17 February 1970, Prime Minister Golda Meir said that Israel was not going “to let the Egyptians conduct a war of attrition [. . .] at their convenience.”[24] Earlier, in late 1969, a few months after Egypt had declared a war of attrition against Israel, Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon, Minister of Transportation Ezer Weizman (formerly IDF’s Chief of Operations), and Israel’s ambassador to the US Yitzhak Rabin strongly advocated massive retaliation via air strikes against the Egyptian rear. The Israeli government, however, did not approve such strategy, believing in flexible and proportionate response and in saving Israeli air power for all- out confrontation.[25] President Nasser was aware of Israel’s preference for “regular” wars. In late 1969 he told King Hussein of Jordan that given Israel’s offensive strategy and powerful air force it would naturally prefer decisive rather than limited war, and for that reason Egypt was focusing on thwarting Israel’s efforts to achieve decisive victory.[26]

Haim Bar-Lev, Chief of Staff during the war of attrition, refused to relate to this gloryless confrontation as a real war. “No time frame was set for that war and no territory was occupied during its course, so it was not considered a true war,” he explained.[27] “Nothing is worse than a war of attrition in which 300 Egyptians and four Jews will fall in battle each day,” declared General Elazar, Bar- Lev’s successor as Chief of Staff since the summer of 1972, removing himself from the conception of strongholds and the Bar-Lev line.[28] Elazar did not hide his reservations regarding attrition and a defensive approach: “Should war start again in the future, we should not base our war effort on staying power and defense.”[29] Both the General Staff and many years later a committee appointed by Prime Minister Ehud Barak and headed by General (ret.) Amram Mitzna, recommended that the soldiers who had participated in the war of attrition should not be granted war ribbons, but rather “combat service badges” instead.[30] The committee discounted the fact that casualty rates during this war were higher than the ones inflicted during the “apogee of *blitzkrieg*” (i.e., the 1967 Six Day War) – to use Martin Van Creveld’s characterization.[31]

In the wake of the war of attrition, Israel defined war of attrition as a *casus belli*,[32] being prepared to revert to all- out, 1967 *blitzkrieg*-style war, if necessary. However, a stronger sense

of security in the post-1967 period and superpower involvement in the conflict, in combination, have weakened this commitment, and attrition challenges did not automatically lead to recourse to "regular" war.[33]

During the post-1973 War of attrition on the Golan Heights, the newly appointed Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur expressed his reservations regarding the continuation of such a war, urging Defense Minister Moshe Dayan to approve a large- scale operation that would lead to the destruction of Syrian dispositions south of the "enclave" (the territory captured by Israeli troops during the war), which remained almost intact.[34]

During the 1981 "Small War of Attrition" with the PLO on the Israeli–Lebanese border, which exposed Israel's soft underbelly – its civilian rear – Israel reluctantly accepted a ceasefire, hoping to be able to launch a decisive attack as soon as possible, once favorable diplomatic conditions arose. "A former prime minister" – most probably Yitzhak Rabin – was cited to have said during a discussion at the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in February 1982 that Israel should avoid any 1981-like war of attrition.[35] In early 1982 Defense Minister Ariel Sharon related to the possibility of another war of attrition in northern Israel as a "complication."[36] Two days before Israel launched the attack that started the 1982 Lebanon War, Prime Minister Menahem Begin said that the instruction he had given to the chief of staff to prepare for a big operation that would destroy the enemy was based on the assumption that the Israeli society would not withstand another war of attrition.[37] According to Sharon, once the ceasefire came into effect, "we were determined to avoid any attrition."[38]

During the Intifadas, Israel tried to put an end to the prolonged conflict by implementing harsh punitive measures against the Palestinians. "We are not built for a war of attrition," explained former Defense Minister Moshe Arens, when referring to the Second Intifada. "There is awareness that we must bring this to a conclusion," he added.[39] On the eve of the 2003 Iraq War, an IDF general related to the possibility of Hezbollah hostilities being launched against Israel during the upcoming war. "[The IDF] won't get into the guerrilla mincing machine they prepare for us in Lebanon," he promised.[40] In early 2004 it was reported that in one of the papers issued by the Training and Doctrine Department, the IDF acknowledged the need to prepare for confrontations that would take a long time to decide.[41] At the same time, however, it restated its commitment to achieving quick battlefield decision and to avoiding attrition.

Even in 2006, years after Israel had apparently internalized the need to fight wars of attrition and developed an implicit attrition conception (see below), it could not get rid of its preference for *blitzkrieg*, most probably as a result of the fear that the civilian rear might be too sensitive and vulnerable. The political and military echelons estimated that it might take weeks to destroy Hezbollah's infrastructure in southern Lebanon. "We should expect [. . .] and be prepared for a prolonged campaign," asserted the General Staff's Operation Order No. 1 from 13 June 2006.[42] The international conditions seemed almost perfect for a confrontation in which Israel would not be stopped until it reached its war objectives. In the back of their minds, though, the Israelis still "dreamed of fighting a short, clean war on the cheap," finding themselves – against their will – "playing incremental catch- up." The IDF, too, was "looking backward toward its proud heritage."[43] After eight days of Israeli attacks in Lebanon during which over 1,000 terrorist targets had been hit, including 180 Katyusha and long-range rocket launch sites, Hezbollah seemed to remain as intransigent as before. Israeli yearning for something that resembled *blitzkrieg* reawakened, though implicitly. While Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that the IDF had as much time as it should ask for to complete its missions, Chief of Staff Dan Halutz

preferred escalation to protracted war of attrition.[44] On 18 July, during a meeting of senior commanders at the Chief of Staff's office, some of the participants talked about the need to stop the attrition mode Hezbollah was imposing on Israel.[45] Following that meeting General Halutz warned the Israeli War Cabinet that Hezbollah was trying to drag Israel into a war of attrition, whereas Israel preferred "a short and forceful war." "They realize that prolonged attrition causes internal pressure from Israeli citizens and international pressure, and think that those are our weak points," Halutz explained, adding that Hezbollah wished the fighting to extend over a long period "so that we will capitulate."[46] Former Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon, who returned from the US to Israel during the war in order to contribute some insights to its conduct, based on his experience and some information he had managed to gather from American officials, thought the Israeli leadership was wrong in believing that people would stay in shelters for weeks and even months until the IDF finished "to crack [Hezbollah] down." Go for *blitz*[*krieg*], was Yaalon's recommendation. "Mobilize reserves and finish the job in a week."[47] A year after the war, when Defense Minister Ehud Barak predicted how Israel's future war will look like, he used *blitzkrieg* terms: "[The IDF will seek] a clear cut, quick and decisive victory, achieved on the enemy's territory, with minimal damage inflicted on the [Israeli] rear."[48] In 2007 the IDF's official site still referred to "achieving quick battlefield decision," in other words, *blitzkrieg*, as one of seven pillars of the IDF's military doctrine.[49]

Two years after the war Israeli military experts and officials offered a conception for coping with the missile threat to Israel, which combined attrition aversion and reluctance to maneuver on the ground. Inspired by former Chief of Staff Halutz's vision that had failed during the war, it preached a "disproportional response," particularly against civilian targets, either Shiite-populated areas or state infrastructure, ignoring the limited leverage the Lebanese government had on Hezbollah and the likelihood of domestic or foreign constraints similar to those that had limited Israeli freedom of action back in 2006.[50]

A skeptical view of Israel's ability to sustain wars of attrition came also from a renowned Israeli author and poet, Haim Gouri, following the Second Lebanon War. "I am no historian, but I have written it down for myself that whereas we have won our wars of movement, we have lost all our wars of attrition. It is difficult for us to sustain this form of war. It is difficult for the IDF to develop the skills required for successful counter-guerrilla warfare and to cope with mass demonstrations or with women shouting in the alleys of poverty and despair."[51] Unlike Israel's "regular" wars, its wars of attrition have not been mentioned in prayers in synagogues, they have no memorial days, and none of them has been commemorated philatelically.

In light of Israel's attrition aversion it was only natural that it would not initiate wars of this kind. And indeed, these wars rather emerged and crept up incrementally.

The emergence of an Israeli attrition strategy

For many years Israel treated attrition as a relatively minor challenge, which did not deserve investing too much intellectual energies. Israelis have traditionally considered "current security" – until the outbreak of the First Intifada, their name for LICs – a minor challenge relative to "basic- security" challenges posed by the regular armies of Arab states.[52] The IDF's military thinking and training, too, were geared toward "regular," symmetrical wars,[53] despite the fact

that Israel had for many years been engaged in asymmetrical wars of attrition. Between the mid-1950s and the late 1980s, most IDF officers' professional articles focused on the challenge of "regular" wars with Arab states, rather than asymmetrical challenges. Only in later periods, particularly during the years 1994–2000, did the IDF "discover" asymmetrical challenges.[54]

Israeli commanders have been "practical soldiers," their primary commitment being to performance, basing themselves on experience and intuition while rejecting the practical value of theory.[55] This is at least a partial explanation for the lack of any official, explicit Israeli national security or national defense doctrine, or any attrition or LIC doctrine. The IDF does have a tactical doctrine, which was first issued in 1963 and was updated in recent years, as well as an operational conception that has been crystallized during the last two decades. But both doctrines focus on HICs and "regular" war contexts, referring to the enemy's irregular or attrition challenge only briefly.

The lack of an intellectual tradition in the Israeli strategic establishment, on the one hand, and the reality of attrition that has been an important part of Israeli security environment since the 1950s, on the other, have produced fragmented, eclectic, and to a large extent implicit attrition thinking. During the course of many years, particularly since the 1980s, elements of attrition conception have developed, which the following sections of this chapter will try to trace.

The 1980s

In the 1980s three important developments pertaining both to the perceived threat from asymmetrical conflicts and to their conduct took place. For the first time, asymmetrical wars of attrition were perceived as a "basic security" challenge. As a result of the First Intifada Israeli defense architects understood that asymmetrical challenges could not be coped with in one go; and post-heroic tendencies started affecting Israel's way of conducting its asymmetrical wars of attrition.

"Basic security" challenges

Asymmetrical wars of attrition were no longer perceived as belonging exclusively in the "current security" category, but were rather treated as challenging Israel's "basic security," either actually or potentially. The main explanation for this "upgrading" is the aggravating threat posed by Palestinian terrorism. This threat fell on the fertile ground of an Israeli society in which personal safety became even more important than national security. Although if measured "objectively" Israel's wars of attrition have never entailed any existential threat to the country, senior Israeli officials started referring to them as such.

In the early 1980s, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon introduced new *casi belli* to Israeli defense policy, including, for the first time, a tacit *casus belli* that for many in Israel related to "current security" threats – insurgency from neighboring states.[56] In 1986, Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir reacted to an attempt made by a Syrian-dispatched Abu Nidal operative to place a bomb on an El Al plane leaving London's Heathrow Airport for Tel Aviv[57] by declaring that, had the aircraft exploded, Israel might have launched a war against Syria.[58]

The watershed: change of perception

A significant shift in Israeli attitude toward attrition occurred in the late 1980s. When the First Intifada erupted in December 1987, Israeli political and military decision makers were taken by surprise.[59] Not only had they underestimated the unrest in the territories,[60] they also did not know how to cope with civil disobedience applied against them by the United National Command – the local leadership. While relatively experienced with guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and riots, they had little knowledge of civil disobedience.

Initially, the Israeli troops behaved as if the uprising were another routine, violent incident of the type they recognized. But it soon became clear that they lacked suitable riot- control equipment and training and that the policing duties imposed on them required skills quite different from what they possessed.[61] As the scope of the unrest exceeded that of previous incidents, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin instructed the IDF to react decisively. He even authorized them to break the arms and legs of civilian demonstrators, if necessary,[62] in order to dissuade them from carrying on the struggle and force the Palestinian leadership to stop hostilities. Rabin, a former Chief of Staff, was inspired by his personal experience with HICs. He basically rejected the idea of attrition, instead committing to a quick and effective military confrontation that would end in victory, which would ultimately translate into political gains.

Four months after the outbreak of the Intifada, however, Rabin realized that Israel's military might was almost irrelevant to coping with extremely limited violence or civil disobedience. Israel's status as the source of power and authority in the territories dictated that its behavior there be restricted both legally and politically. He also concluded that the challenge could not be dealt with in one attempt but rather via a cumulative process of exhaustion,[63] and that the solution for the underlying causes of the uprising was political.[64] This constituted a watershed in Israeli security conception, as has happened to other countries and armies who were strongly committed to *blitzkrieg* but had to adopt an attrition policy, e.g., the Germans on the western front in World War I, or the Soviets in Afghanistan.

The emergence of post–heroic tendencies

As of the late 1970s, Israeli thinking and activity during its asymmetrical wars have been characterized by strong post-heroic state-of-mind. Post-heroic tendencies had existed in the IDF long before the concept of post-heroic warfare was explicitly defined and formulated. The IDF, however, has never acknowledged its post- heroic inclination. Like Monsieur Jourdain in Molière's play, *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, who discovered that "For more than forty years I have been speaking prose without knowing anything about it,"[65] most IDF senior and junior officers have neither heard about it nor written about it in *Maarachot*, the IDF's professional journal, although they have been applying it for years, both in the territories and in Lebanon. Chapter 6 offers a detailed account of Israeli post-heroic tendencies.

The 1990s and 2000s

In the 1990s and 2000s Israeli leadership continued to relate to LICs in terms of a basic security

threat. In 1995, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin declared for the first time that, for Israel, terrorism represented a "strategic threat."[66] Finally, in the midst of a wave of murderous terrorist attacks by Palestinian suicide bombers against Israeli citizens during the Second Intifada, Israeli Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz said that for Israel the conflict was "an existential war,"[67] while Prime Minister Sharon declared that Operation Defensive Shield against Palestinian terrorism in March–April 2002 was "over our home."[68] Referring to terror as an existential threat, in turn, has been translated into greater societal perseverance.

In the 1990s and 2000s, Israeli defense elite also kept internalizing the attritional nature of Israel's asymmetrical conflicts. At the same time a belief spread among IDF senior commanders that asymmetrical wars have become "battles of conviction," which projected on the relative importance attributed to affecting the enemy's consciousness as compared to its capabilities. Also, first significant intellectual efforts were made by the IDF to understand and develop tools for coping with asymmetrical wars of attrition.

Adapting to a reality of attrition

During the First Intifada the IDF's Central Command tested a new attrition-oriented LIC doctrine in the territories,[69] the lessons of which were later applied during the Second Intifada. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who shortly after assuming power changed former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's guideline to the IDF for handling the Intifada from "reducing" the violence to "ending" it,[70] soon adapted to a reality of attrition. Unlike Chief of Staff Mofaz, who strove for decision, both Sharon and Mofaz's successor Chief of Staff Yaalon, came to believe in winning the Second Intifada through a blow-for-blow battle stretching over years or maybe even decades.

When asked why, in contrast to his career as military commander he now refrained from striving for a decisive conclusion as quickly as possible, Sharon explained that as prime minister one has to see the entire picture, not merely the narrow military one. One must also assess how the situation might develop in the future, which requires a gradual approach.[71]

> We have to control our actions in order to avoid escalation. This requires lots of perseverance, determination and peace of mind. One must understand that we cannot achieve everything now. It will take time [. . .], but at the end of the process the citizens of Israel will again feel secure. It will neither be short nor simple [. . .].[72]

Yaalon for his part talked about a war of attrition to be won by scoring points, as opposed to a knockout.[73] Already as Deputy Chief of Staff, he had described the confrontation with the Palestinians as one of attritional nature:

> [. . . The Palestinians] have identified the Israeli civilian rear's [low] staying power as a point of weakness, and have been focusing on it. [. . .] This confrontation is an important test for our staying power. In case we cannot withstand it, it will impact on our relations with the Palestinians and the Israeli Arabs and on the way the Arab world sees us.[74]

Haaretz's military commentator, Zeev Schiff, described Chief of Staff Yaalon's view on attrition: "Yaalon believes that a guerrilla organization can be defeated in a prolonged war of attrition. It will not be a knockout, but a victory on points."[75] Illustrative of the new approach was the name given by Israeli troops to the Second Intifada – "the Six Year War," an ironic contrast to the Six Day War.[76]

A few years later, in mid- November 2006, following a Hamas or Islamic Jihad Qassam rocket

attack on the town of Sderot, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert delivered a speech on the difficulties entailed in coping with terror challenges. War against terrorism cannot be finished in one go, he said, reminding those who have been demanding a Defensive Shield-like operation in Gaza that terror from the West Bank continued despite that operation.[77]

The internalization of the fact that Israel's wars were now of an attritional nature became evident in declarations issued by Israeli officials during the July—August 2006 Israel–Hezbollah war. Prime Minister Olmert said it was "a day-today struggle, in which we ought to project cold bloodedness and determination."[78] He praised the Israeli citizens' staying power, depicting it as an important part of the Israeli power.[79] Chief of Staff Dan Halutz said the rear's backing of the IDF was equal in importance to military power.[80] Deputy Chief of Staff Moshe Kaplinsky spoke about a war that will last weeks, although he predicted it would not take months to end.[81] Former IAF Chief General (ret.) Eytan Ben Eliyahu pointed to the societies' staying power test as the decisive element in the confrontation, praising the Israeli rear's perseverance as something the government could lean on during the crisis.[82] IAF Chief Eliezer Shkedi said the rear's staying power was the most effective weapon in Israel's hands during the confrontation.[83] And Minister of Transportation (former Defense Minister) Shaul Mofaz praised the Israeli rear's staying power, reminding the Israeli people of Sheikh Nasrallah's spider web theory and the expectation of the terrorist organizations that the Israeli civilian rear's morale would break down within a short period of time.[84]

"Burning the enemy's consciousness"

During the 2000s, affecting the enemy's consciousness became more important for IDF commanders than affecting its capabilities. Reflective of this approach was Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon's statement during the Second Intifada that "[Israel must] burn into the Palestinian consciousness" that violence does not bring them political gains.[85]

One of the negative consequences of the aforementioned "battle of conviction" conception has been the belief that the chances of achieving battlefield decision via attrition were fairly slim, and that it was no longer necessary to defeat the enemy in the traditional way but rather to create "a victory appearance."[86] Inspired by American "effect-based operations" thinking and under the impression of police missions in the territories, IDF commanders substituted their commitment to battlefield decision for a new commitment to "leverages and effects." During the early 2000s the IDF was still under the spell of these leverages and effects despite the fact that one of the lessons learned from an exercise (Firestones-9) carried out two years before the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War was that in order to stop the launching of rockets onto Israeli territory it was necessary to affect the enemy's capabilities rather than its "consciousness." Neither this conclusion nor the failure to bring Hezbollah "to acknowledge" its bad condition within a few days during the 2006 Second Lebanon War via "leverages and effects" triggered any second thoughts regarding their efficiency. The IDF rather concluded that the "leverages and effects" should merely be improved.[87]

In recent years the IDF's commitment to clear-cut military achievements has weakened considerably, both in general, and in LIC context in particular. Unlike its traditional approach, the IDF no longer thought that getting to the negotiation table from a position of strength depended on achieving battlefield decision, i.e., denying the enemy the ability to carry on the

fight militarily, but rather on moral exhaustion of the enemy's society. The general tendency to underestimate battlefield decision is reflected in an interview Brigadier Eyval Gil'adi from IDF's Planning Branch gave before retiring from military career:

> When I started my job, I found in the plans the term "defeating the Palestinians." I asked myself, what is that nonsense? Whom exactly are we supposed to defeat? What does defeat mean? We tried to think of alternatives to defeating the enemy. Initially I talked about a "victory image," which is merely an appearance. It then became a matter of producing a victory show.[88]

Chief of Staff Yaalon himself expressed skepticism about the ability to land a decisive blow on a guerrilla organization like Hezbollah.[89] No wonder that when the Second Lebanon War broke out, Chief of Operations General Gad Eisenkot said that defeating Hezbollah was unattainable.[90] "The military does not even pretend to achieve battlefield decision," was Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's impression from the military's state of mind during a Cabinet meeting held on 31 July.[91]

Intellectual efforts to understand attrition

Against the backdrop of the Intifadas, and to a great extent triggered by them, a serious intellectual effort has been made in the IDF to understand the nature of asymmetrical conflicts and attrition situations. As early as the late 1990sarly 2000s the General Staff's Training and Doctrine Department issued dozens of publications on the so-called limited confrontation – IDF's new term for LIC, after having used the term "current security" for many years. Most of these publications were translations of papers published by the British and American armies.

In 2001 the department issued a publication, *The Limited Confrontation*. Although it did offer some insights that might have enriched IDF commanders' minds, it was of an historic and conceptual nature, and was not formulated as a doctrine. The author, Colonel Shmuel Nir (Semo), presented the "limited confrontation" as a non- war situation, in which the central concept was "wearing the enemy out." It was a mixture of old guerrilla warfare principles and post-modern concepts, such as the "operations other than war" (OOTW). *The Limited Confrontation* distinguished between what was required of the military in LIC as compared to HIC situations, stressing the attritional nature of the limited confrontation, in contrast to the decisive nature expected of the military in HICs.[92] In 2004, after having studied the challenge of limited confrontation for two years, the Training and Doctrine Department started issuing "doctrinal" papers. The Infantry's "current security" doctrine department was also active in this field, but its products focused on lesson learning rather than doctrine.[93]

As already pointed out, one of the explanations offered for the poor LIC thinking in the IDF, at least until the outbreak of the Intifadas, was the preoccupation with the challenge which was considered the most threatening – a war of high-intensity nature.[94] Ironically, the IDF's poor performance in the 2006 Second Lebanon War was attributed, among other reasons, to the impact of the policing missions in the territories, which have caused its operational skills to degenerate.[95]

As part of the intellectual effort to understand the phenomenon of asymmetrical wars and the central role played by attrition in such wars, in January 2002 the National Defense College and Haifa University's National Security Studies Center dedicated a symposium to the theoretical and practical aspects of attrition in LICs.[96] In October 2004, *Maarachot*, the IDF's publishing

house, issued an edited volume whose title was *Low-Intensity Conflict*, for which key Israeli military practitioners and researchers contributed articles. In many of the articles LIC was presented as an asymmetrical conflict, in which the vitality of interests and consequently the societal perseverance are of the highest importance, to the point of balancing military—technological capability. Some contributors characterized asymmetrical conflicts as highly affected by moral factors and pointed to the potential of manipulating the opponent's mind.[97]

The time dimension was presented in the volume as one that requires flexible adaptation to changes in the adversaries' war objectives. LIC was treated as a multidimensional effort, which has psychological, economic, physical and other aspects and is waged across all levels-of-war.[98] The volume reflects awareness of the difficulty to achieve battlefield decision in LICs. One of the articles, however, challenged this new thinking, criticizing Israeli tendency to portray attrition as non- military, other than war confrontation, and arguing that learning from the experience of other countries engaged in LICs (e.g., Indochina, Malaya, Algeria, Cuba, Zimbabwe, North Ireland) was a mistake, as their armies operated under different conditions, i.e., no existential threat to the stronger side. The author argued that the response to terror-based attrition has proven to be woefully inadequate. He called for readopting the traditional commitment to military confrontation, short war, and quick battlefield decision, in order to thwart the advantages entailed in the strategy of attrition for the enemy, particularly its negative psychological and economic effect.[99]

Attrition has also been related to in *Maarachot* articles of recent years, many of which were dedicated to LICs. Attrition has usually been presented as a strategy available for the weaker side, and has hardly been perceived as one that might suit the stronger side.[100] But new approaches to LICs, in which attrition is related to, such as Fourth Generation Warfare, Complex Irregular Warfare or Hybrid War[101] have hardly been mentioned or related to.

General characteristics of the emerging attrition conception

To the IDF's credit it should be noted that during the course of Israel's protracted asymmetrical wars, since the 1950s, the IDF has learned, first, that in such contexts, unlike "regular wars," offensive and defensive approaches should be applied in combination, complementing each other; and second, that counter-insurgency efforts must be accompanied by a commitment to fight in compliance with high moral standards, as much as security needs and conditions allowed.

Applying a balanced, offensive–defensive approach

Although the IDF has traditionally believed that there was no better way of defense than going after the enemy, compelling him to stop the attrition,[102] or deterring him by punishment rather than by denial,[103] it was not indifferent to the shortcomings of a purely offensive approach, especially in asymmetrical contexts. These shortcomings included the limited and short-term effectiveness of reprisals, as well as the need to avoid escalation with the Arab states from whose territory guerrillas and terrorists operated against Israel, or with a foreign superpower; to avoid international criticism for Israeli aggressiveness and for creating a destabilizing effect; to avoid

casualties for Israeli troops and among enemy civilians; and to strengthen the sense of security among those living in the frontier areas and the rear. Israel's protracted asymmetrical wars taught the IDF that in such contexts, unlike "regular wars," an offensive approach should be complemented by a defensive one.

The role played by defense goes back to the 1950s, when the IDF, against its will but in response to the political echelon's demands, invested in defensive deployment along the borders in order to strengthen the settlers' sense of security and help them cope with terror attacks. Throughout the years Israel's defensive posture in its asymmetrical wars of attrition has been based on two main elements: buffer zones, which included security fences on the Lebanese border, along the Jordan Valley, and between Israel and the territories, equipped with electronic devices; and a system of shelters and protected spaces to protect civilians under missile attacks. In recent years Israel has also been engaged in developing such means as anti-rocket/Katyusha systems (see Chapter 3).

Commitment to moral standards

An integral part of Israeli counter-insurgency efforts has been the commitment to conduct war in compliance with high moral standards, particularly using force discriminately and proportionally and respecting civil liberties as much as the security needs and conditions allow. This commitment was inspired by Jewish and liberal—democratic values, and was also a result of a realistic acknowledgement of the importance of internal and external legitimacy. Not only did Israel stress its commitment to fight morally, but it also educated its troops in the spirit of the "purity of arms."

The public debate held in Israel in the wake of cases of "collateral damage"; the development of doctrinal, tactical, and technological means and information-gathering methods that could reduce collateral damage considerably; the existence of a code of ethics, which was formulated by the IDF as a result of the ethical dilemmas Israeli troops faced during the Intifadas; close control by the IDF's judicial authorities on targeted killing of terrorists and other operations in the territories; rules of engagement and methods of dispersing demonstrations that tried to make sure that the loss of life or serious bodily injury were minimized; or occasional rules by the Israeli Supreme Court on matters such as discriminate use of force, torture, "human shields" – are all testimony of the commitment to fight morally. These efforts, however, have occasionally failed, either as a result of the fact that asymmetrical wars are usually waged in an environment where it is often impossible to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants; as a result of the troops' stress, intelligence failures, poor planning or performance, and lack of professionalism and discipline; or against the backdrop of murderous terror activity, such as the Palestinian suicide bombing campaign during the Second Intifada (see Chapter 6).

Conclusion

As Israel has been engaged in wars of attrition since the early 1950s, one would expect its strategic thinking to offer theory and experience-based doctrines, as well as strategies and tactics to cope with attrition challenges, something that hardly happened for reasons discussed above. A

gradual crystallization of an implicit Israeli attrition conception did take place, though, strongly affected by the fact that war has receded from the actual battlefield and has become a confrontation between societies. It consisted of the following elements. As wars of attrition serve the Arabs, while Israel prefers short and decisive wars, Israel will not initiate wars of attrition; asymmetrical wars of attrition no longer belong in the "current security" category as since the 1980s they have been challenging Israel's "basic security"; as asymmetrical wars of attrition have become "battles of conviction," affecting the enemy society's consciousness has become more important than affecting the enemy's capabilities; the chances of achieving battlefield decision via attrition are fairly slim, and one had better apply "leverages and effects," instead; the challenge of attrition cannot be dealt with in one *blitzkrieg*-style attempt, but rather via a cumulative multidimensional process; in asymmetrical contexts in particular offensive approach has to be complemented by a defensive approach; and compliance with high moral standards is important for both ethical and pragmatic reasons. Post- heroic conduct of war has become a modus operandi in Israel's asymmetrical wars of attrition, bridging operational effectiveness and morality.

3 The operational aspect

The role played by offense and defense

Every war has varied operational aspects, and so do wars of attrition. In this chapter I chose to focus on the role played by offense and defense. The centrality and uniqueness of offense and defense in the context of attrition is manifested in two aspects. First, whereas in regular wars state players can sometimes afford to adopt pure offense or defense, in wars of attrition they usually need to adopt a balanced offensive/defensive approach. To cite David Petraeus, previously Commanding General of the Multi-National Force in Iraq "[in the protracted confrontation in Iraq, the stronger side had to employ] a mix of offensive, defensive and stability operations."[1] Second, in regular war, usually when one's forces are advancing on the enemy's territory, it means that one is attacking. When one remains on one's own territory, focusing on strengthening one's grip there, it usually means that one is defending. In wars of attrition in general and asymmetrical ones in particular, the borderline between offense and defense as a strategy or tactic is often blurred. Adversaries are engaged in skirmishes or are using firepower rather than maneuvering, which makes it difficult to identify, at any given point in time over the course of the war, who is defending and who is attacking, who is initiating and who is responding. It should be noted, though, that in asymmetrical wars of attrition in particular, the conflict may dictate the use of measures that do not belong in the domain of offense or defense in the strict military sense.

The weaker side often channels its offensive efforts to the two extremes of the levels-of-war pyramid – grand-strategy and tactics. At the tactical level it engages in guerilla-type warfare against the stronger side's troops, attacking occasionally, only when – to cite Mao – it can "pick out the enemy's weaker units for attack," and "concentrate a big force to strike at one part of the enemy forces."[2] At the same time it tries to avoid engagement in which it has no chances of winning. At the grand-strategic level it targets the enemy's society either directly or indirectly, taking advantage of Western democracies' lower cost tolerance in wars in which the perceived stakes involved are not sufficiently high.

For the stronger side defense is unavoidable if it wishes to thwart enemy efforts to cross the border, to protect population centers, military bases, and lines of communications, to deter by denial, and to maintain a reasonable level of personal safety that would strengthen the society's staying power and enable daily life to continue at a level close to normalcy. Defensive deployment would usually require stretching the state's forces across the territory under its control.

Offense would complement defense for compellence or deterrence-by-punishment purposes. Offensive measures, however, often prove to have limited and short-term effect, and are likely to trigger escalation. Once they fail in delivering the goods, the military is tempted to resort to more force. The spiraling tendency of the conflict could express itself in various forms of escalation, and may even end up in regular war (see Chapters 1 and 7). The risks entailed in offensive measures notwithstanding, they often hold a powerful appeal for regular armies, which in most

cases suffer from attrition aversion, tending to believe that with offense there are greater chances for achieving quick and decisive victory, reducing uncertainty, conferring initiative, and increasing the military's size, funds, prestige and autonomy.

In the mid-1950s Israel adopted an offensive approach vis-à-vis the Arab states. The commitment to an offensive approach had its roots in the pre-state Palestinian–Jewish inter-community conflict during the first half of the twentieth century, which was in itself a war of attrition. The Zionist movement at that time was torn between a defensive and an offensive ethos. The defensive ethos was rooted not only in practical reasons, i.e., the need to protect Jewish settlements in Palestine, but also in basic Jewish rejection of violence on moral grounds: violence was perceived as contradictory to Jewish values, and was treated as a necessary evil, or an act of no alternative, imposed on the Jewish community in Palestine by the Arab community's aggression. The offensive ethos, on the other hand, was a result of the Zionist need to establish a territorial base for the Jewish community and to compensate for its quantitative inferiority by adopting offensive methods.[3]

Since the establishment of the State of Israel, the tension between these two approaches has, to a great extent, been reflected in Israeli strategic thinking. One could quite easily identify similar schools of thought among Israel's defense elite regarding Israeli war objectives – a positive-offensive and a negative-defensive. The differences between these schools notwithstanding, they shared a common preference for an offensive strategy, for three main reasons. First, the country's inability to absorb an attack on its territory due to the lack of strategic depth. Second, the IDF's inferiority in the quantitative balance-of-forces vis-à-vis the Arab armies. Offense was considered a force multiplier that could solve this problem.[4] Third, the linkage between offense and battlefield decision: Israel's need to end the war with decisive outcomes as soon as possible due to economic and social constraints, and in order to prevent or at least preempt great power or intervention or the arrival in the battlefield of Arab expeditionary forces.[5] One can even identify defense aversion and cult of the offensive on the part of the IDF, particularly from the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s.[6]

No change occurred in the Israeli offensive approach even when Israel's territorial situation altered after 1967. Matched with the dominant role traditionally played by the IDF in decision-making processes on strategic matters, and given the IDF's predisposition to offense,[7] the IDF's cult of the offensive had a great impact on Israeli strategy. Several factors have eventually, though gradually, balanced the strong commitment to offense. First, the lesson learned from the 1973 October War that Israel should strengthen its defensive posture.[8] And indeed, as of the mid-1980s defense has been treated more seriously by Israeli military thinking. Second, the ascendancy of firepower over maneuver on the battlefield as a result of technological changes that took place on the Arab–Israeli battlefield after the 1967 Six Day War, which started limiting Israel's military freedom of action.[9] Third, the prevalence and predominance of asymmetrical wars of attrition.

The main arguments put forth in the ensuing pages are: first, Israel's preference for offense notwithstanding, in its wars of attrition it implemented a more balanced, offensive–defensive strategy, as a result of frustration from the insufficiency of either offense or defense in coping with attrition challenges alone. A dialectic process was often created in which offense was succeeded by defense and vice versa, the two forms being less autonomous than in regular wars and often used simultaneously, exposing the advantages and disadvantages of each of them in attrition situations.

Second, the increased threat to the civilian rear demonstrated during the more recent wars of

attrition left no choice but to invest in passive and active defense. Third, during the Intifadas in particular, the conflict dictated the use of nonmilitary measures, such as curfews, arrests, trials, demolition or sealing of houses of terrorists, deportation of agitators, and administrative measures like cutting off electricity and telephone communications, administrative detention, or school closures, even though these measures were applied by IDF troops.

Decades of Israeli efforts to cope with attrition challenges have exposed the dialectic nature of the relationship between offense and defense. Backed and sometimes encouraged by "activists" among the political elite, and faithful to its offensive tradition, for many years the IDF has believed that even in attrition situations there was no better way of defense than going after the enemy, compelling him to stop the attrition,[10] or deterring him by punishment rather than by denial.[11] Its military commanders liked the initiative entailed in offense, expecting it to be efficient also when aimed at guerrillas and terrorists or their sponsoring Arab states (e.g., Chiefs of Staff Moshe Dayan and Mordechai Maklef), and to have a cumulative effect (e.g., Chief of Staff Dayan). Deeply convinced in the value of offensive, in the 1960s, the IDF under Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin did not confine itself to preparing for war and strengthening the government's freedom of action, but saw as one of its most important missions the stimulation of offensive action.[12]

Nevertheless, despite its dislike of defense the military could not be indifferent to the constraints, risks and shortcomings entailed in an offensive approach that have often preoccupied the political echelon's mind: the limited and short-term effectiveness of reprisals; the lack of cumulative effect from recurrent raids; the need to avoid escalation with the Arab states from whose territory guerrillas and terrorists operated against Israel (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon – at different times) or with a foreign superpower, such as the Soviet Union (e.g., during the 1969–70 war of attrition); as well as the need to avoid international criticism, avoid the destabilization of pro-Western Arab regimes (e.g., King Hussein's regime), avoid casualties for Israeli troops and among enemy civilians, and strengthen the sense of security among those living in the frontier areas and the rear. All these factors required defensive deployment alongside the offensive approach.

Israel's defensive posture during its wars of attrition has been based on two main elements: first, buffer zones, whose main element has been a security fence on the Lebanese border, the Jordan Valley, and between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, equipped with electronic devices. Second, a system of shelters and protected spaces. These elements have been complemented at times by other passive defense measures tailored to specific cases, such as gas masks. In recent years, in the light of Palestinian and Hezbollah focus on rocket attacks on Israel, Israel has been engaged in developing a third element – active defense, particularly anti-rocket systems. As long as it did not possess such systems, and in the light of the insufficiency of passive defense, defense was accompanied by offense, sometimes as an expression of frustration (see Chapter 7).

Guerrilla warfare, terror, and civil disobedience – strategies or tactics typically used by Israel's weaker enemy in its asymmetrical wars of attrition – often required response by specially trained units capable of handling low-intensity challenges more effectively. Throughout the years Israel formed, trained and used special units in order to improve its performance vis-à-vis guerrillas and terrorists. For example, as in the early 1950s the regular infantry units proved to be unfit for carrying out reprisal raids,[13] the IDF established new elite units – Unit 30 (in 1951), Unit 101 (1953), and Sayeret Shaked (1955) that were expected to perform at a higher standard. After 1967, special operations were carried out on the Egyptian and Jordanian fronts mainly by Sayeret

Matkal, Shayetet 13 and small units from the Golani and paratroopers brigades.

In the wake of the 1982 Lebanon War, special units kept carrying out offensive operations against Palestinian organizations in Lebanon. In January 1983, in order to improve its offensive capabilities in coping with asymmetrical challenges, the IDF formed a new special combined operations headquarters. In the 1990s a new counter-guerrilla special unit – Egoz – was formed to fight Hezbollah guerrillas, and in 1987, two "Masqueraders" units – Duvdevan and Shimshon – were formed in order to improve IDF's efficiency in dealing with terrorists in the territories.[14]

The rest of the chapter will look into each of the cases studied in this book in a more detailed manner.

The 1950s

In the early 1950s Israel had to cope with infiltration and *fedayeen* (paramilitary Palestinians troops recruited, armed and trained by Arab states, particularly by Egypt) challenges. Thousands of Palestinians infiltrated Israel from 1948 to 1956, mostly from Egypt and Jordan. Infiltration focused on three main areas: the 25–35 km "waste" stretching from the Gaza Strip to the Hebron area; the "Jerusalem Corridor" (a quasi-triangle whose apex is in Jerusalem, its northern border is the old road to Jerusalem, its southern border is the HaElah Valley, and its western border is Shaar HaGai and the Beit Shemesh area), and along the Israel–West Bank border, particularly north of the Latrun enclave, which was held by the Jordanians.

The infiltrators' motives were threefold: economic – poor refugees stole crops, animals or agricultural equipment, robbed Israelis, or smuggled goods to and from Israel in order to provide for their living; social – refugees tried to resettle in Israel, or visit their relatives who stayed within the Green Line; and military – some infiltrators were used by Palestinian national organs, such as the Mufti's Arab Higher Committee or the Cairo-based All-Palestine Government for terror activities whose purpose was to inflame and maintain tension between Israel and the neighboring Arab states in order to prevent settlement at the Palestinians' expense. Some infiltrators also worked for Arab militaries fulfilling intelligence collection missions, but such activity was limited in scale because until 1953–54 the Arab states – Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon – were against it, demonstrating determination in preventing infiltration, because of its perceived destabilizing effect.[15]

After 1953–54 the relations between Israel, on the one hand, and Jordan and Egypt, on the other, deteriorated in light of the continuing infiltration, which kept claiming the lives of Israelis, and Israel employed more force in order to stop it. On the Jordanian front, the impression of the 1953 counter-value Qibya Operation, in which 69 civilians were killed and more than 40 houses were blown up, and steps taken by the Jordanian Legion to stop infiltration, brought about a significant decline in infiltration activity.[16]

Towards the mid-1950s Israeli military policy became more offensive. Defensive measures were applied in response to the challenge of Palestinian infiltration and *fedayeen* attacks, which consisted of the establishment of a Border Guard responsible for policing the frontier,[17] the establishment of hundreds of new settlements along the border, which were supposed to be integrated into an overall defensive system,[18] ambushes, a shoot-to-kill policy that did not distinguish between armed and unarmed infiltrators, and the mining of certain areas. An offensive approach, however, was complementing these defensive means, and was carried out in

a series of reprisal raids, whose main objective was to achieve deterrence-by-punishment. According to Aronson and Horowitz, the reprisal raids had additional "latent functions": bringing about a full-scale confrontation, i.e., war; lifting the IDF's morale and improving its combat skills; influencing domestic developments within Arab states; creating tension that would serve diplomatic and procurement purposes; and affecting domestic politics in Israel, including lifting the Israeli public's morale.[19]

The IDF's Chiefs of Staff Mordechai Maklef and Moshe Dayan stressed the raids' deterrence-by-punishment role, vis-à-vis insurgents and Arab states, particularly Egypt. Dayan believed in the cumulative effect of painful offensive measures carried out against aggressors, expressing his hope that successful reprisals would serve as a demonstration of strength that would debilitate the Arab stand vis-à-vis Israel and improve the fighting skills and morale of the IDF.[20] Ariel Sharon, who commanded many raids in the mid-1950s, pointed to another function of the reprisal raids. In his autobiography he wrote that he

> came to view the [raids'] objective not simply as retaliation, or even deterrence in the usual sense. It was to create in the Arabs a psychology of defeat, to beat them every time and to beat them so decisively that they would develop the conviction they could never win.[21]

Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion believed in the deterrent effect of the reprisals, although he did not delude himself that they could prevent every attack on Israel.[22] Even Foreign Minister Moshe Sharet, who held dovish views and underestimated the raids' deterrent effect, pointing to their negative influence on Israeli diplomacy, admitted that they had two positive aspects – maintaining the staying power of the settlers in the frontier areas and lifting the low morale of the general public in Israel as a result of Arab low-intensity violence.

Until 1955 these raids were intentionally of limited nature, to enable Israel to prove its determination to act against the challenge and compel the Arab states to stop infiltration from their territory or sponsor *fedayeen* activity, while avoiding escalation to an all- out war. It was only after the September 1955 Egyptian– Czech arms deal that Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion came to consider Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan's recommendation that current security activity be taken advantage of to create escalation.[23]

During the early 1950s the raids were aimed at Palestinian counter-value targets, i.e., villages inhabited by Palestinian refugees.[24] Such raids, by their nature, constituted collective punishment and proved to be ethically problematic, but as a deterrent and compellence tool they were considered by Moshe Dayan, both as Chief of Southern Command and later on as Chief of Staff, more effective than counter-force operations.[25] (On the ethical dilemmas see Chapter 6.)

As the IDF's regular infantry units were not fit for counter-insurgency, in 1951 the IDF formed Unit 30 – a classified special unit, which operated under the IDF's southern command. The unit's performance, however, was poor and in 1952 it was disbanded. Toward the mid-1950s Israel established new elite units that were expected to set higher performing standards. In August 1953, Chief of Operations Moshe Dayan formed special unit 101, whose mission was to carry out special reprisal operations behind the borders. Five months later, though, despite the unit's successes in inducing new standards and spirit to Israeli reprisals, it was incorporated into the paratroopers unit, which after the merger became IDF's elite infantry brigade, and was often used for special offensive missions. The rationale of the merger was to improve the performance standards of IDF's regular infantry units. And indeed, whereas until late 1953 the reprisal raids proved to be a failure, the establishment of special unit 101 marked a significant change. Audacity, determination and maintenance of the objective now became dominant features of the

IDF's reprisal operations.

The formation of Sayeret Shaked (under the Southern Command) in May 1955 complemented this new trend. Unlike Unit 101 and the paratroopers, the unit's main mission was to prevent terror against Israeli settlements and civilians *within* the boundaries of the state. Successes by the newly established units served as a trigger to the establishment of Sayeret Egoz (under the Northern Command) and Sayeret Haruv (under the Central Command) in the 1960s.[26] These units would later become raid units with aspirations to compete with the IDF's best special force units – Sayeret Matkal – which was formed in 1958 and was subordinated to the Military Intelligence, and Shayetet 13 – IDF's naval special force (commando) unit.

Infiltration into Israel from Jordan in the years 1954–55 and in early 1956 declined significantly with the greater effectiveness of the reprisal raids. With the weakening of the Hashemite regime in the second half of 1956, as a result of external and internal pressures, however, the Jordanian army stopped preventing Palestinian insurgency against Israel. Israeli raids grew in number and scope, but were still restrained.[27] On the Egyptian front, on the other hand, both before and after 1955 the pain inflicted by the Israeli raids proved to be insufficient for deterring and compelling the Egyptians to effectively prevent violence against Israel from their territory.[28] Egypt changed its policy and started training, arming, and even operating terror and guerrilla activities by Egypt-sponsored Palestinian units, which were now called *fedayeen*, in order to weaken Israeli society.[29]

The event that marked the change in Egyptian policy was an Israeli reprisal operation in Gaza in February 1955 (Operation Black Arrow), against an Egyptian army base near Gaza City and nearby railway and water installations. The raid took place following Egyptian intelligence agents' deep penetration into Israel in the Rishon LeZion–Rehovot area, and was carried out by the paratroopers regiment led by Ariel Sharon. After the operation, in which 36 Egyptian troops and two civilians were killed, the Palestinian *fedayeen* were incorporated into an Egyptian unit. The operation had some impact on Egypt's decision to conclude the arms deal with the Czechs, although the deal had already been embroidered in 1954–early 1955, after negotiations between Egypt and the US on the arms deal had collapsed. Other factors, such as Egyptian threat perception as a result of the Baghdad Pact or internal instability in Egypt, contributed to its decision to go for the deal.[30] The Czech–Egyptian arms deal marked a watershed in the pre-Sinai War escalation. Given Israel's threat perception, it pushed Israeli political and military echelons toward landing a preventive strike once conditions were created to cooperate with the two great powers – France and Britain.

Pre-1967

The shift to a more offensive approach in the mid-1950s affected the way Israel conducted its war of attrition against the Syrians and the Palestinians in the pre-1967 period. The Syrians challenged Israel by trying to divert the Jordan River's water, by targeting Israeli farmers cultivating their fields in the disputed demilitarized zones along the border, and by encouraging Palestinian terror and guerrilla attacks on Israel from Jordanian and Lebanese territory.[31]

In January 1964 the first Arab summit decided to divert the Jordan River as a reaction to the Israeli National Water Carrier project, which was supposed to deliver water from northern Israel

to the Negev Desert. Once Syria started applying the summit's resolution, a series of clashes between Israel and Syria erupted, which lasted from December 1964 to July 1966. Israel targeted Syrian diversion equipment, employing tanks, artillery, and aircraft. The latter were used when diversion works took place out of tank fire's reach.[32]

Once escalation threatened to get out of Syria's control, it stopped the diversion works and lowered the profile of the violence against Israel. Israel won the water campaign,[33] but hostilities along the border continued, gradually escalating to the point of creating the crisis that ended up as the 1967 war. In an interview Moshe Dayan gave in 1976, which he allowed to be published only upon his death, he admitted that at least 80 percent of the incidents along the Syrian–Israeli border in the pre-1967 war period occurred as a result of Israeli provocations.[34]

The Palestinians, for their part, became active in the conflict after the establishment of the PLO and Fatah. Between 1 January 1964 and 5 June 1967 they carried out insurgency against Israel from the Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese and Egyptian borders (69, 26, 25 and five attacks, respectively).[35] Jordan was walking between the drops. On the one hand, preventing Palestinian attacks went against its interest to present itself as a representative of the Palestinian people. Allowing these attacks, on the other hand, exposed Jordan to Israeli attacks, which weakened the Hashemite regime.[36]

IDF senior commanders were skeptical about the efficiency of defensive deployment against "popular war." Deputy Chief of Operations Rehavam Zeevi said the IDF was too small for sealing the border, and that many settlers in the frontier areas were "demographically" (he must have meant socio-economically and ideologically) weak and would not withstand ongoing terrorist attacks. Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin, Chief of Central Command Uzi Narkis and Zeevi shared the view that a security fence would not solve the problem. During the months preceding the 1967 war they kept pointing to Syria's responsibility for sponsoring terror attacks against Israel, advocating attacking Syria, in the hope that these attacks would not merely deter Syria from encouraging further insurgency but would also bring about a decade of quiet, similar to the 1957–67 period along the Egyptian border, solve the conflict over the demilitarized zones, and reduce Egypt's and Jordan's readiness to allow insurgents to operate against Israel from their territory.[37]

Chief of Staff Rabin and Chief of Operations Haim Bar-Lev were skeptical about the efficiency of fighting guerrillas directly, believing instead that the best way to cope with Palestinian insurgency was to compel Arab governments to prevent terror and guerrilla activity from their territory by hitting targets on their territory, and, if necessary, by occupying portions of it, particularly in the West Bank.[38] Bar-Lev and Chief of the Navy Yochai Bin-Noun also suggested that Israel resorted to killing Palestinian political and military leaders.[39]

General staff members such as Chief of Northern Command David (Dado) Elazar advocated reprisals that would enable Israel to achieve "positive" objectives, such as capturing Syrian outposts over the Hullah Valley and the Jordan Valley and the sources of the Banias River, changing the Syrian–Israeli armistice's terms, or forcing Syria into recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the demilitarized zones.[40] Others, for example, Chief of the Navy Bin-Noun, who were more skeptical about the effectiveness of reprisal, suggested the launching of large-scale operations, instead.[41] Chief of the Armored Forces Israel Tal raised the idea of "terror against terror" as a means of creating public opinion hostile to Fatah in Jordan, which might push the Jordanian regime into being much more determined in restraining Fatah terrorists.[42] Chief of Staff Rabin thought that defensive deployment was too expensive in economic terms.[43]

During this period the Israeli government – one of the most dovish governments in Israeli history – preferred investing in defensive deployment in order to cope with current security challenges, believing that defensive measures were necessary both for strengthening the settlers' staying power and as a means of avoiding unintended escalation that might lead to war or end up in toppling King Hussein's regime.[44] As a general with political insight, who, given Prime Minister Levi Eshkol's lack of defense background, practically functioned as Israel's defense minister, Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin understood that the disadvantages of defensive means notwithstanding, they made settlers in the frontier areas feel much safer.[45] To that effect, the IDF could not avoid investing in defensive deployment, although it kept clarifying that defense alone was not enough, and unless offensive measures were applied nothing could compel Syrian, Jordanian or Lebanese authorities to stop allowing insurgency against Israel from their territory.[46]

A combination of the IDF's activism and commitment to the offensive and continuous attacks from Arab states' territory, however, hardly left the Israeli government a choice but to approve intermittent launching of reprisal raids. Israel entered one of the most offensive periods in its wars of attrition. Between 1 January 1964 and 5 June 1967, 12 reprisal raids were carried out – seven against Jordan, four against Syria, and one against Lebanon.[47] Some of the most famous raids were the 1960 attack on the village of Taufiq on the Golan Heights – the first Israeli large-scale retaliatory operation since 1956; the 1961 attack on a Syrian strongpoint in Nukeib, north of Kibbutz Ein Gev; two attacks in 1965 on targets near Kalkilya in the West Bank and against the Lebanese Hullah village; the 1966 attacks on Jordanian villages in the Jordan Valley and in the southern Hebron Mountain; and Operation Samoah.

The latter was the largest of all reprisals. It took place on Jordanian territory in November 1966, following a series of guerrilla and terror attacks against Israeli troops and civilians from the Jordanian border as of early October. The operation was aimed at Jordan despite the fact that it was Syria who stood behind the insurgency from the Jordanian border.[48] When the new Baath regime in Syria strengthened its ties with Fatah, based on the belief that insurgency against Israel would be more effective than "regular" war, and given the limited effectiveness of defensive means against terror and guerrilla challenges applied by Israel, the IDF preached the initiation of "frontal collision" with Syria, underestimating the possibility that Egypt and the Soviet Union might intervene even before such collision took place.[49] (For further discussion of Egyptian and Soviet intervention, see Chapter 7.)

As the Samoah operation almost toppled King Hussein's regime, the American administration did not hide its resentment, and even seemed to share Hussein's claim that Israel was planning to capture the West Bank. Egypt's behavior was hard to predict, but it seemed that after its inaction vis-à-vis Samoah, it might come to Syria's help should the situation on the Syrian border deteriorate, a scenario that the Israelis, particularly their political echelon, wished to avoid. Chief of Staff Rabin expressed his concern from the possibility that the political echelon might from now on impose on the IDF passive and static defense – a Maginot Line of fences – which was alien to its offensive spirit.[50] Under the new circumstances, he preached a combination of defense and offense.[51]

Post-1967

The post-1967 period marked a change in the Arab states' strategy vis-à-vis Israel. Aware of their military weakness, they adopted a strategy of limited war, aiming at wearing Israel out gradually. Israel, for its part, felt frustrated, as despite the overwhelming victory of June 1967, it was unable to retaliate by switching to another form of warfare. Constrained by the fear of negative superpower reaction, the need to prove to the Israeli public that the post-1967 lines were really the ideal "defensible borders" that Israel could only have dreamed of, and the lack of sufficient crossing devices[52] – Israel was forced into defensive posture and attrition.

Egypt chose a deliberate strategy of attrition in order to impose on Israel withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. In light of the aforementioned constraints on Israeli freedom of action, "attriting the attritors"[53] seemed the only viable response Israel could pursue. In order to live up to the government's instruction to deny the Egyptians any territorial, military or political achievement,[54] the IDF constructed the Bar-Lev line – a series of strongholds along the Canal, which were supposed to enable Israeli troops to cope with heavy artillery barrages and infrequent commando raids.[55] In combination with mobile forces in their rear, the strongholds comprised the defensive component in Israel's military strategy.

Positional warfare went against the IDF's offensive tradition. Two appreciated Israeli generals, Israel Tal and Ariel Sharon, strongly opposed it, advocating elastic defense, based on rear positioned mobile armored formations to be used in order to overwhelm the opponent's forces should they penetrate into the Sinai.[56] Elastic defense, however, could not guarantee that the government's instructions were fully implemented, and was therefore rejected. The construction of a fortified line tipped the offens–defense balance in the latter's favor.

The offensive element in Israeli strategy did not disappear, though. Offense was still playing a significant role, in the form of commando assaults on the west bank of the Suez Canal and air strikes against counter-force and counter-value targets on Egyptian soil. Israeli naval commandos, as well as armored and airborne forces raided Egyptian military targets in the Suez Gulf in July 1969, September 1969, December 1969 and April 1970. Israeli air attacks on Egyptian targets since July 1969 caused a significant decline in the monthly casualty figures – from 106 troops killed and wounded in July 1969, before the air offensive started, to 65 in August, 47 in September, 56 in October, 39 in November and 30 in December.[57] The IAF was also compensating for Israel's quantitative inferiority in firepower along the Canal by serving as "flying artillery."[58]

After having failed to compel the Egyptians to stop hostilities along the ceasefire lines, even after the citizens of the Egyptian cities along the Canal had fled their homes, Israel turned to an in-depth bombing campaign, basing its attacks on the newly introduced two-seat heavyweight Phantom A-4. The intention was to put greater pressure on the Egyptian society and economy and, if possible, to bring about the collapse of Nasser's regime. A coalition consisting of Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon, Minister of Transportation Ezer Weizman, and Israeli ambassador to the US Yitzhak Rabin persuaded Prime Minister Golda Meir to go for it despite Defense Minister Dayan's reservations, which were based on his fear of escalation that might result in a direct confrontation with the Soviets, something that eventually happened.

While refraining from hitting civilians, Israel sometimes chose targets (e.g., depots and supply bases) near population centers in order to create a demoralizing effect. As a result of the physical and moral damage inflicted by the in-depth bombing, the Egyptian regime almost collapsed, but was saved thanks to Soviet intervention in the war. The Soviets deployed SAM-3 (Goa) antiaircraft missiles manned by Soviet crews as well as Soviet-manned MIG-21 interceptors. This deployment, which covered the Egyptian heartland, demonstrated Soviet resolve to protect

Egypt even if this entailed fighting against the Israelis, and saved the Egyptians from defeat.[59] Israel had to lower the profile of its attacks, confining them to the Canal area, and was ready to consider a ceasefire,[60] particularly after the 30 July dogfight between IAF fighters and Soviet-flown MIG-21 fighters, during which five MIGs were shot down by the Israelis, which marked a direct confrontation with a hostile superpower, something that Israel has always wished to avoid.

Against the backdrop of the Arab states' humiliating defeat in 1967, the PLO appeared as the only viable, effective Arab challenge to Israel. Taking advantage of Jordan's internal weakness and encouraged by the sympathy of Jordan's Palestinian population, the PLO was consolidating its base in the country, carrying out terror and guerrilla attacks on Israel from Jordanian territory and at times from Syria,[61] claiming the lives of hundreds of Israelis, both civilians and soldiers.

In the second half of 1967 it seemed that Israeli military power would soon prove to be ineffective vis-à-vis Palestinian guerrillas and terrorists, who like Mao's "fish in the water" (the people being the water and the guerrillas the fish) would win the hearts and minds of the population in the territories and enjoy its support, as was happening in Algeria or Vietnam, and that measures used against them by the Israelis would only heighten discontent among the territories' population.[62] This scenario did materialize, but many years later, certainly not in the period 1967–73. Defense Minister Dayan adopted a liberal policy in the territories, which proved to be successful. Israel avoided interfering in the lives of the civilian population, allowed free trade and movement between the east and west banks of the Jordan River (the so-called open bridges policy), encouraged economic development, and retained the Jordanian law and government system as well as the traditional political leadership. This liberal approach, which helped drive a wedge between the population in the territories and Fatah insurgents, coupled with the excellent intelligence supplied by the General Security Service (GSS), made it difficult for the insurgents to establish a solid base of operations in the territories, forcing them to operate from neighboring countries.[63]

Israeli troops attacked insurgents' targets in Jordan, trying not to directly engage the Jordanian army. The effort to avoid direct confrontation with the Jordanians did not always succeed, though. One of the most famous confrontations took place during the 1968 Operation Karame. The operation was originally aimed against a concentration of Palestinian insurgents, but deteriorated into a battle with Jordanian forces, whose tanks were deployed in a better position – on the hills above the town of Karame – enjoying favorable conditions vis-à-vis the Israeli tanks in the valley. The fact that it was the Jordanian army who should be credited for the unsuccessful Israeli raid notwithstanding, the Palestinians took credit for its outcomes, presenting them as their own success. Special operations planned and commanded by the Chief Infantry and Paratroopers Officer were carried out on both Egyptian and Jordanian fronts, mainly by Sayeret Matkal, Shayetet 13 and small units from the Golani brigade and the paratroopers brigade.

At the same time, Israel invested in defensive deployment, based on an anti-infiltration barrier running from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, with mined strips, security fence, surveillance devices and other equipment. Infiltrators who had succeeded in penetrating the barrier zone were pursued on Israeli-controlled territory. Similar to Lord Kitchener's tactic during the Boer War – dividing the countryside into closed areas with lines of blockhouses and barbed wire in order to confine the movement of Boer insurgents – the Jordan Valley and areas west of it were divided by the IDF into smaller compartments that enabled Israeli troops to carry out hot pursuits and pinpoint Palestinian guerrillas and terrorists that had just penetrated. Between 1968 and 1970, 130 hot pursuits were carried out in the Jordan Valley and the Judea Desert, during which hundreds of Palestinian terrorists were killed or captured.

Post-1973 war

Two separate, though simultaneous attrition campaigns between Israel, on the one hand, and Egypt and Syria, on the other, were conducted in the wake of the 1973 October War. They served Egyptian and Syrian efforts to put pressure on Israel during the negotiations that followed the ceasefire, and ended only once the disengagement agreements of 1974 were signed. Israel wished to compel the Arabs to stop the war of attrition, but was constrained by internal and external reasons. Attacking Egyptian forces between Cairo and the ceasefire lines was out of the question for Israel due to the expected casualties and superpower reaction.[64] Israel also considered the possibility of attacking the 3rd Army should the Egyptians revert to a large-scale war of attrition similar to that of 1969–70,[65] but this option also entailed external problems. Israeli troops therefore absorbed the Egyptian artillery barrages, and resorted to controlled escalation along the ceasefire lines, hoping to convey the message that it would not yield to violent pressure. Defense Minister Dayan instructed the IDF to use heavy artillery, and occasionally threatened to withhold the passage of food and medicines to the besieged 3rd Army.[66]

On the ceasefire lines in the Golan Heights, another campaign of attrition was accompanying the US- mediated talks between Syria and Israel.[67] Some 1,200 artillery duels were conducted between the two sides,[68] mostly along the ceasefire lines. Advancing to Damascus was out of the question given the position of the superpowers. Therefore, on this front, too, Israel had to limit itself to absorbing Syrian fire, firing back, and occasionally shelling the Damascus international airport.

1965–82

Early signs of an attrition pattern in the conflict between Israel and the PLO in Lebanon could be detected prior to the 1967 War, particularly between June 1965 and April 1968, when the PLO fired Katyusha rockets and gun and mortar shells on settlements along the Israeli–Lebanese border and attacked Israeli vehicles on the roads. In December 1968, one Israeli was killed in a PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) machine gun attack on an El Al aircraft at Athens airport, after several hijacking attempts.

Once the PLO had been expelled from Jordan in late 1970, the organization could hardly carry on operations from Jordanian territory. It made Lebanon home to its headquarters and main base of operations, turning southern Lebanon into a Palestinian state-within-a-state. In the early 1970s Palestinian guerrillas were also attacking IDF troops on the Syrian front. These attacks peaked in September 1972 with 25 incidents. Palestinian hostilities from Syria stopped in February 1973, most probably as a result of Syria’s decision to join Egypt in an all-out war against Israel to be initiated later that year.[69]

Between 1974 and 1979 the number of Palestinian insurgents in Lebanon reached 15,000 and they were gradually organized as a semi-regular army. From October 1973 to 1979, the PLO was responsible for 3,622 terrorist incidents on the Lebanese–Israeli border, and within Israel for the killing of 329 and injuring of 1,748 Israelis.[70] In March 1978 alone, following a terrorist attack

on the Tel Aviv-Haifa highway, 37 Israelis were killed.

Between 1980 and 1982 the Israel–PLO conflict on the Lebanese border kept escalating, peaking in July 1981, when following five days of massive attacks by the IAF in southern Lebanon, the PLO shelled northern Israel, from Nahariya in the west to Kiryat Shmona in the east, which in turn accounted for Israeli retaliation. The IAF and Israeli artillery targeted PLO concentrations, many of which were located in refugee camps. Some 100 people were killed, of whom only 30 were terrorists, and 600 were injured. But not only did these means prove ineffective in destroying PLO artillery and Katyusha launchers, but Israeli troops were not allowed to target terrorist artillery located within Syrian dispositions in the Beka Valley. The escalation was stopped by a US-mediated ceasefire between Israel and the PLO, which lasted four months, then collapsed as a result of different interpretations of its conditions by Israel and the PLO. During the almost year-long period between the ceasefire and the outbreak of the 1982 Lebanon War, Palestinian terrorists carried out 248 attacks on Israeli targets along the border and abroad, killing 26 Israelis and injuring 264.[71]

In order to cope with this prolonged war of attrition, Israel again applied a combined, offensive–defensive approach. A security fence along the Lebanese border, a friendly south Lebanese militia (formed in the wake of the 1978 Litani Operation), a system of shelters in northern Israel's towns and villages – constituted the defensive component of the Israeli defensive deployment. The fence, which had first been built in the 1960s as a response to Palestinian *fedayeen* attacks, was upgraded over the years, now being equipped with electronic devices to detect infiltration and guarded by regular patrols.

The defensive deployment, however, failed in sealing the border. Palestinian insurgents either crossed it or used bazookas, rocket-propelled grenades, artillery and Katyusha rockets to attack Israeli troops and Israeli towns and villages. No wonder that Israel adhered to its traditional deterrence-by-punishment strategy, engaging in a series of reprisal raids against insurgent hideouts or killing Palestinian terrorists in Arab states and in Europe.

In October 1968, after months of Katyusha and mortar attacks by the PLO on Israeli settlements in northern Israel, the IDF raided a PLO outpost in south Lebanon. In December 1968, three days after the aforementioned killing of an Israeli by PFLP attack on El Al aircraft at Athens, Israeli commandos raided the Beirut international airport and blew up 13 Arab airliners. In May 1969, the IDF launched a large-scale raid in south Lebanon – known as Operation Kalachat (saucepan)[72] – to clean up the "Fatahland" area. At the time the operation constituted one of the most complex and difficult tank operations in mountainous terrain the IDF had ever conducted.

A few years later, in April 1973, Israel launched Operation Aviv Ne'urim (Spring of Youth), which was part of the larger Operation Wrath of God that aimed at avenging the 1972 Munich Olympics Massacre. During the operation IDF units attacked PLO targets in Beirut and Sidon. Three PLO leaders, including Yasser Arafat's Deputy for Operational Intelligence in Fatah, Abu Yousef, were killed after having been surprised in their homes. Reports of actual number of insurgents killed during the operation vary from a dozen to 100.[73]

In the early 1970s Israel also punished the Syrian regime for allowing terrorists and guerrillas to operate against Israel from its territory, using aircraft, artillery and tanks to attack Syrian targets, such as bases, radar stations, military outposts and civilian installations.[74] Chief of Staff Elazar explained: "Our goal is to bring the Arab regimes to acknowledge the inadvisability, the risk and the damage entailed in supporting and encouraging the terrorists."[75]

Israel reacted to thousands of terrorist attacks from October 1973 to 1979 in various offensive

forms. It attacked terrorist headquarters, bases, military leadership, weapon systems, and logistics in Lebanon, using aircraft, missile boats, artillery, armor and infantry. Following a terror attack in Nahariya in April 1979, the IDF adopted a new offensive policy, which no longer waited for terror activity to take place in order to punish the terrorists but rather initiated continuous preventive and preemptive strikes aimed at disrupting the terrorists' plans and enforcing them to focus on their own defense rather than attack Israelis. This mode of operation lasted four months and was then stopped due to political constraints.[76]

The terrorist attack on the Tel Aviv–Haifa highway in March 1978 accounted for the launching of Operation Litani. The inter-arm and inter-corps operation included 7,000 Israeli troops. Terrorist infrastructure from the Israel–Lebanon border to the Litani River was heavily damaged; 300 terrorists and guerrillas were killed and hundreds were injured. Eighteen Israeli soldiers fell during the operation, and 113 were wounded. The operations resulted in Israeli occupation of parts of southern Lebanon, up to the Litani River. By June 1978, however, under intense American pressure, Israel withdrew its troops, which were replaced by the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) – a UN force formed in March 1978, whose mandate was to confirm Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, restore international peace and security, and help the Lebanese government realize its effective authority in the area[77] – and by a friendly militia – the Free Lebanon Militia (FLM), which consisted of south Lebanese Christians and Shiites. Israel also formed an alliance with the Maronites in Lebanon.

These measures, however, proved to be insufficient for putting an end to the Israel–PLO war of attrition in northern Israel and southern Lebanon. As the conflict kept escalating, between mid-1980 and mid-1981, Israel took the initiative, launching a series of ground and air attacks on terrorist bases in southern Lebanon. As already pointed out, the escalation peaked in the July 1981 Small War of Attrition, which ended up in a ceasefire. As Israel interpreted PLO attacks on Israeli targets from July 1981 to June 1982, most of which were carried out abroad, as a violation of the ceasefire, it launched the June 1982 Peace for Galilee Operation, which turned into the Lebanon War. In the aftermath of the war, Israeli special units kept carrying out offensive operations against Palestinian organizations in Lebanon. In order to improve its offensive capabilities in coping with irregular challenges the IDF formed a new special combined operations headquarters in January 1983.

1985–2000

In 1985 Hezbollah substituted the Palestinians as Israel's main enemy in southern Lebanon. At times it launched rocket attacks on northern Israeli communities, causing damage to property, trade, and industry and disrupting daily life. Here, too, Israeli deployment was based on the traditional formula of combined, offensive–defensive strategy. The defensive deployment consisted of a barrier, whose main elements were a thickened and contiguous security zone in south Lebanon; the SLA (South Lebanese Army) – a pro-Israeli militia; a sophisticated security fence; and passive defense (shelters or protected spaces) in the towns and villages in northern Israel.[78]

As these defensive measures proved to be insufficient, Israel had to carry out limited air, land or combined air–land attacks on targets such as Hezbollah's training bases, operatives and leadership.[79] Occasionally, the IDF launched large-scale reprisal operations as it had done during

the Israel–PLO war of attrition during the 1970s–early 1980s. The mission of the large-scale air–land operations – the 1993 Operation Accountability, and the 1996 Operation Grapes of Wrath – was to destroy Hezbollah's infrastructure in southern Lebanon.

Hitting infrastructure targets from the air became one of the most favorite modus operandi of the IDF in Lebanon. It served as an indirect approach, which was believed to have greater effectiveness while saving the lives of Israeli troops. It was also compatible with rule number one of post-heroic warfare, which by then had already been deeply rooted in Israeli strategy, particularly vis-à-vis irregular challenges. In a bombing campaign in 1999, Israeli aircraft struck two power stations near Beirut, blew up a telephone communication facility in the city, and destroyed bridges linking Beirut with the south in retaliation for rocket attacks on civilians in northern Israel. Defense Minister Moshe Arens said he would not hesitate to order a new bombing campaign should Syria fail to get the message and take action against Hezbollah. Assistant Chief of Operations General Dan Halutz said that future attacks would target all sources of power in Lebanon, if necessary, as a message that no one was immune against Israeli retaliation.

In the 1990s, in an attempt to strengthen the offensive nature of the IDF's activity in southern Lebanon and keep the initiative in its hands, the IDF's Northern Command under Amiram Levin allocated more missions to special forces units. During that period a new counter-guerrilla special unit – Egoz – was formed to fight against Hezbollah guerrillas. When Israel pulled all its troops out of southern Lebanon on 24 May 2000, for reasons that are discussed in Chapter 4, ending a 22-year military presence there, it declared that should terrorism continue following the withdrawal, it would react forcefully against both insurgents and those who sponsored them.[80]

The Intifadas

The First and Second Intifadas posed unprecedented challenges. In the First Intifada Israel's security agencies had to cope, for the first time, with popular uprising accompanied by terrorism, whereas during the Second Intifada Israel faced a series of deadly suicide bombings that claimed the lives of some thousand Israelis. Terrorism in populated centers during both Intifadas made the traditional distinction between frontline and rear obsolete: there was no longer one front or one line of contact. This required the deployment of a package of defensive measures, both public and private, and a joint action on the part of the military, the police and the GSS.

The First Intifada

The unique nature of the First Intifada as a popular uprising aroused ethical dilemmas that the IDF had hardly encountered in the past due to massive involvement of civilians. These dilemmas are discussed in length in Chapter 6. The conflict dictated the use of measures that did not always belong to the domain of offense or defense in the strict military sense, such as curfews, arrests, trials, demolition or sealing of houses of terrorists, deportation of agitators, and administrative measures like cutting off electricity and telephone communications, administrative detention, or school closures.

In its activity against rioters and demonstrators, who were sometimes also hurling petrol

bombs or rocks, during the initial stages of the Intifada IDF troops were applying a "beating policy" and were using non-lethal or semilethal weapons such as rubber bullets, plastic bullets or tear gas. Firearms were used only when necessary to escape from a life-threatening situation.[81] Two "Masqueraders" units – Duvdevan and Shimshon – were formed in 1987 in order to improve IDF's efficiency in dealing with terrorists in the territories,[82] which were extensively used during both Intifadas. The Israeli security forces did not restrict their activity to the territories, though. They attacked PLO activists in Cyprus and killed Arafat's deputy, Khalil al-Wasir (Abu Jihad) in Tunis.[83]

The Second Intifada

The Second Intifada was different from the former one in at least two aspects. First, Palestinian terrorists were now using suicide bombings within the Green Line. This was not the only measure they used, though – settlements in the territories and those traveling on the roads to and from them, too, were within easy reach for them.[84] Second, when the Second Intifada began, the IDF was better prepared for the challenge than it had been when the First Intifada started.

The unremitting Palestinian campaign of violence prompted harsh Israeli counter-measures. Israeli troops responded fiercely to Palestinian demonstrations, shootings and suicide bombings.[85] In the light of the scale of suicide bombings, the use of harsh measures was widely supported by the Israeli public,[86] and not only by right wing politicians, who insisted on pulling out all the stops so as to put an end to "the war of attrition."[87] The strategy Israel was pursuing consisted of the following offensive elements.

Vis-à-vis the terrorists, a new offensive doctrine was applied. Based on the assumption that there was no longer one front or one line of contact, dozens of simultaneous operations were carried out every day that were supposed to have multidimensional effects. These operations have taken place on the ground (e.g., targeted killing, snipers, arrests, raids) and in the air (e.g., the use of remote controlled unmanned aerial vehicles, combat helicopters armed with precision-guided munitions). From the start of the Intifada the IDF pushed for an offensive approach, which escalated the confrontation rather quickly. By the end of 2000, 327 Palestinians were killed and 1,040 were wounded.[88]

Operation Defensive Shield in mid-2002 seems to have been a milestone in Israeli offensive approach. During the operation the IDF entered cities, rural areas and refugee camps in the West Bank, carrying out continuous offensive activity at the tactical level, and intensifying targeted killing of terrorist operatives. Since Operation Defensive Shield, Israel managed to thwart some 90 percent of the perpetrated terror attacks.[89]

Three features of Israeli operations during the Second Intifada are noteworthy in particular. First, the IDF managed to implement a high degree of inter-service (military–olice—SS) jointness, after having overcome bureaucratic and organizational affiliations and loyalties, thereby improving the efficiency of its counter- nsurgency activity. The second feature is related to the first one, but reflects a relatively new tendency which had permeated the IDF's thinking and operations – heavy (maybe too heavy) reliance on technology. Joint Computerized Command Control Communications and Intelligence (C4I) operation centers were established, working for the first time in IDF history as joint operational entities. The centers provided visual monitoring to all command levels, down to the tactical leaders, or combat helicopters, all being

able to see the same evolving battle picture on their computer screens. The GSS provided real-ime intelligence through its channels; the IAF extended and verified information through its unmanned aerial vehicles and other aerial platforms; and the Field Intelligence supplied updated information from its observation units. Once the intelligence picture was completed, the field commanders could decide on the best way to carry out the mission, which was then monitored throughout by the C4I command centers. The centers also debriefed the commanders once the mission was terminated.[90]

The third feature was targeted killing. This method was employed during the Second Intifada to an unprecedented extent, gradually becoming a major counter-terror means. In the period September 2000–April 2004, Israel carried out 159 targeted killing attempts. Dozens of attempts occurred each year, with the highest rate – 56 attempts (35 percent) – in 2002, after 40 attempts (25 percent) in 2001 and 44 attempts (28 percent) in 2003. The decline can be explained by the fact that in mid-2002 the IDF regained control of the West Bank, and could afford to arrest rather than kill in this area. Most of the strikes – 69 percent – took place in the West Bank. Targeted killing methods included shooting from close range or by snipers (47 percent), launching missiles from helicopter gunships (34 percent), explosive devices, such as booby-trapped vehicles (14 percent), and other methods (5 percent). Since in some cases members of more than one organization were targeted simultaneously, division by organizational affiliation is difficult. It is estimated, though, that some 50 percent belonged to Hamas, some 31 percent to Fatah, 17 percent to Islamic Jihad, and the rest to other organizations.[91]

Of the attempts 85 percent ended up with the targets killed; the rest were injured or saved. These high rates of success were achieved thanks to high-quality intelligence, based on a combination of SIGINT (signal intelligence), HUMINT (human intelligence), and a variety of vision devices, such as unmanned aerial vehicles, which led the Israelis to their targets. Additionally, increased joint inter-service (ground forces–military intelligence–IAF–police–GSS) activity allowed the IDF to overcome the problem of targeting an elusive enemy[92] and to shorten the sensor-to-shooter loop, that is, the time between identifying a target and hitting it, to real time or near real time.

Of the attempts 75 percent were carried out against low-level local military leaders or operatives. The rest (some 17 percent), were senior leaders – either senior military leaders in charge of planning terror operations, and recruiting, training, arming, and dispatching terrorists, like Raad Karmi (September 2001), Atef Abayat (October 2001), Salah Shehadeh (July 2002), or (some 8 percent) were senior political–ideological leaders responsible for funding, political and spiritual guidance and direction of the organization’s strategy, like Ibrahim al-Makadme (August 2003), Ahmed Yassin (March 2004), and Abdel Aziz Rantisi (April 2004).[93]

Vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority the IDF applied piecemeal tactics to flatten its physical presence and undermine the morale of its political leadership and its police and security agencies. Palestinian Authority targets were not elusive like terrorists, so the IDF was tempted to hit them, although some of the Palestinian Authority’s security services, e.g., Jibril Rajoub’s West Bank Preventive Security Force, kept themselves out of attacks on Israeli targets.

Leaning on offense alone was not sufficient for coping with terrorism, though, as was defense alone (despite what was claimed by some analysts[94]). A buffer zone between Israel and the West Bank has been created since late 2003. Troops deployed along the buffer zone have been controlled by the aforementioned C4I centers, which have monitored all ground, airborne (unmanned aerial vehicles) and aerostat surveillance assets. Similar assets have been deployed along the Israeli coastline, in which joint air, naval and army forces have been operating

combined navy patrol craft and air sorties, to intercept, identify and stop suspected enemy infiltration attempts mostly by Hezbollah.[95]

Since the creation of the security fence, the number of terrorist attacks dropped by over 90 percent – from an average of 26 terrorist attacks per year prior to the construction of the security fence to three terrorist attacks per year thereafter. The number of fatal casualties dropped, too, by over 70 percent – from an average of 103 people killed per year prior to the construction of the security fence to 28 thereafter.[96] But it might well have been a result of the combined effect created by the security fence, Operation Defensive Shield, and the targeted killings.

The relative contribution of each of the approaches used during the Second Intifada – either offensive or defensive – is unclear, because during the same period the IDF was carrying out targeted killings, capturing Palestinian cities in the West Bank, building a fence, and strengthening cooperation and togetherness among the various security agencies. Chief of Staff Yaalon attributed the successes to the IDF's offensive approach particularly to the effect created by Operation Defensive Shield.[97]

The 2006 Second Lebanon War

This 34-day war of attrition was unparalleled in terms of the duration of time under which large segments of Israeli civilian population were under rocket attack, and in terms of the sense shared by Israeli decision makers of having almost unlimited time to achieve the war objectives.

The creation of a home front command in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War, during which the Israeli civilian rear was under Iraqi missile attacks, and intensive research and development efforts on active missile defense notwithstanding, Israel still lacked the ability to defend its civilian rear from short-range rockets and missiles. Development of an active missile defense system was delayed due to operational and budgetary problems as well as a sense that the threat would be tolerable.

It is true that Hezbollah rockets proved to be imprecise, but the low rate of casualties on the Israeli side – only 40 people killed as a result of approximately 4,000 known rockets falling in Israeli territory – resulted to a large extent from the fact that civilians remained in protected spaces, and from the fact that hundreds of thousands of residents of northern Israel sought refuge elsewhere in the country. Most Hezbollah rocket launchings were detected and tracked by early warning means, which presumably provided launch point locations and allowed civilians time – although very short – to find shelter.

The IAF was effective in hitting counter-value Hezbollah targets in Beirut, in destroying most of the organization's long and medium-range rocket launchers, and in degrading their accuracy and pushing them out of the optimal launching zones against Haifa.[98] It failed, however, in stopping and even in reducing the short-range rocket fire, in destroying Hezbollah's command and control centers and bunker networks in southern Lebanon, and in decapitating the organization's leadership. The IAF's failure in coping with the short-range rockets should not have come as a surprise. According to estimates given months before the war broke out by former Chief of Military Intelligence Aharon Zeevi-Farkash, former Chief of Northern Command General Benny Gantz, and former IAF Chief General David Ivry, no complete solution existed for the problem of the rockets. Airpower and technology in general were insufficient either for coping with the rockets or achieving victory by themselves. Former IAF

Chief and Chief of Staff during the war, Dan Halutz, held a different view, though.[99]

On the ground, the IDF's offensive activity proved to be much below the level expected from the Israeli military. Counter-fire by conventional artillery during the war was marginally effective, as were raids by special force units on rocket launchers and command posts.[100] During the war's first phase, which lasted until 18 July, the IDF imposed an air and sea blockade on Lebanon, and the IAF attacked the Dahiya quarter of Beirut where, according to IDF reports, Hezbollah command posts were centered. It also hit military targets along the Beirut–Damascus highway and elsewhere, and made an effort to destroy Hezbollah's long-range rocket launchers.

On 18 July, almost a week after the outbreak of the war, when it became clear that Hezbollah was launching hundreds of rockets a day almost uninterruptedly, turning life in northern Israel into a nightmare, and that the war could not be decided from the air or via firepower, Israel committed a few ground brigades into battle, with the mission of destroying Hezbollah's deployment along the Israeli– Lebanese border. On 22 July Israeli ground troops engaged in bloody skirmishes in Maroun al-Ras, Bint Jbeil, and Ayta al-Shaab – not far from this border.

On 29 July the IDF widened its operations in order to create a security belt north of the Israeli–Lebanese border. Ground troops advanced and took hold of dominating terrain. Special forces occasionally attacked Hezbollah targets in the Beka Valley, Tyre, and elsewhere, although they had little effect on the entire Israeli war effort. In the engagements with Hezbollah operatives, the latter were fighting both bravely and efficiently, using simple but advanced anti-tank and anti- ship missiles, in addition to applying guerrilla tactics.

In mid- August it became evident that the IDF was indecisive on the battlefield, particularly vis-à-vis Hezbollah's concealed bunker system (the so-called nature reserves), and that the organization's decentralized command and control system remained intact, despite many Israeli attempts to paralyze it. Israel also failed in preventing short-range Katyushas from being launched onto Israeli soil. The only way to cope with the challenge was to send in ground troops to capture the territory from where the Katyushas were being launched. In the light of these difficulties, and as the diplomatic clock started ticking, the number of IDF troops in Lebanon nearly tripled in size. Between 12 and 13 August, on the eve of the ceasefire, airborne troops landed in the area of the Litani River, and armored units began advancing northwards, heading in the same direction.[101] This proved to be too late, as the IDF never captured the entire area south of the Litani River before the ceasefire took effect.

It may well be true that the IDF had planned an offensive based on a "sophisticated blend of amphibious, airborne and ground penetrations to swiftly extend deep into the front, before rolling back, so as to destroy Hezbollah positions one by one from the rear, all the way back to the Israeli border."[102] Given Israel's failure in incapacitating Hezbollah's political and ideological leadership, and on the assumption that ground operations were inevitable in light of the war objectives, in the initial phase of the war the air campaign should have been followed by a large-scale ground operation aimed at achieving battlefield decision or at least capturing the areas from which the Katyushas were being fired.

Throughout the war Israel refrained from hitting infrastructure targets in Lebanon, whose pro-Western government was considered one of the great achievements of the US quest for democratization in the Middle East. This meant that grand-strategic decision, i.e., denying the enemy's *society* the ability to carry on the war by attacking counter-value (population and economy) targets, became less likely. Israel also avoided direct confrontation with Syria, despite the fact that the latter had for many years been sponsoring Hezbollah's anti-Israel activities.

Hezbollah, for its part, operated in a manner compatible with the battlefield conditions, doing

what any weaker side in asymmetrical wars would do – it channeled its efforts to the two extremes of the levels-of-war pyramid – grand-strategy and tactics. At the tactical level it engaged in guerilla-type warfare against IDF troops. Its fighters used their defensive capabilities – advanced but easy-to-operate weapons, effective evasion and stealth tactics, extensive network of bunkers, and familiarity with the terrain and population – to engage small Israeli combat teams in battle under advantageous conditions. At the grand-strategic level they managed to paralyze social and economic life in northern Israel, to bring about a mass desertion of populated areas, and to cause casualties and damage to property.

Conclusion

The preference for offense has not been merely typical of the Israeli military echelon. It has been shared by politicians, both from the Right, e.g., Menahem Begin, Ariel Sharon, or Shaul Mofaz, and Left, e.g., David Ben-Gurion and "security doves" like Levi Eshkol, or Yitzhak Rabin. An offensive approach has also been strongly supported by the Israeli public. Since the 1950s, however, it became clear that whereas in its "regular" wars Israel could more easily apply an offensive strategy, although in many cases strategic offense was accompanied by defense – either at different levels-of-war (i.e., the operational or tactical), or at different fronts – the conduct of wars of attrition required a balanced offensive/ defensive approach. In attrition situations both offense and defense were almost equally important, each form covering other aspects of coping with the challenge.

Offense had substantial advantages. It created among Palestinian guerrillas and terrorists in particular a strong sense of danger, thereby limiting their freedom of action and forcing them to hide. But defense was necessary in order to defend Israeli civilians and troops and strengthen the sense of security and personal safety among civilians under terror attacks. Whereas it was usually easier to attack Palestinian or Hezbollah guerrillas, let alone regular armies like the Egyptian and Syrian ones in the mid and late-1960s, when it came to terror, the elusive nature of terror made defensive measures crucial. During the Intifadas, measures were used that did not always belong either to offense or defense.

4 Societal staying power

In wars of attrition, particularly of LIC nature, the societies on both sides are involved at one level of intensity or another, either directly or indirectly. Terror, in particular, is a method often used by the militarily weaker side in order to influence the willpower of the enemy's society, not just by killing people but also by disrupting societal and economic life, changing the society's behavior significantly, and generating societal pressure on the political echelon. Another means of pressuring the society is indirect – via inflicting casualties on enemy troops, either by using guerrilla tactics or "conventional" means, building on the sensitivity of the enemy's society to casualties among its troops.

Since World War II, Western democracies have been engaged in the third or fourth model of attrition (see Chapter 1). Do Western democracies tire in wars of attrition more easily than other societies? Mao Tse-tung thought that democracies simply could not tolerate a war of attrition, either economically or psychologically.[1] One of the main hypotheses of war weariness theory is that Western democracies are more prone to war weariness than Third World societies and authoritarian players due to moral, societal and political constraints.[2] Other arguments claim that war aversion is particularly relevant to wars Western democracies think they are unable to win, and that they attempt to win wars in which they have already been engaged in as quickly as possible;[3] that although it is true that casualties in themselves do not necessarily undermine public support,[4] Western democracies have been less inclined to pay a high price in wars in which their stakes have not been sufficiently high, and their cost tolerance has tended to decline over time;[5] and that their publics have been more supportive of the use of force to restrain aggressors, but less supportive of the use of force directed at internal political or regime change within another country.[6] Many wars of attrition of an asymmetrical nature fall into these categories, which explains why Western democracies have lost much of their incentive to be involved – let alone intervene – in wars that were likely to become wars of attrition, except in extreme cases.[7]

Researchers and philosophers of war have challenged some of these hypotheses. Although most of their arguments have not been attrition-oriented, at least two of them may easily apply to attrition situations. First, that empirical tests have shown that democracies are more likely to win the wars they fight, both because political accountability constrains them to engage in wars they are likely to win, and because they are more effective in war thanks to their better militaries[8] and their superior non-material, unit-level (domestic) characteristics – human capital, relatively harmonious civil–military relations and cultural traits.[9] Second, that it is sometimes the lack of will on the part of politicians, misinterpreting societal resilience potential, which accounts for the low cost tolerance attributed to democratic societies rather than any chronic stamina problem.[10] Anyway, there is no reason to assume that in wars of attrition Western democracies' stakes would necessarily be insufficiently high. Sometimes their wars of attrition do involve their vital interests and are believed to be just, which positively affects their resilience and efficiency in managing these wars.[11] The Israeli case seems to testify to the validity of these arguments, as this chapter will show.

Another war weariness theory argument is that players who have experienced long or

destructive wars in the past are more reluctant to be involved in future conflicts.[12] But empirical studies on war contagion (that have focused on great power behavior) have found no consistent evidence of any significant war weariness as a result of involvement in such wars.[13] On the contrary, it has been claimed that past failure may even induce a sense of revenge that might increase war proneness and determination to persevere and win.[14]

This chapter tests the Israeli society's perseverance in wars of attrition. Using a set of indicators for both material and psychological attrition (economic activity and casualties for the former; public consumption patterns, episodes of citizens fleeing from their homes in frontier areas, and anti-war protests and pressures on the government to pursue a political settlement for the latter), it shatters the myth that Israeli society cannot sustain prolonged wars of attrition, and shows that Israeli society demonstrated a rather high degree of staying power in attrition situations.

Higher Israeli staying power than expected

The finding that Israeli society repeatedly demonstrated a high degree of staying power in attrition situations runs contrary to the intuition-and theory-based argument[15] that societies that suffer from low internal cohesion will be less efficient in coping with external threats. Given the divisions within the Israeli society between rich and poor, Jews and Arabs, secular and religious Jews, Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, and between those who have lived in Israel for many years and the newly arrived immigrants;[16] the insecurity created by terror; and the leadership crisis – it was only reasonable to expect that the solidarity within the society would be weak and that it would consequently be less capable of persevering in face of external threats. The finding also refutes Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon's assertion in early 2004 that the weakest link in Israeli national defense has been the Israeli public's lack of stamina.[17]

There are various explanations for this perseverance. First, Israel's wars of attrition were imposed on it, therefore almost never instigating a significant public debate regarding their legitimacy. Second, the higher the stakes involved the higher the tolerance demonstrated by Israeli society. Even when challenges stemming from "regular" wars have diminished significantly and asymmetrical challenges have grown in importance, since the mid-1980s the latter have occasionally been referred to as a strategic threat and even an existential threat. Three episodes seem to testify to this change. First, in the early 1980s, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon reintroduced new *casi belli* to Israeli defense policy, including, for the first time, a tacit *casus belli* that for many in Israel related to a "current security" context – insurgency from neighboring countries.[18] Second, in 1986 Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir reacted to an attempt made by a Syrian sent Abu Nidal operative to place a bomb on an El Al plane leaving London's Heathrow to Tel-Aviv[19] by declaring that had the aircraft been exploded, Israel might have launched a war against Syria.[20] Third, in 1995 Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin declared, for the first time, that terrorism represented for Israel a "strategic threat."[21] And during the Second Intifada the Israeli public tended to accept Prime Minister Sharon and Chiefs of Staff Mofaz and Yaalon's view that Israel was facing an existential threat,[22] and to sympathize with Yaalon's declaration that the Second Intifada was second only in importance to the Israeli War of Independence.[23] Referring to asymmetrical challenges as strategic, let alone existential threats has fallen on attentive ears as

a result of post-modern tendencies among Israeli society, particularly the shifting focus from national security challenges to personal safety concerns, and the worsening of the security conditions in the territories and within the Green Line, which occurred with the two Intifadas, the Gulf War, and the Second Lebanon War.

Third, the death toll and the economic cost inflicted were usually relatively low. Fourth, Israel's "interrupted society"[24] has learned to pull together in wartime, but also to flexibly revert to normalcy as soon as the war ends. In wars of attrition, return to normalcy often took place long before the war was over. Fifth, the existence of a national unity government during the war of attrition of the late 1970s as well as during the First Intifada eased frictions within Israeli society and created a strong sense of solidarity.

Last but not least, the Israeli society's staying power was affected by the center–periphery relationship in Israeli society, which has always had both geographical and socio-economical aspects. The more remote the attrition activity from the country's populated areas (as happened during the 1950s, the 1960s, the 1969–70, the post-1973, the 1970–82, and the 1985–2000 cases), the less severely the threat perceived by Israeli society as a whole. The distance was not merely physical, though. It also existed between social classes. Many frontier settlements were inhabited by the socio-economically weaker lower class Mizra-him – Jews from Arab countries, most of whom had immigrated to Israel in the 1950s. Remote from the hearts and minds of the dominant secular Western Ashkenazi social group, and different from the socially cohesive, ideologically motivated communal communities (Kibbutzim) who demonstrated high staying power, their suffering was a marginal factor in the society's perseverance.[25]

The center–periphery relationship and its impact on the society's staying power have yet another sociological aspect. Since the 1970s the so-called "ethno-national coalition," led by Western religious Zionists and Mizrahi Jews, has played a central role in Israeli politics, society and military, strengthening the legitimacy for the use of force and justification for war. In the military, this group's share in combat units and officer corps has consistently grown, as they have seen the military as a social mobilization track, which has also rewarded them by improving their social status and income. They traditionally hold militaristic views, believing in standing firm against the Arabs and being ready to sacrifice themselves for the country's defense. One of the indicators of the new role played by them in the military has been their share in the IDF's casualties. For example, in the first week of the 1982 Lebanon War, about 55 percent of the troops who fell belonged to peripheral social groups, which had previously held marginal military roles. In the Second Intifada the percentage rose to around 75 percent. In recent years, the original ethno-national coalition has included immigrants from the former Soviet Union, many of whom have shared the same new ethos.[26] In August 2006, the IDF's Chief of the Manpower Branch General Elazar Stern said that in recent years, when consoling bereaved families of troops who fell in battle, he rarely traveled to Tel Aviv, but rather to peripheral areas of the country.[27]

Material attrition

Economic burden

As will be shown in more detail in Chapter 5, studies have pointed to the fact that a slowdown in

economic growth in Israel has usually been caused by global economic depression or insufficient investment in the local market, rather than security conditions.[28] American aid, along with private donations of American Jews and reparation payments by West Germany (in the 1950s) contributed to Israel's ability to sustain wars in general, to cope with the rise in import prices, to improve the standard of living, and to prevent a significant drop in private consumption.[29] Despite terror and war, the Israeli economy has had one of the highest per capita growth rates in the Western world, together with Japan, among all the states established between 1948 and 1974.[30]

Although it is difficult to isolate the economic cost of wars of attrition, as compared to "regular" wars, the economic burden of Israel's wars of attrition tended to be either limited or temporary. The lion's share of the defense budgets throughout the years was spent on military buildup or on conducting "regular" wars rather than wars of attrition. During periods of attrition Israel either knew economic growth and even prosperity despite Palestinian terrorism (e.g., in the early 1950s, and in the 1990s), or knew stagnation or decline in economic growth not merely because of Palestinian or Hezbollah terror but also for other reasons (e.g., the rise in energy costs and the global recession in the 1970s, the Asian economic crisis of 1997–98, or the bursting of the US high-tech bubble in the early 2000s). Another factor that affected the economic burden during Israel's wars of attrition after 1967 was the foreign aid Israel received from the US.

In the 1950s, increase in defense expenditures was aimed at coping with the perceived existential threat emanating from the regular armies of the Arab states rather than infiltration into Israel and *fedayeen* insurgency. In the 1960s, expenditures related to the inter-state arms race, particularly with Egypt, overshadowed the war of attrition on the Syrian border, known as the water campaign, and Palestinian terror and guerrilla activities. During the post-1967 war of attrition, like in the early 1960s' war of attrition, Israel engaged in an accelerated inter-state arms race, which overshadowed the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on the construction of the Bar-Lev line along the Suez Canal. The long-term loans Israel received from the US, as well as donations received from enthusiastic Jewish communities in the West as a result of the IDF's decisive victory in the 1967 war, eased the burden further.

The economic cost entailed in continuous service of many reserve units during the post-1973 war of attrition – dozens of millions of dollars – was overshadowed by the spending for military reconstruction and buildup in the wake of the October War. After the 1973 October War, the IDF almost doubled its size and upgraded its quality – a process that had almost nothing to do with the war of attrition with the PLO. In the wake of the 1975 Israeli–Egyptian interim agreement, defense consumption dropped considerably. At the same time the economy was growing. In the mid-1970s, Israel started receiving large amounts of American economic assistance. All these developments took place while a war of attrition was waged on the Lebanese border between Israel and the PLO.

From the mid-1980s, and well into the 1990s, thanks to the expansion of the Israeli economy, the significant growth in American aid to Israel, the massive immigration from the former Soviet Union and a dynamic high-tech sector, Israel's defense burden was eased in economic terms. This alleviation occurred despite the outbreak of the First Intifada, the murderous Palestinian suicide bombing wave in the mid-1990s, and the continuing conflict on Israel's northern front.

In 2001, the Second Intifada and the global high-tech crisis were equally responsible for the loss of output. By late 2002, the high-tech sector recovered and rose at an annual rate of 27 percent, despite the fact that the Intifada was not yet over. This resilience pointed to the linkage between economic recession or prosperity in Israel, on the one hand, and conditions of the global

economic environment, on the other. During the Second Lebanon War, Israel easily coped with the cost of war, thanks to the combination of the prosperity of both the Israeli economy and the world economy.

Casualties

Except for the post-1973 October War case, where attrition was waged on the battlefronts, the cases discussed in this study involved or targeted civilians, either deliberately or inadvertently. The losses inflicted during wars of attrition usually came in relatively small salvoes – in most cases "only" a few dozen a year. They were also low relative to the losses inflicted during Israel's *blitzkrieg*s – hundreds of casualties in a few days – or to the death toll claimed by road accidents. For example, in the period 1967–2002, Palestinian terror attacks caused the death of an average of 43 Israelis per year, as compared to 518 killed in road accidents.[31] These facts support the argument that terrorism's threat, while real, has been much overblown, because the damage inflicted by it is very low.[32]

On the Lebanese front, the majority of Israeli fatalities claimed by either Israeli–Palestinian or Israeli–Hezbollah wars of attrition were of troops: 51 percent troops, 49 percent civilians during the conflict with the PLO between 1970–82; 95 percent troops in the conflict with Hezbollah until 2006; and 2.7 times the number of troops than civilians in 2006. The majority of fatalities were also of Israeli troops during violent activities related to Palestinian insurgency in the 1960s (70 percent). Other terror activities by Palestinians claimed the highest civilian death toll: 55 percent of the total losses in the 1950s, 63 percent during the First Intifada between 1987 and 1993, and 80 percent during the Second Intifada in the period between 2000 and 2004. These numbers point to the growing involvement of civilians in the wars of attrition as a result of the growing role played by terror in the variety of means used by the weaker side.

Psychological attrition

In the 1960s and the 1970s, at least 70 percent of Israelis expressed concern about terror events.[33] During the First Intifada, 46 percent claimed that their personal safety was worsening.[34] During the Second Intifada, some 75 percent declared that they feared terrorist attacks against themselves or close family members.[35] However, as people under such psychological conditions can still function, I have focused my evaluation on behavior that may indicate deviation from a normal pattern of social life. To that effect I have used three indicators: deviation from former consumption patterns; massive fleeing from homes in areas that have become targets for terrorist attacks; and anti-war protests (demonstrations or conscientious objection) and public pressures on the government to pursue a political settlement that would put an end to the war.

Consumption patterns

As public consumption patterns in Israel show, Israeli society has learned to accept violence as part of its life. Both after the outbreak of the two Intifadas and throughout the uprisings, stays by

Israelis in tourist hotels remained steady and even increased.[36] While entertainment habits of Jews aged 14 and over have been negatively affected by terror aimed at the center of the country, they were influenced little when terror hit Israel's peripheral areas. The percentage of Israelis who attended entertainment shows at least once a month grew during the attrition with the Palestinians on the Lebanese border and later with Hezbol-lah on the same border – from 9.6 percent in 1969 to 14.4 percent in 1975–76, and from 13.4 percent in 1979 to 22.5 percent in 1986–87. Following the outbreak of the First Intifada, however, the rate dropped from 22.5 percent in 1986–87 to 11.3 percent in 1991–92.[37] After the outbreak of the Second Intifada, household expenditure on education, culture and entertainment dropped only moderately.[38]

Fleeing from homes

There have been five main episodes of citizens fleeing from their homes in areas that have become targets for terrorist attacks: during the early 1950s, as a result of infiltration and *fedayeen* activities; in the spring of 1970, after a wave of terrorist attacks on northern Israel's towns and villages; in July 1981 (during the "Small War of Attrition"); in 1996, during Operation Grapes of Wrath; and in July–August 2006 during the rocket barrage by Hezbollah. However, in the 1950s the phenomenon was restricted to settlements in the frontier areas inhabited by immigrants that were socio-economically weak, who, unlike the stronger communities in these areas (i.e., the Kibbutzim), despaired from living in these areas for a number of weaknesses, not just security problems, although the latter were the straw that broke the camel's back. Spring 1970 and July 1981 were only episodes in the broader context of the 1965–82 case; in 1996, it was the Israeli government that initiated the evacuation of some 20,000 residents[39] for a few days in order to enable the IDF to operate in southern Lebanon more freely; and in July 2006 it was a rational behavior on the part of those who could afford to leave with their family to places behind the lines, and did so with almost no panic. To these episodes one can add the 1991 Gulf War, during which many people of the Tel Aviv area left their homes every night to stay with relatives, friends, or hotels elsewhere in the country, but returned during day time to work and study in their home areas. Generally speaking, stronger socio-economically and more ideologically motivated communities in areas under attack, and individuals in these areas who could afford to at least temporarily stay out of these areas, evacuated in an orderly manner. An Israeli expert on stress justified the evacuation of people from areas under threat, presenting it as rational vulnerability diminishing act.[40]

Anti-war protests and pressures on the government

Both anti-war protests (demonstrations, and/or individual conscientious objection) and pressures on the government to pursue political settlement have been relatively few, selective (i.e., refusal to serve in the territories or in Lebanon), or representative of only one point in time in a years-long confrontation (e.g., the 2006 war with Hezbollah). Refusal to serve in the territories during the First Intifada was exceptional in its scope but selective.

The rest of the chapter is dedicated to discussion of each attrition case separately.

The 1950s

Between 1949 and 1955 infiltrators engaged in robbery, theft and theft attempts. On the Jordanian border there were 88 attempts in 1949, 100 in 1950, 1,423 in 1951, 1,154 in 1952, 722 in 1953, 229 in 1954 and 169 in 1955. On the Egyptian border 216 in 1951, 533 in 1952, 549 in 1953, 289 in 1954 and 128 in 1955.[41] Infiltration in the early-1950s claimed the lives of dozens of Israelis each year.[42] For example, there were 22 deaths in 1949, 31 in 1950, 76 in 1951, 50 in 1952 and 56 in 1953. The death toll paid by the infiltrators was even higher, with the ratios around 3:1 in Israel's favor (3:1 in 1951, 4:1 in 1952 and 2:1 in 1953).[43] Infiltration caused direct economic damage to Israel through theft of crops, cattle, and agricultural equipment. Indirect damage was even higher, caused mainly by the need to defend the settlements along the border against incursions.[44]

Infiltration and later on *fedayeen* activities created a strong sense of insecurity among settlers in the frontier areas, who put enormous pressure on the authorities to end the intolerable situation caused by infiltration. Not only did the settlers endure economic hardship as a result of economic crises in Israel,[45] but many were immigrants who had arrived in Israel during the early 1950s and were still coping with absorption difficulties.[46] Due to these conditions, some settlements in the frontier areas were abandoned and there were people who left their homes.[47] The older, socially cohesive, ideologically motivated communal communities (Kibbutzim), on the other hand, demonstrated high staying power. Perceiving the conflict as another chapter of the struggle over the Land of Israel and for the defense of the borders of the newly established State of Israel, the settlers who lived on Kibbutzim were hardly demoralized.[48] In any case, the Israeli government tried to create a stronger sense of security by applying an offensive–defensive security policy that consisted of reprisal raids, on the one hand, and defensive means on the other hand, which included territorial defense in the frontier areas, the establishment of a Border Guard, mining and other measures.[49]

Conditions were even worse in the Palestinian villages on the other side of the border. The refugees who had left their homes during the 1948 War of Independence to neighboring Arab countries suffered from poverty and detachment from their relatives who stayed behind. Many of the Israeli reprisal raids were aimed at Palestinian villages, and the Arab governments were indifferent to their fate.

Pre-1967

Series of clashes between Israel and Syria from December 1964 to July 1966, as well as clashes along the Israeli–Jordanian border between January 1965 and November 1966, affected Israeli settlers whose homes and fields were targeted by Syrian fire or Palestinian terrorists. The Syrians allowed Palestinian terrorists to infiltrate from their territory to Israel, and encouraged terrorist activities against Israel from Jordan. Settlers' life in the Jordan Valley and the Hulla Valley turned into a nightmare, as recounted by residents who were invited to address the Israeli government during the Six Day War, prior to the Israeli attack on Syria.[50] "We [the settlers along the Syrian border] won't be cannon fodder any longer," declared one of the settlers' representatives. "We cannot understand why the government is not saving us from the Syrian nightmare," said another.[51] Terror activities claimed the lives of 14 Israelis, while 18 Israeli

troops were killed in reprisal raids against Jordan.[52] The average fatality rate per year was 14. The loss ratios were in Israel's favor: dozens to 54. Of the Israeli losses 70 percent were troops.

As pointed out in Chapter 3, defensive means such as a security fence were considered by IDF senior commanders as inefficient against "popular war" and too expensive.[53] Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin understood that despite their disadvantages, defensive measures made settlers in the frontier areas feel much safer. On one occasion he said "We would like people to live along the border, and if we don't provide them protection, including fence and lighting, they won't stay there."[54] On another occasion he said "There is no greater danger than settlers fleeing their homes in the frontier areas." To that effect, the IDF invested in defensive deployment, although it kept pointing out that defense alone would not be enough.[55] Deputy Chief of Operations Rehav'am Zeevi believed that the IDF was too small for sealing the border, and that many settlers in the frontier areas were "demographically" (meaning socio-economically and ideologically) weak and would not withstand ongoing terrorist attacks.[56] Most of the settlers of weaker socio-economic background, however, eventually did remain in their homes and fields despite the hardships, and demonstrated exceptional staying power and perseverance.

Post-1967

The post-1967 attrition was waged under new conditions. The 1967 *blitzkrieg* was believed by the Israelis to have removed the existential threat to the country. They felt that for the first time they were living within secure and defensible borders. This new sense of security, the widespread conviction that the Arabs had lost their will and capability to fight, and the postwar economic boom together softened Israeli society. It is not surprising, therefore, that when President Gamal Abdel Nasser launched the war of attrition, he assumed that the Israeli society was unlikely to sustain such a war.[57] Nasser's confidant, Mohammed Hassanein Heikal, editor of *Al-Ahram*, likewise expected Israel to retreat from its positions in the Sinai, even if only a few kilometers, after having lost between 10,000–20,000 troops.[58] Actually, between June 1967 and the end of the war in August 1970, Israel lost only 367 soldiers on the Egyptian front, 260 of them between March 1969 (the official declaration of a war of attrition by Nasser) and August 1970.[59] On the Syrian and the Jordanian borders, although the numerous clashes remained limited, terror and guerrilla activities claimed the lives of 359 Israelis, both civilians and soldiers.[60] Most of the losses were troops (82 percent).[61] The loss ratio between Israelis and Arabs was 17:1 in Israel's favor – 12,600 Arabs (10,000 Egyptians, 300 Jordanian troops, 500 Syrian troops, and 1,800 Palestinian terrorists), as compared to 726 Israelis.[62] These numbers did not come close to the Egyptian estimates.

During the initial stages of the war of attrition with Egypt, the Israeli public showed signs of dissatisfaction with the continuing hostilities and the mounting casualty toll. Anti-war protests increased, particularly among artists[63] and high school graduates who were soon to be drafted. They called on the government to explore every avenue for peace. In a letter to Prime Minister Golda Meir, 70 high school students nearing graduation wrote that they doubted their ability to join the IDF as long as the government was not pursuing peace. The movie *Late Summer Blues* told the story of seven high school graduates who, as the war of attrition dragged on, awaited induction into the IDF and faced the realities of social and self-awareness, as well as imminent decisions concerning life and death. In April 1970, only three years after IDF prestige had

reached mythological proportions, an anti-war satirical revue by Hanoch Levin, *Queen of the Bath*, criticized Israeli society's militarism and exposed its decadence.[64] That same month Prime Minister Meir rejected a peace initiative proposed by the President of the World Jewish Congress, Nahum Goldmann. Even more ominous, for the first and only time in Israel's wars of attrition, demoralization penetrated the military. Troops along the Suez Canal, who had been under heavy fire, reported that they suffered from undue stress.[65] By and large, however, a highly patriotic, and to a certain extent militaristic Israeli society, resented the "unpatriotic" expressions. Levin's play was performed no more than 18 times, and the Prime Minister's office easily organized a letter by 1,000 high school students condemning their peers' letter.[66]

On the Egyptian side, 500,000–750,000 Egyptian civilians fled their homes, and the Canal cities of Ismailia, Kantara, and Suez turned into ghost cities.[67] The death toll mounted to 10,000,[68] and tens of thousands were injured. Egypt was on the verge of defeat. Had it not been for the Soviets, who in response to Nasser's plea for help decided to intervene in the war Egyptian collapse would have been imminent.[69]

Post-1973

The postwar attrition took place immediately after the end of the traumatic October War that claimed the lives of almost 3,000 Israeli troops. In order to pressure Israel to withdraw its forces from the heart of their country, the Egyptians adopted coercive diplomacy, accompanying negotiations with Israel on a disengagement agreement with continuous barrages on Israeli troops on the west bank of the Suez Canal. Violence ended only after the signing of the disengagement agreement on 18 January 1974. In the Golan Heights, an 80-day war of attrition accompanied the US-mediated talks between Syria and Israel. The war peaked between 12 March 1974 and the signing of the disengagement agreement in May 1974. According to Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad, as long as Syria had the option of waging a war of attrition, Israel had not yet won the war.[70]

The war of attrition did not directly involve the civilian rear, although it delayed a massive release of Israeli reserve troops. Many reservists had to serve up to six months, which entailed a heavy social and economic cost. Two months into the war on the Egyptian front, 452 incidents occurred and the IDF lost 30 troops and 120 were wounded. The Egyptians lost hundreds of their soldiers.[71] On the Syrian front, 43 Israeli troops were killed and 138 were wounded. There is no information regarding Syrian casualties.[72] Overall, however, as Israeli society was still licking the wounds of the October War, the postwar war of attrition was overshadowed by the economic and casualty cost of the October War and hardly preoccupied the Israeli public.

1965–82

Most of the anti-Israel violence during the period between 1965 and 1982 came from Lebanon. Early signs of an attrition pattern in the conflict between Israel and the PLO in Lebanon could be detected between June 1965 and April 1968, when the PLO fired Katyusha rockets and gun and mortar shells on settlements along the Israeli–Lebanese border and attacked Israeli vehicles on the roads.[73] As the PLO had been expelled from Jordan in late 1970s, the organization found it

very difficult to carry out operations from Jordanian territory. The PLO therefore made Lebanon home to its headquarters and main base of operations, taking advantage of the decline of central authority in the country. Southern Lebanon became a Palestinian state-within-a-state.

Terrorist strikes against civilian targets in northern Israel were accompanied by attacks on Israeli civilians and troops in the territories, hijacking commuter planes with Israeli passengers on board, and attacks on Israelis abroad. Between 1970 and 1982, Palestinian terrorist attacks claimed the lives of 365 Israelis; 51 percent soldiers and 49 percent civilians.[74] An average death toll of 30 fatalities per year was a price that Israeli society had long learned to stomach.

On two occasions, however – in the spring of 1970 and during the 1981 “Small War of Attrition” – citizens in towns and villages in northern Israel demonstrated low staying power. In May 1970, as a result of a wave of terrorist attacks against Metula, Kiryat Shmona and other settlements, people started leaving the frontier areas. Again, it was the weaker settlements socioeconomically, like Kiryat Shmona, where the phenomenon was more pervasive, as the citizens suffered from unemployment and lack of sufficient housing, health services and shelters. In the spring, 67 families – less than 2 percent of the town’s residents – left Kiryat Shmona within three months.[75]

In 1981, Israel demonstrated lower cost tolerance than the other side. In mid-1981, following five days of massive attacks by the Israeli Air Force (IAF) in southern Lebanon that began on 10 July, the PLO shelled the town of Nahariya in northern Israel. Israel retaliated by targeting PLO concentrations from the air, many of which were located in refugee camps. Some 100 people were killed, of whom only 30 were terrorists, and 600 were injured. For the next 12 days the PLO shelled northern Israel, from Nahariya in the west to Kiryat Shmona in the east. Not only did Israeli aircraft and artillery prove ineffective in destroying PLO artillery and Katyusha launchers, they were also not allowed to target terrorist artillery located within Syrian dispositions in the Beka Valley. Although Palestinian fire was far from precise, as reflected by the relatively low casualty rates on the Israeli side (six were killed and 59 were injured), for those living in the 68 towns and villages of northern Israel, daily life became intolerable. Homes, factories, and public buildings were damaged; trade, industry and education systems were paralyzed; and some 40 percent of Kiryat Shmona residents fled their homes.[76]

The PLO called the July 1981 events “The Sixth War,” presenting it as a turning point in its struggle against Israel thanks to the organization’s perseverance under heavy IAF attacks and its success in disrupting normal life in northern Israel and exposing the country’s soft belly.[77] A PLO document described what happened on the Israeli side:

> The enemy found itself against its will in a real war of attrition, the most dangerous one since the establishment of the State of Israel. The war turned northern Israel into a battlefield, as had been done to southern Lebanon. For the first time, Israeli settlers felt the pressure of the war over their heads. The citizens of 37 villages, towns and cities in northern Israel started a collective retreat, fleeing from the Palestinian missiles. The rest filled the shelters to their full capacity, staying there for 14 days and nights.[78]

The Israeli government was under heavy societal pressure to restore life in northern Israel to normal as soon as possible. At the same time it felt that the diplomatic conditions were not ripe for a large-scale attack on PLO infrastructure in southern Lebanon. First, it had to avoid any widening of the differences with the US administration, which had already decided to withhold the supply of F-16 fighters to Israel following the IAF raid on the Iraqi nuclear reactor in June and the bombing of Palestinian headquarters in Beirut.[79] Second, both political and military decision makers in Israel believed that the PLO would soon violate the ceasefire, which would

change the administration's attitude toward the Israeli plan to destroy PLO infrastructure in southern Lebanon.[80] The government therefore decided to postpone retaliation and to accept an undesirable ceasefire. In any case, however, the "Small War of Attrition" constituted only one episode in the prolonged 1965–82 Israel–PLO war of attrition, particularly against Israel's eventual war against the PLO in Lebanon in 1982.

1985–2000

During the war of attrition between Israel and Hezbollah, the Lebanese "Party of God" exacted an increasing death toll on the Israeli side, mostly military (some 95 percent of the losses were troops). In the period between 1988 and 1996, 113 Israeli soldiers were killed. The average loss ratio for this period was around 3:1 in Israel's favor.[81] At times Hezbollah also launched rocket attacks on northern Israeli communities and caused damage to property, trade, and industry and disrupted daily life. The economic cost, however, was mainly local.

Israeli large-scale reprisal raids caused greater damage on the other side of the border, sometimes inflicting a high toll on civilians. During Operation Accountability in 1993, some 300,000 civilians were displaced. During Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996, Israel launched air, artillery, and naval barrages on Lebanon, blockaded its ports, and again prompted thousands of people to flee their homes. In June–July 1999, Israeli aircraft hit counter-value targets in Beirut.

The death toll and the disruption of social and economic activity in northern Israel notwithstanding, Israel managed to sustain its presence in Lebanon for more than 20 years, basing itself on strong public support. In 1995 and 1996, public support exceeded 70 percent (77 percent and 72 percent respectively), and in 1997 – probably the worst year for Israeli military presence in southern Lebanon due to the exceptional death toll (see below) – and 1998 it exceeded 60 percent (62 percent and 64 percent respectively).[82] Three important reasons accounted for this support. First, the majority of the Israeli people shared the feeling that the security zone in southern Lebanon was protecting the citizens of northern Israel. Second, the death toll was relatively tolerable – some 25 soldiers each year. The death toll for Israeli civilians was also tolerable. For example, during Operation Grapes of Wrath, Hezbollah fired 750 rockets onto Israeli territory, but only injured 24 civilians.[83] Third, the Israeli troops in Lebanon displayed unshakable morale, even during the late years of the intervention, when opposition at home to the presence in Lebanon grew significantly.[84] The growing public opposition since early 1997 accounted for Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh's accusation that the Israeli society's inability to stomach casualties sabotaged the military's mission to buffer northern Israel from guerrilla attacks.[85]

In fact, only 29 percent of the Israeli public attributed the pullout of southern Lebanon to national weakness; rather, 61 percent believed that the IDF presence in southern Lebanon was no longer contributing to the security of Israel's northern towns and villages.[86] After the February 1997 helicopter crash, which claimed the lives of 73 Israeli troops, and the casualties inflicted on Israeli troops in Wadi Saluki in August 1997 (five troops) and during the September 1997 elite commando unit operation in southern Lebanon (12 troops), the voices calling for withdrawal, spearheaded by the anti-war Four Mothers movement, eventually fell on attentive ears. The proponents of unilateral withdrawal gradually succeeded in convincing the Israeli public and

political leadership both from the coalition and the opposition of the futility of Israeli occupation of the security zone.[87] Some 3,000 reserve troops were reported to have asked not to be sent to Lebanon, and 180 went to jail for refusing to serve.[88] On 1 April 1998 the ministerial Committee for National Security voted unanimously to accept UN Security Council Resolution 425, calling for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon under appropriate security arrangements.[89] Aware of the change in Israeli public opinion vis-à-vis southern Lebanon, Ehud Barak made this an issue in his 1999 election campaign, promising to withdraw from Lebanon should he be elected. And indeed, in May 2000, the Israeli government headed by Prime Minister Barak withdrew the Israeli troops unilaterally.

The Intifadas

The Intifadas, yet another testimony of Israeli society's high cost tolerance level, embodied certain qualitatively different characteristics. First, they had a negative economic countrywide impact. Second, the civilian losses inflicted during the Intifadas outnumbered the military ones. Third, the Second Intifada took an unprecedented death toll on Israeli society – more than 1,000 Israelis – most of whom were civilians. Fourth, the Second Intifada in particular was perceived as constituting an existential threat, which explains the high staying power demonstrated by the Israeli society despite the economic and human cost.

The First Intifada

After the outbreak of the First Intifada, both GDP and GDP per capita dropped moderately for one year (1988), and then grew again.[90] Israeli businesses that relied on the territories' market suffered a severe blow.[91] Tourism to Israel dropped in the years 1988–91, and net domestic production in agricultural activity sank temporarily in 1988.[92] Israel had to allocate more troops to the territories, including reservists, which made its activity there much more expensive.[93]

On the Palestinian side, however, economic conditions, which were already bad, worsened. Frequent closures disrupted trade and other economic relations between Israel and the territories and accelerated the replacement of Palestinian laborers in Israel by laborers from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa.[94] The leadership of the uprising forced hundreds to resign from their government jobs.[95]

The death toll ratio was clearly in Israel's favor: 7:1 – 1,962 Palestinians (including 359 who were killed by Palestinians) as compared to 277 Israelis.[96] Of the Israelis killed, 63 percent were civilians.[97]

Psychologically, the First Intifada clearly wielded an effect: according to 63 percent of the Israeli population, the nation's mood was negatively affected, and 46 percent claimed that their personal safety was worsening.[98] This decreasing sense of security worked in two different directions. On the one hand, public opinion polls on fighting terrorism conducted among the Jewish population from 1988 to 1994 detected a high level of support (over 80 percent) for the use of force.[99] Israelis also understood that it was essentially a civic obligation to unite and oppose the Palestinian uprising. The existence of a national unity government during the First

Intifada eased frictions between parties and between the government and the military, and as such it strengthened the Israeli society's staying power.

On the other hand, Israelis expressed increasing support for negotiations with the PLO pending the organization's recognition of Israel and readiness to give up violence (43 percent in 1987, 53 percent in 1988, and 58 percent in 1989). The support for negotiations dropped temporarily as a result of the PLO's pro-Iraq policy during the 1991 Gulf War, but rose again after the Madrid Conference to 43 percent in 1992, 52 percent in 1993, and 60 percent after the Oslo Accords.[100] In other words, hope existed that there was a Palestinian partner with whom a settlement could be reached.

Despite the perceived threat both after the outbreak of the Intifada and throughout the Palestinian uprising, stays by Israelis in tourist hotels remained steady and even increased.[101] The number of Israelis who left their homes in the territories grew only moderately in the period between 1988 and 1991 and started declining in 1991, two years before the Oslo agreement was signed (4,000 in 1988; 3,900 in 1989; 4,800 in 1990 and 4,200 in 1991), as compared to the pre-Intifada years (1,800 in 1984; 2,200 in 1985; 3,500 in 1986 and 3,200 in 1987).[102]

Researchers differ on the scale of the conscientious objection to military service in the territories during the First Intifada. According to Aryeh Shalev, instances of refusing to serve were few.[103] Martin Van Creveld, on the other hand, claims that the number of soldiers and officers who declared their refusal to serve in the territories was rather high. According to him, by the end of 1992, almost 200 soldiers were put in jail after having announced their refusal to serve, including a high percentage of officers.[104] Ruth Linn, who investigated reserve soldiers' selective refusal during the first four years of the Intifada, quotes 165 soldiers as the number of those who decided to refuse to join their units in their assigned tasks in the territories and were court-martialed for performing a disciplinary offense. She points to the main reason for their refusal – the morally controversial conflict – and to their affiliation to the left or extreme-left. [105] Yoram Peri found that conscientious objection came from the social elite: some 25 percent were Kibutzniks, 25 percent were officers, many objectors were university graduates, and most of them held leftist views.[106]

Although conscientious objection was never considered by Israelis a civil right, objectors were tolerated by the society and military.[107] And indeed, the IDF refrained from resorting to harsher measures against refuseniks in order to avoid their becoming victims and even heroes, and commanders were instructed to solve the problem within their units. Since the end of 1992 as a result of this policy, very few soldiers, almost all of them conscripts, were sentenced for this offense.[108]

Surveys taken in the period 1988–91 showed that an overwhelming majority of Israeli youngsters (87–90 percent) trusted the IDF's combat proficiency, claiming that they would have enlisted voluntarily even if conscription had not existed (94 percent), and that they were willing to serve in elite units (78 percent).[109]

On the Palestinian side, the society suffered from harsh measures used by Israel. Demolition and sealing of houses of terrorists, deportation of agitators, and administrative detention were accompanied by collective punishments such as curfews, cutting off electricity and telephone communication and closure of schools. Probably as a result of the worsening economic conditions, increasingly fewer Palestinians abided by the United National Command's instructions to violate law and order. The number of those who took part in demonstrations and disturbances dropped sharply from 1990 (48,858 in 1990; 29,174 in 1991; 23,686 in 1992 and

20,459 in 1993),[110] and the number of Palestinian workers in Israel rose from 49,000 in 1987 to 52,000 in 1989.[111] Despaired by their condition, many Palestinians wished for the Intifada to end.

The Second Intifada

During the Second Intifada the economic burden on the Israeli side was high. A study on the linkage between terrorism and economics showed that the higher the number of casualties and terrorist attacks within the Green Line, the lower the level of economic activity in Israel. The terrorist attacks coincided with the bursting of the international high-tech market, and their combination forced the Israeli economy to backtrack by several decades, even beneath the level of the severe recession experienced prior to the 1967 Six Day War. Exporters faced difficulties in meeting future contracts, domestic demand dropped considerably, real wages and per capita GDP declined, and unemployment reached 11 percent. GDP dropped moderately for two years (in 2001 and 2002), but grew again in 2003. GDP per capita dropped from 74,847 NIS in 2000 to 72,451 in 2001; 70,492 in 2002; and 70,121 in 2003.[112] Israel was also forced to allocate greater resources to fighting terrorism.[113] Consequently, even hard-liner Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was reported to have said that there was no outlet from the economic hardships but a political agreement with the Palestinians.[114] In 2004, though, there was a shift to economic growth and the high-tech industry began to recover. The recession ended in spite of the Intifada.

As for the Palestinians, the IDF imposed strict closures on Palestinian enclaves, surrounding them first by earthwork barricades and later on by a security fence, separating them from Israel and preventing supplies from getting through. The border was closed for some 125,000 Palestinian workers, who had relied on jobs inside Israel for their modest income.[115] As a result of these measures, three years after the eruption of the Intifada, the economy in the territories shrank to 70 percent of its former activity.[116] Unemployment was estimated between 40 percent and 70 percent. More than 50 percent of residents in the West Bank and some 80 percent in the Gaza Strip lived below the poverty line. Fifty-one percent of children suffered from malnutrition and another 21 percent from acute malnutrition.[117]

Nearly as many Israelis died as a result of terrorist attacks between 2000 and 2004 as had been killed by terrorists between 1948 and 2000. Continuous terrorism killed 300 Israeli civilians annually. As a percentage of population, it is equivalent to 13,000 in the US. Relative to the Palestinians the fatality ratio was in Israel’s favor:[118] nearly 3,500 Palestinians and 1,061 Israelis were killed.[119] Most of the Israelis (some 80 percent) were civilians. According to GSS, most of the Palestinians killed in the Intifada – some 66 percent – were combatants (armed men or terrorists),[120] whereas according to Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem, two-thirds of the Palestinians killed in 2004 did not participate in the fighting.[121]

From the Palestinians’ point of view, these numbers could be considered an achievement, as the death toll paid by Israel in absolute terms was much higher than any toll paid during previous wars of attrition. It was also higher than the death toll of the First Intifada both in absolute and relative terms (3:1 and 7:1 in Israel’s favor, respectively). Again, the conflict was waged between societies rather than militaries, as reflected by the fact that most of the losses on both sides were civilians – only some 47 percent of the dead Palestinians were terrorists, and only some 20 percent of the dead Israelis were soldiers.[122] Following efficient counter-terrorist measures used

by Israeli security agencies, in 2003 and 2004 the Israeli death toll dropped considerably from 452 in 2002 to 214 in 2003 and 97 in the period of January–September 2004,[123] although it remained very high in absolute terms.

A number of surveys conducted during the Second Intifada pointed to the Israeli society's resilience in the face of the murderous wave of terror. In a study conducted in late 2004, researchers from the Center for National Defense Research at Haifa University analyzed the effects of terrorism on the daily lives of Israelis. One in five Israelis (approximately 1.27 million) have lost a relative or friend in a terrorist attack. Of Israeli Arabs 75 percent and only 63 percent of Jews reported having faith in the Israeli leadership's ability to protect the civilians. The report also revealed that Israeli citizens felt they had little control over their lives. Of Israeli Arabs 61 percent and 54 percent of Jews reported they were more apprehensive about their future. In October 2000, 80 percent of Israeli Jews polled declared that they feared terrorist attacks against themselves or close family members, and in April 2004, the fear level remained high at 75 percent.[124]

Another survey by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies pointed to the fact that between 2002 and 2003, Israelis became less worried about the security conditions (63 percent and 40 percent, respectively), and less worried about the country's general condition (in 2002, 46 percent said it was poor, whereas in 2003 only 26 percent thought it was poor).[125] According to a third poll conducted in mid-2004, 48 percent of Israelis believed that their personal safety was at a level similar to the previous year, 27 percent felt an improvement, and only 21 percent felt less safe than in the past.[126] This higher sense of security can be explained by the Israeli security forces' success in thwarting terrorist attacks as a result of mid-2002 Operation Defensive Shield, which are also reflected in the aforementioned drop in death toll claimed by the Intifada.

Although most Israelis (58.9 percent) did feel depressed as a result of the murderous suicide bombings, only 9.4 percent suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), 82.2 percent felt optimistic about their personal futures, and 74.6 percent felt confident in their ability to function under terrorist attacks.[127] Among terror attack victims, only 13 percent suffered from PTSD three months after having experienced the attack and 43.5 percent showed no long-term psychological effect.[128]

The economic cost and the heavy casualty toll notwithstanding, Palestinian violence promoted a sense of resolve and unity among Israelis, the likes of which Israel had not known for decades.[129] The Israeli public seemed to believe that the struggle was over vital interests, accepting Prime Minister Sharon and Chiefs of Staff Mofaz and Yaalon's view that Israel faced an existential threat.[130] The public also seemed to sympathize with Yaalon's declaration that the "Thousand Day War" – his name for the Second Intifada – was second only in importance to the Israeli War of Independence.[131]

After the outbreak of the Intifada, household expenditure on education, culture and entertainment dropped only moderately from 13.5 percent in 1999 and 14.2 percent in 2000 to 13.4 percent in 2001 and 13.1 percent in 2002.[132] Not only did stays by Israelis in tourist hotels during the uprising remain steady, but they even increased.[133]

A tendency to leave the territories gained momentum during the inter-Intifada period (1992–2000), having nothing to do with any sense of insecurity. It happened during the same years when Israel and the PLO reached important agreements (Oslo A, 1993; Gaza and Jericho, 1994; Oslo B, 1995; Hebron, 1997; and Wye, 1998), and peace between the two sides seemed closer than ever. Between 6,400 and 8,100 left their homes in the territories in the years 1992–97;

13,600 in 1998; 9,400 in 1999; and 16,000 in 2000. A possible explanation for this increase in the tendency to leave the territories is the improving economic conditions in Israel in the years preceding the Second Intifada, which also affected many families in the territories, who now could afford to live within the Green Line. Interestingly, the number of settlers in the territories that left their homes during the first and second years of the Second Intifada (10,600 in 2001; 10,300 in 2002) was lower than the number of those who had left their homes in 2000 – the year that preceded the outbreak of the Intifada (16,000). The number even dropped to 8,700 in 2003,[134] probably as a result of the fact that the IDF had regained control over the West Bank. Like the Kibbutzniks within the Green Line, many settlers in the territories were ideologically motivated, although unlike the former group, who held socialist, secular views, they were rather motivated by strong national–religious views. Common to both groups, though, was the impact of their values on their staying power and resolve.

As for protests and conscientious objection, more than 270 reservists announced that they would refuse to serve in the Palestinian territories on moral grounds. In September 2003, 27 IAF pilots, most of whom were not on active reserve duty, signed a petition against the collateral damage inflicted in the territories. In their petition the pilots declared that they would refuse to take part in military action against targets located in populated areas that could end in injury to innocent civilians. The dovish Peace Now movement organized demonstrations against Sharon’s handling of the conflict, and the Council for Peace and Security – a group of some 1,000 retired military and intelligence officers with dovish views – campaigned for a unilateral withdrawal from Palestinian territories.

However, objection to military service in the territories among regular soldiers and reservists remained marginal. Neither Peace Now nor the Council for Peace and Security gained widespread public support.[135] Of the Israeli public 75 percent thought the protest by the pilots was illegitimate,[136] not only because soldiers should obey orders but also because the protesters were believed to have a political agenda, i.e., objection to the occupation of the territories.

Almost four years after the outbreak of the Second Intifada, it appeared that Israeli society was much stauncher than the Palestinians had imagined. To cite Chief of Staff Yaalon: “When the Palestinians initiated the confrontation, their evaluation was that Israel would not be able to withstand even a few dozen casualties. They were surprised. Operation Defensive Shield showed them that they were dealing not with a spider web, but with a tiger.”[137] Israel’s economy was growing again and tourism was being revived; Israelis pursued their routine, returning to cafes, discos, and even public transportation shortly after each suicide bombing.[138]

On the Palestinian side, a Palestinian public opinion survey conducted in September 2004 showed that after four years of violence, an overwhelming sense of insecurity prevailed among Palestinians (86 percent), causing a high level of support for bombing and rocket attacks, on the one hand, along with a demand for the mutual cessation of violence (59 percent) and a questioning of the effectiveness of armed attacks, on the other.[139]

The 2006 Second Lebanon War

During the Second Lebanon War the Israeli civilian home front faced their severest challenge – dozens, sometimes hundreds of rockets hitting Israeli territory daily throughout the 33-day war. According to Israeli police figures, 3,970 rockets landed on Israeli soil, 901 of which in urban

areas. More than 1,000 rockets landed in Kiryat Shmona, 808 in Nahariya, 471 in Safed, 176 in Karmiel, 106 in Acre, 93 in Haifa and 181 in Tiberias.[140]

The war's direct economic price was low – between 0.9–1.0 percent of the national product, i.e., between $1–1.5 billion. Economic growth hardly suffered from the war and reached its pre-war forecast of 4–6 percent.[141] In other words, from a macro-economic perspective, the war's economic cost was absorbed in the country's general economic activity. Most of the damage was inflicted on northern Israel, where economic activity was suspended for a month. The "*zimmer* policy," according to which Israel turned a blind eye to Hezbollah buildup as long as the "*zimmers*" (bed-and-breakfast rooms) and hotels in northern Israel were full, became irrelevant. As a result of the war, the tourism industry in that part of the country was paralyzed and extensive damage was inflicted on hundreds of dwellings, several public utilities, and dozens of industrial plants. Some 500 forest and brush fires were caused by rocket impacts[142] (for a detailed account of the war's economic price, see Chapter 5). While Hezbollah managed to almost paralyze life in northern Israel, life elsewhere in the country remained almost normal. Similarly, in Lebanon, while the Shiite neighborhoods of Beirut and Shiite villages in southern Lebanon were destroyed, the Christian and Sunni neighborhoods in Beirut stayed intact.

A total of 44 Israeli civilians were killed and 2,015 were injured, of whom 1,318 suffered from anxiety and panic. On the Lebanese side, 250 Hezbollah militias were confirmed dead by the organization, but according to Lebanese estimates the real number was 500, 180 of whom were identified by the IDF. The estimate of the number of Lebanese civilians killed ranged from 850–1,191 and 4,409 were injured. The war also claimed the lives of 43 Lebanese soldiers and policemen.[143]

The Israeli–Lebanese general loss ratio was 9:1 in Israel's favor. The civilian loss ratio was 23:1, and the military loss ratio was 4:1, both in Israel's favor. Israel sacrificed more troops than civilians (2.68:1), whereas on the Lebanese side the civilian casualties were double the number of military ones. There seem to be two main explanations for this loss ratio. On the Israeli side, the limited lethal effect of Hezbollah Katyusha rockets, which was reduced even further by efficient instructions by the IDF's Homefront Command that were followed by most citizens. Additionally, there was a relatively quiet and ordered evacuation of citizens from populated areas under Katyusha fire in northern Israel to friends, relatives or hotels in safer places across the country. On the Lebanese side, the inadvertent "collateral damage" inflicted by IAF bombings increased the Lebanese death toll.

The military loss ratios, which were worse than the civilian ones for the Israeli side, although still in its favor, were a result of the fact that the IDF played into Hezbollah's hands by confronting the organization head-to-head at the tactical level. Israel's hands were tied as far as hitting Lebanese (not Hezbollah) grand-strategic targets as a result of American pressures not to endanger the democratically elected pro-Western Fouad Seniora government, the only political body with whom Israel could potentially negotiate.

Fleeing from homes by Israelis was unprecedented. One hundred and twenty thousand out of 200,000 citizens of the frontier areas were reported to have fled their homes,[144] most of the citizens of Metula,[145] some 50 percent of the citizens of Safed[146] and 70 percent of the citizens of Kiryat Shmona.[147] There are sources that portray a different picture: 85 percent of the men stayed in their homes, and 9 percent left for only a few days, 66 percent of the women stayed and 13 percent left for a short period of time.[148] Many families traveled to relatives in safer areas to spare the trauma of Katyusha rocket attacks from their children or themselves. Those who had no

friends and relatives to stay with were offered hospitality by families and municipalities across the country. Unlike the 1950s, those left behind were not merely the weakest socio-economically; they were the ones who felt unable to leave their jobs and businesses or were mentally stronger. Nevertheless, 77 percent of those who stayed at home belonged to the low-income groups, as compared to 60 percent of the high-income sector.[149] To balance the picture, the evacuation was relatively quiet and ordered.[150] Shortly after the war ended, economic life across the country returned to pre-war level, and those who had left their homes in northern Israel returned, students went to school and the tourism sector recovered.[151] In Lebanon, 974,184 people – around 25 percent of the population – were displaced. Unlike most Israelis who left their homes, many Lebanese became refugees in their own country, having nobody to take care of them.[152]

In 2006 anti-war protests were of minor scale. On 22 July only a few thousand demonstrators, many of whom were Arab Israelis, gathered in Tel Aviv, calling for an end to the war and a refusal to serve in the military.[153] By 8 August, only three soldiers refused to serve.[154]

According to a survey conducted after a week of fighting, 85 percent of the Israeli public felt the society demonstrated high staying power and 65 percent said they felt safe. Of the Israelis living in the northern parts of the country who suffered from Hezbollah Katyusha attacks 88 percent believed the society's staying power was high and 59 percent said they felt safe.[155] In surveys conducted two to three weeks after the outbreak of the war over 85 percent expressed satisfaction with the IDF's performance and over 92 percent were convinced that Israel was conducting a just war.[156] Many of northern Israel's citizens declared they were ready to stay in shelters for as long as necessary in order to destroy Hezbollah infrastructure in southern Lebanon. The explanation for this perseverance is not merely a strong sense of outrage as a result of an unprovoked attack by Hezbollah, but something deeper – the need to put an end to the threat Hezbollah was posing to the country as an Iranian proxy. A post-heroic mood started to develop, however, as a result of the death of 12 reserve troops by a Katyusha rocket near Kfar Giladi on 6 August. That event became a watershed in the public's support for the government. Beforehand, the government enjoyed the support of 80 percent of the public, whereas in its aftermath, that support declined to 51 percent and continued to decline to 40 percent on the day the ceasefire was declared.[157]

Symbolically, for many Israelis the war marked departure from the spider web image. "[Nasrallah's] 'spider web' speech, as it came to be known, is very much in the mind of Israelis today as we belatedly try to restore our lost deterrence," explained an Israeli journalist.[158] Another journalist put it in a more figurative way:

> [. . .] This entire war evolved in order to prove the fallacy of Nasrallah's spider web theory. The Hezbollah leader kept repeating that Israeli society is constructed like a spider web. Stretch it a little and it will tear. Turns out that not only does Nasrallah not understand anything about the Israelis, he knows even less about spider webs. They are one of the natural wonders of the world; more resilient and flexible than steel wire of the same diameter and thinner than silk thread. They can stretch to five times their size without tearing. Scientists and industrialists have tried to recreate the spider web out of silicone but nothing has emerged that is as strong as the original.[159]

Conclusion

This chapter refuted the myth that Israel could not withstand a draining war of attrition. In fact, Israeli society has learned to grapple with constant violence. Five explanations can be offered for its staying power. First, most of Israel's wars of attrition have been imposed on it, almost never instigating a significant public debate regarding their legitimacy. Second, the higher the stakes involved, the higher the tolerance demonstrated by the Israeli society. This applies particularly to the 1950s, when settlers in the frontier areas felt they were continuing the struggle for independence, and to the Second Intifadas, which many Israelis perceived as an existential threat. Terror, in particular, has created a strong sense of insecurity among Israeli citizens, one of the reactions to which has been greater determination to persevere. Third, the cost in terms of losses and quality of life was mitigated by the moderate economic cost inflicted by the wars of attrition as well as by the fact, typical of protracted conflicts, that the death toll was relatively limited, the Second Intifada being the notable exception. Israel has conducted its recent wars of attrition against the Palestinians and Hezbollah post-heroically. By inflicting damage on enemy forces or infrastructure while minimizing casualties for enemy civilians and for its own troops, it has proved that the fourth attrition model does work, that a militarily stronger Western Democracy can mobilize its technological edge for conducting wars of attrition both effectively and at less cost, thus being able to sustain such conflicts despite their protracted nature. Fourth, the more remote the attrition activity from the country's centers – both geographically and socio-economically – the less severely the threat perceived by the Israeli society. Throughout the attrition years, low morale in the frontier areas of Israel had not been translated into low morale in the rest of the country. This has been exemplified by the cases of post-1967, post-1973, 1970–82, 1985–2000 and 2006. Fifth, the existence of a national unity government during the war of attrition of the late 1970s as well as during the First Intifada eased frictions within Israeli society and created a strong sense of solidarity.

Finally, this study has found no evidence of any significant war weariness as a result of involvement in protracted wars. On the contrary, although this can hardly be proved, it seems that years of experience gained in waging protracted conflicts as well as past successes have instead contributed to the Israeli society's perseverance during such conflicts. The constant increase in the standard of living in Israel, combined with the strong sense of social solidarity demonstrated during wartime, has mitigated the cost paid in terms of losses and quality of life.[160] The Israeli success in maintaining a democratic, open society and in creating a strong economy under conditions of protracted conflict is yet another testimony of the Israeli society's staying power.

5 Economic sustainability

The more intensive and protracted war became, the more the adversaries' sustainability over a long period of time came to depend on their national power in general. It was against this backdrop that nineteenth and twentieth century military thinkers linked the efficiency of military operations with the degree of success in rallying the economic, industrial and other resources of the nation in support of the army. Two sea power strategists, Julian Corbett and Alfred T. Mahan, stressed the material dimension in their maritime theory.[1] J.F.C. Fuller referred to logistics not merely as a military factor but also as a national endeavor, pointing to the flow of rear resources to the frontline as one of the important conditions for battlefield success.[2] Other twentieth- century thinkers called for "squaring the [Clausewitzian] triangle" by adding technology and economy to Clausewitz's non-material three dimensions of war (the government, the military and the people),[3] due to the role played by the material dimension in modern war and strategy.[4]

The warplane and subsequently the missile and terror activities have served to bring war directly to the civilian rear, testing not only the resilience of the enemy's army but also that of its society and economy. Economy has no longer been merely a resource that backs the military effort on the battlefield, but rather a center of gravity that could determine the society's staying power during the war. Such ideas were expressed in the aftermath of World War I by Basil H. Liddell Hart and air power theorists and doctrinaires. Liddell Hart pointed to the vulnerability of industrialized states,[5] whereas Giulio Douhet, "Billy" Mitchell and Alexander P. de Seversky, preached dealing a mortal blow to the enemy's centers of population and industry from the air as a means of deciding wars.[6]

Being relatively developed and prosperous, the economies of Western democracies produce numerous centers of gravity the enemy can choose to hit. As a result of the division of labor and specialization, which are typical of modern economies, a strong interdependence between sectors usually develops in such economies, which may multiply the cost inflicted by disruptions which are caused by security crises.[7] On the other hand, thanks to their economic robustness and the decentralized nature of their societies and economies, the damage inflicted on Western democracies' economies tends to be limited and short term, and they cannot be expected to collapse, even after 9/11-like blows on economic centers of gravity. "Knocking out key nodes [of Western economies] is much more difficult than it first appears because activity automatically shifts to other nodes and sectors."[8]

It should be noted, though, that a player's economy can be highly affected by factors such as global economic boom or downturn, the player's independent economic strength or weakness, or the existence (or lack) of foreign aid. Thus, even when facing growing defense challenges, a player can decrease its defense expenditures relative to GDP or GNP, improve the ratio between its own defense expenditures and those of its enemies without increasing the burden on its economy, or enjoy positive developments in other indicators. Such a "miracle" usually comes true thanks to a combination of generous foreign aid in the short term and significant and quick economic growth in the long run. Israel has experienced both.

Israel's security challenges have claimed a high economic price throughout the years, which is reflected in the state's defense expenditures (both local expenditures and import) or defense

consumption as percentage points of GNP or GDP. Israel’s defense consumption curve increased after the 1960s, peaking during the mid-1970s. It then declined, particularly as a result of economic growth that more than doubled the GDP from 1975 to 1999 (2.5 times). More specifically, it ranged from 5.6 percent in 1965, to 13.2 percent in 1970, 15.2 percent in 1975, 13.3 percent in 1980, 11.4 percent in 1985, 9.7 percent in 1990, 7.3 in 1995, 6.4 percent in 2000, 6.1 percent in 2005 and 6.2 percent in 2006.[9] Nevertheless, even after starting to decline, in the late 1990s Israeli defense consumption was still higher than that of Western states during that period, e.g., the US (3.2 percent) or the European Union (2.2 percent).[10]

The following figure shows Israel’s defense expenditure as percentage points of GDP in the years 1950–2006.

At the same time, however, part of these defense expenditures have been diverted to investment in research and development and infrastructure, to producing military items that could later be exported, to the employment of thousands of scientists, engineers, technicians and simple workers across the country, to purchasing goods and services from the local industry, etc., thereby contributing to the state’s economy as a whole.

The chapter treats belligerence in the Arab–Israeli context as given, not trying to evaluate the so-called “dead-weight” cost of defense, which is roughly equal to what would happen in the absence of belligerence. Of course, in the absence of belligerence, tax rates would have been lower, GDP per capita would have been much higher, there would have been no conscription or reserve duty, there would have been less emigration, etc.

The chapter focuses on the economic burden caused by Israel’s wars of attrition. The main arguments put forth are:

1. Many of the economic difficulties Israel faced during its wars of attrition were reflective of global economic downturn, arms races with the Arab states, or lack of GNP/GNP growth rather than attrition challenges.

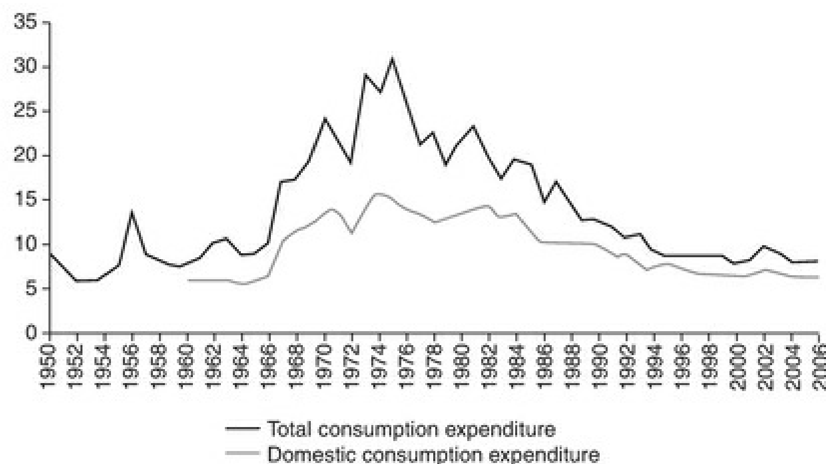

Figure 5.1 Israel’s defense consumption expenditure as percent of GDP, 1950–2006 (source: The State of Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Publication No. 10/2007).

2 The defense burden on Israel’s economy during its wars of attrition, particularly the asymmetrical ones, tended to be either limited or temporary compared to its “regular” wars.
3 Drawing on existing resources and stockpiles rather than requiring new ones, the wars of attrition entailed low defense expenditures relative to expenditures on procurement, both in

Israeli and foreign defense industries.[11] This is compatible with a basic principle of Israeli defense economy since the 1950s – preferring military buildup and weapons procurement to "current security" purposes because of the formers' greater contribution to the country's long- term defense needs.[12]

4 According to the information available on Israel's adversaries, the economic cost on the Israeli side was always lower than the one inflicted on the enemy.

5 Since the mid-1970s a combination of economic growth, the peace process, and other positive developments in Israel's strategic environment, such as the Iran–Iraq War, economic crisis in Syria during the 1980s, or the end of the Cold War – accounted for the decline in Israeli defense expenditure despite the fact that Israel was still challenged by Palestinian and Hezbollah terror in the territories and from Lebanon.

In order to evaluate the economic cost of Israel's wars of attrition, I will use a variety of indicators, such as the percentage of defense expenditures or defense consumption of gross national product (GNP) or gross domestic product (GDP); the level of employment; the level of inflation; foreign direct investment (FDI); stock market performance; the local currency's value; and the health of particular sectors of the economy.[13]

Overview

It is relatively easy to point to the defense burden on Israel's economy caused by "regular" wars, due to the high correlation between defense expenditure and inter-state wars and arms races. The growth of defense consumption following the regular wars had several reasons: the need to rehabilitate military units, to substitute weapon systems that had been damaged, and to return equipment to service; the tendency to acquire additional and more advanced weapon systems and equipment; Arab military buildup that compelled Israel to react; and the increasing power of the Israeli security establishment, which enabled it to receive greater resources.[14] For example, as a result of the Sinai War, defense consumption for 1956 grew by 100 percent. Affected by the Six Day War, in 1967 it grew by 77 percent; and in 1973 it grew by 64 percent.[15]

The economic impact of wars of attrition, particularly those of asymmetrical nature, on the other hand, is more difficult to assess. Falling over the course of many years into the category of "current security," which constituted a lesser threat and usually required lesser budgets, the wars of attrition did not seem to deserve special attention. No war of attrition category has ever existed in Israeli state budgets, and no comparative research regarding the economic burden of such wars has ever been conducted. Even had there been specific reference to wars of attrition, an undetermined amount of defense expenditures would have been hidden elsewhere in the state budget or would have remained unidentified for security reasons, such as the GSS or Mossad activities, whose role in combating terror has been crucial.

In wars of attrition, in particular, one must also bring into consideration the indirect impact of the security conditions. Primary indirect implications include allocation of resources to defense purposes at the expense of resource allocation to other, more productive and growth-inducing sectors. Secondary indirect implications pertain to the behavior of economic units under uncertainty, such as the tendency of households or firms to decrease their investments under such conditions. Tertiary indirect implications may also occur, as a result of measures employed by

the government to cope with the worsening security conditions, for example, the imposition of taxes.[16] Indirect expenditures on defense, such as police activity, private sector security services, or the construction of private shelters and security spaces, are not included in the state's defense budget. Expenditure in the territories – a major counter-insurgency scene – belongs to the dark side of the defense budget.[17]

Other reasons accounting for the difficulty in isolating the economic impact are wars of attrition's protracted nature and the proximity in time between them and the "regular" wars. Wars of attrition can stretch over a number of fiscal years, wherein security conditions and allocations undergo significant changes. As a result of the fact that some wars of attrition were either a prelude to or continuation of "regular" wars, e.g., the post-October 1973 case, they were not referred to separately.

Given the lack of adequate information about wars of attrition expenditure, analysis in this chapter is admittedly often based on guesstimate, that is, a combination of reasoning and guessing.

The analysis of the Israeli case points clearly to the existence of a linkage between the level of the threat Israel had to cope with and its economic behavior in general and defense expenditure or consumption in particular. Although it could apparently be argued, for example, that Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's decision to cut defense expenditures in 1952 or the cut in the defense budget led by Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1985 were driven by economic necessity rather than decreasing threats, when one learns the facts one finds out that even if factors other than security threat played a role, they had a secondary, sometimes marginal effect. In the early 1950s the level of the threat posed by the Arab states was tolerable, and once it increased, in the mid-1950s, Israel reacted accordingly. Likewise, as a result of the improvement in the security conditions in the mid-1980s, in light of the peace with Egypt, the Iran–Iraq War, or the economic crisis in Syria, Israel could afford to cut its defense expenditures, thus also helping the economy to recover from years of hyper-inflation.

The lion's share of Israel's defense expenditure throughout the years was spent on military buildup or on conducting "regular" wars rather than wars of attrition. In seven out of the nine attrition cases analyzed in this book – the early 1950s; the early/mid 1960s; the 1965–82 war; the post-October 1973 war of attrition; the First Intifada; the first Israel–Hezbollah war of attrition; and the Second Lebanon War – attrition constituted a relatively limited burden from an economic point of view. In two cases – the post-1967 war of attrition and during the Second Intifada – attrition did claim a heavy economic cost. These two cases differ from each other, though, in the sense that the latter was at least equally affected by reasons that had nothing to do with the violence between Israel and its adversaries, particularly by the worldwide slump led by the high-tech sector.[18]

During periods of attrition Israel either knew economic growth and even prosperity despite terrorism aimed against it, e.g., in the early 1950s, and in the 1990s, or stagnation or decline in economic growth not merely because of Palestinian or Hezbollah terror but also for other reasons, e.g., the rise in energy costs and the global recession in the 1970s, the Asian economic crisis of 1997–98, or the bursting of the high-tech bubble in the early 2000s. A factor that eased the economic burden of Israeli security, including the one caused by wars of attrition since the mid-1970s, was the foreign aid Israel received from the US. American long-term loans along with donations from enthusiastic Jewish communities in the West as a result of the IDF's decisive victory in the 1967 war eased the burden even further.

In the mid-1970s Israel entered a new era, in which challenges emanating from "regular'' wars

have diminished significantly, whereas asymmetrical challenges have grown in importance. In the new reality Israeli defense expenditure as percentage points of GNP or GDP has been declining despite the continuing challenge posed by Palestinian and Hezbollah terror in the territories and from Lebanon, and defense expenditure on attrition continued to be lower than the "regular" war-oriented expenditure, as one can tell from the expenditure for procurement. The rest of the chapter will discuss the economic price caused by each particular attrition case.

The early 1950s

Infiltrators in the early 1950s inflicted direct economic damage to Israel through theft of crops, cattle or agricultural equipment, as well as indirect damage, caused mainly by the need to defend the settlements along the border against infiltrators and *fedayeen*.[19] Although the exact damage can hardly be evaluated due to lack of data, it seems that Palestinian infiltration to Israel was a relatively minor problem in economic terms. And indeed, when Israeli officials and historians related to the problem of infiltration and to *fedayeen* attacks, they pointed to the death toll claimed as a result of these challenges rather than their economic cost.

In the early 1950s Israeli GDP increased by 30.1 percent in 1951, and averaged a rate of 9.2 percent for the 1950s, second in the world only to Japan's 9.7 percent.[20] The real burden on the country's economy during this period stemmed from the heavy spending on nation-building in general and building a new army and absorbing mass immigration of Jews from Europe and Arab countries in particular, both causing an economic crisis. The country suffered from a huge deficit in the balance of payments. The current account deficit was partially covered by donations from Jews in the Diaspora and from the US government, but Israel also had to raise costly short-term loans from Swiss and American banks, and to painfully cut the defense expenditure. The most significant cut took place between 1951 and 1952, when defense expenditure was cut by half – from $151.5 million at current rates to $75.5 million. The Israeli government also adopted and applied a policy of severe austerity.[21]

Later, into the mid-1950s, Israeli defense expenditure increased, not as a result of Palestinian infiltration into Israel and *fedayeen* insurgency but rather as a result of an Arab–Israeli arms race. Israel was making an effort to cope with the perceived existential threat emanating from the regular armies of the Arab states, and was trying to catch up to Arab extensive military buildup that was taking place during the late 1940s–early 1950s, peaking at the September 1955 Czech–Egyptian arms deal.

In this period France became Israel's great power patron, ally and main arms supplier. Unlike the Americans, who used to turn down most of the items included on the Israeli acquisition list Israel presented to them, France shared with Israel a common enemy – Egypt. Threatened by Egyptian support for the FLN in Algeria, France was ready to provide Israel with new weapon systems of unprecedented quantity and quality. A significant portion of Israeli defense expenditure was now devoted to purchasing these weapon systems.

Arms shipments arrived in Israel in late 1956, consisting of 60 Mystère 4 aircraft, six Uragans, six Meteors, five S-55 helicopters, 120 AMX-13 light tanks, 80 American Sherman tanks, self-propelled artillery, radar systems, and small arms. The new Uragans and Mystères were much more expensive than the older aircraft generation. For example, the Uragans cost six times more than Mustangs, and the Mystères were 19 times more expensive than the Mustangs.[22] Not less

important, these weapon systems were purchased for regular warfare purposes rather than any war of attrition, particularly not an asymmetrical one. As Israel based its counter-insurgency warfare in those days on infantry, it is quite clear that these weapons were purchased for other military purposes. As a result of both the arms deal with France and the Sinai War, Israeli defense consumption for 1956 doubled; it was 217 percent higher than in 1954–55.[23]

The impact of the arms race with Arab states was again reflected after the war. However, Israeli investments in military research and development projects in the wake of the war notwithstanding,[24] from 1957 Israel felt safer and could afford to decrease its defense expenditures by 32 percent. During the rest of the 1950s they grew moderately – 2.4 percent per year in 1958–59.[25] Israeli defense expenditures in the 1950s were lower than 10 percent of GDP.[26]

The pre-1967 war

In 1967 Israeli defense expenditures were six times higher than those ten years earlier. The change cannot be attributed to the war of attrition on the Syrian border, known as the water campaign, or to Palestinian terror and guerrilla attacks on Israel, but rather to the inter-state arms race, particularly with Egypt. Not only was Egypt trying to balance Israel's military power in the early/mid-1960s, it was also attempting to exceed it. The number of Egyptians in uniform more than doubled between 1960 and 1967 (from 130,000 to 270,000). Egyptian defense expenditures rose from 6 percent of GNP in 1960 to more than 13 percent by 1966. Egypt's intervention in Yemen was another factor that accounted for the rise in its defense expenditures. During the same period, the military forces of Syria and Jordan were undergoing significant growth as well. Syria's tank fleet increased from 350 to 550, and the number of its jet fighters more than doubled – from 50 to 120. Jordan almost doubled the number of its troops from 30,000 to 55,000, tripled its tank fleet from 100 to 300, and doubled its air force.[27]

Against the backdrop of such a massive buildup on the Arab side of the hill Israel was naturally focusing on balancing a potential Arab war coalition consisting of the direct confrontation states and expeditionary forces from Arab states not bordering it. The IDF's buildup effort focused on aircraft and tanks. Between 1962 and 1966, Israel purchased 75 French Mirage-3 aircraft, 28 heavy-lift, multipurpose American Sikorsky-54 and Sikorsky-55 helicopters, five French Super Perlon helicopters, as well as hundreds of tanks: 256 British Centurions, 250 American Pattons, and 165 American Shermans. It also purchased SA Hawk missiles from the US. New acquisition sources opened in Europe, particularly in Germany and Britain. As weapon systems from these countries were of older generations, Israel had to invest in its own defense industry in order to upgrade them.[28]

In 1966, on the eve of the 1967 Six Day War, Israeli defense consumption in real terms was 3.3 times higher than in 1955, that is, prior to the outbreak of the Sinai War.[29] In the period 1958–63 Israel's defense budget grew by 14 percent of GNP annually. In the years 1962–63, the Israeli defense budget saw real growth – 33 percent in 1962 and 46.3 percent in 1963 – being 8.7 percent of GNP in both years and 23.1 percent and 22 percent of state budget in the respective years. Between 1964 and 1966 it grew to 10 percent of GNP and 24 percent of the state budget due to arms acquisition. The defense burden eased to some extent as a result of the significant

growth of Israel's GNP – 10 percent annually in the period 1958–63. By 1960, 42.6 percent of the import was covered by export, and in 1967 it reached 70 percent, causing the per capita deficit to decrease from $225 in 1951 to $134 in 1960 and $82 in 1967. In the period 1965–66 the defense budget growth was stopped, mainly as a result of the economic recession that started in 1965.[30]

Post-1967

As in the post-Sinai War period, the 1967 War was followed by an accelerated inter-state arms race. The destruction of the Egyptian army and the heavy damage inflicted on the Jordanian and Syrian armies accounted for a sharp increase in Arab defense expenditures, which Israel had to match. Israeli arms acquisition in the post-1967 period focused on substituting the old IAF aircraft with new American first-line ones, such as Skyhawks and Phantoms, and on purchasing new tanks, artillery, submarines, etc.

Although in the aftermath of the Six Day War the IDF was coping with attrition on three fronts – the Suez Canal, the Jordan Valley, and Lebanon (on the latter, see below) – the items purchased after 1967 were indicative of the type of war Israel was preparing for – another round of *blitzkrieg*. The fact that during the war of attrition with Egypt Israel was using the IAF as "flying artillery" due to lack of sufficient artillery units,[31] and at the same time it was doubling the number of its tanks – 1,700 in 1973 as compared to 990 in 1967[32] – is reflective of the priority given to "regular" war. In light of the breaking of the French–Israeli alliance by President Charles de Gaulle at a critical point in time for Israel – during the prewar crisis – Israel adopted a policy of security industrial autonomy, which required greater investments in the local defense industry.

If between the Sinai War and the Six Day War Israeli defense expenditures had averaged the rate of 9.3 percent of GNP, in the period 1967–73 they rose to the average rate of 20.2 percent of GNP.[33] Foreign currency expenditures increased from $160 million to over $800 million in 1970–71.[34] The new territorial reality required investments in infrastructure and military units in order to effectively defend against attempts by Arab armies to regain control of their land or against Palestinian insurgency from within and without the territories, and to take responsibility for civilian life in the territories. In order to live up to these challenges Israel enlarged its regular army, and doubled the size of its armored forces after having witnessed the latter's dominant role in the military success of June 1967.

Israeli defense consumption in 1970 – the Egyptian–Israeli war of attrition's last year – grew by 39 percent. The construction of the Bar-Lev line – the central defense investment during the war – absorbed huge amounts of the money. By 1970 it reached around one billion Israeli Lira,[35] that is, some $250 million at current prices. The heavy investment in fortifications along the Suez Canal since 1968 notwithstanding, this growth was smaller than the growth that had taken place as a result of Israel's "regular" wars, which ranged from 64 percent to 100 percent (see the percentages above).[36] Apparently there is another way of assessing the burden of the war of attrition – by looking at defense consumption in the years that followed the war. Real defense consumption decreased in the period 1971–72 by 6 percent,[37] and the growth in Israeli defense expenditure was moderate.[38] This, however, should not be attributed merely to the improvement

in the security conditions, but also to the allocation of resources for social purposes as a result of social unrest in Israel during this period. Once the war of attrition ended, the Israeli government diverted resources from defense to social services as a result of lower classes' demonstrations. The defense budget was cut dramatically from 38.7 percent of GNP in 1970 to 18 percent on the eve of the 1973 war.[39]

The full employment economy had to adapt to the government's decision to increase the length of male conscript service from two-and-a-half to three years as well as to raise the annual period of reserve duty to a minimum of two months, as a result of the growing size of the military and its expanding missions.[40] The new burden coincided with a wave of immigration from the Soviet Union in the early 1970s. Israel found itself absorbing more than 100,000 immigrants, who were arriving at the rate of almost 1,000 per week in 1972.[41]

The burden was balanced, however, by an economic boom in the late 1960s– early 1970s and by American foreign aid. Exceptional economic growth took place in the years 1969–72 – much higher than the growth that had characterized the five years that preceded the 1967 war. It continued, at lower rates, over the course of the 1970s, during Israel's continuous war of attrition with the Palestinians, both on the Lebanese and the Jordanian fronts.[42] Another positive factor that helped alleviate the burden during the post-1967 period was foreign aid. Israel started receiving long-term loans from the US,[43] as well as donations from Jewish communities in the West that were enthusiastic about the IDF's decisive victory in the 1967 war.

On the Egyptian side, in late 1969 President Nasser admitted that his country was paying a high price for initiating the war of attrition. During that year its war effort cost reached 300 million Egyptian Liras. Nasser estimated that the damage inflicted on industry in the Canal area reached 170 million Egyptian liras, and said an additional expenditure should be expected as a result of weapon and ammunition acquisition, assistance to hundreds of thousands of people who had fled their homes from the Canal Zone and loss of revenues from the Canal.[44]

Post-1973

The war of attrition that followed the October 1973 war is usually considered part of the October War, although it deserves to be analyzed separately as it constituted a different type of war. From an economic point of view, the most significant fact was the delay in massive release of Israeli reserve troops that had been mobilized for the October War, despite the 24 October ceasefire.

The direct economic cost entailed the continuous service of many reserve units, which is difficult to evaluate. One can estimate the cost based on the "Blue-White" alert that was issued in May 1973, as a reaction to a threatening deployment by Egyptian and Syrian troops along the borders, which included a partial mobilization of reserve forces.[45] The cost of "Blue-White" is estimated at 60 million Israeli lira. The cost of the reserves' mobilization, which lasted about a month, is estimated at 45 million Israeli lira, that is, around $10 million at current prices.[46] The five–six month partial mobilization after the October War entailed a greater number of reserves – about two divisions. If one multiplies the $10 million cost by ten-month period of one reserve division's mobilization – four months on the Egyptian front (up to February 1974) and six months on the Syrian front (up to May 1974) – one gets a figure of $100 million, which is overshadowed by the unprecedented spending for reconstruction and force-building in the wake

of the October War, which caused 64 percent growth of Israeli defense consumption (see below).

1965–82

Again, during the Israel–PLO war of attrition the "current security" expenditures were overshadowed by the "basic security" ones, a fact that once again points to the limited impact of Israel's wars of attrition on its economy.[47] From an economic point of view, this period stood in the shadow of both the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 October War. Most of the activity during this war of attrition, however, took place from the early 1970s, after the PLO had been expelled from Jordan in "Black September" 1970, and had made Lebanon home to its headquarters and main base of operations, creating a Palestinian state-within-a-state in southern Lebanon.

As a lesson learned from the fact that in the 1973 October War the IDF fought simultaneously on two separate fronts, lacking sufficient force to divert ground troops from one front to another in order to concentrate forces and achieve battlefield decision, after the war Israel decided to build a much greater and stronger military. Between October 1973 and the end of June 1977, the IDF's tank fleet grew by more than 50 percent, self-propelled artillery by more than 100 percent, armored personnel carriers by 800 percent, and aircraft by 30 percent. By 1982 the IDF almost doubled its size and upgraded its quality.[48] The following figures exemplify the difference between the number of weapons system in 1974 and 1982: fighter aircraft: 466, and 580, respectively; transport aircraft: 54, 96; helicopters: 78, 175; tanks: 1,900, 3,600; missile ships: 16, 23; divisions: 6, 11.[49] The military buildup effort was not attrition-oriented, though. Instead, it focused on the worst-case scenario of an all-out Arab attack, reflecting a strong *blitzkrieg* orientation.[50]

Between 1973 and 1976 Israeli defense expenditure reached an unprecedented peak – 32 percent of GNP. Unfortunately, when that rise took place, the average growth of the Israeli economy was relatively low – not higher than 3 percent, and Israel was negatively affected by the rise in energy costs and the global recession of the 1970s. The war of attrition between Israel and the PLO on the Lebanese border notwithstanding, in the wake of the 1975 Israeli–Egyptian interim agreement and the 1978 peace agreement with Egypt, defense consumption started dropping. In 1976–77 it declined by 30 percent, and then remained stable throughout the period of 1978–82.[51] From 1977 to 1981 Israeli defense expenditure declined to 25.4 percent of GNP, which was still very high by Western standards.[52] True, on occasions, e.g., during the 1981 Small War of Attrition, damage was inflicted on homes, factories, and public buildings in northern Israel. Trade, industry and education systems were paralyzed and some 40 percent of Kiryat Shmona residents fled their homes.[53] But that event, which lasted a short period of time, was only one episode in the 1965–82 war of attrition, and had merely a local effect.

In the mid-1970s Israel started receiving large amounts of American economic assistance. The US agreed to finance arms purchases through loans rather than cash sales. In the wake of the 1978 Camp David agreement with Egypt, Israel became the largest annual recipient of direct economic and military assistance from the US, receiving $3 billion each year in direct assistance, which is about one-fifth of the foreign aid budget.[54] Aid took a large leap upwards after Israel withdrew from the Sinai, helping Israel to cope with the global economic depression between 1981 and 1983.

1985–2000

During the 1980s and the 1990s, Hezbollah attacked Israel by launching rockets to northern Israeli towns and other settlements, causing damage to property, trade and industry, and disrupting daily life. During the March–April 1996 Israeli Operation Grapes of Wrath, Katyusha rockets fired by Hezbollah brought life along Israel's northern border to a halt. The estimated damage caused to hundreds of houses reached $30 million.[55] Assuming that the size of the force the IDF deployed in southern Lebanon during the course of the war did not change significantly, its cost reached some $100 million annually (the figure $100 million is for 1999, and it constituted 1.2 percent of Israel's defense expenditure for FY 1999, which was $8.41 billion[56]).

From the mid-1980s a comprehensive stabilization program was implemented by the Israeli government in order to cope with the inflationary process that had started in the late 1970s and turned into hyper- inflation in the early 1980s. One of the reasons for the delayed implementation of the program, alongside the deepening crisis and the dollarization plan's fiasco, was the tension on the Lebanese border and the impending war there. In the mid-1980s the Likud–Labor national unity government enjoyed wide public support and could implement the ambitious plan.[57] As a result of the program, the Israeli economy recovered and expanded. Assisted by falling oil prices from 1985 on, economic growth resumed. The defense budget was cut from 21.8 percent of GNP in 1985 to 19.4 percent in 1987, 16.4 in 1988, and 14 percent in 1989. It continued dropping until it leveled out at approximately 11–12 percent during the early 1990s.[58] The meaning of this trend was that despite the continuing conflict on Israel's northern front and the outbreak of the First Intifada, which had a negative economic countrywide impact (see below), the defense burden was eased in economic terms.

In the early 1980s Israel's strategic relations with the US improved considerably. One of the by-products of this improvement was a significant growth in American aid to Israel, which peaked at $4.5 billion annually – some 20 percent of Israel's GNP.[59] In 1985 Israel obtained an extra $1.5 billion in aid to fight inflation.[60]

Since 1990, Israel experienced substantial economic growth. In the first half of the 1990s GDP grew by 6–7 percent annually (1993 was an exception with 3.5 percent growth) – one of the highest rates in the world. The growth was powered by massive immigration from the former Soviet Union and a dynamic high-tech sector, both of which operated under the relatively favorable geopolitical climate created by the Middle East peace process – the 1993 Oslo agreement and the 1994 Jordanian–Israeli peace. The economic prosperity of the 1990s persisted even against the backdrop of a murderous Palestinian suicide bombing wave in the mid-1990s.[61] A productivity decline started in 1996, coinciding with a wave of Palestinian terror. Some analysts pointed to the Asian economic crisis of 1997–98 as a major explanation for that temporary decline,[62] whereas others think that its impact on the Israeli economy was rather marginal.[63]

The First Intifada

After the outbreak of the First Intifada in December 1987, Israeli GNP and GDP kept rising.

Both GDP and GDP per capita dropped moderately for one year, but then grew again.[64] Tourism to the country suffered a 50 percent drop by midsummer of 1988, and kept dropping in the years 1988–91. Net domestic production in agricultural activity sank temporarily in 1988.[65] Losses to the Israeli business sector reached $19 million daily. For lack of commuting Arab labor, Israel's construction industry and its largest citrus plantations were paralyzed for more than half a year. By the end of 1988, the Palestinian boycott had cost Israel $650 million in export losses, including "exports" to the Palestinian market.[66]

Israel had to allocate more troops to the territories, including reservists, which made its activity there much more expensive.[67] As early as February 1988, the cost of augmented military forces in the territories reached $5 million a day, which added to annual cost of $1.825 billion, i.e., some 26 percent of the defense consumption in current prices in 1988.[68]

The fact that during the Intifada's early years (1988–89) Israel's defense consumption dropped by 24.9 percent, serves as evidence that the economic effect of asymmetrical challenges is usually relatively limited. Both the decreasing external threats as a result of economic difficulties in Syria, which compelled it to give away the notion of strategic balance vis-à-vis Israel, and Iraq's economic problems in the aftermath of the Iran–Iraq War, overshadowed the negative effect caused by the Intifada. Defense consumption grew again in 1990–91 by 12.6 percent,[69] well into the Intifada, when the uprising already showed signs of fading away.

During the 1991 Gulf War, which coincided with the later stages of the Intifada, economic activity was slowed and even halted. Increased resources were made available for security purposes, tourism to Israel decreased by 83 percent, immigration from the former Soviet Union dropped by some 70 percent, and state revenues fell significantly. But the influence the war had on the Israeli economy was temporary. GDP was still growing, and the crisis' impact did not alter the factors underlying cyclical adjustments in the Israeli economy that overshadowed the direct impact of the war.[70] In the autumn of 1992, the US Congress approved $10 billion in loan guarantees to Israel,[71] which fueled growth in the Israeli economy, helping it to recover.

On the Palestinian side, the damage to the economy in lost wages and other income was grave, even critical.[72] Economic conditions, which were already bad, only worsened. As part of its effort to disengage from the Israeli economy, the Palestinian Unified National Leadership held strikes, boycotted Israeli goods and tried to establish an autonomous economy. Hundreds of government employees were forced by the Unified Command to quit their jobs.[73] If before the First Intifada some 180,000 workers from the territories used to work within the Green Line, in Israeli-controlled industrial zones and in Israeli settlements in the territories, during the Intifada their number dropped significantly to no more than 100,000 in 1991, and to 65,000 following the Rabin government's closure policy of April 1993.[74] Frequent closures and curfews disrupted trade and other economic ties between Israel and the territories and accelerated the replacement of Palestinian laborers in Israel by laborers from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa.[75]

The tourist industry, which had been a major contributor to the Palestinian economy, bringing in $90 million each year, was damaged.[76] A substantial decline in Palestinian standard of living took place, exacerbated at the end of 1988 by the devaluation of the Jordanian dinar, the currency most widely used in the territories.[77] Despaired by their condition, many Palestinians wished the Intifada to end.

The Second Intifada

A dramatic worsening of the security conditions in the territories occurred with the Second Intifada. Not only did this Intifada strengthen the feeling that terror became a strategic threat, it also accounted for the acknowledgment that even "low-intensity" challenges were now requiring growing defense expenditures. Whereas in the past "current security" activities were carried out merely by infantry, they now came to include sophisticated technological measures, and joint operations with various kinds of aerial platforms and armor, which were obviously much more expensive. A growing number of regular and reserve troops were needed for coping with the challenges, each reservist costing around $100 daily.[78]

The burden on Israel's economy during the Second Intifada, particularly as a result of the unprecedented terrorist challenge posed by the suicide bombers, was exceptional compared to Israel's other wars of attrition. Israel spent some $900 million annually on the IDF's deployment in the territories, around $500 million on direct and indirect military expenditures on settlements, approximately $30 million on settlement-based security activities, and around $1.3 billion on the construction of the security fence in 2004.[79] (In 2006 the security fence construction's cost was estimated at $2 billion.[80]) Together the spending reached approximately 28 percent of the state's annual defense budget ($9.7 billion in 2003), as compared to 41 percent spent on procurement ($4 billion – $1.2 billion local procurement plus $2.4 billion American security assistance).

The higher the number of casualties and terrorist attacks within the Green Line, the greater the effect on the country's economic activity. In the economic history of the State of Israel there were only three years of negative growth. The years 2001 and 2002 were the first instances of negative growth since 1953. Even during the recession of the mid-1960s, there was no such negative growth. During the first two years of the Intifada Israel lost 2 percent of GDP. GDP per capita dropped by 3 percent annually from 2000 to 2003. Unemployment exceeded 10 percent[81] – a leap of almost 20 percent since the beginning of 2001. Tourism dropped in the period 2000–01 by more than 50 percent, at a cost of $1.7 billion, and continued dropping. Many non-high-tech industries were severely affected by the violence, particularly sectors heavily reliant on Palestinian labor, such as agriculture and construction.[82] Exporters faced difficulties in meeting future contracts, and domestic demand dropped considerably. The Israeli stock market reacted negatively both to the rise in terrorism and to the global economic downturn. Between October 2000 and mid-2002 the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE) 100 index dropped considerably, by more than 30 percent.[83]

A *Business Week* article in early 2002 summed up the Israeli economic situation: "the wealth of Israel is trickling away, bit by bit, in a deadly war of attrition."[84] Experts wondered if the Israeli economy would be able to recover, and even hard-liner Prime Minister Sharon was reported to have admitted that there was no outlet from the economic hardships but a political agreement with the Palestinians.

To balance the picture, it should be noticed that the terrorist attacks' impact on the country's economy coincided with the bursting of the international hightech market, and that it was their combined effect that forced the Israeli economy to backtrack by several decades, even beneath the level of the severe recession experienced prior to the 1967 Six Day War. Israel's economy was the most technology-dependent in the world, with 15 percent of the country's GDP and 31 percent of all exports originating from the high-tech sector.[85] An analysis by the Bank of Israel Research Department showed that in 2001, the Intifada and the global high-tech crisis were

equally responsible for the loss of output.[86] According to Israeli government and private economists estimates, some two-thirds of the fall of the country's GDP growth from 6.4 percent in 2000 to zero in 2002 was due not to terrorism but to the worldwide slump led by high-tech.[87] As a result of its technology-dependency, the global high-tech slowdown hit Israel harder than other countries.[88]

In mid-2003 there were early signs that the recession was about to end and that the economy was on the verge of growth. After having fallen at an average annual rate of 11 percent in the first seven months of 2002, the high- tech sector rose in the remaining months of the year at an annual rate of 27 percent,[89] pushing the entire economy forward toward a renewed growth. This happened despite the fact that the Intifada was not yet over, which supports the claim that economic recession in Israel has often been highly affected by the global economic environment. According to a report by Israel's Ministry of Industry and Trade, despite major suicide bombings in Israel's city centers, the country's infrastructure – ports, communications, transport, power and water sectors – were operating undisturbed.[90]

An Israeli expert praised the way the Israeli economy managed to cope with the unprecedented terror of the Second Intifada:

> Much of the economic downturn that Israel experienced during this period can be attributed to factors exogenous to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Israeli patterns of GDP growth, unemployment, foreign direct investment, and stock market performance were fundamentally similar to those among Israel's main trading partners. Overall, the Israeli economy did not suffer from pronounced inflation (with the exception of a brief period related more to monetary policies and global economic processes than to security concerns), and Israel's currency was largely stable. Governmental debt increased in the early part of this period and governmental spending on defense increased significantly, but this was in response to a variety of factors of which the heightened level of terrorism was only one. Even tourism was only partially impacted by the rise in terrorism, due to the fact that domestic tourism was largely unaffected.[91]

Israel reacted to the Intifada, among other means, by imposing strict closures on Palestinian enclaves, surrounding them first by earthwork barricades and later on by separating them from Israel by building a security fence. The border was closed for some 125,000 Palestinian workers, who had relied on jobs inside Israel for their modest income.[92] The number of Palestinians allowed to work in Israel, in Israeli-controlled industrial zones, and in Israeli settlements dropped to 7,500 in mid-2002, rose to 31,000 by the end of 2002, dropped again to 17,000 in January 2004, and rose to 33,000 in March 2004.[93] As a result of these harsh measures, three years after the eruption of the Intifada the economy in the territories shrank to 70 percent of its former activity.[94]

According to the World Bank report that covered the Second Intifada's first 27 months, all Palestinian economic indicators declined dramatically. Gross national income per capita fell to nearly half of what it had been two years before. More than 50 percent of the work force was unemployed. Physical damage resulting from the conflict amounted to $728 million by the end of August 2002. Between June 2000 and June 2002, Palestinian exports declined by almost half, and imports by a third. Investment shrank from an estimated $1.5 billion in 1999 to a mere $140 million a year later. Overall national income losses in over two years reached $5.4 billion — the equivalent of one full year of national income prior to the Intifada. As a result of rising unemployment, reduced demand and Israel's withholding of taxes collected on the Palestinian Authority's behalf, monthly revenues dropped from $91 million in late 2000 to $19 million. A collapse of the Palestinian Authority was avoided only thanks to donor budget support, which totaled $1.1 billion.

Over half a million of formerly middle-income Palestinians became fully dependent on food aid. Of the population of the West Bank and Gaza 60 percent lived under the poverty line of $2 per day, and the numbers of the poor tripled from 637,000 in September 2000 to nearly 2 million. Per capita food consumption declined by 30 percent.[95] Of children 51 percent suffered from malnutrition and another 21 percent from acute malnutrition. The incidence of severe malnutrition in Gaza was equivalent to levels found in some of the poorer sub-Saharan countries.[96]

The 2006 Second Lebanon War

The 2006 War's general cost was estimated at $5 billion, and the defense establishment's cost at $1.5 billion. The direct and indirect damage to property came to another $1 billion.[97] During the war the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor predicted that unemployment in northern Israel, which prior to the war had already been high – 11 percent – would rise to 14 percent.[98] Tourists' arrivals in Israel in July 2006 declined by 25 percent compared to July 2005, after having grown by 13 percent in the period of January–July 2006.[99] According to one report, during the war 65 percent of the employees in the trade and services sector in northern Israel did not go to work, and 70 percent of businesses were closed.[100] A more recent report, however, portrayed a rosier picture, claiming that 85 percent of the factories in northern Israel did remain fully or partially operational throughout the war and three-quarters of their labor force did show up for work daily.[101]

Israel's economy proved that it was in good shape to weather the cost of the war. The combined, direct and indirect cost was quite easily absorbed by the Israeli economy thanks to the budget surplus and unexpected growth of the Israeli economy. Although the Bank of Israel predicted 3.9 percent economic growth in 2006, growth reached almost 5 percent.[102] Foreign unemployment dropped by 8.3 percent, and some 44,000 new jobs were created thanks to the growing economy. The year 2006 was also a record year in foreign investments in Israel: $23 billion. Israel's real estate market in areas not directly affected by Hezbollah's rockets remained strong. A major factor enabling the Israeli economy to grow in spite of the war was the positive state of the world economy.[103]

The only data available for the Lebanese side's economic cost as a result of the war refers to the State of Lebanon, not Hezbollah. Given the fact that Hezbollah is as much a social and political organization embedded in Lebanese politics and society as it is a terrorist or guerrilla movement,[104] the economic cost of the entire country is relevant to the evaluation of the organization's relative staying power vis-à-vis Israel.

According to Lebanese officials' estimates at the end of the war, the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure would cost $3.5 billion.[105] Besides infrastructure, the war destroyed the tourist season in a country where some 70 percent of the national income, which stood at $5 billion, came from tourism. Thousands of tourists from the Gulf, Jordan and the West fled the country. Exports, which during the first five months of 2006 grew by 45 percent, froze as a result of the Israeli closure of Beirut's air and sea ports. Goods could still be exported to Syria via the border passes and the Syrian Latikiya port, but the checkpoints were not manned.

A few facts balanced the economic picture, however. Lebanese foreign currency reserves

(some $13 billion) were still high, as a result of 18 months of excellent economic activity, and many small hotels were occupied by people who had fled their homes in Beirut and southern Lebanon. Lebanon also received $100 million from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and promises to grant massive economic support for the reconstruction of the country once the war was over from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, France, Germany and the US.[106] After the war, Iran helped compensate Shiites whose property was damaged. It distributed some $150 million to Lebanese citizens, mostly Shiite supporters,[107] thereby limiting the price Lebanon paid for the war.

Conclusion

Despite four "regular" wars (1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973) and nine wars of attrition in between, the country's economy saw tremendous growth throughout the years. The Israeli economy proved that it was highly affected by and reflective of international economic events and trends, and domestic investments rather than Israel's wars of attrition.

In the 1950s, an increase in defense expenditures was aimed at coping with the perceived existential threat emanating from the regular armies of the Arab states rather than infiltration into Israel and *fedayeen* insurgency. In the 1960s, expenditures related to the inter-state arms race, particularly with Egypt, overshadowed both the war of attrition on the Syrian border (the so-called water campaign), and Palestinian terror and guerrilla activities. During the post-1967 war of attrition, Israel was engaged in an accelerated inter-state arms race, the cost of which was incomparably higher than the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on the construction of the Bar-Lev line along the Suez Canal.

The economic cost entailed in continuous service of many reserve units during the post-October 1973 war of attrition – some dozens of millions of dollars – was lower than the spending for military reconstruction and buildup in the wake of the October War. After the 1973 October War the IDF almost doubled its size and upgraded its quality – a process that had almost nothing to do with the war of attrition with the PLO during the 1970s. In the wake of the 1975 Israeli–Egyptian interim agreement, defense consumption dropped considerably. At the same time the economy was growing. In the mid-1970s Israel also started receiving large amounts of American economic assistance. All these developments took place while on the Lebanese border a war of attrition was waged between Israel and the PLO.

As of the mid-1980s, and well into the 1990s, thanks to the expansion of the Israeli economy, the significant growth in American aid to Israel, massive immigration from the former Soviet Union, and a dynamic high-tech sector, Israel's defense burden was eased in economic terms, despite the outbreak of the First Intifada, the murderous Palestinian suicide bombing wave in the mid-1990s, and the continuing conflict on Israel's northern front.

During the Second Intifada the global high-tech crisis was at least equally responsible for the loss of output. Once the high-tech sector began to rise again at an annual rate of 27 percent, the Israeli economy entered a process of recovery despite the fact that the Intifada was not yet over, which points to the strong linkage between the state of the Israeli economy and developments in the global economic environment. Indeed, during the Second Lebanon War, Israel coped with the cost of war quite easily, thanks to the combination of a robust domestic and international economy.

6 Fighting with one hand tied behind the back

Bridging morality and effectiveness

According to the realist tradition, which dominated strategic thought in the nineteenth century, morality had almost no relevance to war. The democratic–liberal tradition, which inspired strategic thought during the interwar and post-World War II periods, on the other hand, did preoccupy itself with the tension between morality and operational effectiveness, e.g., with questions pertaining to the justness of war, the need to make sure that the use of force enhanced the chances of peace, etc.

Since World War II, most wars of attrition have been of asymmetrical nature, and almost always involving civilians. Whenever the leadership of the weaker side in such wars of attrition opted for a strategy that rejected violence – e.g. Mahatma Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela, or the Palestinians in the early stages of the First Intifada – it either truly believed that ethics and effectiveness did not contradict each other (e.g., Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, Mandela), or just adopted nonviolent methods because they seemed to be more effective vis-à-vis enemies who were constrained by liberal values (e.g., the Palestinians vis-à-vis Israel in the First Intifada).

The moral aspect of war could be a source of embarrassment for Western democracies. On the one hand, committed to liberal values in general and civil liberties in particular, such societies feel obliged to abide by international law and liberal norms. On the other hand, being attacked by terrorists, who, at least according to Western standards, have no moral inhibitions, they have to fight back as effectively as possible in order to defend their citizens. These two commitments often contradict each other, although according to Justice Aharon Barak, former President of Israeli Supreme Court, democracies' morality is a source of strength, not merely a weakness.[1]

The post-9/11 USA Patriot Act reflects an effort to bridge the necessity to fight terrorism effectively ("preserve the lives and liberty of the American people from the challenges posed by a global terrorist network" – to cite the US Department of Justice), without giving up basic democratic–liberal values. The Act was presented to the American people and the world as one that allows law enforcement agencies to use tools that had already been available to deal with organized crime and drug trafficking against terrorists; e.g., intercepting wire, oral, and electronic communications relating to terrorism, and sharing information about these communications among government agencies.[2] The Anti-terrorism Crime and Security Act in the UK, which was formally introduced into the Parliament shortly after 9/11, was also meant to provide stronger powers for the security agencies to investigate and prevent terrorist activity and other serious crimes. Emanuel Gross, who compared the ways three democratic states – the US, the UK and Israel – had coped with the legal and moral aspects of the war against terror, particularly after 9/11, found out that unlike the US and the UK Israel had already internalized this threat many years ago, and the dilemma between satisfying security needs and sticking to fundamental democratic values had become a matter of routine forced on it by the

circumstances.[3]

The fact that in many asymmetrical wars of attrition the interests of the stronger side were often less vital than the ones of the weaker side, compelled Western democracies to relate to the justness of the war they were waging, in order to gain legitimacy for the struggle. Were they fighting a defensive war of no choice or rather an offensive war of choice? How high were the stakes involved? Were their societies prepared to fight in cases where the stakes were not sufficiently high?[4] At the same time, Western democracies have usually reiterated their commitment to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants, to refrain from using excessive force, and to respect not only their own but also their enemies' civil liberties.

Ethical dilemmas have only intensified in the post-Cold War era due to two main developments: first, the prevalence of asymmetrical conflicts – some 95 percent of the conflicts in the international system – and second, the unprecedented destructive and murderous nature of terror. Not only have these developments required that Western democracies be more effective in waging the war on terror, they have also made it more urgent to create an updated legal system and crystallize an updated code of ethics more suitable to the challenge.

Laws and ethics of war still focus on state-to-state context, often overlooking the prevalence of asymmetrical conflicts, where at least one adversary is a nonstate player,[5] which means that the hands of states may be tied when engaged in conflict with nonstate players, who do not possess regular armies. These artificial and anachronistic terms of reference have been referred to by legal experts. For example, George Schwarzenberger, Abraham Sofaer, David Kretzmer and Daniel Statman think that the use of violence against aggressors could be justified not merely in classical symmetrical situations but also in mixed ones, which do not clearly belong to the domain of war or peace between states.[6] Michael Schmitt argues that states should not be prevented from acting in self-defense by targeting terrorists simply because the mode of conflict exists at a different, state–nonstate level.[7] And Kretzmer interprets the international humanitarian law system as one that allows applying counter-terror methods against terrorists in order to prevent an imminent attack that cannot be stopped by other means. He points to the conditions under which a state may use lethal force against suspected terrorists: 1) there is extremely strong evidence that the suspected terrorist is involved in executing or planning a terrorist attack and there is a well-founded fear that other means of preventing that attack are likely to fail; 2) force is used to thwart an imminent attack; and 3) apprehending or arresting the suspected terrorist is not feasible.[8] Kretzmer also thinks that using force against terrorists may be lawful under the human rights law system, provided that the suspected terrorists are regarded as combatants. He therefore recommends adopting a mixed legal model that would incorporate features of international humanitarian law and human rights law.[9] Ward Thomas, too, calls for supplementing the paradigm of interstate aggression embodied in the UN Charter regime on the use of force in a way that would recognize that the threat posed by terrorist networks falls somewhere between traditional notions of war and peace.[10] Finally, Alan Dershowitz argues that being partially anachronistic, the current set of laws needs to be updated so that it would reflect the principles of the old laws of war and human rights and at the same time enable Western democracies to fight terror effectively. Moreover, he elegantly draws the line between how a Western democracy must behave due to its values and the moral compromise it sometimes has to make when confronted with challengers that severely threaten its security.[11]

Israel has been no exception in this sense, being unique only in the fact that it has been conducting wars of attrition for decades. The question this chapter tries to answer is: Has Israel

been successful in bridging the tension between morality and operational effectiveness during its wars of attrition?

The main arguments put forth in the ensuing pages are:

1. During its wars of attrition Israel has been making an effort to live up to Jewish and universal ethics, particularly the need to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants, under complex conditions, such as the difficulty to make such distinction in asymmetrical wars, and despite the fact that hitting civilians often has a greater punitive and deterrent effect.
2. Since the late 1970s, in its asymmetrical wars of attrition, Israel has been trying to bridge operational effectiveness by opting for a post-heroic policy. By saving not only its own troops and civilians' lives but also the lives of enemy civilians, not only has Israel complied with the principle of discriminate use of force, but it has also enjoyed greater domestic and external legitimacy, as well as sustainability in such wars. The policy has worked well against the Palestinians but only with partial success vis-à-vis Hezbollah.
3. Israel's attitude toward its enemies' civil liberties has been pragmatic. As a self-defending democracy, threats to its national security and the personal safety of its citizens required deviation from fully respecting the enemy's civil liberties, so as to be able to fight without two hands tied behind its back, but short of employing "dirty war" methods, which have been considered a "black flag."

Unlike previous chapters, in which each war received a different section, the tension between morality and effectiveness during Israel's wars of attrition will be referred to in this chapter by focusing on four major aspects of international law and ethics: just war, discriminate use of force, proportionality, and respect of civil liberties.

Israel's basic commitment to moral conduct of war

Israeli efforts to behave morally during its wars of attrition have drawn on four sources: the IDF's tradition and military heritage; the democratic principles, laws, and institutions of the State of Israel; the tradition of the Jewish people throughout their history; and the universal moral values based on the dignity of human life.[12]

A guiding principle, which has served as a moral lighthouse for Israeli troops for many years, has been the so-called purity of arms. The purity of arms combat code has existed since pre-state times, constituting a moral obligation not to hurt innocent civilians during military operations. More specifically, it means that Jewish or Israeli troops are not allowed to kill noncombatants, loot or rape – despite facing this behavior by the enemy – because it is immoral. The concept is based on words by Zionist socialist ideologue Berl Katznelson during the Arab Revolt in Palestine (1936–39), in conjunction with the Jewish community's policy of "self-restraint" vis-à-vis the Arab terrorists. Katznelson said it was imperative that arms were not used against noncombatants, "so that our weapons will not be stained with the blood of the innocent."[13] David Ben-Gurion, another leading figure at the time, also expressed his objection to the killing of innocent civilians, but unlike Katznelson, his reasoning was not solely based on moral considerations, but on utilitarian reasons, i.e., expected criticism against the Jewish

community.[14] The policy of restraint, including the purity of arms, which was part of it, was rejected by the National Military Organization (*Etzel*), a militant Jewish underground movement. The purity of arms principle was later adopted by the *Palmach* – the *Haganah*'s strike force – as one of its ethical principles, and the concept is sometimes attributed to Yitzhak Sadeh, the *Palmach*'s commander.[15] It is noteworthy that in 2002, IAF Chief Dan Halutz considered the purity of arms a fundamentally invalid concept, arguing that weapons were never intended to be pure and there were no clean wars. According to him, there was only an appropriate and proper use of force, which preserves one's human image.[16]

Fighting among civilian populations during the Intifadas complicated adherence to ethical standards. Difficult in particular was abiding by the principles of discrimination and proportionality and respecting civil liberties. In the absence of explicit guidance by the Israeli political authorities regarding military operations among civilians, and in the light of criticism of the IDF troops' behavior in the territories, the military had to fill the lacuna. It formulated an ethical code that was supposed to serve as a guiding light for IDF troops in general and in the territories in particular. The code was first published in 1995, and was then revised in 2000. The current incarnation of the purity of arms value is a section in the Code of Ethics, which states:

> IDF servicemen and women will use their weapons and force only for the purpose of their mission, only to the necessary extent, and will maintain their humanity even during combat. IDF soldiers will not use their weapons and force to harm human beings who are not combatants or prisoners of war, and will do all in their power to avoid causing harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property.[17]

In early 2004 the IDF added a code of ethics for combating terrorism[18] – Israel's number one threat in recent years – and distributed it to most of its field units and commanders. The code outlined rules of behavior during operational activity in the territories, calling on the troops to observe the rules "in order to maintain the image of a humane and ethical army."[19]

The public debate held in Israel in the wake of "collateral damage" inflicted by IDF troops, the deeply rooted norm of the purity of arms, the formulation of ethical code by the IDF, the occasional rules by the Israeli Supreme Court, and the lack of any incidents of violence against women by IDF troops – have all been indicative of Israeli commitment to fight as morally as the conditions allow, despite the fact that for its enemies the end has usually justified the means.

Criticism of Israeli counter-insurgency policy has stemmed not only from its Arab enemies, but also from international organizations like Amnesty International, whose reports are often referred to in this chapter, and Israeli organizations like B'Tselem. Their main criticism focused on Israeli behavior in the territories, claiming that since their occupation, Israel had continuously violated the basic rights of the local population. During the Second Intifada criticism focused on Israel's targeted killing policy, which allegedly denied terrorists the right to a fair trial, claimed the lives of innocent people, provoked more killings of civilians as revenge, and complicated the peace process.[20]

Throughout the years Israeli writers and intellectuals have set moral standards and ethical boundaries for treating civilians during wartime in their works. Three of them – S. Yizhar (Yizhar Smilansky), Nathan Alterman and David Grossman – seem to be noteworthy in particular, not only thanks to their compelling writing, but also because they came from mainstream Zionism and did not draw on any extreme leftist ideology. Yizhar and Alterman, who belonged to the War of Independence generation, were inspired by encounters between Israeli soldiers and Arab civilians during that war, prior to the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention and Israel's engagement in wars of attrition.

In the early 1950s, that is, during Israel's first war of attrition, S. Yizhar published two works of fiction – *The Prisoner* and *The Story of Hirbet Hizah,* which he had written during the War of Independence. The former piece told the story of the brutal interrogation of an unfortunate Arab shepherd, and the latter was about the banishment of Arabs from their village by Israeli troops. In these pieces Yizhar questioned Israeli ethics, creating controversy in Israeli society regarding the morality of IDF troops during wartime.

In his poem "On This" [*Al Zot*, in Hebrew][21] Nathan Alterman, the most influential Hebrew poet of the late 1940s and 1950s, described a deplorable episode of a young Israeli soldier killing an innocent old man and a woman in the streets of a recently captured Arab town during the War of Independence. The poem was a clear-cut expression of detest of such behavior and could be considered one of the milestones on the ongoing journey of educating IDF troops in the spirit of the purity of arms. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion had it distributed to all IDF troops. In 1957, in his "City of the Dove" [*Ir Hayona*] collection, Alterman depicted the use of arms by Jews as a necessary evil, and insisted that moral conduct be assured both at the individual and national levels.[22]

In mid-1987, a few months before the outbreak of the First Intifada, Israeli writer David Grossman wrote an account of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank, after having traveled in the area for seven weeks. In his book, *The Yellow Wind* he described, among other things, demolition of houses of terrorists' relatives, administrative detention, exploitation of and inhumane attitude toward Palestinian workers in Israel, double standards of Jewish settlers in the territories, etc. His impression from what he had seen was that there was no such thing as moral occupation, and that occupation was by definition immoral.[23]

Rabbis were divided on the question of restraint vis-à-vis the Arabs and the purity of arms principle. The tension between Jewish historical passivity, on the one hand, and militant nationalistic behavior, on the other, stood in the center of a debate between religious Zionists and ultra-Orthodox Jews in the *Yishuv*, the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine.[24] In the 1930s, when the question was raised of how to react to Arab terror attacks, some Rabbis considered the purity of arms a moral dictate, drawn from Jewish morality, whereas others were more permissive regarding the use of force against civilians, believing that in the light of the enemy's murderous behavior, its civilians should not enjoy immunity.[25]

In reaction to allegations about its moral misconduct, Israel has always claimed that it was conducting a just war, acting in self-defense while avoiding the killing of innocent people and respecting civil liberties. According to Israeli officials, whose stand has gained public support, it was the immoral behavior of Palestinian and Hezbollah terrorists, who were operating from and within populated areas that has accounted for unintended damage caused by Israel. Advocates of the targeted killing policy claimed that a controlled pinpoint killing had the potential for fewer noncombatant casualties than bombing or invading entire areas. Proof that Israel was acting upon necessity, avoiding the use of harsh measures whenever possible, can be found in the fact that it usually refrained from targeted killing when an option existed to arrest terror operatives, to interrogate them and to bring them to trial. Such option reopened after Israel had regained partial control of the West Bank in mid-2002.

One of the expressions of the Israeli security establishment's moral position was an article by General Amos Yadlin and Professor Asa Kasher, in which they stressed Israel's commitment to avoid killing of innocent civilians or at least reduce the collateral damage as much as possible.[26] Yadlin and Kasher, however, pointed to the difficulty in applying such an approach in asymmetrical situations, where the distinction between gunmen and innocent civilians is often

obliterated.

Against the backdrop of allegations against Israel on moral grounds, Israeli belief that it has been doing the utmost to abide by the purity of arms principle, and the legal lacuna concerning asymmetrical state–nonstate wars, it is interesting to follow the rules by Israeli courts, particularly the Supreme Court, which has traditionally enjoyed both countrywide and worldwide respect and appreciation. The following words by Chief Justice Aharon Barak are a clear-cut message that the law must be respected and obeyed even under conditions of war in general and terror in particular.

> Even when the cannons roar, the military commander must uphold the law. The strength of society to withstand its enemies is based on its recognition that it is fighting for values worthy of defense. The rule of law is one of those values. [. . .] The state fights in the name of the law and in the name of the upholding of the law. The terrorists fight against the law and break the law while doing so. The war against terror is also the law's war against those who rise up against it.[27]

A series of rules accompanied Israeli wars of attrition, particularly those that involved civilians, reflecting the need to balance between the need to fight morally and the country's obligation to provide its citizens with the defense they deserved.

On various occasions Israeli courts have sent clear-cut moral messages concerning the purity of arms. As a result of the 1956 Qfar Qassem incident, when Arab civilians unaware of the curfew Israel had declared on Arab settlements as a result of the Sinai War inadvertently violated it and were killed by Border Guard troops, the Israeli government condemned the killing and the District Court made a landmark ruling on the obligation of soldiers to disobey manifestly illegal orders – in this case killing innocent civilians. Judge Benjamin Halevy stated that "the distinguishing mark of a manifestly illegal order is that above such an order should fly, like a black flag, a warning saying: 'Prohibited!'"[28]

The Israeli Supreme Court has usually ruled against the use of excessive force. For example, the GSS's interrogation techniques that were used on Palestinian suspected terrorists were considered by the Court on 6 September 1999, and were eventually prohibited, along with other forms of physical pressure. In 2002 the Supreme Court barred the practice of using Palestinian civilians as "human shields" during military operations against terrorists in the territories.[29] On the other hand, the Supreme Court did not ignore the extreme terror threat Israel was facing during the Second Intifada and the need to fight against it with force, including the use of methods that were strongly criticized from a purely moral point of view, such as targeted killings. In 2002, during the Second Intifada, the Supreme Court recognized that Israel was "in the midst of difficult combat against a raging wave of terrorism" and was "acting according to its right to self defense."[30] In December 2006, the High Court of Justice ruled that "it cannot be determined in advance that every targeted killing is prohibited according to customary international law." The Court said that each killing must be evaluated individually on the basis of the relevant considerations.[31]

Against the backdrop of such rules by the Court, it was accused that unlike its rights-minded approach inside the Green Line, with regard to the territories it has been adopting a government-minded approach, which has been affected by its being a state institution and by the reality of a conflict between the Jewish state and Palestinians. It was also accused that it has been rationalizing and legitimizing Israeli authorities' violation of international humanitarian law, human rights standards, and penal law in the territories, by allowing the deportation of protected persons from the occupied territories, punitive house demolitions, etc. At the same time, however, critics have acknowledged that the Court's "shadow" had a restraining effect on the

authorities' behavior.[32]

Any discussion of Israeli basic commitment to moral conduct of war must point to the attitudes of Israeli soldiers towards Palestinian women. Violence against women in general and rape by soldiers in particular has been a worldwide phenomenon during wartime.[33] This explains why a series of international law demands that women be protected during armed conflicts.[34] A noteworthy fact regarding Israeli moral behavior in the territories is the lack of violence against women by IDF troops.[35] During Israel's War of Independence there were 12 reported rape incidents,[36] but there were none during the nine wars of attrition. True, during the Intifadas in particular, there were allegations that Palestinian women found themselves alone with men who searched their houses and were molested, harassed or threatened with "shame" by individual troops during searches, interrogations or in checkpoints,[37] but no rape incidents were ever reported. In September 2007 the editor of the official daily of the Palestinian Authority *Hayat al-Jadida*, Hafez al-Barghuthi, praised the attitude of Israeli troops to Palestinian women in the West Bank, pointing to the fact that searches on their body have been carried out by policewomen or by female soldiers and not by men, and to the mannerly way these women have been approached, as compared to the behavior on the part of Palestinian security forces towards their own women.[38] On one occasion, during the Second Intifada, an article in *Le Nouvel Observateur* from 8 November 2001 reported that Israeli soldiers were deliberately raping Palestinian women in checkpoints, knowing that once dishonored, they were doomed to be killed by their families. Shortly after the publication, the editor admitted that the allegations were untrue, and apologized.[39]

In the rest of the chapter I will discuss the four major aspects of international law and ethics: just war, discriminate use of force, proportionality, and respect of civil liberties.

Major ethical and legal issues

The ethical issues that will be addressed below can be divided into two main categories: *jus ad bellum*, which defines the legal and legitimate reasons a player may engage in war, particularly the inherent right of self-defense; and *jus in bello*, i.e., principles and laws to which a player involved in war is expected to adhere. "Just war" could be considered the general paradigm into which the other moral and legal aspects belong, and I will address it here both as a *jus ad bellum* and a *jus in bello* issue, whereas the other three will be treated as reflective of *jus in bello*.

Just war

Just war is first and foremost a war that is waged as an act of self-defense.[40] As wars of attrition are often imposed on Western democracies, who usually do not initiate such wars but rather prefer regular war or *blitzkriegs* instead, the problem of justifying their wars of attrition is moderated.

Given Israel's attrition aversion, just cause was the easiest principle for it to comply with. The justness of its wars of attrition was rarely questioned by the general public in Israel, as has already been pointed out in Chapter 4. It is true that after 1967, Arabs, foreign governments and

individuals, as well as some Israelis, have pointed to Israeli occupation of the territories as accounting for Arab resistance against it. In the late 1970s Israeli military presence in southern Lebanon supplied another source of criticism against Israel.[41] The two pre-1967 wars of attrition, however, had nothing to do with the occupation of the territories, and after Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai, the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon, it became easier for it to justify its reaction to Palestinian and Hezbollah provocations, based on its right to defend its citizens.[42]

Against the backdrop of the murderous attacks against Israeli citizens during the Second Intifada, the Israeli Supreme Court expressed its view that Israel was acting according to its right to self-defense.[43] The targeted killing method, which Israel was using as a response to the suicide bombing campaign, was considered by the state's attorney general and the military chief advocate as an act of self-defense.[44] Israeli and foreign scholars, too, defended Israel's right to use targeted killing as an act of "active self-defense," again, provided that all other measures have failed, and based on the premise that the killing was aimed at those who terrorized lives of innocent civilians, and was therefore a form of preemption rather than punitive in its purpose.[45] But even the staunchest supporters of this counter-terror method on moral grounds have made clear that it should not be used as a means of vengeance or punishment, or for achieving side benefits such as deterrence, or applied on a much larger scale than originally intended (i.e., targeting "ticking bombs").[46]

It seems that Michael Walzer's view concerning the conditions that would justify preemption, which were formulated in the 1970s in a state-to-state and regular wars context, applies to the targeted killing issue. Walzer justified preemptive strikes if three conditions were fulfilled: an obvious intention on the part of the enemy to do injury; active preparations that turn that intention into a positive danger; and a situation in which the risk of defeat will be greatly increased if the fight is delayed.[47] He pointed to the difficulty to justify preventive strikes, though, due to the uncertainty regarding the existence of these conditions.[48]

Necessity and the right to self-defense being major determinants of the justness of war may "invite" manipulation, either for domestic or international purposes. For example, in the mid-1960s, in the midst of the water campaign with the Syrians, Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin told the members of the General Staff:

> The question is, what is the right way of getting the "Jews" [i.e., a pejorative nickname the "Sabra" senior commanders gave to the government members, many of whom were perceived as having a Diaspora mentality] into a small or big war [. . .]. Whoever thinks of collision seriously must make the Jews feel that it is inevitable. [. . .] The only way [to do it] is [. . .] by presenting it as [war] of no choice.[49]

Rabin's manipulative intentions, however, were unnecessary, as Syria's attempt to divert the Jordan River's water was considered in Israel a *casus belli*.

Another manipulative case took place in 1981, during the Israel–Palestinian war of attrition on Israel's northern border, when Defense Minister Ariel Sharon laid the ground for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon less than a year later, by implicitly including, for the first time, a tacit *casus belli* that belonged into the "current security" category – insurgency from Lebanon – whereas all previous *casi belli* belonged into the basic security category.[50] His plan was to create the impression that Israel was not deviating from its war of no choice tradition. Prime Minister Menahem Begin, on the other hand, thought there was no moral obligation that required a nation to fight only when "facing the ocean or when standing in front of a pit," because such a war could entail enormous casualties. Begin believed that it was absolutely legitimate to fight a war

of choice, if it served vital Israel security interests.[51] As will be seen in the ensuing pages, Israel's belief in the justness of its wars of attrition notwithstanding, the world has not always accepted its right to self-defense.

Discriminate use of force

The principle of discrimination forbids direct targeting of and intentional harm to noncombatants.[52] But unintentional harm to civilians can hardly be avoided when guerrilla and terror tactics are used during a conflict, as a result of the tendency of guerrillas or terrorists to disseminate among civilians. Michael Walzer points to the dialectics troops fighting against an enemy that is hiding among civilians find themselves caught in:

> On the one hand, they are expected to do everything they can to prevent civilian deaths. [. . .] On the other hand, they are expected to fight against an enemy that hides behind civilians. So (to quote a famous line from Trotsky), they may not be interested in the dialectic, but the dialectic is interested in them.[53]

Walzer does not see any neat solution to the dilemma other than taking technological, doctrinal, disciplinary and other measures in order to reduce "collateral damage." Troops are required to minimize civilian casualties as much as possible, by aiming as precisely as they can at combatants, and, if necessary, also by taking risks in order to do that, and calling off counterattacks that might kill large numbers of civilians.[54] Daniel Byman believes that in the final analysis, the test of abiding by the principle of discrimination is practical and specific: is the defending state successful in implementing it in a given case? If counter-terror measures entail the killing of innocent people, it would be difficult to justify their use.[55]

Most of Israel's wars of attrition have involved civilians on either side. Israeli attitude towards the principle of discrimination could be divided into two periods: until the 1953 Qibya Operation, and henceforth.

Qibya as a watershed

Up until 1953, in the framework of an effort to hunt infiltrators and *fedayeen*, who found refuge in villages on Arab states' territory but close to the Israeli border, Israel raided some of these villages, deliberately hurting civilians who lived there. Deliberate targeting of villages stopped in the early 1950s, though, in the wake of the 14 October 1953 Qibya Operation. The operation, which was carried out by special unit 101, under the command of Ariel Sharon, was designed to punish a village where *fedayeen* were thought to be based, by inflicting as much destruction and by claiming as many casualties as possible. A total of 69 civilians were killed during the operation and more than 40 houses were blown up.[56]

After the 1953 Qibya Operation, the political leader of the Religious–Zionist movement (at the time, a dominant orthodox stream, which held dovish political views and presented a strong moral stand against immoral behavior during wartime), Minister of Welfare and Religions, Haim Moshe Shapira, called Qibya a despicable crime, one that was completely incompatible with Jewish values, exactly as had been the Dir Yassin massacre during the War of Independence.[57] Chairman of the Council of Religious–Zionism Rabbis, Rabbi Shaul Israeli, ruled in the wake of

Qibya that the killing of women and children in Qibya was committed in the framework of a holy war (*Milhemet Mitzva*) against cruel enemies. According to Rabbi Israeli, although a military action should not be avoided just because civilians may be hurt, harming civilians deliberately was prohibited.[58] Israeli Orthodox philosopher Isaiah Leibowitz wrote that now that the Jews had a state and a military of their own, the way they used their force was put to moral and religious test. The Qibya Operation may have been rational and even justified, but was nevertheless morally "cursed."[59] Amitai Etzioni pointed to another aspect of Qibya, that of self-betrayal. Besides being morally bad in itself, Qibya also constituted Jewish self-betrayal – the Jewish people's departure from its destiny as "a light to all the nations" and becoming "normal."[60] Left wing parties – the Communists and MAPAM – blamed the IDF troops that took part in the Qibya massacre for behaving according to the standards of Israel's enemies, deviating from the behavior that was expected of the IDF. Right wing intellectual Israel Eldad, on the other hand, claimed that Jewish morality had the role of securing Jewish existence, and avoiding the killing of Israel's enemies was a deviation from that moral imperative.[61] Most of the Israeli press, though, preferred blaming the Arabs and European countries for failing to prevent murderous terrorism against Israelis.[62]

Unlike the aforementioned strong reactions against the operation on moral grounds, Chief of Operations Moshe Dayan and Ariel Sharon stressed its achievements. They thought the operation taught the Jordanians that Israel would not tolerate violence against its citizens and that it returned the IDF's its lost pride.[63] After expressing the Israeli government's reservation about what had happened in Qibya, while officially denying any Israeli involvement in the massacre, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, Foreign Minister Moshe Sharet and Moshe Dayan, who was nominated Chief of Staff in December 1953, instructed the IDF to shift to hitting counter-force targets only.[64] The instruction was based on practical rather than moral grounds. Israeli decision makers wondered whether the operation would have the expected deterrent effect and feared diplomatic pressures as a result of the death of so many civilians. Moral considerations merely played a secondary role. Dayan did not hide his concern that the post-Qibya counter-force policy was taking the sting out of the Israeli raids,[65] but he also realized that the world Jewry and the citizens of the State of Israel expected the IDF to abide by the purity of arms principle.[66] And indeed, diplomatic pressures were not late to come. On 24 November 1953 the UN Security Council condemned the killing of innocent civilians; Britain sent a tacit threat that it might consider standing by Jordan as required by its defense pact with the monarchy; and the US withdrew economic assistance to Israel. Even American Jewry condemned the killing.

Post-Qibya policy and practice

Both political and military echelons in Israel have internalized the principle of discrimination, incorporating it in their operational plans and considerations. Since Qibya, Israeli officials reiterated their commitment to discriminate use of force. For example, during the pre-1967 war of attrition, in April 1966, Israeli troops who raided villages in Jordan following a series of Fatah attacks on civilian targets in Israel were given strict orders to blow up houses but to avoid the killing of civilians. Eleven Jordanian civilians were killed during the raid nonetheless.[67]

During the post-1967 war of attrition on the Egyptian front and along the Jordan River, Israel was applying a policy of sticks and carrots in the territories. A liberal approach was adopted

toward the population, which enabled the people to live their lives almost uninterruptedly. At the same time, terrorists were hunted, imprisoned, deported across the Jordan River without trial, and their houses or the houses of those who sheltered and helped them were demolished (see the discussion of collective punishment, below). Israel was aware of the boomerang effect of collective punishment, which often drove passive people into actively supporting guerrilla and terror attacks against it, and therefore tried to avoid it.[68] The stick and carrot policy worked quite successfully in the West Bank, but was much less successful in the Gaza Strip, where resistance to Israeli occupation was stronger and needed the application of harsher measures by Israel.

During the 1965–82 war of attrition with the Palestinians on the Lebanese border, in December 1968, while briefing commandos before boarding the helicopters on their way to raid the Beirut International Airport, Chief of Staff Haim Bar-Lev gave explicit orders to avoid the killing of civilians.[69] During the Second Intifada, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon declared “Israel distinguishes between terrorists – whom we will pursue relentlessly – and the civilian Palestinian population that is not involved in terror.”[70] On various occasions during the Intifada Israeli soldiers refrained from firing missiles at houses where armed Palestinian were hiding in order not to hurt civilians who were in the building.[71] In 2005 Israeli targeted killings became much more sophisticated and selective, particularly when carried out from the air (see below).

After the 2006 Second Lebanon War, Amnesty International accused Israel of violating international laws banning direct attacks on civilians and barring indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks during the war.[72] Similarly, Human Rights Watch’s report claimed that the primary reason for the high Lebanese civilian death toll during the Second Lebanon War was Israel’s failure to distinguish between military targets and civilians. The report acknowledged the fact that Hezbollah had at times violated the laws of war in its deployment of forces in Lebanon, and that it had frequently violated the laws of war in its rocket attacks on Israel and by allowing the firing of rockets from within populated areas and the mixing of its combatants with the Lebanese civilian population, or storing weapons in populated civilian areas in ways that had violated international humanitarian law.[73]

As a matter of fact, during the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah War, the intensity of the fighting and the fact that the war lasted much longer than the 1982 war notwithstanding, far fewer civilians were killed as a result of Israeli military operations compared to the 1982 Lebanon War,[74] thanks to improved precision capabilities of Israeli munitions and warnings issued to Lebanese villagers to evacuate so that they would not be harmed.[75]

Intended and unintended damage to civilian targets, and Israeli doctrine of "double-effect"

Israeli policy change in the wake of Qibya notwithstanding, throughout the years innocent civilians have been killed during Israel’s wars of attritions. It seems that Israel has been acting upon the so-called doctrine of double effect. The doctrine accepts that intended harm to civilians is illegitimate, but also assumes that if evil done brings about something good – in this case, stopping violence against innocent Israelis – it is not less permissible than trying to do something good, which bears unintended negative results.

Israel did occasionally attack counter-value targets, often apologizing for collateral damage inflicted as a result of its attacks. In April 1956, during the first Israeli war of attrition, following

Egyptian artillery fire on Israeli settlements along the border, an Israeli artillery unit was instructed to return fire on the city of Gaza. The fire caused the death of more than 50 Egyptians, most of whom were civilians. Once Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion heard about what happened, he immediately instructed the IDF to limit its activity to military targets, in the spirit of the post-Qibya policy.[76]

During the 1969–70 war of attrition, Israel hit counter-value targets along the Suez Canal and in the heart of Egypt in an ineffective attempt to compel the Egyptians to stop the war they had initiated. The death toll among Egyptians mounted to 10,000.[77] Tens of thousands were injured, and 500,000–750,000 Egyptians fled their homes in the Canal cities as a result of Israeli bombings. Ismailia, Kantara, and Suez turned into ghost cities.[78] On one occasion, as a result of a mistaken identification of a target, an Israeli Phantom bombed a factory in Abu Zaabal, causing the death of 86 civilians.[79] Israel took responsibility for the mistake.[80] Israel's attacks became most effective only after it started hitting targets in the heart of Egypt, which eventually stopped in the wake of Soviet intervention in the war.

Charged with the task of "pacifying" the Gaza Strip from insurgents, in 1971–72 the Israeli Southern Command flattened streets in refugee camps, in order to turn them into wide security roads.[81] During the 1981 Small War of Attrition with the PLO on the Lebanese border Israel targeted PLO concentrations from the air, many of which were located in refugee camps. Some 100 people were killed, of whom only 30 were terrorists, and 600 were injured. In 1996, during the Israel–Hezbollah first war of attrition, Israel launched Operation Grapes of Wrath, during which Israeli artillery fire inadvertently killed 100 civilians in the southern Lebanon village of Qana, causing Israel to stop the operation because of international and domestic criticism.

During the two Intifadas, hundreds of Palestinians were killed while participating in hostilities against Israeli troops and as a result of operations against terrorists who had placed their bases of operations or had found refuge in built-up areas. During the Second Intifada, an Israeli F-16 aircraft fired a laser-guided bomb into a building in Gaza City, killing Hamas military leader Salah Shehadeh and 14 other people, including eight children. The incident was criticized both in Israel and abroad. On another occasion, in May 2004, during an IDF operation in Rafah, a Palestinian crowd drew near IDF forces, endangering them. A single missile was fired from a helicopter into an open area, flares were fired in the air, and machine gun fire was opened towards a wall of an abandoned structure along the side of the road in an attempt to deter the crowd. After these warnings had failed, four tank shells were fired at the structure, as a result of which eight Palestinian demonstrators were killed. Often before the IDF attacked Palestinian Authority targets during the Second Intifada, Israel warned occupants of the buildings in advance, allowing them time to evacuate. These bombings were dubbed by Head of the Israeli Military Intelligence, Amos Malka, as "real estate bombings."[82]

On 30 July 2006, during the Second Lebanon War, an apartment building in the southern Lebanon village of Qana was hit by Israeli aircraft, after Hezbollah terrorists had found refuge in it, shortly after having launched Katyusha rockets at Israel. It was the same village where the tragic incident of 1996 had taken place. A total of 28 people were killed, 16 of whom were children.[83] Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Defense Minister Amir Peretz, and Israel's ambassador to the UN Danny Gillerman expressed Israel's regret.[84]

After the war the Winograd Investigation Commission was established. During the testimonies of the State's Attorney General Menachem Mazuz and the Military Chief Advocate General Avichai Mandelblit, Ruth Gabison, member of the Commission, implicitly raised the double-

effect dilemma, suggesting generally that current international law had become a "strategic danger," because by restricting the use of force it had only brought about the prolongation of war, preventing quick victory and causing further casualties. The two witnesses defended the prohibition of indiscriminate use of force. Attorney General Mazuz explained that international law had become a dominant factor in international relations and had consistently been going in the direction of further restrictions on the use of force, a trend that cannot be reversed. Indiscriminate use of force is unacceptable by law abiding states, Mazuz said.[85] And the Military Chief Advocate testified that he did not have to explain to IDF commanders why it was imperative to avoid the killing of innocent civilians, because they themselves understood that indiscriminate use of force was out of the question.[86]

Targeted killing and discriminate use of force

Targeted killing has been used by Israel for many years as an anti-terror method, but was extensively used during the Second Intifada. Arguments against Israeli targeted killing policy focused on the collateral damage incurred,[87] which on occasion entailed the killing of whole families.[88] Of the various counter-terror methods developed and used by Israel throughout the years, this one seems to be the most compatible with the principle of discrimination, at least in comparison to the alternative of invading a civilian area. Amos Yadlin and Asa Kasher attributed incidents of collateral damage as a result of targeted killing during the Second Intifada to intelligence failures, poor planning or performance rather than any moral misbehavior.[89]

Between September 2000 and April 2004, Israel carried out 159 killing attempts. Of those killed (78 percent) 248 were combatants, whereas 69 (22 percent) were noncombatants.[90] Later on, Israel managed to improve its performance, and its targeted killings became much more sophisticated and selective. According to IAF Chief Eliezer Shkedi, not only had the IAF improved the hitting rates in targeted killing from 10–15 percent in early 2004 to 60–80 percent at the end of the year, but also the number of noncombatant casualties had declined from one noncombatant for one terrorist (1:1) in early 2004 to one noncombatant for 12 terrorists (1:12) at the end of that year.[91]

Proportionality

The principle of proportionality says that even if a player is legally allowed to defend himself once attacked, he is obliged to apply the minimum force necessary to achieve his legitimate objectives and to make sure that the response is proportional to the injury suffered. Furthermore, the response must be immediate and necessary.[92] Damage to civilian population becomes prohibited once it is seen as excessive in relation to the military advantage.[93] Obviously, a conflict in which there is asymmetry between powerful players and weaker ones has naturally a greater potential of violating the principle of proportionality, as the stronger side is both capable of using excessive force and is often tempted to do so.

Compliance with the principle seems to be problematic. First, anyone familiar with the nature of war knows that once war begins and force is used, it could gradually escalate to the point of becoming disproportionate to the objectives one wishes to achieve. Ambition, reputation, hatred,

frustration or humiliation – can all account for such escalation, pushing war to the extreme, away from constraints – either rational or ethical.[94] Second, it is difficult to draw the line between excessive and legitimate use of force.[95] Third, proportionality is open to interpretation; it depends on the context, and is always a subjective test.[96] Fourth, it is sensitive to the impact of cumulative effect of collateral damage.[97]

What is considered beyond any legal or legitimate boundary by Western democratic standards is the so-called "dirty war," i.e., using extreme measures such as mass killing of civilians, torture, or ethnic cleansing. Not only is dirty war a blatant violation of ethical norms and civil liberties, in most cases it is also unnecessary and counterproductive. Ironically, one of the states associated with employing such means in the post World War II era was a Western democratic great power – France – who was using them during the Algerian War.[98]

Throughout the years, Israel has allegedly been carrying out attacks that were considered excessive in their use of force. As in the case of discriminate use of force, it has been caught in the dilemma between strictly respecting what was legal in the eyes of international law – which, as pointed out above, needed updating as to enable self-defending democracies to protect their citizens – and the need to ensure deterrence or effective compellence. For example, as already pointed out, in 1971–72, during the post-1967 war of attrition, the Israeli Southern Command had to employ harsh measures in order to pacify the Gaza Strip, which proved to be effective.[99]

According to Dan Shomron, Chief of Staff during the First Intifada, the uprising could have been stopped had Israel used transfer, famishment or genocide, but none of these means would have been acceptable in Israel.[100] During the Intifada, however, the IDF tried to cope with the challenge posed by lightly armed or unarmed opponents by developing extremely detailed rules of engagement that spelled out what troops were allowed and not allowed to do. Demonstrators and rioters were to be handled firmly and dispersed with the appropriate amount of force, and random brutality was to be avoided.

Although there has never been an official Israeli decision to use extreme measures to force an end to the Intifadas, in practice, during the First Intifada, as a result of stress, frustration, little or no specialized training, or poor discipline, the rules of engagement were often broken, and troops occasionally opened fire at the wrong persons, administered beatings, or inflicted humiliation.[101] Israel occasionally initiated, or at least tolerated, the use of excessive force by individual troops and the use of drastic means such as beating, collective punishment of entire villages and towns, demolition of houses, deportation of activists and tight movement control (the issue of civil liberties challenged during Israel's wars of attrition is discussed below).[102]

During the Second Intifada incidents of violence against innocent Palestinians and damage to property did not disappear. According to the IDF, between September 2000 and June 2007 the Military Police investigated 1,091 incidents of alleged violence or misconduct on the part of Israeli soldiers and officers against civilians in the territories, which resulted in 118 indictments.[103] Although charges of mass rape, murder and pillage spread abroad both by Palestinians and by some of their sympathizers inside and outside Israel were false, there was occasional resort to random acts of vindictiveness by some troops, especially in the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack. At times, these resulted in the deaths of noncombatants (including women and children); more often, they took the form of callous behavior at check-posts, which was all too often tolerated by both the military judicial system and senior commanders.[104]

The harsh means applied by Israel were prohibited by the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, but some of them have been legal in the eyes of Israeli law (the 1945 Defense Emergency

Regulations), and have occasionally received the backing of the Military Advocate General, who, for example, allowed the use of force during interrogations in exceptional cases, referring to the ticking bomb scenario, where it becomes necessary to obtain information as soon as possible from a terrorist in order to save the lives of innocent civilians.[105] The Israeli Supreme Court has ruled against the use of excessive force. For example, in 1999 it unanimously outlawed methods of physical force that were routinely used in interrogations by the GSS. It did allow physical force, however, in "exceptional cases," referring to the "ticking bomb" exception.

The broadening of targeted killings during the Second Intifada to targets that did not fall into the category of ticking bombs, as well as the elimination of the political and ideological leadership of Hamas – were apparently not compatible with the principle of proportionality. On the other hand, in light of the murderous nature of suicide bombings and Israeli efforts to reduce collateral damage, the response could be considered quite proportional. Moreover, the elimination of Hamas' spiritual leadership and threats to eliminate their successors proved to be highly effective.[106]

In the 2006 Israel–Lebanon War, the question was again raised if Israel was abiding by the principle of proportionality. Legal experts, a number of European governments and the UN Secretary General considered Israel's response to the abduction of its soldiers a violation of the principle of proportionality, especially in light of the unnecessary suffering caused to Lebanese civilians. So also did French President Jacques Chirac and UN humanitarian Chief Jan Egeland.[107] In defense of Israel, French philosopher Bernard Henri Levi asked rhetorically in *Le Point*:

> With whom does proportionality lie – with the Israelis, who have withdrawn from Lebanon six years ago, and from the Gaza Strip six months ago, and are prepared to withdraw from the West Bank, or with those whose main interest is the destruction of Israel?[108]

According to Amichai Cohen, the charge that Israeli response to Hezbollah attacks during the Second Lebanon War was disproportional seemed to rest on the cumulative effect of collateral damage. The objection was not so much to the operations against Hezbollah per se, but rather to the sum total of collateral damage that those operations caused to Lebanese civilians.[109]

Civil liberties

Civil liberties are fundamental individual rights, such as the right to life, fair trial, free movement, or privacy, and freedoms such as freedom of speech, movement and religion. In Western democracies these liberties are protected by law against unwarranted governmental or other interference. In wars of attrition that involve civilians, particularly LICs, wherein terror and guerrilla tactics are major methods used by nonstate players, and given the elusive nature of guerrillas and terrorists and the fact that they often disseminate among civilians – a tension is created between civil liberties and security.

Efforts made by Western democracies to enhance security while respecting civil liberties notwithstanding, sometimes the need to ensure security for one side entails doing wrong to another, by denying its civil liberties. In the Arab-Israeli case, while improving the safety of one ethnic group – in this case, Israelis – by providing it with a higher level of security, such measures often denied other groups – in this case, particularly Palestinians – the freedom of movement, the right to access to one's property, to cultivate one's land, to receive medical care,

to work, to enjoy equal treatment and protection, to be presumed innocent, etc. Targeted killing, for example, has served the right of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians to life (the latter by applying a discriminate use of force), but at the same time it has denied alleged terrorists the right to life and fair trial.[110]

In the dilemma between security and civil liberties, the guiding principle is often pragmatic. Assuming that security is the most cherished value universally, both by nations and individuals, as long as deviating from respecting civil liberties proves to be effective in the war on terror in the sense that the measures used effectively safeguard democratic societies' security, it would be logical and justified to keep applying them, short of employing "dirty war" methods. For example, Israel has been a success story in preventing airplane hijacking since the mid-1970s, thanks to its profiling policy.[111] Should deviating from civil liberties fail in providing security, however, they ought to be abandoned and rejected.

In the rest of the section I will discuss the following issues: various forms of collective punishment; transfer of terror supporters; and physical pressure.

Collective punishment

Collective punishment belongs to the family of methods that out of context would be classified as evil doing. The 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits collective punishment and considers it a war crime.[112] Although collective punishment is prohibited by law, the method has been commonly used, both before and after the Fourth Geneva Convention, including by Western democracies, based on the belief that it might be morally disputable but practically effective. The British used collective punishment during the Boer War, basing themselves on the laws of war that existed at the time,[113] as well as against Communist rebels in Malaya in 1951, the Mau-Mau in Kenya in 1952 and in Cyprus in 1956. Many years earlier, in 1774, British "Intolerable Acts" against the citizens of Massachusetts[114] constituted a form of collective punishment. During the American Civil War General William Sherman's Special Field Order No. 120/V from 9 November, 1964, for the "March to the Sea," allowed collective punishment "should guerrillas or bushwhackers molest our march, or should the inhabitants burn bridges, obstruct roads, or otherwise manifest local hostility." It permitted to "enforce devastation more or less relentless according to the measure of such hostility."[115] In the Algerian War villages suspected of aiding guerrillas were subjected to collective punishment. The Americans in Vietnam were allegedly employing collective punishment as well.

In 1950, Chief of the IDF's Southern Command Moshe Dayan believed in the effectiveness of collective punishment. He explained that although it might not be justified morally, collective punishment was aimed against villages that were located close to where violence against Israel was taking place, and forced civilians in Jordan or Egypt to put pressure on their respective governments to prevent hostility against Israel so as to avoid Israeli retaliation.[116] The 1953 Qibya Operation, which had been designed to punish an entire village, proved that collective punishment might be immoral but was effective. It was therefore applied from time to time during Israeli wars of attrition, particularly in the territories. However, it has never been acknowledged by Israel as part of any official counter-insurgency policy.

Until the outbreak of the First Intifada, as the territories knew relative quiet for 20 years (from 1967 to 1987), the application of harsh measures that could harm the entire Palestinian society or

parts thereof was quite rare. The more threatened Israel became by terror attacks from the territories, particularly since late-1987, and more so after the outbreak of the Second Intifada, the harsher the measures it used in order to cope with these threats. These measures included ones that fell into the category of collective punishment, such as prolonged curfews, house demolitions, and administrative detention; closures, physical barriers, checkpoints, and other restrictions on Palestinian movement, which turned Palestinian freedom of movement from a fundamental human right into a privilege that Israel granted or withheld as it deemed fit. Frequent closures also prevented Palestinians from going to work or harvesting and transporting their agricultural produce, children from going to school, and the society in the territories as a whole from conducting normal cultural and social life.[117]

In the rest of this section I will discuss three forms of collective punishment – house demolitions, economic restrictions, and ethnic profiling – and one issue that allegedly incorporates a number of collective punishments – the security fence.

House Demolitions

House demolition has been used in many conflicts as a means of penalizing civilians for supporting insurgents and deterring others from such support. Demolition of the empty houses of those who play accessories to terrorism in the territories had occasionally been carried out by Israelis, but the house demolition policy intensified during the First and Second Intifadas. During the Second Intifada alone, more than 3,000 civilian homes were demolished in retaliation for terrorist attacks against Israeli targets. According to B'Tselem, the main victims of the demolitions were family members, among them women, the elderly, and children, who bore no responsibility for the acts of their relatives and were not suspected of involvement in any offense. Furthermore, unlike house demolition in the past, in which the IDF had been careful to damage only the house of the terrorist's nuclear family, in many cases during the Second Intifada the IDF also damaged nearby homes, either intentionally or unintentionally.[118] In mid-2004, in the Rafah refugee camp, the IDF demolished many houses in an attempt to uncover tunnels used by Palestinians to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip from Egypt, making over 1,000 people homeless.[119]

House demolitions were used despite their doubted legality and despite their limited effectiveness. During both Intifadas the number of violent events did not diminish following house demolitions. During the First Intifada they sometimes caused an escalation of terrorist acts against Israelis.[120] In 2005 an Israeli Army commission to study house demolitions during the Second Intifada found no proof of effective deterrence and concluded that the damage caused by the demolitions outweighed their effectiveness.[121] As a result of these findings the IDF approved the commission's recommendation to end punitive demolitions of Palestinian houses.

Economic Restrictions

According to international law, everyone has the right to work and to enjoy full and productive employment under conditions safeguarding fundamental and economic freedoms to the individual.[122] Unlike the early years of the occupation of the territories, during which Israel had

hunted guerrillas and terrorists but at the same time had encouraged the local economy to grow and prosper, during the Intifadas Israel also used economic measures to fight Palestinian resistance.

During the First Intifada a combination of Palestinian self-imposed measures and Israeli sanctions worsened the economic conditions in the territories. As pointed out in Chapter 5, hundreds of government employees were forced by the Unified Command to quit their jobs, and the number of workers from the territories in Israel or Israel-controlled areas dropped considerably. Frequent closures and curfews imposed by Israel as a result of the unrest in the territories, and terror attacks on Israelis, disrupted trade and other economic ties between Israel and the territories and accelerated the replacement of Palestinian laborers in Israel by laborers from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. The Palestinian tourist industry was critically damaged, and a substantial decline in the Palestinian standard of living took place, exacerbated by the devaluation of the Jordanian dinar, the currency most widely used in the territories.

The Second Intifada was much more violent, claiming an unprecedented number of Israeli casualties. Alongside other means, Israeli reaction included the imposition of strict closures on Palestinian enclaves, which were surrounded by earthwork barricades and later on began the construction of a security fence. The border was closed for some 125,000 Palestinian workers, who had relied on jobs inside Israel for their modest income.[123] The number of Palestinians allowed to work in Israel dropped considerably, and more than 50 percent of the work force was unemployed. The economy in the territories shrank to 70 percent of its former activity.[124] All other Palestinian economic indicators declined dramatically. As a result of rising unemployment, reduced demand, and Israel's withholding of taxes collected on the Palestinian Authority's behalf, monthly revenues dropped from $91 million in late 2000 to $19 million. A collapse of the Palestinian Authority was avoided only thanks to donor budget support. Over half a million of formerly middle-income Palestinians became fully dependent on food aid. Of the population of the West Bank and Gaza 60 percent lived under a poverty line of $2 per day, and the numbers of the poor tripled. Per capita food consumption declined by 30 percent. A total of 51 percent of children suffered from malnutrition and another 21 percent from acute malnutrition.

Ethanic, Racial or Religious Profiling

Profiling refers to the discriminatory practice by law enforcement officials of targeting individuals for suspicion of crime based on the individual's race, ethnicity, religion or national origin.[125] The domestic law of Western democracies is committed to prohibiting discrimination on the basis of subjective criteria. For example, the Fourteenth Amendment of the American Constitution requires that all US citizens be treated equally under the law.

The question which arises is, can Western democracies engaged in war against terror afford to avoid the use of ethnic, racial, or religious profiling, despite the fact that profiling may save the lives of potential victims of terror? The US Supreme Court offered two conditions under which profiling might be justified: the government must show that it has a "compelling interest" in doing so, and that is has already tried less restrictive means to achieve the same objectives.[126] But here another question arises: where to draw the line between compelling interest and non-compelling interest. Protection against a 9/11-type terror attack seems to qualify as compelling. The UK has already given the answer to that question by establishing special intelligence units to track Muslims across the Kingdom that might be engaged in terror following the July 2005

London bombings.[127]

As for Israel, according to the 1994 Amendment to the Basic Law: Human Freedom and Dignity, fundamental human rights must be upheld in the spirit of the principles set forth on the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, according to which "the State of Israel will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex."[128]

At least two aspects of profiling have been applied by Israel as counterinsurgency methods during its wars of attrition. First, the roads regime imposed by Israel in the West Bank during the Second Intifada, restricted the use of certain routes by Palestinians, either totally or upon military permits, and reserved the right to use them for Israelis only. All Palestinians were treated as actual or potential security risks, and their freedom of action was violated. According to B'Tselem's estimate, during the Second Intifada Palestinians were restricted from some 41 sections of road in the West Bank, covering an approximate distance of 700 km.[129] Israel's explanation for this road regime was that it resulted from imperative security considerations and not from any ethnic or racial discrimination, as claimed by B'Tselem. Again, security needs and Israeli civilians' right to life were in conflict with civil liberties for Palestinian civilians, and Israel preferred its own citizens' rights.

Another profiling aspect was Israeli policy, since the 1970s, of singling out Arabs, either from the territories or from within the Green Line, for extensive search procedures, or intrusive questioning, based on the assumption that members of this ethnic group were more likely to take part in hijacking or blowing up airplanes. The fact that Israel has been successful in preventing airplane hijacking since the mid-1970s, thanks, among other means, to its profiling policy,[130] at least gave the impression that the method was effective. Critics, however, claimed that protecting passengers was justified as long as all of them, no matter what their race, were subject to the same inspections. As a result of this criticism, and in order to put an end to the discrimination of an entire ethnic group, new electronic detectors were installed at Ben-Gurion Airport that eliminated the need for individualized checks, and the airport authorities seem to have found other, more discreet, ways of singling out the luggage of Arab passengers.

The Security Fence

The security fence incorporates a number of aspects of collective punishment. The construction of the fence was criticized by the ICJ, who considered it violation of international law and caused suffering to Palestinian civilians; by the UN General Assembly that endorsed the ICJ advisory judgment on the fence, the Red Cross, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International. According to Amnesty International, by constructing the security fence within the territories, Israel has been violating both international humanitarian law and international human rights law; more specifically, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Amnesty claimed that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been suffering from unprecedented disproportionate and discriminatory restrictions on their movements within the territories and from other violations of their fundamental rights, including the right to work, to food, to medical care, to education, and to an adequate standard of living, and the right of access to their land.[131]

On the other hand, even Amnesty International recognizes Israel's "right to take reasonable,

necessary and proportionate measures to protect the security of its citizens and its borders."[132] And indeed, the security benefits of the fence for Israelis seem to speak for themselves, highlighting once again the tension between security for one side and civil liberties for another. Since the creation of the fence, the number of terrorist attacks has dropped sharply – from 73 in the period September 2000–July 2003 (an average of 26 terrorist attacks per year) to five in the period July 2003–August 2004. The number of fatal casualties inflicted by terrorist attacks from the West Bank in the period August 2003– August 2004 also dropped, by some 84 percent as compared to the period September 2001–July 2002 (see Table 6.1).[133]

In the dilemma between violating the civil rights of the Palestinians in the territories as a result of the construction of the fence, Israel chose improving the security for its own citizens, and the fence provides better security to fulfill that goal.

Transfer of terror supporters

Deportation or forcible transfer of residents of an occupied territory is prohibited by international law, particularly by Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, regardless of their motive. This prohibition notwithstanding, Israel deported more than 1,000 Palestinians in the first 20 years of its military rule in the territories (1967–87). During the five years of the First Intifada 66 Palestinians were deported. Following the killing of six members of the Israeli security forces by Palestinian terrorists in December 1992, Israel deported 415 Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists from the territories to south Lebanon for a period of up to two years.[134]

During the Second Intifada Israel transferred from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip relatives of Palestinians who had killed or injured Israelis. B'Tselem considered that transfer an act of collective punishment. "Punishing persons for deeds they did not commit – where the sole reason for the punishment is that they are relatives of individuals suspected of having committed crimes – constitutes collective punishment, which is prohibited by international law,"

Table 6.1 The security fence's impact

Number of terrorist attacks from the West Bank	
Prior to the fence (annual average)	73
Thereafter	5
Number of fatalities inflicted by terrorist attacks from the West Bank	
September 2000-August 2001	52
September 2001-July 2002	173
August 2002-July 2003 (fence under construction)	68
August 2003-August 2004	28

Source: CSS Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.

B'Tselem's report argued. The Israeli Supreme Court, on the other hand, ruled that the military commanders in the territories were authorized to issue orders for "assigned residence," basing its rule on Article 78 of the Convention, which allows "relocation" due to security reasons, though not in order to achieve deterrence.[135]

Physical pressure (torture)

Torture is prohibited by international law.[136] Although it is usually associated with non-democratic regimes, this form of punishment has been used by Western democracies even after the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). One of the famous examples was the systematic use of torture against FLN operatives by French officials during the Algerian War.[137]

According to Alan Dershowitz, even though a Western democracy cannot afford to do what other societies can when it comes to torture, it is nevertheless imperative that democracies are able to fight fairly and effectively against those who threaten their citizens. To that effect, the laws must be changed to permit the use of effective measures; otherwise the law would be a suicide pact.[138] David Luban, on the other hand, fears the possibility that as a result of terror threats, liberal thinking will give birth to an ideology and culture of torture. “The same liberal ideas seemingly can justify interrogational torture in the face of danger. These ideas allow us to construct a liberal ideology of torture, by which liberals reassure themselves that essential interrogational torture is detached from its illiberal roots. The liberal ideology of torture is expressed perfectly in so-called ‘ticking-bomb hypotheticals’ designed to show that even perfectly compassionate liberals [. . .] might justify torture to find the ticking bomb.”[139]

Shortly before the outbreak of the First Intifada the Israeli government appointed the Landau Commission to examine GSS interrogation methods. The commission justified the exertion of a moderate degree of physical pressure, based on the assumption that without some kind of physical force an effective interrogation was impossible. “The means of pressure should principally take the form of nonviolent psychological pressure through a vigorous and extensive interrogation, with the use of stratagems, including acts of deception. However, when these do not attain their purpose, the exertion of a moderate measure of physical pressure cannot be avoided,” stated the commission in its report.[140] This became of great relevance during the Intifadas, particularly the second one, when the GSS was engaged in a daily effort to preempt and prevent suicide bombings.

In 1991, Israel ratified the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, article 7 of which states that “no one shall be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”;[141] and in September 1999 the Israeli Supreme Court ruled against the use of torture and physical pressure. According to the President of the Supreme Court, Aharon Barak, preserving the Rule of Law and respecting an individual’s liberty constituted important components in a democracy’s understanding of security, and torture could not be justified even for purposes of securing information that might prevent terrorism.[142]

The interrogation restrictions set by the Landau Commission and the Supreme Court’s stand notwithstanding, during the Intifadas Palestinian prisoners accused the GSS of using torture methods during interrogations. In Israel the GSS interrogating methods have been dubbed “special measures,” which the organization has been empowered to use under extreme conditions, mainly a “ticking bomb” scenario. According to B’Tselem, however, torture has been neither extraordinary nor limited to “ticking bombs.” It has become a bureaucratic routine. B’Tselem estimated that the GSS was annually interrogating between 1,000 and 1,500 Palestinians and was using methods constituting torture against some 85 percent of them.[143]

Combining operational effectiveness and morality

Western democracies engaged in asymmetrical wars of attrition have been trying to bridge operational effectiveness and morality in general and reduce collateral damage in particular by opting for a "post-heroic" policy. By sparing not merely the lives of their own troops and civilians, but also the lives of enemy civilians, not only do they comply with the principles of discriminate use of force and proportionality and respect the right to life, but they may also enjoy greater domestic and external legitimacy, as well as sustainability in such wars. As pointed out in Chapter 1, post-heroic policy's roots are demographic, social and moral, and it is characteristic of highly technological Western democracies conducting non-existential wars in which their readiness to sacrifice is relatively low. It has been adopted in a process where practice seemed to precede doctrine, and society and military seemed to be mutually affecting each other. A post-heroic player would try to avoid committing ground forces, instead using precision-guided fire in place of maneuvering on the ground. Alongside precision-guided munitions (PGMs), it would also use non-lethal and less-lethal weapons as a sword that cuts almost without wounding or killing.[144]

Thinking along the post-heroic lines has been introduced in the scene of war as early as the late 1970s, first by the Israelis and then by the Americans, long before it was explicitly defined and formulated by Edward Luttwak. By now, it has penetrated deep into the strategic thinking of both the US and Israel. The US Army Field Manual of 1993 assumed that, alongside the expectation of achieving a decisive victory by US troops, it was the public's loss-aversion that determined its attitude towards military operations.[145] This state of mind seems to have affected US operations in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Except for Somalia, where the intervention got rough after 18 troops were killed basically because the perceived stakes were extremely low, post-heroic warfare seems to have worked out quite well. As I will show below, it also turned out to be amenable for the Israelis in their asymmetrical wars of attrition.

One of the problems in conducting post-heroic warfare stems from the fact that the enemy usually does not "cooperate" with the nature of the warfare being waged against it, but rather sticks to a heroic pattern of warfare, that is, deliberately trying to create civilian casualties on both sides. The more the casualties inflicted on a Western democracy, the more inclined it might become to merely abide by post-heroic warfare's first rule. For example, in the American war in Afghanistan, which began shortly after 9/11, the American public was much more permissive of the casualties inflicted by US forces because the memory of 9/11 was still fresh. Similar feelings could be detected among Israelis in the face of the suicide bombings of the Second Intifada.

Low tolerance for casualties among its troops has always characterized Israeli operations, a significant factor that has affected considerations regarding the scope of operations, sometimes even accounting for sacrificing the achievement of the war objectives or accomplishing military missions for the sake of avoiding casualties. News items covering IDF operations have often ended with the assuring message that "all our troops (or aircraft) have returned safely to their bases." On occasions, operations succeeded but nevertheless invoked criticism that the cost in terms of casualties outweighed the benefit. For example, during the 1968 Karame Operation, 28 Israeli troops were killed as compared to 150 Fatah insurgents. As a result of the casualties on the Israeli side, the operation has not been considered a success in Israel. In July 1969 Israeli naval commandos raided the Green Island in the Gulf of Suez. It destroyed Egyptian radar network in the area, but lost six frogmen.[146] Following the raid, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan

described what he and senior IDF commanders felt while waiting for the commandos to return from their mission: "All night we stood on the shores of the Red Sea, waiting for their return. At sunrise, they came out of the water bearing the price of victory on their backs [i.e., the bodies of the dead frogmen]."[147]

In the late 1970s, sensitivity to casualties turned into a policy of avoiding the killing of IDF troops. The IDF demonstrated early signs of adopting the first rule of post-heroic warfare, i.e., don't get killed, during the Israel–PLO war of attrition on the Lebanese border. When Defense Minister Ezer Weizman approved the 1978 Litani Operation, following the bloody terrorist attack on the Haifa–Tel Aviv highway, he instructed Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur that "[the operation] should be conducted very carefully. Ten Fatah [insurgents] are not worth even the hand of one of our soldiers. The more lives of our guys we can save, the better."[148] In reference to the 1982 Lebanon War, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon said that although Israel preferred quick achievements, the need to avoid casualties came first.[149] In September 1982, after the murder of President-elect Bashir Gemayel by the Syrians, Israel decided to advance to the Beirut area in order to uproot PLO infrastructure and headquarters there. Once IDF troops approached the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, they allowed their Lebanese allies – the Christian militia – to enter the camps in their place so as to spare the lives of Israeli troops. This ended up in the massacre of Palestinians by Lebanese Christians.

More than a decade later, during the first Israel–Hezbollah war of attrition, Chief of Staff Ehud Barak explained that in its operations in southern Lebanon against Hezbollah, the IDF preferred using massive fire instead of maneuvering forces on the ground in order to avoid or at least reduce the number of casualties for its troops. During the 1993 Operation Accountability he stressed that "only one Israeli soldier was killed [in the operation], whereas Hezbollah suffered heavy damage."[150] A senior commander explained: "the fewer casualties we suffer on our side, the more successful we consider the operation to be. [. . .] We have methods by which we can inflict intolerable damage on the other side while minimizing the casualties on our side."[151] In 1999, Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz revealed that the IDF was now leaning on air activity against Hezbollah, rather than activities on the ground, so as to reduce casualties.[152] Indeed, Israel managed to maintain its presence in Lebanon for more than 20 years – from 1978 to 2000 – thanks to the fact that the number of soldiers killed in battle – some 25 a year – was sustainable. Gradually, post-heroic warfare became the IDF's new way of war in its asymmetrical wars of attrition.

However, as already pointed out in Chapter 4, following the February 1997 helicopter crash, which claimed the lives of 73 Israeli troops, and the casualties inflicted on Israeli troops in Wadi Saluki in August 1997 (five troops) and during the September 1997 elite commando unit operation in southern Lebanon (12 troops), post-heroic warfare's first rule – avoid casualties to your own troops – was broken, and the voices calling for withdrawal, spearheaded by the anti-war Four Mothers movement, eventually fell on attentive ears, and the road for the 2000 withdrawal was opened.

During the First Intifada, Israeli engagement regulations were adapted so as to provide the Israeli troops with the tools to cope with situations where unarmed civilians were involved. The main goal was to disperse violent riots without causing loss of life and serious bodily injury.[153] Since the mid-1990s, R&D units in the Israeli Defense Ministry focused on developing non-lethal and less-lethal weapons to be used in asymmetrical conflicts, whose main purpose was to increase the combat effectiveness of the Israeli troops while reducing casualties for the troops

and for civilians on both sides.[154]

During the 2002 Defensive Shield Operation, when Israeli troops faced strong resistance in a congested urban areas filled with explosives, snipers, and booby-traps, they advanced from house to house by tearing down holes in the walls so as to avoid exposure to snipers.[155] At the same time, instead of using artillery or fighter-bombers, which would have flattened whole neighborhoods in the Palestinian refugee camps, home to hundreds of guerrillas and terrorists, the IDF chose to target only the terrorists, trying to spare the lives of noncombatants. The troops engaged terrorists in house-to-house fighting that spared civilians as much as possible. Attack helicopters swapped their rockets for TOW missiles, which caused less collateral damage. Noncombatant casualties would have been even lower if the Palestinian terrorists had not used civilians as shields and decoys. When the IDF entered the town of Jenin's refugee camp in April 2002, it took great care to avoid casualties to its own troops as well as civilian casualties. As a result of the self-imposed restrictions, however, it suffered more casualties than expected.[156] The final toll of the battle of Jenin was approximately 56 Palestinians dead, mostly gunmen, while Israel lost 23 soldiers.[157]

During the Second Intifada, the IDF also developed and implemented the Army Digitalization Program (ADP), which linked sensors and shooters across all command levels, down to the single soldier, enabling every authorized user to transmit, receive and view high resolution still format, as well as live video from any sensor, including ground observations, battle management systems (BMS) sight views, UAVs etc. One of the systems enabled ground troops and pilots to view real-time video images of the combat zone taken by UAVs, and was particularly important in a dense urban landscape where military forces did not have a clear line of sight.[158] As such, it was supposed to reduce casualties on both sides.

During the 2006 Second Lebanon War, in a Cabinet meeting on 27 July 2006, Minister of Transportation (formerly Chief of Staff and Defense Minister) Shaul Mofaz warned against a ground operation, claiming that "the Israeli public is sensitive to the price it has already claimed – 32 dead troops. It can also change the rear's feelings."[159] Mofaz was wrong, because, as pointed out in Chapter 4, 88 percent of Israelis living in the northern parts of the country, who suffered from Hezbollah Katyusha attacks, believed the society's staying power was high, 59 percent said they felt safe, and many of northern Israel's citizens declared they were ready to stay in shelters for as long as necessary in order to destroy Hezbollah infrastructure in southern Lebanon. During discussions in the days that followed, Homeland Security Minister Avi Dichter opposed a major ground invasion, arguing that "You can do this in a very short time, but you are going to kill many more innocent civilians and cause many more casualties among the [Israeli] troops. We have no intention of doing either."[160] In a Cabinet meeting on 31 July, he reiterated his objection to large-scale ground operation: "We have had great achievements [. . .], and it would be unwise to risk them by exposing 40,000 troops to the Lebanese reality."[161] Towards the end of the war, though, the feeling in the Cabinet was that there was no choice but to go for a ground operation, and on 9 August it discussed alternative plans for such an operation. During these discussions Minister of Housing Meir Shitrit opposed advance to the Litani River, stressing the casualty consideration.[162] Chief of Staff Dan Halutz admitted that a "no casualties" approach had penetrated the Israeli military mind as a result of the IDF's preoccupation with terror challenges.[163] According to IDF's Chief of the Manpower Branch Elazar Stern, part of the explanation for the IDF's failure in the Second Lebanon War was oversensitivity to casualties.[164] And Edward Luttwak, the father of the term post-heroic warfare, thought the Israeli aversion to

casualties was unjustified either in itself or as compared to similar combat situations that other armies had faced.[165]

The Second Lebanon War revealed post-heroic policy's limitations. Israel found itself caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, in order to achieve the ambitious political and military war objectives it was necessary to sacrifice both troops and civilians, that is, to violate the principles of post-heroic warfare.[166] On the other hand, deviating from the rules of post-heroic warfare might have limited Israel's freedom of action, mostly because of international pressure. This indeed occurred when the pursuit of Israeli goals caused many Israeli casualties and much collateral damage in Lebanon. As was pointed out above, far fewer civilians were killed as a result of IDF operations in the Second Lebanon War thanks to the improved precision of Israeli munitions.

Israel's post-heroic way of war has never been met by similar behavior on the part of its enemy, who has preferred to stick to heroic warfare, ready to sacrifice their own fighters and determined to kill as many Israeli civilians as possible. This has forced Israel at least to consider changing its commitment to post-heroic warfare. In the spring of 2002, before the IDF launched Operation Defensive Shield, Zeev Schiff, a senior Israeli military commentator, anticipated that Israel would abandon the imposed self-restraint.

> It seems that the day is approaching in the terrible war that is developing here, when anyone who comes to destroy Israeli families, including children and babies, will have to consider that Israel will harm his family, and not only his property [. . .]. With Palestinian terror cutting down entire families, perhaps the voices calling for physically harming the families of the suicide terrorists will drown out the voices that reject this idea out of hand as unethical.[167]

This did not happen, though.

Conclusion

When confronted with terrorism, Western democracies are often caught in the dilemma between respecting their obligation to ensure their national security and the personal safety of their citizens, on the one hand, and their commitment to abide by the highest moral standards and respecting the rule of law, on the other. Self-defending democracies have been paying a price for their determination to fight terror effectively, in terms of eroding their liberal values, to the point of adopting illiberal laws, norms and methods.

Since late-1953, sparing the lives of enemy civilians has been an unwritten principle of Israeli military policy. Strict orders have been given to IDF troops to that effect, despite the feeling that hurting civilians might have a great punitive and deterrent effect, and the temptation, following murderous attacks on Israeli civilians, to put an end to the immunity of enemy civilians from Israeli attacks. Throughout the years, however, innocent civilians were killed during Israel's wars of attrition, particularly the asymmetrical ones. When it turned out that innocent people had been killed, Israel often apologized publicly.

As a result of the popular nature of the First Intifada, Israel updated the rules of engagement and developed non-lethal weapons so as to avoid the killing of civilians, and the IDF issued an ethical code. During the Second Intifada, in the light of the Palestinian suicide bombing campaign, Israel adopted a targeted killing policy that was supposed to eliminate terrorists while saving the lives of innocent civilians. Targeted killing proved to be both effective (particularly

when aimed at political and ideological leadership), and relatively moral – at least compared to the alternative, which was large-scale ground operations that would have claimed a heavy death toll from both sides. Israel has always preferred arresting terrorists to killing them, due to the intelligence benefits of capturing them alive. The more intense the terror attacks on the Israeli civilian rear, the easier it became for Israel to cope with allegations concerning disproportionate response and "collateral damage."

The public debate held in Israel in the wake of "collateral damage" inflicted as a result of military operations against terrorists (e.g., following an attempt by Chief of the IAF Dan Halutz to back pilots who had fired missiles at terrorists but caused collateral damage[168]), the existence of an ethical code in the IDF, occasional rules by Israeli court, the lack of any incidents of violence against women by IDF troops, etc. – are all expressions of deep commitment to fight as morally as the circumstances allow, notwithstanding the fact that for Israel's enemies the end has often justified the means.

At face value, since the occupation of the territories in 1967, Israel seems to have violated almost all civil liberties. A closer look reveals a much more complex picture. As a self-defending democracy, threats to its national security and the personal safety of its citizens required deviation from fully respecting the enemy's civil liberties, so as to be able to fight without having two hands tied behind its back, but short of employing "dirty war" methods, which have been considered a "black flag." Some violations of civil liberties – e.g., house demolitions or transfer of terrorists – proved to have a limited deterrent effect and were therefore applied much more selectively. Other forms – e.g., ethnic profiling, or moderate physical pressure during interrogations – proved their effectiveness and were therefore more justified if one does not ignore the dilemma between ensuring security for Israelis and respecting Palestinian civil liberties. The security fence, which allegedly incorporated violation of a number of civil liberties, proved effective in reducing terror attacks against the Israeli rear. The fact that Israel has never initiated a war of attrition has only strengthened its moral case.

Human rights organization and liberals across the world have much higher expectations of a Western democracy during wartime than of a non-democracy as far as morality is concerned. Information about human rights violations is also much more available in free societies. The result is often unbalanced allegations aimed at Western democracies, for violating liberal norms. Israel has been no exception in this respect. In its case, the fact that it has been engaged in war for decades, and since 1967 the IDF has had to fight among civilians in the territories, has only aggravated Israel's position, no matter how hard it has tried to live up to Western ethical standards. In September 2007 the President of the United Nations Human Rights Council Doru Romulus Costea conceded that the organization had failed in its handling of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. He agreed that the Council had routinely criticized Israel and arbitrarily supported resolutions that had condemned Israel, while withholding criticism on other major human rights violations around the world.[169]

The greatest challenge for Western democracies is to identify the delicate borderline between preserving its liberal values even under murderous attacks and deteriorating to the adoption of methods that despite their effectiveness entail an intolerable price in terms of their values. The tension between the competing, even contradicting, values of security, on the one hand, and discriminate and proportional use of force and respect for civil liberties on the other, can be bridged in two major ways. First, creating a new set of laws that would empower Western democracies to defend themselves without violating the law. One of the major issues the new set of laws will have to address is the broadening of the meaning and application of self-defense to

include situations beyond the reaction to enemy attack or inter-state conflicts. The new set of laws, however, carries the potential of permitting morally questionable behavior under the auspices of law.

Second, a selective adoption of a post-heroic policy. The policy has worked well for the Israelis vis-à-vis the Palestinians. Ironically, Israel's often-criticized targeted killing policy, which has indeed violated the right to life and fair trial, has reduced collateral damage significantly and at the same time brought Hamas leadership to agree to a ceasefire, which marked the end of the Second Intifada. Post-heroic policy was less effective vis-à-vis Hezbollah, particularly during the Second Lebanon War, which means that sometimes it has to be abandoned and replaced by a "heroic" way of war.

7 Beyond staying power

Escalation, deterrence, and war outcomes

A series of wars of attrition have left Israel in good social, economic and political shape, relative to Arab expectations and its own fears and attrition aversion. Having discussed the way Israel conducted these wars from various angles – operational, societal, economic and moral – this chapter looks beyond Israel's staying power and evaluates the consequences of these wars and Israeli achievements in, and as a result of them. More specifically, it first asks if it could take credit for successfully controlling escalation during these wars, particularly for achieving escalation dominance and avoiding the deterioration to regular war. Second, it examines if the way Israel conducted these wars served its deterrence. Third, given the limited relevance of battlefield decision in wars of attrition and the fact that modern war is often waged beyond the direct battlefield, it tries to find out if Israel was at least successful in achieving grand-strategic decision or victory, the latter being described in terms of the correlation between the war objectives and their achievements, or in creating favorable military and political conditions for the longer run.

The main arguments put forth in this chapter are:

1. As a result of a combination of attrition aversion, frustration from the indecisiveness of attrition, and opportunity, Israel tended to escalate its wars of attrition until the mid-1970s. Since the 1970s, however, an activist rhetoric was often accompanied by restraint, either as a result of an effort to lower violence in northern Israel for economic considerations, or due to the complexity of conducting war of attrition among civilians within territories under Israeli responsibility. Misinterpreting Israeli ability to take mounting violence against it, Palestinians and Hezbollah occasionally brought about escalation which they themselves wished to avoid. After years of difficulty in achieving escalation dominance during its wars of attrition, particularly vis-à-vis nonstate players, the two Intifadas constituted a positive change in this respect.
2. Israeli deterrence, both during and as a result of its wars of attrition was usually limited and temporary, if at all. Nonstate players, in particular, were difficult to deter.
3. No battlefield decision at the strategic level was achieved in any of the attrition cases analyzed in this study. Typical of wars of attrition, which often involve the players' society and economy, grand-strategic decision was present in one form or another in no less than five wars of attrition since the early 1970s. Frustrating in particular for Israel was the fact that its military superiority could not guarantee political victory, while the military inferiority of its weaker enemies did not prevent them from achieving such victory.
4. Israel managed to gain clear long-term achievements only once: the victory in the water campaign of the mid-1960s, which conveyed the message that Israel would not tolerate any attempt to deny it water.

Israeli escalation proneness

Until the 1970s, Israel demonstrated escalation proneness, out of its attrition aversion and the belief that demonstrating resolve via escalation, even if it led to war, could serve Israeli interests better than the continuation of attrition. Escalation expressed itself in the frequency and scope of military operations conducted during the wars of attrition, the scene of operations, the targets chosen, the involvement of external players, etc. As the escalatory process developed, though, emotionally driven decision making and behavior sometimes occurred on the Israeli side, particularly frustration-induced escalation, which often triggered further violence that sometimes deteriorated to "regular" war.[1]

Two main considerations affected the degrees of violence employed by Israel until the 1970s: operational, i.e., the degree likely to be effective vis-à-vis its rivals; and political, i.e., the amount of violence likely to provoke minimum criticism at home and abroad.[2] Two dilemmas Israel faced in the 1950s and the 1960s reflected these considerations. The first dilemma concerned the use of aircraft in border incidents, and is elaborated below. The second dilemma was about the management of the conflict with Syria. While launching raids against Jordan and Lebanon, with the hope of forcing their governments to prevent insurgency from their territory, Israel hesitated to attack Syria. On the one hand, it was necessary to stop the diversion of the Jordan River's water and put an end to Syria's support for and sponsorship of the Fatah insurgency against Israel, even if that meant going to war. A replica of the Sinai War that had put an end to insurgency against Israel was very attractive and tempting. On the other hand, Israel feared that escalation with Syria would push the Arab world, which until that point was reluctant to back Syria, let alone intervene in the conflict, to stand by its side. Undesirable in particular were scenarios of Egyptian and Soviet active support for Syria, Egyptian attack on Dimona, or tension between Israel and the US in the mist of complex negotiations between the two countries on arms supply to Israel.[3]

Since the 1970s, however, Israel rather preferred restraint – particularly vis-à-vis Hezbollah, in order to create conditions for economic prosperity in northern Israel, and vis-à-vis the Palestinians, due to the complexity of operating among civilians for whom Israel was legally responsible.

Frustration-driven escalation

Frustrated by the difficulty to deter or compel the enemy in its wars of attrition, particularly those of asymmetrical nature, Israel was gradually pushed into using higher levels of violence. Notable in particular was its shifting from occasional reprisals to sequential offensive initiatives; from hitting counter-force targets to hitting counter-value ones; from targeting insurgents to targeting Arab states; from small-scale reprisals to large-scale operations; and from ground operations to the use of air power.

Two examples from the early 1950s and early 1960s demonstrate the frustration-driven escalation. In the early 1950s Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan preferred war with Egypt to the continuation of low-intensity hostilities.[4] He was even ready to initiate attacks on Syrian outposts northeast of the Sea of Galilee in December 1955 so as to force Egypt to live up to its commitment to the Syrian regime and drag it into war with Israel.[5] To Dayan's disappointment,

Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion was not tempted to approve his scheme, due to his lack of confidence in the IDF's capabilities at the time. Only after the opportunity opened to cooperate strategically with France and Britain as a member in a three-party war coalition, did Ben-Gurion gain the courage to go to war. In the early 1960s it was Assistant Chief of Operations Colonel Rehavam Zeevi who advocated initiating war against Syria and the Fatah organization in order to avoid a mass desertion of Israeli settlements in the frontier areas as a result of violence along the borders.[6]

Opportunity-driven escalation

Given Israeli attrition aversion and feeling that in war of attrition achieving military successes was of lower likelihood, "activists" among the Israeli defense elite occasionally looked for opportunities to break the pattern of attrition and shift to a "regular" mode of conducting war. In 1965, against the backdrop of terror and guerrilla activities from Jordan, attempts to sabotage the Israeli Water Carrier project, and Syrian efforts to divert the Jordan River's water, Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin was ready to go to war in order to save Israel's deterrent image.[7] Stimulated by a growing sense of self-confidence, Rabin urged a deliberate escalation on the Israeli–Syrian border, seeing the border incidents as a "gold mine" that would play into Israel's hands. He believed that escalation would either deter Syria from further violence, or trigger war that would topple the Syrian regime. He assumed that Egypt would stay out, and foresaw a northern version of the 1956 Sinai War, when both Jordan and Syria evaded coming to Egypt's help despite their alliance with Egypt. Some general staff members, e.g., Haim Bar-Lev, Chief of Logistics Matityahu Peled, and Chief of the Navy Yochai Bin-Noun, advocated escalation vis-à-vis the Palestinians, hoping that it would create an opportunity to launch a large-scale operation, maybe even war, against Syria.[8]

In accordance with this state of mind, Israel initiated many of the border incidents with Syria. In an interview Moshe Dayan gave to the Israeli journalist Rami Tal in 1976, he admitted that the way Israel managed the conflict on the Syrian border before 1967 contributed to the outbreak of the war between the two countries. According to Dayan, some 80 percent of the cross-border clashes between Israel and Syria in the pre-1967 years were a result of Israeli provocations.[9] Like Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion in the 1950s, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol was reluctant to go to war, but things nevertheless evolved in that direction.[10]

In 1981, the newly nominated Defense Minister Ariel Sharon started planning war in Lebanon, in order to put an end to continuous PLO terror and guerrilla activity from this country. The significant decrease in border incidents on the Israeli–Lebanese border following the July 1981 Israel–PLO ceasefire notwithstanding, he took advantage of the terrorist attacks on Israeli targets abroad to push for war in Lebanon.

Another example of opportunity-driven escalation is the Israel–Hezbollah 2006 War. On 12 July 2006, after Hezbollah had fired Katyusha rockets and mortars at Israeli military positions and border villages, diverting attention from another Hezbollah unit that crossed the border and kidnapped two Israeli soldiers and killed three others, Israel reacted to the provocation by launching a large-scale reprisal, which turned into a 33-day war of attrition.

From occasional reprisals to constant offensive initiative

When faced with a raging wave of terrorism or guerrilla attacks, the IDF tended to pay less attention to the political and diplomatic complications entailed in escalation. Instead, it opted for continuous attacks on enemy guerrillas and terrorists, even ones not directly connected to previous enemy attacks, hoping to keep them focused on their own defense rather than planning and carrying out attacks on Israeli troops or civilians. Backed by the US since the late-1960s, Israel felt it had greater freedom of action to implement that policy compared to the 1950s and most of the 1960s. Such a policy was carried out in April 1979, following a terror attack in Nahariya and during the Second Intifada. Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon's words during the Second Intifada are reflective of this policy: "The ultimate means is [. . .] not to wait for [. . . the terrorist] in front of a bus or a mall, but rather surprise him while in bed."[11]

From counter-force to counter-value targets

The "normal" escalatory path usually passes from counter-force to counter-value operations, and adversaries are usually pushed into hitting counter-value targets after having despaired from the effect created by counter-force measures. Examples for such a path from Israel's wars of attrition history include a series of counter-value bombings in Egypt by the IAF, launched during the 1969–70 war of attrition; a bombing campaign in 1999, during which the IAF struck two power stations near Beirut, blew up a telephone communication facility in the city, and destroyed bridges linking Beirut with the south in retaliation for Hezbollah rocket attacks on civilians in northern Israel, after hitting Hezbollah targets had proved to be inefficient; or the IAF's attack on the Shiite Dahiya quarter in Beirut, in July 2006, after failing to compel Hezbollah to stop the war by destroying the organization's long-range Katyusha launchers.

Israel could not always afford to carry out counter-value operations. Soviet intervention in the 1969–70 war of attrition forced Israel to stop the in-depth bombings in Egypt and to agree to a ceasefire; and in 2006 Israel refrained from large-scale attacks on infrastructure targets in Lebanon, whose pro-Western government was considered one of the greatest achievements of the US quest for democratization in the Middle East and a potential partner for peace with Israel.[12] A number of infrastructure targets were hit, nevertheless, such as Beirut's international airport, 46 gas stations, 92 bridges, 82 communication lines, 14 radar stations and 52 tunnels across the country.[13]

Sometimes an opposite escalation track can take place – from counter-value to counter-force attacks. When Israel attacked an Egyptian Army base near Gaza City in early 1955, during Operation Black Arrow, after having focused on Palestinian counter-value targets beforehand, this had a greater escalatory effect that triggered a deeper Egyptian involvement in Palestinian violence against Israel and is believed to have affected, at least to some extent, Egypt's decision to sign the September 1955 Czech–Egyptian arms deal, which constituted a threat to Israel.[14]

From targeting insurgents to targeting Arab states

It was mainly the elusive nature of insurgents and the insufficient effectiveness of the reprisal

raids aimed at them that forced Israel to act indirectly, by attacking the Arab states from whose territory the insurgents were operating against it. To cite Chief of Staff David Elazar in the early 1970s: "Our goal is to bring the Arab regimes to acknowledge the inadvisability, the risk and the damage entailed in supporting and encouraging the terrorists."[15]

The aforementioned Operation Black Arrow in February 1955 was only a prelude to a new policy of targeting Arab states in order to stop insurgency from their territory. It was soon followed by three retaliation raids against central Arab states – two against Egyptian troops near Nitzana in late October and early November 1955, and one against Syria in mid-December 1955.[16]

In the pre-1967 war of attrition Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin, and with him the entire General Staff, urged the government to approve a major confrontation with Arab states that were engaged in border incidents (Syria) or allowed, supported or sponsored Palestinian guerrilla and terror activity against Israel from their territory (Syria, Jordan and Lebanon). The dovish government at the time was reluctant to approve reprisal raids, but continuous Palestinian attacks from Arab states' territory did not leave it much choice but to put the blame on these states, and to approve reprisals against them. Between 1 January 1964 and 5 June 1967, 12 reprisal raids were carried out – seven against Jordan, four against Syria and one against Lebanon.[17] The attacks on Arab states were usually of limited scale, though, signaling Israeli determination to act against those who had attacked it while avoiding all-out war.

The policy of compelling Arab governments to act against Palestinian insurgency by raiding their territory did work on the Lebanese border. After the IDF attack on wells and water reservoirs in the Lebanese village of Hullah, the Lebanese army tightened its control over the Palestinians in southern Lebanon and tried to prevent insurgents from infiltrating into Israeli territory.[18] As for Jordan, Israel had to react to insurgency carried out from Jordanian territory, but did not want to destabilize King Hussein's regime.[19] Operating against Syria was deemed to make much more sense because of its involvement in Fatah attacks on Israel, the effort it was making to divert the Jordan River's water, and given Egypt's reluctance to support Syria on the water conflict, let alone to be dragged into military confrontation with Israel at an inconvenient timing from Egypt's perspective. In September 1966 Prime Minister Levi Eshkol warned that Israel "will hold the Syrian government entirely responsible for all acts of sabotage and terror perpetrated from its territory."[20]

Egypt was caught in a dilemma between its reluctance to go to war, the likelihood of which became higher in the light of the escalation between Israel, on the one hand, and Syria and Jordan, on the other, and its hope to topple King Hussein's regime, an interest which the reprisals seemed to serve quite well.[21] As for Syria, in order to avoid Israeli retaliation, it made sure that the insurgents it had encouraged to attack Israel would operate from Jordanian or Lebanese territory. In the early 1970s, however, Syria did allow terrorists to operate from its own territory, risking being punished by Israel. And indeed, Israel retaliated by using aircraft, artillery and tanks against Syrian targets, such as bases, radar stations, military outposts and civilian installations.[22]

The 1965–82 Israeli–Palestinian war of attrition on the Lebanese front culminated in an Israeli attempt to overthrow the pro-Syrian regime in Lebanon and to establish a pro-Israeli government that would expel the PLO from Lebanon. There are yet more examples of Israeli targeting of Arab states for insurgency carried out from their territory. As mentioned previously, in 1999 the IAF attacked infrastructure targets in Beirut in reaction to Hezbollah attack on northern Israel,

and during the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah war of attrition some infrastructure targets were hit, although Israel was constrained by the US as far as attacking such targets in Lebanon was concerned.

From small-scale to large-scale operations

In five out of nine wars of attrition covered in this research, Israel lost patience with enemy attacks on it and launched large-scale reprisals. Large-scale operations of major importance were Operation Black Arrow (1955) against Egypt; Operations Samoah (1966) and Karame (1968) in Jordan; Kalachat (1969), Aviv Neurim (1973), Litani (1978), and Peace for Galilee (1982) against the Palestinians in Lebanon; Accountability (1993) and Grapes of Wrath (1996) against Hezbollah; and Defensive Shield (2002) against the Palestinians in the West Bank.

Resort to decapitation

Eliminating leaders and activists of terrorist organizations as a counter-terror means was first raised in the 1960s by Chief of Operations Haim Bar-Lev, Chief of Northern Command David Elazar and Chief of the Navy Yochai Bin-Noun, who thought it might stop a wave of Fatah terrorism against Israel.[23] But Israel practically resorted to this method in the 1970s. To mention a few milestones in Israeli decapitation policy since the early 1970s: in April 1973 special units attacked PLO targets in Beirut and Sidon. Three PLO leaders, including Arafat's deputy for operational intelligence in Fatah, Abu Yousef, and some 20 other PLO personnel, were killed. In January 1977 Israel killed Mahmud Saleh, PLO representative in Paris. In April 1988 Israeli commandos killed Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), Arafat's deputy in charge of the PLO's military arm in Tunis. In 1992 Israel eliminated Hezbollah's Secretary-General Abbas Mussawi. In October 1995 it killed Fathi Shikaki, the Islamic Jihad's leader, in Malta. In January 1996 it targeted Yahya Ayyash, who made the bombs used by suicide bombers, in Gaza.

In the light of the mass murderous suicide bombing attacks on Israeli civilians during the Second Intifada, Israel adopted a declared targeted killing policy, which became a major counter-terror method. As insofar as it concentrated on eliminating military operatives and leaders, it only triggered new levels of escalation. Strong statistical evidence was found that associated targeted killings with an increase in suicide bombing attempts, with each additional hit inviting additional 7.75 attempts.[24] Despaired by its inability to stop the continuous wave of suicide bombings, Israel turned to decapitating Hamas's political and ideological leadership. Unlike the elimination of military leaders, the decapitation of the organization's political and spiritual leaders Sheikh Yassin and Abdel Aziz Rantisi proved to be very effective, accounting for its decision to suspend hostilities against Israel, which essentially meant the end of the Second Intifada.[25] If rumors that Israel had poisoned Arafat are well-founded, then this, too, proved to be effective, as his successor, Abu Masen, declared that the violent Intifada was over.

From ground operations to the use of air power

During the 1950s and the 1960s Israel occasionally used aircraft in border incidents, in order to overcome Syrian topographical advantage, and compensate for Israeli shorthandedness on the ground. In 1951, after having sent four aircraft into the scene of battle during a border incident with the Syrians, Israel was condemned by the UN Security Council and by the US. As a result of that criticism, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, who, in addition to being courageous was also endowed with cautiousness, refrained from authorizing the use of airpower during border incidents for some 11 years.[26] In 1958 he revealed another consideration for rejecting recommendations by Chief of Staff Haim Laskov and Chief of Northern Command Yitzhak Rabin to use aircraft against the Syrians in response to Syrian fire on Israeli settlements and farmers in the Hullah Valley and the Sea of Galilee: "Should we now introduce aircraft, they might interpret it as war; they, too, will introduce aircraft, but they might not limit themselves to using them against [Kibbutz] Dan [in northern Israel, A.K.] but rather against Haifa or Tel Aviv."[27]

In late 1962, however, this policy was changed and the Israeli government authorized the IDF to use aircraft, if necessary. This happened months after the IAF had been employed during a reprisal raid against the Syrian village Nukeib on the Golan Heights, in order to silence Syrian artillery, which had pinned down Israeli ground troops, enabling them to return safely to Israeli territory.[28] The use of the IAF during the Nukeib raid did not arouse any international criticism, but Israel still hesitated to use it.[29]

Yitzhak Rabin, who became chief of staff in 1964, urged Prime Minister Levi Eshkol to take advantage of Israel's air superiority vis-à-vis the Syrians and authorize the employment of aircraft in reaction to the shelling of Israeli settlements, stressing the futility of ground operations against Syria. Eshkol's consent resulted in the 13 November 1964 border incident, in which the IAF attacked Syrian ground targets. The attack, which was also a message to the Syrians to abandon their diversion scheme, marked a new phase in the Israeli–Syrian confrontation, in which airpower played a major role in Israeli strategy.[30] Contrary to Israeli expectations, the Syrians continued their diversion works, and were followed by the Lebanese, who announced that they were about to start similar works in their own territory. Israel reacted by initiating border incidents that were supposed to lay the ground for further attacks on Syria.[31] In 1966 Israel felt it was no longer forced to limit the use of aircraft in retaliation to Syrian attacks on its settlements, as the US, from whose reaction it feared most, was deeply engaged in Vietnam and, according to Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, was in no position to lecture Israel. This, combined with over-enthusiasm on the part of IAF pilots to go beyond their assigned missions, and American support for Israel in the UN,[32] accounted for a new stage in the escalatory ladder. On April 1967, following a series of border incidents with Syria, Israel launched an unprecedented air attack on Syria. Artillery batteries were hit from the air, 130 Israeli aircraft flew over Damascus emitting supersonic booms, and six Syrian MIGs were shot down near and above Damascus, sowing the seeds of the May 1967 crisis and the June 1967 war.[33]

During the 1969–70 war of attrition with Egypt the IAF served as "flying artillery," compensating for the IDF's quantitative inferiority in firepower along the Suez Canal,[34] and was used for in-depth bombings that were meant to put pressure on the Egyptian society and economy and, if possible, bring about the collapse of Nasser's regime.

Using airpower was also compatible with Israel's post-heroic policy, which characterized its asymmetrical wars of attrition since the late-1970s. In order to avoid casualties among its own troops and to minimize casualties among enemy civilians, the IDF preferred using aircraft to

maneuvering on the ground. The IAF's share in IDF missions increased significantly. In 1999, Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz admitted that the IDF was leaning on air activity against Hezbollah, rather than activities on the ground, so as to reduce casualties.[35] During the Second Intifada, the IAF was carrying out more than one-third of Israeli targeted killings of terrorists in the territories.[36] In the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah war of attrition, however, over-reliance on the IAF proved to be a great mistake due to the IAF's limitations in coping with the short-range rocket challenge.[37]

Difficulties in controlling escalation

Although Israeli top officials were sometimes tempted to seek an opportunity to escalate, even if this meant war, this inclination characterized a relatively small group within the Israeli military and political elite. Many more officials feared uncontrolled escalation that might lead to "regular" war or external players' intervention on the enemy's side. If already engaged in escalation, Israel usually wished to escalate to a level where the adversary would understand he cannot win; that is, to achieve escalation dominance.

The discussion below shows how limited and partial was Israel's success in these respects. In three cases – the 1950s, pre-1967, and pre-1982 – Israeli wars of attrition deteriorated to "regular" war. In three wars of attrition Israel failed in preventing the intervention of players in the confrontations it was engaged in – when the Egyptians were drawn into the conflict with the Palestinians in early 1955, and again in 1967 into the conflict with Syria; and when the Soviets intervened in the Egypt–Israel 1969–70 war of attrition. After years of difficulty to achieve escalation dominance, particularly vis-à-vis nonstate players, a positive change can be traced vis-à-vis the Palestinians during the two Intifadas.

Escalation to regular war

In the early 1950s, once reprisal raids failed in deterring Arab hostility,[38] the IDF preferred war against Egypt and Syria to the continuation of small war on the border. Driven by the belief that without another round of war the Arab states would never be ready to sign peace with Israel, Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan wished to take advantage of the escalation at the "current security" level, which he himself was often responsible for – to bring about the outbreak of war with Jordan or Egypt.[39] Improved military performance in reprisals in the mid-1950s increased Israeli self-confidence to the point of removing hesitations to target neighboring states held responsible for terror operations launched from their territory. Israeli activism, in turn, pushed the Arab states towards sponsoring Palestinian activities against it. To Dayan's disappointment, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion refused to go to war for "current security" challenges and was skeptical about the IDF's power to fight alone against Egypt, let alone against a coalition of Arab states, and Foreign Minister Moshe Sharet strongly objected to any action that might escalate to war. Eventually, though, Israel attacked Egypt for other reasons.

During the pre-1967 war of attrition many voices in the hawkish General Staff preached the use of drastic measures against both Syria and Fatah insurgents.[40] The dovish Eshkol

government, however, preferred reprisals of minor scale. “The notebook is open and the hand writes down,” Eshkol declared in defense of his restraint policy. Paradoxically, this policy contributed to the deterioration of the situation along the borders, which eventually ended in war.

In late-1966 the cumulative effect of insurgency from Jordanian territory left Israel almost no choice but to launch a large-scale reprisal against Jordan, which took place in November 1966. The Samoah Operation had a negative impact on the clandestine relationship between Israeli and Jordanian authorities and pushed King Hussein into Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s arms, to the point of joining the anti-Israeli war coalition on the eve of the Six Day War.[41]

On 7 April 1967, an aerial operation against Syria was accompanied by Chief of Staff Rabin’s boasting that Israel could take on Syria at the time and manner of its choosing, and by Israeli threats to take even more ferocious action against Syria in the future.[42] Former Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion blamed Prime Minister Levi Eshkol for turning each reprisal into an act of war, and former Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, Ben-Gurion’s political ally, told Chief of Military Operations Ezer Weizman that Israeli decision makers were leading the country to war.[43] But the fact that Syria continued encouraging terror and guerrilla attacks on Israel and instigating border incidents only triggered further threats on Syria. On 11 May, Eshkol warned Syria that Israel might have no choice but to respond to Syrian provocations on a much larger scale than it did on 7 April, and Rabin declared that Israeli troops might advance to Damascus in order to overthrow the Syrian regime.[44] Egypt’s decision to support Syria in light of the continuing tension on the Syrian–Israeli border, and the role played by the Soviets in the pre-1967 war escalation (see below), made war almost inevitable.

In the wake of the 1967 war Israel felt much safer. Unlike the early 1950s–mid-1960s, war was apparently no longer necessary, as Israel finally enjoyed “defensible borders,” and the Arabs seemed to have learned their lesson. Even had Israel decided to opt for war, the superpowers would not have let it capture any additional territory. What Israel failed to understand, though, was the Arab states’ resolve to regain their lost territories, and their sober understanding of their weaknesses, which accounted for the adoption of war objectives and strategies tailor-made to their disadvantages and limits. The post-1967 attrition became, to a great extent, a corridor to “regular” war which, according to Nasser’s planning, would be the next phase in the process of eradicating the consequences of “Israeli aggression of 1967.”[45]

In the post-1973 war of attrition, reverting to all-out war, or at least attacking the 3rd Army, or advancing to Damascus as a reaction to the war of attrition imposed on Israel by Egypt and Syria, was only possible in theory, not in practice. Israel was exhausted and constrained both domestically and externally, particularly by the expected casualty toll and superpower reaction.[46]

During the war of 1965–82 against the Palestinians Israel needed much self-restraint in order to avoid going to war before 1982, in light of sequential waves of Palestinian terror against it from Lebanon, which occasionally claimed a heavy death toll. Israeli reprisals failed in stopping Palestinian terror, though. During the almost year-long period between the July 1981 ceasefire between Israel and the PLO and the outbreak of the 1982 Lebanon War, Palestinian terrorists carried out 248 attacks on Israeli targets along the border and abroad, killing 26 Israelis and injuring 264.[47] This death toll did not constitute a quantitative escalation, as in previous periods the death toll had been higher: between 1970 and 1982 Palestinian terrorist attacks claimed the lives of 365 Israelis, both soldiers and civilians.[48] An average toll of 30 fatalities per year was a price the Israeli society had long learned to stomach.

Ironically, the 1982 Lebanon War was not a direct result of an escalation that got out of hand

but rather a pre-planned war by Israel, whose objectives included a desire to create conditions for a pro-Israeli Christian rule in Lebanon and the expulsion of the PLO from that country, and therefore cannot be considered an escalation control failure. Due to inconvenient political conditions, particularly tension with the US after the Israeli assault on Iraqi nuclear sites, Israel had to wait until 1982. The opportunity to attack the PLO occurred following the attempt on the life of Shlomo Argov, Israeli Ambassador to the UK in London in June 1982.

During the Intifadas, the likelihood that the conflict would deteriorate to "regular" war was between low and zero. First of all, no Arab state was to be blamed for either the popular uprising during the First Intifada or the suicide bombings during the Second Intifada. Second, no Arab state has even thought of coming to the Palestinians' help in the territories. Israel was therefore left alone with a challenge that was almost domestic, being solely responsible for law and order in the territories which it had been dominating since June 1967.

During the 1985–2000 war of attrition, a similar pattern of confrontation that had characterized the Israel–PLO 1965–82 war of attrition evolved between Israel and Hezbollah. In response to Hezbollah attacks on northern Israel communities, which caused physical damage and disrupted daily life, the IDF occasionally launched large-scale reprisal operations. Following Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, Hezbollah's violence continued at a much lower scale than the one that had characterized the 1985–2000 period. Even the 2006 Second Lebanon War did not escalate to "regular" war but rather remained a war of attrition.

External players intervention

Due to Israel's traditional sense of quantitative inferiority vis-à-vis the Arab world and its fear of hostile great or super-power intervention, or just of Arab expeditionary forces fighting on its enemy's side, it always wished to confront as few enemies as possible. In three wars of attrition it failed in preventing the intervention of external players in the direct confrontation in which it was engaged.

In the mid-1950s, the policy of hitting counter-force targets in Arab states' territory as a means of compelling them to stop Palestinian insurgency against Israel dragged Egypt into arming and sponsoring *fedayeen* activities against Israel. The Israeli operation Black Arrow in February 1955 is considered a factor in Egypt's decision to conclude the September 1955 Czech–Egyptian arms deal, which in turn was perceived by Israeli political and military echelons as a potential existential threat, pushing it into an accelerated arms race with Egypt and later on into an anti-Egypt war coalition with France and Britain.

The pre-1967 war of attrition was rich with potential and actual foreign intervention. Israel failed in avoiding direct confrontation with Jordan as a result of counter-insurgency activity in Jordanian territory. Whenever Israel planned operations against Palestinian insurgency from Jordanian territory, it took into consideration the possibility of direct confrontation between Jordanian and Israeli troops. But it was in the interest of Israel to avoid such intervention. However, when the IDF launched a reprisal raid against the hostile village of Samoah in the Hebron region in November 1966, after continuous attacks by Palestinian insurgents from Jordanian territory, the raid deteriorated into a confrontation between Israeli and Jordanian troops.[49] Jordan, for its part, expected Egypt to provide it with air defense, but Egypt was reluctant to be dragged into confrontation with Israel at that particular point in time, and failed to provide such air cover, hiding behind the pretext of operational difficulties due to UN

Emergency Force (UNEF) presence in the Sinai.[50] Had the Egyptians decided to come to Jordan's help, the situation might have deteriorated to an Arab–Israeli war months before such a war did break out, in June 1967.

In the pre-1967 war of attrition, Israel had the upper hand in the so-called water campaign,[51] to a great extent thanks to Egypt's refusal to intervene on Syria's side as long as it was involved in the Yemen civil war. But hostilities along the Israeli–Syrian border escalated nevertheless, culminating in mid-1967 with Egypt's decision to come to Syria's aid, which constituted the second episode of external intervention. Ironically, one of the reasons for the November 1966 Egyptian–Syrian defense agreement, which had been signed half a year before the 1967 crisis, was President Nasser's hope that it would restrain Syria and prevent it from dragging Egypt into war against Israel without Egypt's consent.[52] Israeli restraint vis-à-vis Syria despite occasional clashes on the Israeli–Syrian border and the fact that Syria was encouraging Fatah attacks on Israeli troops and civilians from Jordanian and Lebanese territory may have been interpreted in Egypt as Israeli weakness and may have encouraged it in mid-1967 to stand by Syria without fear of uncontrolled escalation. However, concentration of forces in the Sinai close to the Israeli border and the sea blockade imposed on Israel by the closing the Straits of Tiran were both considered by Israel *casi belli*. Combined with the formation of an anti-Israel war coalition, they left Israel no choice but to defend itself by going to the 1967 Six Day War.

Three weeks prior to war and against the backdrop of ongoing hostilities on the Israeli–Syrian border, the Soviets conveyed intelligence to the Syrians that may have been concocted by the KGB and the *Staazi* (the former East German secret police), according to which Israel was planning to attack Syria and had already deployed between 11 and 13 divisions on the border between the two countries.[53] A few months earlier, in early 1967, the Soviets started making preparations for intervening in a future Arab–Israeli war.[54]

During the post-1967 war of attrition there were two episodes of intervention, the first being a minor one, by a local and relatively weak player, i.e. Jordan, the second being the most outstanding foreign intervention in the history of Israeli wars of attrition, because it was carried out by a superpower – the Soviet Union. During the 1968 Karame Operation against Palestinian terrorists' headquarters and training bases located in the Jordanian town of Karame, Jordanian forces intervened, as they had done during the November 1966 Operation Samoah, and a direct confrontation between the troops of both sides developed.

During the 1969–70 Egypt–Israel war of attrition a second front was opened when the Soviets decided to intervene in the war in order to save Egypt, which was on the verge of defeat. Being the central Arab state and given the importance of its ports for the Soviet Middle Eastern fleet, it was only natural that the Soviets would consider Egypt a key client and would be prepared to do a lot in order to defend it and maintain Soviet grip on it. The worse Egypt's situation in the war against Israel became, particularly after a series of in-depth counter-value bombings by the IAF, which in 1970 caused President Nasser to fly to Moscow and ask for help, the more the Soviets were prepared to confront Israel directly, aware of the possibility that they might encounter the IAF or that the US might come to Israel's help.

Given Israel's fears from direct confrontation with the Soviets, and in the light of US hesitations to come to its help, Israel had to readjust its war objectives and to lower the profile of its operations in Egypt and to eventually accept ceasefire.[55] It also decided not to react to the violation of the August 1970 ceasefire, when the Soviets deployed SAM missiles along the Suez Canal, which constituted a major challenge for the IAF, limiting its freedom of action considerably.[56]

Escalation dominance

Escalation dominance is about the capability to escalate a conflict to a level where an adversary cannot respond and understands he cannot win.[57] As this section will show, Israel had a mixed experience with escalation dominance in its wars of attrition. After years of difficulty in achieving such dominance, particularly vis-à-vis nonstate players, the two Intifadas constituted a positive change in this respect.

As was previously pointed out, in the early 1950s Israel's policy of pressuring the Arab governments to restrain Palestinian violence against Israel from their territory[58] failed in producing the expected effect. It is true that following the 1953 Qibya Operation, despite the potential of friction between Israel and Jordan as a result of the Jordanian army's deployment along the border,[59] efforts made by the Jordanian Legion's Chief General John Glubb to deescalate the tension between the two countries, and the preventive measures he applied along the border, did bring about a significant decrease in hostility against Israel from Jordanian territory. Once Glubb and the other Legion's British commanders had to quit their jobs as a result of an Egyptian-inspired nationalistic atmosphere in Jordan and Egyptian influence on radical commanders in the Legion, the situation along the border deteriorated.[60]

During the pre-1967 war of attrition the Egyptian front was quiet, after Egypt had learned the lesson of the mid-1950s escalation, which led to the Sinai War. On the Lebanese front Israel enjoyed escalation dominance. After the IDF had attacked wells and water reservoirs in the village of Hullah, following Palestinian insurgency against Israel, the Lebanese army tightened its control over the Palestinians, trying to prevent insurgents from infiltrating Israeli territory.[61]

On the Syrian front the picture was mixed. On the one hand, Syria's attempt to divert the Jordan River's water and consequent Israeli response[62] ended up in Israeli escalation dominance, and Syria gave up its diversion attempts. On the other hand, border incidents with Syria and a series of Israeli reprisals on the ground and in the air apart from the water campaign characterized the pre-1967 period, and here Israel could not take credit for achieving escalation dominance. On the Jordanian front, Israeli retaliatory operations in Jordanian territory had a limited effect, and Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin admitted that the IDF had failed in preventing or stopping Palestinian insurgency.[63] Pressuring King Hussein proved to be inefficient as Israeli attacks on Jordan only weakened his regime, and he was too weak to confront the Palestinians anyway.[64]

On the Egyptian front during the post-1967 war of attrition, Israel inflicted destruction on Egyptian towns along the Suez Canal, later on resorting to in-depth bombings. But when it already seemed that it was achieving escalation dominance and that Egypt reached the conclusion that it had no chance of winning the war, the Soviets came into the picture. Their unprecedented intervention caused Israel to step back, losing escalation dominance to the Soviets.[65] Vis-à-vis Palestinian insurgency from Jordan, Israel did not achieve escalation dominance despite its military edge. It managed, though, to keep Palestinian terror and guerrilla activity at a tolerable level, thanks to its offensive–defensive strategy, while avoiding major confrontation with the Jordanians and enabling the citizens in the territories to live their lives as uninterruptedly as possible.

During the post-1973 war of attrition, on both fronts – the Egyptian and the Syrian – Israel failed in compelling the other side to end the confrontation. In reaction to Egyptian artillery barrages aimed at pressuring Israel to accept an agreement favorable to Egypt, Israel resorted to

controlled escalation along the ceasefire lines, hoping to convey the message that it would not yield to violent pressure. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan instructed the IDF to use heavy artillery, and occasionally threatened to withhold the passage of food and medicines to the besieged 3rd Army, to no avail. Israel also considered the possibility of attacking the 3rd Army should the Egyptians revert to a large-scale war of attrition similar to that of 1969–70.[66] Vis-à-vis the Syrians, who were conducting a similar campaign of attrition, Israel was firing back, and occasionally shelling the Damascus international airport, demonstrating that Syrian strategic and grand-strategic targets were within its reach, even without advancing to Damascus. But on this front, too, Israel was far from achieving escalation dominance. The post-1973 war of attrition ended only after disengagement agreements had been signed, in the framework of which Israel had to withdraw from parts of territories under its control – the town of Kuneitra in the Golan Heights, and a 20 kilometer strip east of the Suez Canal.

During the 1965–82 war of attrition, the ongoing effort – both defensive and offensive – to stop Palestinian attacks from Lebanon and achieve escalation dominance, which are described in detail in Chapter 3, proved ineffective, both on the northern front and abroad. The fact that the PLO never stopped its attacks on Israel from Lebanon until 1982, and its return to southern Lebanon after the 1978 Litani Operation, retaining its presence there over the next several years, reflected the futility of the almost countless Israeli counter-attacks and reprisals. Even the presence of both UNIFIL and Major Saad Haddad's Free Lebanon Militia (FLM) in southern Lebanon were ineffective in restraining the PLO's activity.

The way Israel managed the 1981 Small War of Attrition is reflective of the constraints that impeded Israel's chances of achieving escalation dominance vis-à-vis the PLO in Lebanon in the early 1980s. First, Israel lacked operational effectiveness. Israeli aircraft and artillery proved ineffective in destroying PLO artillery and Katyusha launchers. Second, escalation control considerations did not allow the IDF to target terrorist artillery located within Syrian dispositions in the Beka Valley. Third, Israel suffered from heavy international constraints, particularly the tension with the US in the wake of the IAF raid on Iraq's nuclear sites. Due to the latter constraint in particular, on 21 July the Israeli government authorized US Ambassador Phillip Habib to negotiate "a stop to the hostilities against Israel from Lebanon,"[67] and on 24 July Israel accepted the ceasefire.

In the 1985–2000 Israel–Hezbollah war of attrition, it was Hezbollah who enjoyed escalation dominance in the late 1990s, to a great extent due to the debate that evolved in Israel regarding the IDF's presence in southern Lebanon. The debate heightened following the Israeli helicopter's crash over Galilee in 1997, which increased the death toll of that war, after years of tolerable casualty rates. Not only did Israel reach the conclusion that it could not win the war, but it also looked as if it capitulated to Hezbollah's demand to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon.

It was for the first time during the Intifadas that Israel succeeded in conveying the message that the Palestinians could not win the violent confrontation, compelling at least their major terrorist organizations to stop hostilities against Israel. The explanation for this success seems to be twofold: first, Israel enjoyed full access to and presence in the territories until Oslo, and partial presence after Oslo. Second, the territories were economically and socially dependent on Israel, which limited the Palestinians' ability to sustain the struggle under Israeli economic restrictions.

As the First Intifada progressed, probably as a result of the worsening of economic conditions, increasingly fewer Palestinian civilians abided by the United National Command's instructions to violate law and order. The number of those who took part in demonstrations and disturbances

dropped sharply from 1990 onward – 48,858 in 1990; 29,174 in 1991; 23,686 in 1992; and 20,459 in 1993.[68]

As already pointed out in Chapter 5, during the Second Intifada economic conditions on the Palestinian side became intolerable for the Palestinians. Marwan Barghouti, one of the Intifada's prominent leaders, admitted that the Palestinians had been paying a very high price, although he rejected the notion that they had been compelled by the Israeli military to stop the violence.[69] In late 2002, a few months after Operation Defensive Shield, almost 80 percent of the Palestinians in the territories supported putting an end to the violent struggle with Israel, and almost 60 percent supported action taken by the Palestinian Authority against suicide bombers.[70] In 2004 Palestinian Authority President Abu Mazen admitted that "using the weapons was harmful and has got to stop."[71] A Palestinian public opinion survey conducted in September 2004 showed that after four years of violence, an overwhelming sense of skepticism regarding the effectiveness of armed attacks on Israeli targets prevailed among Palestinians.[72]

This does not mean that problems of escalation dominance did not occur throughout the struggle. For example, as long as Israel focused its targeted killings on "military" operatives, it failed in compelling the terrorists to stop committing suicide bombings or in deterring potential terrorists, who kept sacrificing their lives for a cause which they considered sacred.[73] Not only did targeted killings and collective punishment fail in deterring terrorist attempts, as new terrorists replaced eliminated ones, they also provoked riots or murderous retaliations, which only stimulated further escalation. For example, the killing of Khalil al-Wasir during the First Intifada instigated a wave of unrest and riots in the territories.[74] Perpetrated suicide bombings from 2001 to 2003 intensified from 54 cases in 2001 (34 carried out, 20 thwarted), to 167 in 2002 (55, 112, respectively) and to 209 in 2003 (25, 184). The number dropped in 2004 to 130 (14, 116).[75]

One cannot disregard the correlation between Hamas' consent to the unilaterally announced Palestinian *hudna* (temporary suspension of hostilities) of 29 June 2004 and the killing of its spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin in March 2004 and the organization's leaders in the Gaza Strip, Abu Shanab in August 2003 and Abdel Aziz Rantisi in April 2004. Not only were Yassin and Rantisi not replaced by a new chief leader, which both reflected and created a leadership vacuum, but Mahmoud al-Zahar – one of the two remaining top Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip who had escaped an attempted targeted killing (the other one was Ismail Haniyya) – for the first time expressed the organization's interest to take part in the political system following Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.[76] Hamas leadership's decision towards *hudna* with Israel could certainly be considered an Israeli success in terms of escalation dominance.[77]

Unlike the Intifadas, in the 2006 Second Lebanon War Israel again failed in achieving escalation dominance. During the initial stages of the war, Israel believed in its ability to achieve such dominance by "burning Hezbollah's consciousness" via intensive air attacks. Israel's self-confidence grew after the IAF had destroyed most of the organizations' long and medium-range rocket launchers. In practice, though, Israel failed in reducing the number of rockets launched onto its territory, as the IAF was unable to destroy the short-range launchers. Hezbollah withstood the destruction of the Dahiya quarter in Beirut and the heavy destruction inflicted to southern Lebanon Shiite villages by the IDF, and demonstrated resolve and efficiency on the ground while managing to keep launching a daily salvo of no less than 100–200 rockets to populated areas in northern Israel until the ceasefire came into effect.

Limited and temporary deterrence

One of the forms of coercion applied by Israel during its wars of attrition was deterrence-by-punishment, the logic of which was to prevent future violence by applying measures that would convey the message, both for the short and the long run, that the price of further violence against Israel would outweigh its benefits. Reprisals were the most common deterrent tool Israel was applying during its wars of attrition. The architect of Israeli reprisal policy, Moshe Dayan, had in mind both their short-term and long-term, cumulative effect. Referring to their long-term effect, he explained: "the reprisals are forcing the Arabs to ask themselves from time to time, is the destruction of Israel a realistic scheme, or should we rather despair from it?"[78]

The reprisals' punishing effect, however, was usually limited and temporary, if at all, and they hardly had a cumulative effect. Even the staunchest advocates of the offensive approach in Israel reached the conclusion that nonstate players in particular were difficult to deter, due to their extremist ideology, the strategy of attrition they were applying, the variety of new methods they were using against Israel, their decentralized structure, the division among them, and the limited influence their societies had on their behavior.[79] In light of the difficulty to deter nonstate players, Israel believed that deterrence-by-punishment would be more effective when aimed against Arab states.

In the early 1950s, as a result of Israel's military weakness during its first years, conditions were not yet ripe for the adoption of either offensive or deterrent policies, because they required an image of a powerful state. Such conditions were gradually being created as Israel grew stronger, first in the current security context, in the mid-1950s, and then in the basic security context, after the 1956 Sinai War, from which Israel emerged as a regional military power.

Its weakness in the early 1950s notwithstanding, when infiltration became intolerable, the IDF considered responding by using both defensive and offensive measures. Chiefs of Staff Mordechai Maklef and Moshe Dayan related to the reprisals as acts of deterrence and punishment, both against insurgents and Arab states. Dayan also believed in their cumulative effect, and hoped that they would strengthen the IDF's fighting skills as a by-product. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion believed in the deterrent effect of reprisals, but he did not delude himself as to the chances of completely stopping attacks on Israel.

The Military Intelligence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were also skeptical. The Military Intelligence held the view that the reprisals had no more than a short-term effect, as long as their impression was fresh. It saw two ways of stopping infiltration into Israel, which were both difficult to implement: a basic one – solving the refugees' problem, and an immediate one – decapitating the infiltrators' leaders.[80] Foreign Minister Moshe Sharet, who served as prime minister during David Ben-Gurion's leave in 1953, and senior Foreign Ministry officials, most of whom were political doves, expressed their concern of the reprisals, which instigated further escalation, had negative repercussions on Israeli diplomacy, and failed in deterring infiltrators.[81]

During the pre-1967 war of attrition, as a result of Israel's image as a regional power following the Sinai War, deterrence of both types – by-denial and by-punishment – could be expected to play a greater role in its relations with its enemies. But even in this new reality, deterrence vis-à-vis the Palestinians was still suffering from lack of effectiveness. Not only did Israel fail in stopping Palestinian hostilities against it, but following the establishment of the PLO in 1964, it also faced a more organized Palestinian armed struggle, which was even harder to deter.

As for the Arab states, even though Israel won the water campaign with Syria, both during this campaign and in its aftermath Israeli deterrence proved to be limited. Syria was challenging Israeli air superiority and was endorsing anti-Israel Palestinian sabotage activity.[82] Violent exchanges along the border between the two countries, many of which were now initiated by Israel, became common, gradually escalated to the point of creating the crisis that ended up in the 1967 war.

Israel's higher profile vis-à-vis Syria and Jordan in the mid-1960s and these Arab states' bad experience from their pre-1967 attrition against Israel must have created a loss aversion that affected their decision to evade their commitment as Egypt's formal allies to come to its help once the 1967 Six Day War broke out, beyond some limited attacks on Israeli targets. Two events that had taken place within the months preceding the war only strengthened their fears from war with Israel: Egypt's reluctance to assist Jordan during the November 1966 Samoah Operation, and Syria's feeling that Egypt had abandoned it when six Syrian MiG-21s were shot down on 7 April 1967 by the IAF.[83]

The Arabs' humiliating defeat in the Six Day War notwithstanding, the Egyptian leadership's motivation to challenge Israeli deterrence after 1967 was not a result of Egyptian miscalculation of the balance of capabilities.[84] On the contrary, it believed that weaknesses in its own military would soon be amended. An attrition strategy was perceived by the Egyptians as compensating for their "conventional" weakness. The fact that the Soviets were now, for the first time, ready to intervene in an Arab–Israeli war in order to save their Arab client[85] changed the capabilities equation between the adversaries, and strengthened Egypt's self-confidence despite the social, economic and political cost it had already paid during the war of attrition. It also exposed the weakness of Israeli deterrence vis-à-vis a hostile superpower, in this case the Soviet Union, while its own superpower patron – the US – was unwilling to deter the hostile superpower.

During the same post-1967 period, Israel was facing a rising Palestinian self-confidence and determination. The Palestinians felt that unlike the Arab states, whose armies had collapsed when confronting the IDF, they held the clue for effectively engaging the IDF by using sub-conventional, low-intensity warfare. They were encouraged by the fact that Israeli counter-insurgency operations against Palestinian guerrillas and terrorists in Jordanian territory were hardly effective as a deterrent-by-punishment. They were also not deterred from operating against Israel from the so-called Fatahland in southern Lebanon, despite several anti-Palestinian Israeli raids in Lebanon, which are discussed in Chapter 3. Israeli deterrence-by-denial had shortcomings, too.[86] The anti-infiltration barrier in the Jordan Valley did not deter insurgents. Israel was unable to seal the border, and IDF troops were often carrying out hot pursuits once insurgents had managed to penetrate the barrier.

Israel conducted the post-1973 war of attrition on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts after being worn out from the recent "regular" October War and constrained diplomatically. The only power image Israel could count on for deterrence purposes was the fact that it had managed to recover from the Arab surprise attack of 6 October in a very impressive fashion, finishing the war with significant military achievements. These achievements had no more than a limited impact on Israeli immediate deterrence, though. Syria and Egypt dared challenging it by a war of attrition – the backbone of their coercive diplomacy, which focused on pressuring Israel to accept disengagement agreements favorable to them. Israeli troops' proximity to Damascus and Cairo (40 and 101 kilometers, respectively) and Israeli officials' statements to the effect that Israel might have no choice but to revert to large-scale attacks on the Syrians and the Egyptians made no impression on them, as they were aware of Israel's military and diplomatic constraints.

As for the 1965–82 Israel–PLO war of attrition, during the 1970s Israel was engaged in a series of reprisal raids against Palestinian terrorist and guerrilla hideouts both in Arab states and in Europe,[87] which were accompanied at times by attacks on PLO headquarters in Beirut and massive military offensives against the organizations' infrastructure in southern Lebanon, like the 1978 Litani Operation. But these deterrence-by-punishment operations had only a short-term impact, and failed in stopping PLO attacks. Deterrence-by-denial failed, too. Neither the security fence along the Lebanese border nor the preventive activity of the friendly south Lebanese militia in the wake of the 1978 Litani Operation managed to seal the border. Palestinians either crossed it or used bazookas, rocket-propelled grenades, artillery and Katyusha rockets to attack troops and towns and villages in northern Israel.

The low societal cost tolerance demonstrated by Israelis during the 1981 "Small War of Attrition," and the need to postpone retaliation against the PLO in Lebanon and accept an undesirable ceasefire in order to avoid further widening of the differences with the US administration after the IAF raid on the Iraqi nuclear reactor in June, weakened Israel's deterrent image. The Palestinians were perfectly aware of the Israeli determination to find the opportunity to land a massive strike on the PLO in Lebanon that would not only restore Israeli-eroded deterrence but also bring about a basic change in Israeli–PLO balance. But after July 1981 they had greater confidence in their ability to neutralize Israel's military edge, which may have been effective vis-à-vis Iraq but was much less effective against guerrillas, and to demoralize northern Israel.[88]

During the 1985–2000 Israel–Hezbollah war of attrition, when Israeli defensive deployment on its northern front, which was based on security zone in southern Lebanon, a security fence along the border, and passive defense measures (e.g., shelters) in Israeli towns and villages along the border proved to be insufficient, as they were bypassed by indirect fire, especially Katyusha rockets, Israel understood that it would be unwise to base its deterrence on denial. It therefore turned to deterrence-by-punishment by launching large-scale reprisals, pressuring Hezbollah both directly and indirectly (via the Lebanese government), exactly as it had done during the 1965–82 period against the PLO. Neither the two large-scale operations against Hezbollah – the 1993 Operation Accountability, and the 1996 Operation Grapes of Wrath – nor the 1999 bombing against infrastructure near Beirut, failed to deter Hezbollah. The eroding public support in Israel for the military presence in southern Lebanon during the late 1990s negatively affected Israel's deterrent posture.

The Intifadas showed that feelings of humiliation among Palestinians in the territories outweighed their military weakness. The difficulty Israel encountered in dealing with popular uprising during the First Intifada and with suicide bombings during the Second Intifada, created the impression that the Palestinians were successful in identifying Israel's points of weakness, and made it harder for Israel to deter them before, during and after the outbreak of violence.

Whereas until the 1980s the PLO was employing guerrilla or terror methods against Israel, the main characteristic of the First Intifada was a popular uprising, which was much more complex to handle for Israel. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin's beating policy during the initial stages of the Intifada had two purposes: compel the Palestinians to stop the struggle, and deter them from employing both violent and nonviolent methods by punishment. The beating policy failed, though, as popular uprising and civil disobedience could not be coped with in regular methods. On the other hand, exposing the Palestinian society as a whole to the struggle against Israel proved to be a double-edged sword for the Palestinians. Poverty, unemployment, and malnutrition in the territories during the later stages of the First Intifada eventually did cause it to

fade, but hardly “burned the conscience” of the Palestinian leadership and public to the point of being deterred from embarking on another Intifada a few years later.

Encouraged by the mid-2000 Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, interpreting it as an Israeli weakness, and inspired by Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah’s spider web “theory,”[89] the Palestinian nurtured the belief that they would be able to force Israel out of the territories if they only emulated Hezbollah’s strategy and tactics.[90] But only in 2004 did Israel find the clue for deterring Hamas’s leadership from further carrying on suicide bombings, by targeting the organization’s ideological and political leadership. Decapitation had a deterrent effect, although terror did not stop completely.

After the Second Lebanon War Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah’s said that had he known on 11 July that there was a 1 percent possibility that Israel’s military response would have been as extensive as it turned out to be, he would not have challenged it.[91] These words prove that “deterrence works [. . .] even against highly motivated ‘non-deterrables.’”[92]

War outcomes

No battlefield decision was achieved in any of the attrition cases analyzed in this study beyond the tactical level. Grand-strategic decision, on the other hand, was present in one form or another in no less than five wars of attrition since the early 1970s, playing a significant role in the two Intifadas. Israel can also take credit for a few victories, as will be elaborated below. Finally, it is true that many years of wars of attrition against Israel brought the Palestinians consistently closer to realizing the vision of a Palestinian state, to a great extent thanks to social and political processes within Israel, but at the same time their mainstream organizations recognized Israel.

Battlefield decision

The fact that no battlefield decision beyond the tactical level was achieved in any of the attrition cases analyzed in this study means that even if Yehoshfat Harkabi’s claim that attrition is the opposite of battlefield decision may not be true in theory (see Chapter 1), it is often so in practice. It is noteworthy, though, that not only did Israel’s “regular” wars that followed three of its wars of attrition – those of 1956, 1967, and 1982 – end up in Israeli battlefield decision, it was achieved in a *blitzkrieg*-style of fighting.

Although in reference to the 1985–2000 Israel–Hezbollah war of attrition Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz declared that Israel had defeated Hezbollah,[93] this was not the case. According to former Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, from his very first day in office in mid-1996, he appreciated that terrorism and guerrilla warfare could not be militarily defeated.[94] With regard to the Second Intifada it is noteworthy that by the time that Israel eliminated Hamas’s political and ideological leadership, in 2004, Israeli security forces had managed to neutralize some 25 percent of the Palestinian terrorists – either by targeted killing or by arrests. The latter became a much more viable option after the IDF had regained military control as a result of the 2002 Operation Defensive Shield in the West Bank.[95] Interestingly, this rate is close to the force destruction rate that had been needed in the “regular” wars in order to force the enemy to consider stopping the

fight. This means that before the decapitation of the organization's top leadership, significant damage had already been inflicted on Hamas' war effort, although not sufficient for imposing a ceasefire.

The 2006 Second Lebanon War is of particular interest, as it reflected the fact that the IDF had lost the appetite for battlefield decision in the traditional sense; that is, on the ground, hoping to achieve it from the air (see Chapter 2).[96]

Grand-strategic decision

It was only natural that given the deeper involvement of civilians in the Arab-Israeli wars of attrition compared to the "regular" wars, the concept of grand-strategic decision, i.e., denying the enemy's society's ability to carry on the war, rather than its military, would become much more relevant. And indeed, since the early 1970s grand-strategic decision has been playing a role in one form or another in no less than five Israeli wars of attrition.

In early-1970, Israel was close to achieving grand-strategic decision in the 1969–70 Israeli–Egyptian war of attrition after having imposed intolerable societal, economic and political damage on Egypt via in-depth bombings. Had it not been for the Soviets, who intervened in the war in order to save their most valuable client in the Middle East, Israel would have soon reaped the fruit of its pressure on the Egyptian rear.

As already pointed out in previous sections, societal and economic conditions in the territories during the Intifadas were so bad that the Palestinians could not sustain further attrition. Both Intifadas faded away, which can be considered a grand-strategic decision achieved by Israel. The decapitation of Hamas's political and ideological leadership in 2004 was a greater factor in the organization's consent to ceasefire than the damage inflicted on its military capability.

As for the 1985–2000 Israel–Hezbollah war of attrition, although only 29 percent of the Israelis attributed the pullout of southern Lebanon to national weakness – the other 61 percent pointed to futility of Israeli occupation of the security zone that failed in securing Israel's northern towns and villages – which can be interpreted as grand-strategic decision achieved by Hezbollah.

During the 2006 Second Lebanon War Chief of Staff Dan Halutz wished to achieve grand-strategic decision by hitting infrastructure targets in Lebanon.[97] But unlike Kosovo, which was a case of grand-strategic decision achieved by denying the Serbian *society* the ability to carry on the war (the Serbian army remained almost intact), in Lebanon 2006 the Americans would not let the Israelis hit infrastructure targets in a country whose government had been democratically elected, and had just become relatively independent from Syrian influence. Bringing Hezbollah to its knees by inflicting great damage to the State of Lebanon was therefore out of the question, much to Israel's frustration. On the Israeli side, although the civilian rear was under constant Hezbollah attacks, the economic and societal cost was tolerable.

Victory

Israel's wars of attrition were further proof of the fuzziness of victory, defined in terms of the correlation between political or military war objectives before and during the war and their achievement. The fact that Israel's wars of attrition were imposed on it meant that victory was

often derived from Israel's "negative" objectives, which were of thwarting nature. The fact that victory is more subjective than battlefield decision and that unlike battlefield decision there can be more than one victor,[98] only contributed to the fuzzy and mixed picture concerning victory in Israeli wars of attrition.

Israel can take credit for victory in a few attrition cases. In the 1960s it won the water campaign against Syria, after achieving the objective of stopping the diversion of the Jordan River's water. In the 1969–70 war of attrition Israel managed to achieve its negative war objective of thwarting any Egyptian attempt to force Israel to give up the Sinai Peninsula.[99] Israeli also managed to thwart the Palestinians' main objective of forcing it to withdraw from the territories by using both civil disobedience and terror against it, and by internationalizing the conflict.[100] And Chief of Staff Yaalon described Israel's success during the Second Intifada as "the very deep internalization by the Palestinians that terrorism and violence will not defeat us, will not make us fold."[101]

To balance the picture, one can portray a more complex picture of Israeli victories. In the 1969–70 war of attrition, Israel may have succeeded in denying Egypt its war objective but failed in achieving its own "positive" war objectives of toppling Nasser's regime in the hope of negotiating peace with a more convenient Egyptian leadership.[102] Although Israel managed to break the popular uprising of the First Intifada, the Palestinians, too, could claim that thanks to their uprising the Israelis understood that they will have to give up a significant part of the territories and accept the establishment of a Palestinian political entity. And indeed, as a result of the Oslo Accords, Israel gave up political and security control of parts of the territories. Although during the Second Intifada Israel regained control over the West Bank (in 2002), it withdrew from the Gaza Strip in late-2005, in the wake of the Second Intifada, which can be interpreted by the Palestinians as a significant achievement of their armed struggle whose objective was to push Israel out of the territories.

As for the 2006 Second Lebanon War, Israel did succeed in achieving the following objectives: pushing Hezbollah from the Israeli–Lebanese border northwards, stopping terror activities from Lebanon, and strengthening Israeli deterrence vis-à-vis Hezbollah and other regional actors. It nevertheless failed in achieving other objectives: stopping Katyusha fire on Israel during the war,[103] "breaking" of Hezbollah[104] or at least significantly weakening its capabilities and status in Lebanon, bringing about a settlement which would be kept by an effective international mechanism, and creating conditions for the return of the kidnapped troops.[105] The failure to achieve some of the declared war objectives accounted for a deep disappointment among the Israeli public, which was reflected in a public opinion survey conducted in mid-August 2006, according to which 58 percent thought Israel achieved only part of the objectives or none at all.[106]

There were also Israeli failures in achieving victory. In the early 1950s Israel failed in putting an end to insurgency from Egyptian territory, which was its main objective, and needed the 1956 Sinai War to achieve it. The post-1973 war of attrition ended up in disengagement agreements in which both Egypt and Syria gained territory beyond the one they had possessed before the outbreak of the October War (as already pointed out, Israel withdrew from the town of Kuneitra in the Golan Heights and from 20 kilometers east of the Suez Canal), whereas Israel failed in denying these countries any political or territorial achievement via attrition. Israeli efforts to stop the PLO insurgency in the 1965–82 war did not bear fruit, and like in 1956 it needed a war – the 1982 Lebanon War – in order to defeat the PLO militarily and drive its headquarters out of

Lebanon after invading the country.

Israel withdrew from Lebanon twice. In 1985 it pulled its troops out, but retained presence in a security belt along the Lebanese–Israeli border. In 2000 Israel withdrew completely, after 15 years of war of attrition against the Hezbollah. Although to some extent the 2000 withdrawal served the Israeli objective of achieving "Peace for Galilee" (the 1982 war's original name), Hezbollah can take credit for achieving its war objective of liberating southern Lebanon from Israeli occupation, although it occasionally kept attacking Israel under the pretext of regaining the Shaba Farms to Lebanon.

Cumulative, long-term political achievements

Each Arab–Israeli "regular" war contributed to the feeling among Arab states and societies that Israel could not be defeated militarily, and that there was no other choice but to accept it as a fait accompli in the region. As far as the wars of attrition are concerned, Israel managed to gain clear long-term achievements only once: the victory in the water campaign of the mid 1960s, which conveyed the message that Israel would not tolerate any attempt to deny it water.

Three other cases have the potential of having long-term repercussions, the first being positive from Israeli perspective; the second and the third being beneficial mainly to the Palestinians, although to a certain extent also serving Israeli long-term interests. The first case is the quiet on the Israeli–Lebanese border following the 2006 Second Lebanon War. The destruction Israel had inflicted on southern Lebanon has made this part of the country hostage to good behavior on the part of Nasrallah.[107] The other two cases are the Intifadas, as a result of which both Israel and the Palestinians endorsed the two-state solution formula, which is perceived as good for both sides by mainstream Israelis and Palestinians, although it is not yet clear if and how it will be practically implemented.

The First Intifada promoted the PLO's readiness to recognize Israel's right to exist – a long-standing Israeli hope. Although in the narrow, immediate sense Israel had the upper hand, the uprising put the PLO on the diplomatic map, again, evoking a greater readiness on the part of Israelis to reach a compromise with the Palestinians, which in turn paved the way for the Oslo Accords. The US's decision to engage in dialogue with the PLO, after the organization had recognized Israel's right to exist and agreed to denounce all form of terrorism, enabled the PLO to recover from the harsh diplomatic blow it suffered as a result of its support for Iraq before and during the 1991 Gulf War.

During the Second Intifada the vision of a Palestinian state made another step forward. It is true that the Israeli public supported tough measures against the Palestinians, but at the same time it also strongly supported peace with the Palestinians based on the exchange of land for peace. In polls conducted in Israel in late 2002, over 60 percent of the respondents supported conducting negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. A total of 58 percent said they would support the creation of a Palestinian state on the basis of the 1967 borders, with certain border modifications, and 78 percent agreed to dismantle the majority of the Jewish settlements in the territories as part of peace with the Palestinians.[108] In 2003, a swing in support for more conciliatory measures and away from increased militancy took place in Israeli public opinion, after it had sharply dropped from 67 percent in 1999 (that is, before the outbreak of the Intifada) to 45 percent in 2000. In 2003, 35 percent thought that the Arab–Israeli conflict would end by signing peace agreements with the Palestinians and the Arab states as compared to 26 percent in

2002 and 30 percent in 2001,[109] and 65 percent supported the establishment of a Palestinian state as part of an Israeli–Palestinian peace treaty.[110] The Second Intifada did not weaken Israeli readiness to make far-reaching concessions in the framework of agreement that would solve the core issues in dispute, including the right of return and the status of Jerusalem in general and the Temple Mount in particular.

Similar attitudes could be traced among Palestinians. A Palestinian public opinion survey conducted in September 2004 showed that an overwhelming sense of insecurity prevailed among Palestinians (86 percent), on the one hand causing a high level of support for bombing and rocket attacks, but on the other hand strengthening the demand for mutual cessation of violence (59 percent) and questioning the effectiveness of armed attacks on Israel.[111] Being the weaker and the stateless party, the Palestinians seem to have benefited more in the long run.

Four main plans and initiatives were devised in 2003–04, accepting the notion of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. In mid-2003, the Israeli Cabinet accepted President Bush's "Road Map," which included the establishment of a Palestinian state. The Geneva Initiative – a 50-page proposal signed by dovish Israeli leaders and Palestinian officials on 1 December 2003 – offered a new agreed model of a final agreement, settling all outstanding issues. Former GSS Chief Ami Ayalon and President of the Al-Quds University, Sari Nusseibeh, drew up another, though similar, initiative. Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert called for a unilateral withdrawal from most of the territories so as to prevent an Arab majority between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean and to make sure that Israel stayed a Jewish and democratic state.[112] He was followed by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who after having referred to the need to put an end to "occupa-tion,"[113] declared in December 2003, that if within a few months the Palestinians would still disregard their part in implementing the "Road Map" Israel would unilaterally disengage from the Gaza Strip and from some isolated settlements in the West Bank. On 2 February 2004 Sharon introduced his disengagement plan,[114] justifying the need to minimize friction between Israelis and Palestini-ans.[115] The Prime Minister's plan soon gained the support of the majority of the Israeli public.[116] However, it was interpreted by 75 percent of the Palestinians as a victory for Palestinian armed struggle,[117] which brought Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon to declare that disengagement would only encourage further terrorist acts against Israel.[118] Among Israelis, 44 percent saw Sharon's plan to evacuate the settlements from Gaza as a victory for the Palestinians, while 50 percent did not think it was a Palestinian victory.[119]

It should be noted that the many years of quiet on the Egyptian front between 1956 and 1967 cannot be attributed to the pre-1956 war of attrition but rather to the Sinai War. In the 1969–70 Israeli–Egyptian war of attrition, the fact that Egypt was on the verge of collapse in late 1969/early 1970 was not translated to any long-term achievement, and three years later the Egyptians again attacked Israel. Arab fulfillment of the post-1973 disengagement agreements was a result of the 1973 October War rather than the war of attrition that succeeded it. It also did not require many years for the PLO to recover from the 1965–82 war of attrition and the 1982 Lebanon War that followed.

Conclusion

Any judgment of Israel's achievements, both during its wars of attrition and as a result of them,

must bear in mind that it operated under constraints of various types. In its asymmetrical wars of attrition, Israel faced elusive nonstate players. Once it tried to punish Arab states for allowing insurgents to operate against it from their territory, it sometimes only caused their further weakening, something that Israel wished to avoid because stronger regimes could better restrain anti-Israel insurgency, and because some of the regimes (the Jordanian and the Lebanese ones) were pro-Western. Inter-Arab commitments, too, complicated the picture by drawing external players into the direct confrontation. And, after all, Israel has neither been a great power nor a superpower, but rather a small state that had to be attentive to international constraints, and was greatly affected by the patron–client relationships between the superpowers and their local allies.

This chapter depicted changes in Israeli escalation proneness – from strong escalation propensity until the 1970s, in the hope of deterring and compelling its enemies, to a much more cautious behavior thereafter. Given Israeli attrition aversion, on the one hand, and its relative military strength, on the other, it is no wonder that it demonstrated such proneness. But escalation tended to fail in delivering the expected goods. As often happens in escalation processes, it was difficult to control; Israel rarely achieved escalation dominance; escalation sometimes deteriorated to "regular" war; and on a few occasions it brought about detrimental external players' intervention. Israel also learned that the Arabs may have been deterred from an all-out war against Israel, particularly after 1967, but they could hardly be deterred from small, or limited war. And indeed, Israel was not very successful in deterring its enemies before, during and following its wars of attrition, either by denial or by punishment. Deterrence often proved to be limited and temporary. There were also other factors that restrained Israeli escalation proneness, such as the need to enable Israeli civilians to conduct their lives as uninterruptedly as possible, and the moral and legal complexities entailed in operating among civilians in the territories.

Israeli cautiousness since the 1970s had its limits, too. Misinterpreting Israeli self-restraint, the Palestinians and Hezbollah felt more confident to behave in a less controlled way, which only fueled escalation that they themselves wished to avoid; as whenever Israel resorted to large-scale operations like Litani, Accountability, Grapes of Wrath, Defensive Shield, or the Second Lebanon War – they were the ones who paid a higher price.

As far as war outcomes are concerned, battlefield decision in wars of attrition was usually irrelevant beyond the tactical level. Grand-strategic decision, victory and long-term cumulative outcomes, on the other hand, were sometimes reachable. In this respect Israel did not share the fate of its "peer" Western democracies that had a very negative experience with translating military effectiveness into political gains. It may have been the combination of relatively high stakes during most of its wars of attrition, the fact that these wars were imposed on it and were therefore treated as wars of no choice, and the experience Israel had gained throughout the many years of wars of such nature that helped it not only to persevere but also to reap at least some military and political fruit.

Conclusion

No other post-World War II Western state has experienced such an extensive and continuous engagement in war of various kinds – symmetrical and asymmetrical, *blitzkrieg* and attrition – as Israel has, so there is a lot to be learned from its experience in general and about wars of attrition in particular.

The most common explanation for the difficulties Western democracies have faced during their non-existential, asymmetrical wars of attrition has been their inferiority in the balance of interests and/or the balance of resolve, which had negatively affected their cost tolerance. The Israeli experience proves that Western democracies are not doomed to fail in asymmetrical wars of attrition but can rather be militarily effective, socially resilient, economically robust, and morally faithful to liberal values, as far as the security challenges allow.

Most of the Western states involved in wars of attrition after World War II were great powers or superpowers, in contrast to the small state of Israel. This means, on the one hand, that if Israel managed to persevere during such wars, stronger Western democracies can surely succeed in similar situations. On the other hand, one should not ignore the strong sense of self-defense that accompanied Israel's conduct of these wars, which was a result of two major factors. First, Israel's wars of attrition took place on its borders or within its territory, often affecting, at least indirectly, its "basic security." Second, these wars were imposed on it, and were therefore considered just.

Combined, offensive/defensive strategy

Although modern war of attrition has receded from the actual, traditional battlefield, operational effectiveness in such wars is still of great importance. It is a significant factor in the society's staying power and the moral support it provides to the military. There is usually a high correlation between a feeling among the public that the military is functioning well and domestic legitimacy for the war and the way it is conducted, and vice versa – between disappointment from the military's functioning and questions asked about the war's necessity and justness.

That every military wishes to be operationally effective goes without saying; the question is which strategy or tactic serves that goal best. Armies of Western democracies are not different from other armies in their basic preference for offense. Militaries everywhere tend to associate offense with initiative, audacity, courage, and imagination. Above all, militaries are aware of what both military theory and practice have been pointing to for decades – that it is only via offense that active battlefield decision can be achieved. In regular war, offense-oriented players would treat defense merely as complementary to strategic offense, which is to be found either at lower levels-of-war (i.e., the operational or tactical levels), or on secondary fronts. Highly qualitative militaries, in particular, consider offense-oriented strategies or tactics, such as the indirect approach, first strike or *blitzkrieg*, ultimate expressions of their skills, and the shortest and cheapest way of waging and winning war.

Not only was the IDF no exception in these regards, but also in its "regular" wars it preferred offense to the point of developing "the cult of the offensive."[1] When it came to wars of attrition,

however, Israel learned from its own experience that in such wars opponents do not necessarily employ strategies of one type only, e.g., offense or defense, but rather a mixture of direct strategies, and that a more balanced approach is usually required, as offense and defense are almost equally important, each form covering different aspects of coping with the challenge.

Offense plays an important role in wars of attrition. For example, it creates a strong sense of danger among insurgents, limiting their freedom of action and forcing them to hide. But, as predicted by attrition theory, in attrition situations even if one attacks, battlefield decision beyond the tactical level is only rarely achieved. The Israeli case shows that the contribution of offense to escalation control, escalation dominance, deterrence, grand- strategic decision, victory, and longer- run achievements is often limited, and offense sometimes accounts for escalation that ends up in "regular" war.

Furthermore, whereas in regular war, offense, unlike defense, is relatively independent in producing battlefield success, in wars of attrition it cannot deliver success on its own. It cannot prevent attacks on the country's territory, and when insurgents operate within the state-controlled territory, it cannot create artificial strategic depth as it sometimes does in regular war. Offense, which in regular war is often considered an asset for the quantitatively weaker player, serving as a major force multiplier, loses its relevance as such in asymmetrical war of attrition, the reason being that Western democracies – Israel included – usually enjoy military and technological superiority over their enemies in the first place. Offense applied in wars of attrition also does not necessarily decrease the economic cost of war as compared to defense, as, unlike "regular" war, the state needs troops both for offense and defense, and is unable to give up a variety of defensive measures, both passive and active.

In the Israeli case, like in many other wars of attrition, the borderline between offense and defense was often obliterated to the point of difficulty to identify at any given point in time who is defending and who is attacking. Also, during the Intifadas the nature of the conflict dictated the use of measures that did not belong to the domain of offense or defense in the strict military sense.

Societal perseverance

Much has been written and said about Western democracies' war aversion. As pointed out in Chapter 4, it has been claimed that their publics dislike wars wherein the stakes are not sufficiently high or wars that the country seems to be unable to win; that their publics are more supportive of using force to restrain aggressors, but less supportive of using it when it is directed at internal political or regime change within another country; that they do not tolerate dirty wars and collateral damage inflicted while operating among civilians; that their cost tolerance tends to decline over time; and that they attempt to win wars in which they are already engaged in as quickly as possible. Many wars of attrition of an asymmetrical nature fall into these categories, which explains why post- Cold War Western democracies have lost much of their incentive to be involved – let alone intervene – in wars likely to become wars of attrition, except in extreme cases. Chapter 2 described in length Israel's attrition aversion, which it has not yet succeeded in completely eliminating.

In recent years, the weaker side has been attributed by the Fourth Generation Warfare school unprecedented strength vis-à-vis their stronger opponent – often being Western democracies – in

two main areas: psychological warfare, thanks to communicating different messages to different audiences, and technological sophistication – to the point of exaggerating insurgents' power vis-à-vis Western democracies beyond any proportion.[2] Stressing the difficulties featured by Western states in wars of attrition deviates one's attention from the fact that many asymmetrical wars were lost by authoritarian regimes and won by democratic states,[3] which supports the claim that these basically peace-loving states do not necessarily suffer from war weariness and reluctance to sacrifice, and that democracies can be very resilient and efficient in war,[4] to a great extent thanks to their superior non-material, unit-level (domestic) factors, such as human capital, relatively harmonious civil–military relations and cultural traits.[5]

The Israeli case proves that pessimism regarding the chances of Western democracies to succeed in wars of attrition is indeed not in place. It conforms to some of the preconditions for a successful foreign intervention set by the Weinberger Doctrine. First, for Israel there was no question of being wise before entering a war from which it would later be hard to exit, as Israel's wars of attrition were imposed on it (the Second Lebanon War being the only case that could be debated in this regard, depending on how one interprets Hezbollah's provocation that led to the war). As such, they were also less likely to instigate public debate regarding their legitimacy. Second, the stakes involved in these wars were often sufficiently high. Terror, in particular, created a strong sense of insecurity among Israelis, as it usually does to open societies, and the more it threatened Israel's basic values and interests, the greater the resilience it demonstrated.

Additional encouraging conclusions to be drawn from the Israeli case regarding societal staying power are: 1) The cost paid by Western democracies in their wars of attrition in terms of casualties and quality of life is often mitigated by the sustainable economic cost inflicted by wars of attrition, as compared to "regular" wars. 2) The cost is also moderated thanks to the fact that in wars of attrition the death toll is often claimed in small salvoes. 3) The more remote the attrition activity from the country's centers – both geographically and socioeconomically – the less severely the threat is perceived by its society. This could create a sense of normalcy in the center – be it the homeland versus a far territory or the sociological center versus the sociological periphery, as happened in the Israeli case – which could strengthen the society's staying power. On the other hand, this can also weaken the society's willingness to carry on the war, as happened in Indochina or Vietnam. 4) By conducting wars of attrition post-heroically, i.e., by minimizing casualties for one's own troops and for enemy civilians, Western democracies can conduct wars of attrition both effectively and at less cost, being able to sustain such conflicts despite their protracted nature. This is true, however, provided that they do not develop a blind, automatic commitment to post-heroic warfare, as happened to Israel in the Second Lebanon War, as this would take the sting out of the military's bite in circumstances that require heroic use of force, particularly to sacrifice troops in order to achieve the war objectives.

Stephen Rosen's double- balance explanation, i.e., relative destructive capabilities versus relative cost tolerance, remains the simplest and most elegant explanation not only for the weaker side's success (as a result of greater cost tolerance), but also for the stronger side's success, which is achieved in cases where it enjoys superiority in both balances, as was demonstrated by Israel during the Second Intifada.

This study did not find any evidence of significant war weariness as a result of involvement in previous protracted wars, as claimed by certain war weariness theorists. The Israeli case rather shows that years of experience gained in waging protracted conflicts can contribute to the society's determination and perseverance during such conflicts.

Economic sustainability

The Israeli case teaches us that being relatively developed and prosperous, the economies of Western democracies produce numerous centers of gravity the enemy can choose to hit. As a result of the division of labor and specialization, which are typical of modern economies, a strong interdependence between sectors characterizes Western economies, which may multiply the cost inflicted by disruptions caused by security crises. On the other hand, even when facing severe attrition challenges, a Western democratic player can still decrease its defense expenditures relative to its GDP or GNP, improve the ratio between its own defense expenditures and those of its enemies without increasing the burden on its economy, or enjoy positive developments in other economic indicators. Thanks to their economic robustness and the decentralized nature of their societies and economies, the damage inflicted on their economies tends to be limited and short term, and they cannot be expected to collapse, even after 9/11-like blows on economic centers of gravity. The economy of a small country like Israel will naturally be more sensitive to international economic processes and foreign aid than the economies of great powers, let alone superpowers.

The Israeli case also teaches us that if the state engaged in wars of attrition is also involved in inter-state conflicts, the lion's share of its defense expenditures will be spent on the inter-state arms race, which is usually more crucial for the state's security than state—nonstate asymmetrical wars of attrition.

Bridging morality and effectiveness

When faced with terrorism, which has become the main weapon in the hands of insurgents during wars of attrition, Western democracies are often caught in the dilemma between respecting their obligation to provide personal safety to its citizens, on the one hand, and their moral commitment to abide by the highest ethical standards and respect the rule of law even under severe security threats, on the other.

Self-defending democracies, in particular, may find themselves adopting illiberal laws or behavior in the name of fighting terror effectively, as happened to the US (the Patriot Act) or the UK (the Anti-terrorism Crime and Security Act) in the post-9/11 era. The more intense terror attacks on the Western democracy's civilian rear, the greater the tendency to treat "collateral damage," disproportionate response or civil liberties violations as a necessary evil, as happened to Israel during the Second Intifada. For example, Israel's targeted killing policy violated the right of alleged terrorists to life and fair trial, but at the same time it protected innocent Israelis and reduced collateral damage inflicted on innocent Palestinians. When aimed against political and ideological leadership, it proved exceptionally effective.

As human rights organizations and liberals across the world have much higher expectations from a Western democracy than from an authoritarian country as far as morality in war is concerned, and as information about human rights violations is much more available in free societies, Western democracies are often criticized by these organizations or individuals, the result being unbalanced allegations aimed at them for violating liberal norms. The fact that Israel has been engaged in wars for decades, and since 1967 the IDF had to fight among civilians in the

territories, only exposed it to allegations on moral grounds.

The public debate held in Israel in the wake of “collateral damage” inflicted as a result of military operations against terrorists, the existence of an ethical code in the IDF, occasional rules by Israeli courts, the lack of any incidents of violence against women by IDF troops, etc. – are all expressions of deep commitment to Western values and to fighting as morally as the circumstances allow, notwithstanding the fact that for the Western democracies’ enemies the end usually justified the means.

Challenging in particular for Western democracies is nonviolent popular struggle against them. For Israel it was the popular nature of the First Intifada, which in its early stages had some similarities with the British struggle in India or during the Arab Revolt in Palestine in 1936—39. In both the British and Israeli cases, civil disobedience threatened to “disarm” the Western democracy without using force against its troops but rather by turning their own values into a paralyzing weapon aimed against them.

Bridging morality and operational effectiveness and creating a balance between them is a very complicated task. Here, Michael Walzer comes to Western democracies’ help, offering a few requirements they are expected to live up to when engaged in confrontations which involve civilians. Although these requirements were formulated in reference to the Israeli case, they seem to apply to Western democracies in general. According to Walzer, when the enemy attacks from civilian areas, he himself is responsible for the civilian deaths caused by the Western democracy’s counter- fire. But Western democracies’ soldiers are required to aim as precisely as possible, to take risks in order to do so, and to call off counterattacks that would kill large numbers of civilians. It is both morally right and politically intelligent for them to minimize – and to be seen trying to minimize – civilian casualties. Still, minimizing does not mean avoiding entirely.

There are two possible ways to bridge the tension between the competing, even contradicting, values of security, on the one hand, and discriminate and proportional use of force and respect for civil liberties, on the other. First, creating a new set of laws that would empower Western democracies to defend themselves without fighting with two hands tied behind their back is essential. One of the major challenges the new set of laws will have to address is the broadening of the meaning and application of self-defense so as to include situations beyond the reaction to enemy attack or inter- state conflicts. Second, adopting a selective post- heroic policy, that is, applying it as long as it does not “disarm” the Western democracy. Post-heroic policy served Israel well in the territories, when it was imperative to reduce collateral damage, but the policy had to be replaced by a “heroic” warfare, particularly by readiness to sacrifice on the part of Israel in order to achieve victory during the Second Lebanon War.

Escalation, deterrence and war outcomes

The Israeli case has been living evidence of escalation propensity developing out of attrition aversion and belief that the display of power and resolve via escalation could serve the state’s interests better than the continuation of attrition, even if it might lead to “regular” war. When considering the degree of violence to be employed in the framework of escalation, a Western democracy takes into consideration not only operational factors, e.g., the degree likely to be effective vis-à-vis its rivals, but also political ones, e.g., the amount of violence likely to provoke

minimum criticism at home and abroad. The smaller the Western democratic player – like Israel – the more salient the external factors become.

The Israeli case reaffirms the old truth that escalation is hard to control. As the escalatory process develops, emotionally driven decision making and behavior sometimes occur, particularly frustration- induced escalation, which often triggers further violence. The Israeli laboratory also teaches us that escalation dominance is only rarely achieved; that escalation sometimes deteriorates to "regular" war; that it may bring about detrimental external players' intervention; and that it is likely to entail moral and legal complexities as a result of operating among civilians. It also warns us that cautiousness in the hope of preventing uncontrolled escalation has its limits, too. For example, self-restraint may be misinterpreted, encouraging opponents to behave in a less controlled way on their part, which might only fuel escalation that they themselves wished to avoid.

It is true that battlefield decision beyond the tactical level has become irrelevant to wars of attrition in general and asymmetrical ones in particular. But, as typical of modern wars and exemplified by Israel, grand-strategic decision, which relates to the staying power of the enemy's society, has been present in one form or another in wars of attrition. Unlike many strong players, who during the Cold War era often became victims of grand-strategic decision being achieved by their weaker opponents, Israel showed that grand- strategic decision is at the stronger side's hand, too. Israel was close to achieving grand- strategic decision in the 1969—70 war of attrition before the Soviets decided to intervene, and it did achieve such decision in the two Intifadas.

Israel's wars of attrition are yet another reminder of the fuzziness of victory, which is a result of the fact that victory is more subjective than battlefield decision, because it is determined by the correlation between political and military war objectives before and during the war and their achievement; and the fact that unlike battlefield decision there can be more than one victor, and that achievements can be defined in both positive and "negative" terms, i.e., denying the enemy the achievement of his own war objectives. Israel achieved victory in a number of wars of attrition, both against state and nonstate players. In the 1960s it won the water campaign against Syria. In the 1969–70 war of attrition it managed to achieve its negative war objective of thwarting any Egyptian attempt to force Israel to give up the Sinai Peninsula. It also managed to thwart the Palestinians' main objective of forcing it to withdraw from the territories during the Intifadas by using both civil disobedience and terror against it, and by internationalizing the conflict.

Israel proved that a record of perseverance created during recurrent attrition rounds can have a long-term cumulative effect. Such cumulative effect was created in the relationship with the Palestinians, when societal and political processes both within Israeli and Palestinian societies and leaderships during the many years of attrition gradually and consistently brought the two sides to accept each other's right to exist as a state, or at least their being a fait accompli.

In conclusion, the Israeli example confirms the fact that democracies can succeed in asymmetrical conflicts, and refutes the myth that the interests of Western democracies are necessarily less vital, that their resolve is necessarily lower or that their vulnerability is greater than those of their weaker opponents. It points out that difficulties in managing conflicts and in winning them do not mean that every war of attrition must end to the detriment of the Western democracy.

Notes

Introduction

1 Post-modern war in general and post-modern LICs in particular are characterized, among other things, by the centrality of personal safety; blurred distinction between conventional, sub-conventional and non-conventional challenges; convergence between military and non-military missions; post-heroic policy, distinction between evil leaders and the people as the victim, and emphasis on non-lethal and less-lethal weapons, mostly typical of Western democracies; soldier-statesmen fighters; information warfare; etc. See A. Kober, "Western Democracies in Low-Intensity Conflicts: Post-Modern Aspects," pp. 3–20.

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Index

9/11 2, 20, 24, 94, 112–13, 132, 137, 173–4
Abayat, Atef 68
Abu Mazen 158
Abu Nidal 42, 74
Abu Yousef 63, 149
Abu Zaabal 125
Accountability Operation 65, 73, 84, 138, 148, 162
Afghanistan War 13–14, 18–19, 20, 24, 32, 42, 137, 178, 181–2
Al-Alamein 24
Algerian War 18–21, 24, 32, 47, 61, 99, 127, 130, 135, 182n114, 202n98, 204n136
Allon, Yigal 38, 60
Alterman, Nathan 116–17, 199n21, n22
Amnesty International 116, 124, 133–4, 199n28, 200n34, 201n72, 203n117, n118, n119, n121, n122, 204n131
Antal, John 11, 178n2
Anti-terrorism Crime and Security Act 113
Arab Revolt 175, 199n15
Arab summit 57
Arafat, Yasser 35, 63, 66, 149
Arens, Moshe 3, 39, 65
Argov, Shlomo 153
Army Digitalization Program (ADP) 139
Aron, Raymond 12, 178n12, 202n94
Arreguin-Toft, Ivan 31, 181n90, 182n101, 197n4, 209n3
Asquith, Herbert 32
Assad, Hafiz al- 81, 188n67, 192n70
Aviv Ne'urim Operation 63
Ayta al-Shaab 70
Ayyash, Yahya 149
B'Tselem 87, 116, 131–2, 133–6, 193n96, n121, 204n129, n134, n135, n140, 205n143, 205n153
Baath 58
Baghdad Pact 56
Banias River 58
Barak, Aharon 112, 118, 135
Barak, Ehud 38, 40, 43, 84–5, 137, 184n48, 189n80, 205n150
Bar-Lev, Haim 37–8, 57–8
Bar-Lev Line 38, 59, 76, 101, 110
Barghouti, Marwan 158
Barghuthi, Hafez al- 119
Battle of the Marne 26
battlefield decision 11, 14, 22, 25–7, 29, 31–2, 39–40, 42–3, 45, 47, 49, 51, 70, 103, 143–4, 163–4, 169, 171, 176, 184n31, 186n4, n5, 187n9, 188n52, 209n98
Begin, Menahem 39, 71, 202n51
Beirut international airport 124
Beka valley 63, 70, 83, 157
Ben Eliyahu, Eytan 44
Ben-Gurion, David 55, 71, 98, 115, 117, 123–4, 133, 145–6, 149, 151–2, 159–60, 183n14, 187n22, 201n57
Bernhardi, Friedrich von 16, 27, 179n33, 181n86
Bin-Noun, Yochai 58, 145, 149
Bint Jbeil 70
Black Arrow Operation 56, 147–8, 154
Black September 103
blitzkrieg 2–3, 5–6, 10–11, 13–14, 36–40, 42, 49, 76, 80, 101, 103, 120, 163, 170–1, 179n22, n27
Bloch, Ivan 32
Blue-White alert 103
Boer War 61, 130
Border Guard 54, 79, 118
Byman, Daniel 121, 198n104, 201n55

Camp David agreement 104
casus belli 38, 41, 74, 121
Center for National Defense Research 88
Chirac, Jacques 128
civil liberties 7, 21, 48, 113–15, 117, 119, 127–9, 133–4, 141–2, 174–5, 204n125
Clausewitz, Carl von 1, 5–6, 11–12, 14–16, 21–3, 26, 31, 94, 177n2, n8, 178n11, 179n25, 180n55, n60, 181n74, 182n102, 195n3, 202n94
closure policy 52, 66, 85–7, 106, 108, 110, 130–2, 193n115, 198n92, n95, 204n123
Cohen, Amichai 129, 202n92, n97, n104, 203n109
collateral damage 48, 89, 91, 116–17, 121, 126–9, 136, 138, 140–2, 172, 174, 175
collective punishment 55, 86, 123, 127, 129–30, 133–5, 158, 203n112, n117, 204n135
Complex Irregular Warfare 1, 12, 17, 47, 177n3, 178n7, n9, 186n101
controlled escalation 62, 151, 154, 156, 176, 187n19, 191n49; *see also* escalation control
Costea, Doru Romulus 141
Council for Peace and Security 89
counter-force targets 21, 32, 55, 60, 123, 145–7, 153
counter-insurgency 1–2, 29, 40, 47–8, 53, 55, 65, 67, 88, 97, 100, 113, 116, 120–1, 126, 130, 133, 149, 154, 161, 177n2, 178n16, 179n41, 181n94, 189n79, n91, 192n89, 202n90, 206n2, 207n36
counter-value targets 32, 54–5, 60, 69, 71, 84, 14–15, 145–7, 155, 177n3, 178n7, n17, 192n67, 193n104, n108, 196n55, 197n58, n60, 177n71, 201n64, n78, 202n101
Creveld, Martin Van 1, 12, 38, 86
Cronkite, Walter 33
Dahiya quarter 70, 147, 159
Dalai Lama 112
Dan, Kibbutz 150
Dayan, Moshe 37–8, 52, 54–5, 57, 60–2, 122–3, 130, 137, 145–6, 151–2, 156, 159, 188n65, 192n73, n75, 196n45, n46, 201n63, n64, 206n9, 207n46, 208n66, n78
De Gaulle, Charles 20, 101
Debray, Regis 1, 11, 177n4, 179n41
defense budget 7, 75, 97–8, 100–2, 104, 107
defense consumption 76, 95–6, 100–6, 111
Defense Emergency Regulations 128
defense expenditure 4, 7, 76, 95–9, 100–4, 106, 110, 173–4
Defensive Shield Operation 43–4, 67–9, 88, 90, 138, 140, 148, 158, 163, 169, 205n156
Delbrück, Hans 1, 11–12, 15–16, 177n2, 179n32, 180n51, 199n30, 202n86
Dershowitz, Alan 114, 135, 198n1, 199n11, 204n138, 205n142
deterrence-by-denial 7, 30, 47, 50, 52, 160–2, 168, 186n103, 187n11
deterrence-by-punishment 7, 22, 30, 47, 51–2, 54–5, 63, 159–62, 168, 186n103, 187n11
Dichter, Avi 139, 202n82
diminishing strength of the attack 26
Dir Yassin 122
dirty war 33, 114, 127, 129, 141, 172
discriminate use of force 7, 21, 48, 114, 119, 121, 123, 126–7, 129, 136, 142, 175, 200n52
double-effect doctrine 21, 124, 126, 200n52
Douhet, Giulio 32, 94, 182n107, 195n6
Duvdevan (Masqueraders unit) 53, 66
Egeland, Jan 128
Egyptian–Czech arms deal 55–6, 148, 154
Ein Gev, kibbutz 58
Eisenkot, Gad 45, 184n50
Elazar, David (Dado) 3, 37–8, 58, 64, 75, 147, 149, 184n28, 192n59
Eldad, Israel 122
Elisabeta, Czarina 20
Engels, Friedrich 22–3
escalation control 7, 18, 153, 157; *see also* controlled escalation
escalation dominance 18, 143, 151, 155–8, 168, 171, 176
Eshkol, Levi 58, 71, 146, 148, 150, 152, 183n21, 187n12, n31, 188n34, n38, n39, n40, n41, n42, n43, n44, n45, n46, n47, n48, n49, n50, n51, 191n53, 200n49, 201n67, 206n3, n5, n8, n18, n23, n26, 207n29, n32, n41, n53, 208n61, n63
ethical code 48, 113, 115–16, 140–1, 174, 184n49, 199n12, n17
Etzioni, Amitai 122, 201n60
Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) 19
Fabius (“the Cunctator”) 16, 23, 25
Falkenhayn, Erich von 26, 32

Fatah 37, 57–9, 61, 63, 68, 123, 137, 144–5, 148–9, 151, 154
Fatahland 63, 161
fedayeen 3, 53–6, 63, 76, 78–9, 99, 110, 122, 153, 187n15, n29
Firestones-9 45
first intifada 3–4, 19, 28–9, 39–43, 46, 48, 52, 65–7, 74, 76–7, 85–8, 93, 98, 105–6, 111–12, 115–17, 119, 125, 127, 130–1, 134–6, 138, 140, 143, 151, 153, 155, 157–8, 162–4, 166, 171, 174, 176, 181n95, 185n59, n60, 189n81, 192n80, 193n81, n93, n95, n96, n103, n105, n111, 197n66, n67, n68, n72, n73, 203n120, n121, 204n136, 209n100
first Lebanon war 19, 25, 39, 53, 63–4, 75, 124, 137, 153, 166, 168, 184n35, 192n77, 208n88
Foch, Ferdinand 22, 180
Four Mothers movement 84, 138
Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW) 1, 12, 17, 28, 47, 172, 177n3, 178n7, n8, 181n89, 186n101, 209n2
Fourth Geneva Convention 116, 129, 130, 134
Frederick the Great 15–17, 20
Free Lebanon Militia (FLM) 157
Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) 18, 20–1, 99, 135
frustration-driven escalation 22, 127, 143–5, 176
Fuller, John F.C. 94, 180n68, 181n78, 182n112, n113, 195n2
Gabison, Ruth 126
Gamham, David 1, 183n11, 189n2
Gandhi, Mahatma 112
Gantz, Benny 69
Gaza and Jericho agreement 89
Gemayel, Bashir 137
General Security Service (GSS) 61, 66–8, 87, 97, 118, 128, 135–6, 167
George, Lloyd 32
Giap, Vo Nguyen 1, 11, 23, 177n2, 179n41, 180n67
Gil'adi, Eyval 45
Gillerman, Danny 125, 202n84
Glubb, John 155–6
Goldmann, Nahum 81
Goltz, Colmar von der 16
Gouri, Haim 40
grand-strategic decision 7, 29, 31–2, 71, 143–4, 163–4, 169, 171, 176
Grapes of Wrath Operation 65, 78, 84, 104, 125, 148, 162, 169
Green Island 137
Green Line 54, 66, 74, 87, 89, 106–7, 118, 133
Gross, Emanuel 113, 198n3, 200n45
Grossman, David 116–17, 199n23
Guevara, Che 1, 11, 23, 177n2, 179n41, 180n67
Guibert, Jacques 22, 25, 69, 74
Gulf War 14, 74, 78, 86, 106, 166, 179n42, 197n70, 202n95
Gur, Mordechai 38, 137, 184n34, 205n148
Haganah 115
Halevy, Benjamin 118
Halutz, Dan 3, 39–40, 44, 65, 69, 115, 139, 141, 164, 177n7, 184n46, 205n168
Hamas 44, 68, 125, 128, 134, 142, 149, 158, 162–4
Hammes, Thomas 1, 12, 178n8, 186n101
Harkabi, Yehoshafat 11, 163, 180
Heathrow Airport 42, 74
Hebron agreement 89
Heikal, Mohammed Hassanein 35, 80
Hezbollah 3, 5, 18, 31, 36, 39–40, 44–5, 53, 65, 68–71, 75, 77–8, 83–4, 90–3, 96, 98, 104, 109–10, 114, 117, 120, 124–5, 129, 137–9, 142–4, 146–9, 151, 153, 157–9, 162–6, 169, 172, 177n3, 178n7, 183n6, 189n98, n100, 194n142, 198n104, 203n107, 208n89, 209n104
Hoffman, Frank 1, 12, 177n3, 178n7, n9, n10, 184n50, 186n101
holy war (*milhemet mitzva*) 122
house demolition 52, 66, 86, 117, 119, 127, 130–1, 203n118, n119, n121
Hullah Valley 150
Hullah village 58, 148, 156
Human Rights Watch 124, 133, 201n73, n74, 202n83
Hussein, King 38, 53, 58–9, 148, 152, 156
Hybrid War 1, 12, 17, 47, 177n3, 178n7, n9, n10, 186n101
Indochina War 13, 18–20, 31, 47, 173, 181n93, 182n114

Indo-Pakistani War 19–20, 27 International Court of Justice (ICJ) 133, 198n5
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 133
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) 133, 203n122
international humanitarian law 113, 119, 124, 133
Iran–Iraq War 4, 10, 26–7, 96, 98, 106, 181n75, n82
Iraq War 12, 14, 25, 28, 39, 50
Islamic Jihad 35, 44, 68, 134, 149
Israel Air Force (IAF) 44, 60, 63, 67–70, 82–3, 89, 91, 101, 115, 126, 141, 146–8, 150–1, 155, 157–61, 188n58, 189n92, 196n31, 207n34
Israeli, Shaul 122
Ivry, David 69
Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies 88, 185n56, 190n18, 200n50
Jahns, Max 16
Jomini, A.H. 22–3, 180n65
Jordan Valley 3, 48, 53, 58, 61, 80, 101, 161, 184n31
Jordanian–Israeli peace 105
jus ad bellum 7, 119, 200n40
jus in bello 7, 119
just war 21, 92, 114, 117, 119, 120, 200n40, n47, n52, 202n92
Kalachat Operation 63, 148
Kaplinsky, Moshe 44
Karame Operation 61, 137, 148, 155
Karmi, Raad 68, 90
Kasher, Asa 117, 126, 199n26, 200n45, n46, n89
Kashmir 20, 28–9
Katyusha rockets 39, 48, 62–3, 70, 82–3, 91–2, 104, 125, 139, 146–7, 157, 161–2, 165
Katznelson, Berl 115
Kenya 24, 130
Kfar Giladi 92
Khalil al-Wasir (Abu Jihad) 66, 158
Kiryat Shmona 63, 82–3, 90–1, 104
Kissinger, Henry 33, 182n118, 188n68
Kitchener, Lord Herbert 61
Korean War 18, 25, 28, 181n72, n92
Koser, Reinhold 16
Kosovo 18–19, 32, 136, 164, 180n43, 182n108
Kretzmer, David 113–14, 198n5, 196n6, 199n9, n32, 203n110
Landau Commission 135–6
Laskov, Haim 149
Late Summer Blues 81
Lawrence of Arabia 1, 11, 110
Leibowitz, Isaiah 122, 201n59
Leonhard, Robert 11, 178n2
leverages and effects 45, 49
Levi, Bernard Henri 128
Levin, Amiram 65
Levin, Hanoch 81
Levy, Jack 1, 177n3, 190n12, n13
Liddell Hart, Basil H. 1, 11–12, 14–16, 30, 94, 177n2, 179n21, n29, n34, n36, n37, n38, 181n77, 182n98, 185n55, 195n5
Lind, William 1, 11–12, 178n2, 181n89
Litani Operation 63, 64, 137, 148, 157, 161, 169
Litani River 64, 70, 139
Livni, Tzipi 45
Luban, David 135, 204n139
Luttwak, Edward 12, 17, 136, 139, 179n42, 180n43, 182n97, 183n2, 187n24, 188n33, n56, n59, n62, 189n102, 191n45, 192n57, 196n21, n27, n28, n30, n34, 199n28, 201n68, 202n79, 205n146, n165, 207n51, 209n107
Machiavelli, Niccolo 14, 179n23, 190n11, 209n4
Madrid Conference 86
Mahan, Alfred T. 94, 195n1
Makadme, Ibrahim al- 68
Maklef, Mordechai 52, 54, 159
Malaya 24, 47, 130
Mandela, Nelson 112

Mandelblit, Avichai 126, 202n86
Mao Tse-dung 1, 11, 22–3, 25, 31, 50, 61, 72, 182n99, 183n11, 186n2, 189n1
March to the Sea 30
Maroun al-Ras 70
Mattis, James 177n3, 178n7, n10, 186n101
Mau-Mau 130
Mazuz, Menachem 126, 202n85
Mearsheimer, John 31, 180n64, 182n103, 183n17
Meir, Golda 38, 60, 81
military intelligence (AMAN) 56, 69, 125, 159
Mitchell, William ("Billy") 94, 195n6
Mitzna, Amram 38
Mofaz, Shaul 43–4, 71, 138–9, 151, 163, 190n22, 194n130
Moltke, Helmuth von (the Elder) 16, 22–3
Montgomery, Bernard 24
Morgan, Clifton 1, 190n12, n13
Mossad 97
Munich Olympics Massacre 63
muqawama 36, 183n9
Mussawi, Abbas 149
Napoleon 14, 16, 26, 179n24
Narkis, Uzi 57
Nasrallah, Hassan 36, 44, 92, 162–3, 166
Nasser, Gamal Abdel 30, 35, 38, 60, 80, 102, 150, 152, 154–5, 165
National Military Organization (*Etzel*) 115
national unity government 4, 28, 74, 85, 93, 104
national water carrier 37, 57, 145
Navarre, Henri 31
Nir, Shmuel (Semo) 46, 186n97, n98, n100
non-trinitarian war 12, 17
Northern Ireland conflict 19, 24, 33, 47
Nukeib 58, 150
October War 5, 8, 37, 46, 52, 62, 64, 76, 81–2, 97–8, 102–3, 111, 161, 165, 168, 192n71
Olmert, Ehud 39, 44, 125, 167, 185n77, n79, 195n155, 198n102, 202n84, 206n12, 209n112
Operations Other Than War (OOTW) 11, 46
opportunity-driven escalation 145–6, 151
Oslo A agreement 86, 89, 105, 157, 165–6
Oslo B agreement 89, 165–6
Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) 19–20, 25, 35, 38, 57, 60, 62–6, 146, 148–9, 153, 157, 160–2, 166, 168, 183n4
Palestinian Authority (PA) 53, 68, 109, 119, 125, 132, 158, 167
Palmach 115
Patriot Act 112, 174, 198n2
Paul, T.V. 11, 178n2
Peace for Galilee Operation 64, 148, 166
Peace Now movement 89
Peled, Matityahu 145
Peretz, Amir 125, 209n104
Peri, Yoram 86, 187n7, 193n106, 201n71
Pericles 16, 23, 25
Peters, Ralph 11, 178n2, 184n43
Petraeus, David 50
physical pressure 118, 128–9, 135, 141; *see also* torture
Pickering, Jeffrey 1, 177n3, 190n12
Piotr, Czar 20
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) 62–3
post-heroic policy/warfare 2, 5–6, 10, 12, 15, 17–18, 21, 24, 33, 41–3, 49, 65, 92–3, 114, 136–40, 142, 150, 173, 175, 177n1, 179n42
profiling 129–30, 132–3, 141, 203n111, 204n125, n126, n127, n130
proportionality 7, 21, 38, 40, 48, 114–15, 119, 124, 126–9, 133–4, 141–2, 174–5, 184n50, 200n40, 201n75, 202n92, n96, n97, 203n108, n109
Qana village 125, 202n83
Qfar Qassem 118
Qibya Operation 54, 122–4, 130, 155, 101n56, n57, n58, n59, n60, n62

Queen of the Bath 81
Rabin, Y itzhak 8, 37–9, 42–3, 52, 57–60, 71, 74, 80, 98, 106, 120–1, 145, 147, 149–50, 152, 156, 162, 178n11, 181n95, 185n59, n63, 188n64, 196n48, 207n46, n55, 209n102
Rafah 125, 131, 203n119
Rajoub, Jibril 68
Rantisi**,** Abdel Aziz 68, 149, 158
revolution in military affairs (RMA) 45
right to fair trial 116, 129, 142, 174
right to life 129, 133, 136, 142, 174
Rommel, Erwin 24
Sabra and Shatila 137
Sadeh, Yitzhak 115
Saleh, Mahmud 149
Saluki, Wadi 84, 138
Samoah Operation 58–9, 148, 152, 154–5, 160
Sayeret Egoz 56
Sayeret Haruv 56
Sayeret Matkal 53, 56, 61
Sayeret Shaked 53, 56
Schiff, Zeev 44, 140, 185n75, 187n32, 189n99, 192n60, n76, n80, 193n93, n118, 196n40, n46, n53, 197n67, 201n69, 202n80, 205n167, 207n49, 208n62, 209n100
Schmitt, Michael 113, 199n7
Schwarzenberger, George 113, 199n6
second intifada 3–4, 14, 19, 39, 43–6, 48, 52, 65–7, 69, 74–7, 85, 87–90, 93, 98, 106–9, 111, 115, 118–20, 124–8, 130–7, 139–40, 142–3, 146, 149, 151, 153, 155, 157–8, 162–7, 171, 173–4, 176, 191n26, 194n138, 198n95, 202n104, n106, 203n121, 206n25
second Lebanon war 3–6, 18, 40, 45, 69, 74, 76, 90, 98, 109, 111, 124–5, 129, 139, 140, 142, 153, 158, 163–6, 169, 172–3, 175, 180n44, 184n50, 186n95, 189n101, 195n156, 205n166, 207n37, 209n105
security fence 48, 53, 57, 59, 61, 63, 65, 68–9, 80, 87, 107–8, 130, 132–4, 141, 161–2, 204
Seven Years War 16, 20, 23, 203n121
Seversky, Alexander P. de 94, 195n6
Shalev, Aryeh 86, 189n81, 193n95, n103, 196n37, 197n73, 203n120, 209n100
Shallah, Ramadan 35
Shamir, Yitzhak 42, 74
Shapira, Haim Moshe 122
Sharet, Moshe 55, 123, 151, 160
Sharon, Ariel 39, 41, 43, 55–6, 59, 71, 74, 87, 89, 107, 121–2, 124, 137, 146, 167–8, 184n31, n35, 185n68, n71, n72, 187n21, 188n56, 190n22, 194n130, 201n63, 209n115, n116
Shayetet 13, 53, 56, 61
Shehadeh, Salah 68
Sherman, William 130
Shikaki, Fathi 149
Shimshon (Masqueraders unit) 53, 66
Shitrit, Meir 139
Shkedi, Eliezer 44, 126, 189n92
Shomron, Dan 127, 186n87
Simpkin, Richard 11, 178n2, 179n39
Sinai War 14, 37, 56, 97, 100–1, 118, 144–5, 156, 159–60, 165, 168, 183n19, 206n4
Six Day War 14, 19, 37–8, 44, 52, 80, 87, 97, 100–1, 103, 107, 152, 154, 160, 184n31, 187n15, 190n25, 191n50, 206n20, 207n54
Small War of Attrition 38, 78, 82–3, 104, 125, 157, 161
Smilansky, Yizhar 116
Sneh, Ephraim 84
Sofaer, Abraham 113, 198n5, 199n6, 200n45
South Lebanese Army (SLA) 65
Staazi 154
Statman, Daniel 113, 199n6, 200n45, 203n110, 208n73
Stern, Elazar 75, 139
strategy of annihilation 15
strategy of attrition 2, 9–11, 13, 15–16, 21–3, 25–6, 32–3, 36, 40, 47, 59, 159–60, 180n54, 182n96, n97, 183n2, 186n96, 192n58, 196n44, 207n45
Suez Canal 29, 30, 60, 76, 81, 101–2, 110, 125, 150, 155–7, 166
Suez Gulf 60, 137
Sun Tzu 10, 178n1, 179n40

supreme court 48, 112, 116, 118, 120, 132, 135–9, 199n32
Szabo, Ernest 11, 178n2
Tal, Israel 36, 58–9, 183n14, n15, n17
Tal, Rami 146, 206n9
targeted killing 48, 67–9, 116–18, 120, 124, 126, 128–9, 140–2, 149, 151, 158, 163, 174, 189n86, n91, n93, 198n5, 199n6, n9, n31, 200n40, n44, n45, 201n55, 202n90, n106, 203n110, 206n24, n25, 207n36, 208n73, n75
Tet Offensive 19, 21, 32–3
Thomas, Ward 12, 114, 199n10, 200n45
Thompson, Robert 1, 11, 177n2, 178n14, 179n41
ticking bomb 120, 128, 135–6, 204n139
torture 48, 127, 129, 135–6, 198n1, 199n11, 202n98, 204n136, n137, n138, n139, n140, 205n142; *see also* physical pressure
transfer 127, 129, 134, 141
Trinquier, Roger 1, 11, 179n41
UN Charter 200
UN Charter regime 114
UN Emergency Force (UNEF) 154
UN Human Rights Council 141
UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) 64, 157
UN Security Council 149
Unified Command 106, 131; *see also* United National Command
Unit 101 53, 55–6, 122
Unit 30 53, 55
United National Command 42, 86, 157; *see also* Unified Command
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 135, 204n136
victory 2, 7, 16–17, 28, 30–1, 33, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44–5, 51, 59, 69, 76, 98, 102, 126, 136–7, 143–4, 164–9, 171, 175–6, 190n12, 194n138
Vietnam War 13, 19–20, 26, 28–9, 32–3, 61, 130, 150, 173, 178n16, 180n53, 182n14, n105, n114, n115, n116, n118, 183n18, 190n11
Walt, Stephen 8
Walzer, Michael 120–1, 175, 200n41, n47, n52, 201n53
War of Independence 5, 22, 74, 89, 93, 116, 119, 122
war weariness 72–3, 93, 172–3, 177n3, 183n11, 189n2, 190n12, n13
Wazir, Khalil al- (Abu Jihad) 149
Weizman, Ezern 38, 60, 137, 152, 188n64, 205n155, 207n46
White, Jeffrey 1, 12, 177n3, 178n7
Winograd Commission 126, 198n102, 202n85, n86
Winter War 26
World War I 10, 13, 15–16, 23, 25–6, 32, 42, 94, 182n100
World War II 2, 8, 10, 12, 14–15, 17–18, 22–4, 72, 112, 127, 170, 180n68
Wrath of God Operation 63
Wye agreement 89
Yaalon, Moshe 40, 43–5, 69, 73–4, 89–90, 146, 165, 167, 185n74, 189n97, 190n22, n23, 194n130, n131, 206n11, 209n101, n118
Yadlin, Amos 117, 126, 199n26, 200n46, 202n89
Yassin, Ahmed 68, 148, 158
Yemen civil war 154, 207n53
Zeevi, Rehavam 37, 57, 90, 145
Zeevi-Farkash, Aharon 69, 207n117
Zimmer policy 90