CHAPTER IV

THE LEBANON CONFLICT-AN AIRPOWER PERSPECTIVE ON FIGHTING AN UNCONVENTIONAL WAR

The challenge posed to Israel by sub-conventional warfare, however is the most difficult. It is not enough to deal with terror through military means alone. It must be dealt with at its roots.  

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The entire spectrum of conflict that Israel faces classically falls under the genre of 4GW and does not fall into the very narrow category of Low Intensity Conflict (LIC). Like the Indian scenario, the Israeli situation is better described as sub-conventional and semi-conventional warfare, which consists of not only LIC, terror and counter-terror operations, and various forms of guerrilla warfare, but also a new kind of warfare in which non-state actors are equipped with conventional firepower and weapons, which they employ conventionally from bases that are typical of sub-conventional warfare. In 2006, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) embarked on an entirely new strategy of using airpower to target Hezbollah leadership and weapon systems in the heart of Lebanon without using ground forces. This shift in strategy is what necessitates a close look at the Lebanon conflict, and debate whether air power has the potential to fight the fourth and fifth generation wars of the 21st century.

Israeli Experience

Israel’s low-intensity conflict doctrine has undergone a significant change over the last few years, and a radical shake-up has commenced as the Israel Defence Force (IDF) focuses its resources on fighting unconventional warfare and 4GW. The IDF is gradually transforming itself from a force designed to fight short conventional wars and conduct classical anti-guerrilla/terrorist into a military adapted and aimed at managing a continuous semi-conventional or unconventional war, the likes of which the Hezbollah is waging against it. It is relevant to repeat that the entire spectrum of conflict that Israel faces does not fall into the very narrow category of Low Intensity Conflict (LIC). Like the Indian scenario, the Israeli situation is better described as sub-conventional and semi-conventional warfare, which consists of not only LIC, terror and counter-terror operations, and various forms of guerrilla warfare, but also a new kind of warfare in which non-state actors are equipped with conventional firepower and weapons, which they employ conventionally from bases that are typical of sub-conventional warfare. The IDF has previously experienced sub-conventional warfare during the popular, and mainly unarmed first Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza from 1987-92, and during the 25 years of guerrilla fighting in Lebanon from 1982-2006. However, it was taken aback by the characteristics of the setbacks of the 2006 conflict with the Hezbollah. What started as an armed struggle directed against the IDF in the Southern Security Zone of Lebanon quickly came to involve an extensive terror campaign inside Israel by well trained and well-armed Hezbollah militia.

The traditional strategic doctrine of Israel, which, according to the IDF, was designed for a force geared at striking short and decisive blows at threatening or invading forces, became unsuited to the new situation, as did most of the tactical concepts and thinking of the IDF. In an effort to strike at the nerve of the Hezbollah’s military capability, the IDF embarked on an entirely new strategy of using airpower to target Hezbollah leadership and weapon systems in the heart of Lebanon without using ground forces. This shift in strategy is what necessitates a close look at the Lebanon conflict.

Genesis of the Conflict

Following the events of ‘Black September’ in September 1970, in which Jordanian security forces massacred a number of Palestinian terrorists in the Palestinian refugee camps, Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) were forced to leave Jordan. With overt support from Syria, they established bases in Southern Lebanon and began the war in southern Lebanon in 1982 against the State of Israel, a war that continues till today, not as a classical guerrilla war, but as a semi-conventional war conducted by the Hizballah. During the late seventies, the terrorist activities of the Fatah, the military wing of PLO consisted mainly of sporadic attacks against IDF patrols. Gradual escalation comprised attacks by Fatah on Israeli civilians in Northern Israel. This precipitated retaliatory raids by the IDF into Southern Lebanon, and involved the use of both armour and air power. In the bargain, the Shiite population of Southern Lebanon was gradually drawn into the conflict. With the Lebanese government unable to check the influx of Fatah forces and military infrastructure into the Palestinian refugee camps, it was only a matter of time before the tempo of conflict would rise. Gradually, the Fatah took over

Southern Lebanon and dug in infantry fortifications along with fortified command posts to withstand IDF attacks. The style of warfare of the Fatah became more daring, and they launched coordinated raids into Israel, attacking soft targets and taking hostages to bargain for the release of their brethren in Israeli captivity. Reluctant to use ground forces to clear the PLO positions, Israel resorted to artillery and air attacks, accompanied by Special Forces, to try and coerce the PLO into withdrawing from Southern Lebanon to areas around Beirut. These half-hearted actions by the IDF emboldened the PLO to step up attacks on Israel using rockets against civilian targets in Northern Israel in the early eighties.

The chronological sequence of events from 1982 would reveal a distinct shift in the style of warfare prosecuted by Israel in their attempt to create a Security Zone in Southern Lebanon that would prevent the PLO initially, and now the Hizballah from launching frequent attacks on Israel from urban sanctuaries in Lebanon. In response to repeated rocket attacks, and a PLO attempt to assassinate the Israeli ambassador in London in 1982, Israel launched Operation Peace for Galilee against Lebanon. This operation, involving three Israeli army divisions, lasted almost two months with the divisions occupying Southern Lebanon and Beirut, and engaging in fierce skirmishes with the PLO and other fighters. Though the operation resulted in the vacation of Beirut by the PLO, the loss of human life in the entire operation was appalling to say the least. It is estimated that more than 18,000 civilians were reported killed with another 30,000 wounded. It is acknowledged by the Israelis themselves that the war was a wasteful expenditure and cost the IDF the lives of almost 500 soldiers. The 1982 conflict resulted in the creation of a ‘Security Zone’ in Southern Lebanon in 1985 under Israeli occupation.

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which insulated Northern Israel from potential attacks from terrorists. Though Yasser Arafat and the PLO were exiled to Tunis after the 1982 conflict, most Fatah fighters remained in the Lebanon refugee camps, waiting for an opportune moment to re-commence operations against Israel. This is when the Hizballah stepped in to fill the vacuum left by the departure of PLO from Southern Lebanon. At this stage Southern Lebanon comprised several several zones that are depicted in Fig 4.1 on the following page.\textsuperscript{50} One zone was formally under the Lebanese government, but was actually controlled by the Hizballah. The second, the Bekaa valley was, and is still under control of the Syrian armed forces. The third was the Israeli controlled security zone, which was also supported by the Southern Lebanon Army(see fig 4.1). This security zone was primarily created to shield Northern Israel from the Katyusha rockets, which the Hizballah had started using against civilian targets. These rockets had a warhead of 30kgs, and a range of approximately 20 km. While the concept of the security zone worked, it also forced the Hezbollah to develop tactics to harass the IDF within the security zone to a point where the concept itself was questioned by the Israeli people, more of which will be discussed later.

Fig 4.1-Map of Lebanon Depicting Various Zones

This new enemy, the Hizballah, comprising mainly of Shiite muslims from Southern Lebanon, was more militant and fundamentalist than the Fatah, and started asserting themselves with assistance from Syria. This forced the Israelis to rethink their strategy the next time around in 1996 when, in response to another series of grave provocations from Palestinian terrorists and Hizballah, the IDF launched Operation Grapes of Wrath in April 1996. This time around, the Israelis used a combination of tactics to force a settlement with the PLO and Hizballah. These tactics ranged from a naval blockade of Lebanese ports and accurate long range naval gunfire and artillery fire, to highly productive aerial attacks using precision weapons. In a short and decisive campaign that lasted only seventeen days the Hizballah was forced to negotiate a ceasefire. It would

52 Alan Vick, Benjamin Lambeth. Op cit., p. 29
be appropriate from an air power perspective to note that over 2,000 combat sorties were flown over Lebanon by the Israeli Air Force without a single loss.\textsuperscript{53}

It is important here to understand the Hizballah’s progress from 1982 onwards to realise how difficult it is to combat fundamentalist terrorist groups that rely on ambush, sabotage and kidnapping to complement conventional military means. The Hizballah is a well trained conglomeration of terrorist groups with significant sponsorship from Iran, Syria and several other Middle Eastern states with a stated objective to create an Islamic nation on the ashes of the State of Israel.\textsuperscript{54} It’s strategy to achieve this was to incrementally conquer Israel through progressive attrition, starting with the security zone that Israel established in Southern Lebanon in 1985. On the other hand, Israel’s goal was to resist the Hizballah until a conclusive peace agreement could be reached with Syria, after which, presumably, Hizballah would curtail operations since it was primarily funded and supported by Syria and Iran. Israel’s strategy to achieve this could generally be described as a combination of active and passive defence, with strong border security and surgical strike operations against identified Hizballah targets in Lebanon. Hizballah relied mostly on mortars, rocket launchers and small arms. However, to defend themselves against Israeli armour and aircraft they procured AT-3/4 missiles and Strela SAMs, probably from Syria or Iran. Hizballah also has considerable explosive expertise, aided and supported by Iran. Furthermore, they have taken full advantage of available technology, including night vision devices, advanced mines, electronic fuses and recent generation communications. Israel employed a broad range of the latest advanced technology, including the Merkava battle tank, the Apache attack helicopter, the F-16 fighter aircraft and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles(UAVs), as well as smart munitions such as laser bombs and TOW guided missiles, and also used the latest early warning, surveillance and target-

\textsuperscript{53} Op Cit, Gordon, Shmuel,p.85
acquisition systems. From the beginning, Israel was able to inflict heavy losses on Hizballah, however, Hizballah has persisted in the struggle, driven by staunch ideology, and resourced by oil rich Arab states. It has largely abandoned fixed facilities and does not attempt to hold ground against Israeli forces. Instead, they stay mobile, move away from Israeli assaults, and reoccupy positions after Israeli forces depart. They have also managed to indoctrinate the Lebanese population against the IDF, and the Christian militia called The Southern Lebanon Army(SLA). In the process, however, much of the Lebanese population turned against Israel, and forced its leadership and people to doubt the legitimacy of maintaining the security zone in southern Lebanon. As a result, as the conflict dragged on with Israel in occupation of Southern Lebanon, there was decreasing sympathy, and even animosity in Europe and other parts of the world against Israel and its aggressive tactics to stop terrorist attacks on Israeli military and civilians. Israeli civilians and politicians too were beginning to doubt the effectiveness of a security zone in southern Lebanon, with a hostile local Lebanese population, an ineffective local Christian militia, the SLA that was pro Israel, and an increasingly dangerous Hizballah that was taking its toll on the IDF. The pressure on the Barak government in 2000 was immense, and in a strategically flawed politico-diplomatic move, much against military advice, the IDF pulled out of the security zone in Southern Lebanon in late 2000. Instead of ushering in peace and restraint, the pull out emboldened the Hizballah, which reinforced its cadres, moved south and stepped up attacks against settlements in Northern Israel.

The War of 2006
After six years of skirmishes, heavy loss of life and damage to infrastructure in Northern Israel, Israel launched the much talked about aerial campaign or Operation Just Reward against the Hizballah in July 2006 in retaliation to the kidnapping of two IDF soldiers by Hizballah cadres. Though the Hizballah did
not anticipate the rapid escalation that followed, it was very well prepared for absorbing punishment from aerial and artillery bombardment. Israel’s primary military objectives revolved around elimination of Hizballah leadership, disruption of its command and control structures, and most importantly, destruction of its armoury of rockets and missiles.55

Fig 4.2 Map of Lebanon after Jul 2006 showing R Litani and UNIFIL Deployment56

The secondary objectives were to create a buffer zone upto the Litani River in S Lebanon(see figure4.2), coerce terrorist outfits to dissuade them from waging war against Israel, and securing the release of the two kidnapped soldiers. These operations were also designed to stay clear of the ineffective United Nations International Force in Lebanon(UNIFIL), a force deployed to oversee the de-

55 Paper on ‘Lessons From Lebanon War’ that was circulated amongst faculty at The Defence Services Staff College in June 2007, p.2.
militarisation of southern Lebanon after the IDF vacated the security zone in 2000.

As against these stereotyped, unrealistic and conventional Israeli objectives, the Hizballah had very clever politico-military objectives, which revolved around flexibility, mobility and effective retaliation. In preparation for an eventual Israeli assault, the Hizballah had very effectively dispersed their main firepower assets, the Katyusha rockets. They had also anticipated heavy collateral damage to Beirut and other areas of Lebanon and alerted the international media on the ruthlessness and brutality of the Israeli war machine.\(^{57}\) During the course of the 34 day war, the Israeli Air Force flew approximately 15,500 sorties and deployed four divisions to progress ground operations towards the end of the conflict when air power did not yield the desired results. The Navy too contributed by effectively blockading the Lebanese coast. Against this effort, the Hizballah cadres, numbering around 15,000 fired almost 200 Katyusha rockets at targets in Northern Israel every day, which included attacks on the cities of Haifa, Nazareth and Maalot. As a result of these relentless attacks, almost one million civilians had to seek refuge in bomb shelters. The Hizballah even inflicted critical damage on an Israeli missile boat, INS Hanit with a Chinese/Iranian C-802 anti-ship missile.\(^{58}\) On 23 July, the IDF commenced ground operations and crossed into Southern Lebanon with the aim of capturing the territory upto River Litani. The operation met with stiff resistance with Hizballah anti-tank teams damaging at least 40 Merkava Main Battle Tanks and ambushing a number of Israeli patrols. Mounting casualties, lack of progress on the ground, absence of synergised air-land operations and the relative ineffectiveness of offensive air power, coupled with mounting international pressure, forced Israel to accept a cease fire on 14

\(^{57}\) Op Cit,n.55, p.5.
\(^{58}\) Ibid.p.7
August 2006. In consonance with the objectives of this study, it is important to study the employment of air power in greater detail.

Application of Air Power

Israel employed airpower along conventional lines of operation. The Israeli Air Force flew almost 10,000 combat, 2000 attack helicopters, 1300 reconnaissance and about 1200 air mobility sorties. The broad operational aims of air power conformed to the overall Israeli military aim during the conflict, which was to eliminate various rungs of Hezbollah leadership, assist in creating a safe 'buffer zone' in Southern Lebanon and coerce other terrorist outfits like Hamas and dissuade them from undertaking military operations against Israel. Typical strategic and operational targets included runways and infrastructure at Beirut International airport, transportation infrastructure that supported the movement of arms and supplies from Syria and Iran and higher rungs of Hizballah leadership. Tactical targets included Hizballah cadres, rocket and missile launchers and control systems. Reconnaissance aircraft and UAVs with advanced sensors initiated searches for guerrilla activity along the border and deeper into Lebanon. These searches were unfortunately not accompanied by adequate Human Intelligence(HUMINT). Advanced communications systems relayed target data to command posts and strike platforms. Airborne aircraft on call, which includedF-16s and Apache helicopters, engaged targets assigned to them using LASER guided or TV guided missiles or guns. When significant intelligence was gained on Hizballah nodes or leadership, Israeli fighters conducted deeper offensive strikes with precision weapons. Much of the time, Israel successfully struck its intended target. However, often, the intended target was imbedded with civilian infrastructure, leading to civilian casualties and collateral damage. This single factor caused the greatest damage to Israel's legitimacy, both at home and abroad. In spite of Israel’s weak attempts to
engage the media. In summary, aircraft employment by Israel was highly effective at destroying designated physical targets. However, it was unsuccessful at preventing collateral damage, deterring Hizballah from conducting attacks, or stopping the flow of personnel and supplies to Hizballah. It would be appropriate here to mention that the Israeli Air Force destroyed most of the Hizballah’s medium range missile launchers, an operation that ensured that Tel Aviv and other Israeli towns in depth were not targeted by the Hizballah.

Air power weaknesses evident in south Lebanon were as follows:-

- In an urban environment the operative capability of air power is greatly reduced as the guerrilla fighters easily assimilate into the population, and the fear of hitting civilians who are not linked to the guerrillas creates severe difficulties for air operations. When this is coupled with high training levels of the adversary, locating and destroying the Katyusha launchers became an extremely daunting proposition, even for on-call fighter aircraft. Hezbollah fighters operated inside the OODA (Observe, Orientate, Decide and Act) loop of the Israeli Air Force by re-locating their launchers within 60-90 seconds of a launch, thereby making it extremely difficult even for airborne fighter aircraft and attack helicopters with near real time info and images of the launch sites to target them.

- The proximity of friendly forces constitutes another limitation, since air attacks can hit these forces. This problem exists with regard to all types of air warfare against ground forces, and is not unique to counter-guerrilla warfare.

59 Ibid.p.9
• Lack of precise and updated intelligence on human and highly mobile targets hampered the effectiveness of air power. This particular aspect brought to light the declining capability of Israeli intelligence to penetrate Hizballah networks as compared to their earlier exploits with the PLO and Egypt. Had the Israelis anticipated Hizballah strategy, and infiltrated their lines with Laser Designator armed Special Forces, designation of fleeting targets may have allowed more effective targeting by fighter aircraft and attack helicopters, both by day and night. Another perspective on intelligence is that while the IDF had collected excellent intelligence about the Hizballah build up in Southern Lebanon, and the massive build up of weapon inventories, translating and interpreting this intelligence into likely Hizballah tactics and employment was lacking.

• Targeting infrastructure like the Israelis did, completely alienated the civil population and hardened their resolve to support the Hizballah. It appears that the Israeli Air Force wanted to replicate some aspects of the NATO air campaign over Kosovo in which critical Serb infrastructure was destroyed in an attempt to bring Slobodan Milosevic to the negotiating table.  

• Inadequate use of air inserted Special Forces except for one daring raid severely affected the coercive capability of the IDF, something the Arabs and Palestinians had always dreaded.

As pointed out, advanced sensors, weapons and communications technology has made Israeli air power quite effective tactically. For strategic success, Israel needed to deploy deep reconnaissance platforms that were able to loiter or dwell for long periods, with the ability to focus on small areas with high resolution, and able to network with other sensors. This capability had to be reinforced with

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accurate human intelligence, something that has taken a back-seat in the recent past due to excessive reliance on electronic surveillance. Israel also needed weapons with a small radius of destruction, but accurate enough to strike single individuals when necessary. A weapons platform like the Predator UAV that is able to loiter over an area without being vulnerable to Hizbollah SAMs, and able to sustain accurate fire for hours at a time would have been a valuable asset. Finally, an effective missile defence technology able to engage the Katyusha rockets, or capable of locating them before they are fired, would have been of immeasurable worth to the Israelis. The sub-conventional/semi-conventional war in south Lebanon illustrates that even the most modern aircraft, weapons, sensors and communications do not guarantee strategic success in a small war though they can cause critical and weakening attrition on the morale and physical capability of the non-state actor. There is a widespread feeling that Israeli air power failed miserably in 2006. If that had been the case, why did the Hizbollah agree to a cease-fire? The Israelis did mis-calculate the resilience of the Hezbollah, and thought that air power alone would break them. Coupled to this was some indiscriminate target selection of infrastructure in Beirut that caused tremendous hardship to the common Lebanese, and a fair amount of collateral damage. As against this, had the Israelis followed up their initial air strikes against Hezbollah leadership with surgical Special Forces operations, we may have seen a different result in the 2006 Lebanon conflict. In summary, it is reasonable to assess that strategically Israel lost some ground losing ground, even though it was tactically quite successful most of the time.

**Similarities between Lebanon and Kashmir**

It is both interesting and ironical that a number of similarities exist between the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hizbollah, and the proxy war raging in

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Ibid
Kashmir between Indian security forces and Pak sponsored Islamic terrorists. Without debating on legitimacy issues of both conflicts, it would be appropriate to draw relevant geo-political and military lessons.62

- Both Israel and India are coping with classical 4GW in which terrorists adopt a combination of guerrilla and conventional tactics in jungle, mountainous and urban terrain with varying degrees of help from local population and neighbouring countries.

- External help for terrorists from legitimate states enables them to sustain operations. Syria and Iran provide the entire spectrum of assistance to the Hizballah, which includes specialized weapon training, intelligence and logistics support. In Kashmir, most terrorist groups are provided safe sanctuary in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, funded by radical Islamic terrorist organisations like Al-Queda, and trained by the Inter Services intelligence, the Pakistani intelligence agency.

- The methodologies of raids, sabotage and attacks are very similar with the Hizballah retreating to camps in Southern Lebanon after their raids, while terrorists in Kashmir blend into the local population, carry out attacks, and escape into POK. Suicide attacks and kidnappings too are typical features of both conflicts.

- Training of the Hezbollah by Syria and Iran and Mujahideen groups like Taliban and Lashker-e-Taiba by the ISI bear striking similarities. Notwithstanding the existing truce along the LOC in Kashmir, any instability in Pakistan is likely to escalate terrorist attacks emanating from POK.

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62 The Conflict in Lebanon & Kashmir, Opcit, n.47, p.17
Military operations in both scenarios are restricted by political constraints imposed by democratic governance, and the overwhelming desire for peace.

When it comes to using air power, there are distinct differences between the way India and Israel perceive its employment in J&K and Lebanon respectively. While it is acknowledged that coordinated offensive air strikes and air launched special forces attacks on terrorist training camps in POK would have sent a very strong message to Pakistan, and coerced terrorist groups into curtailing their forays into the Indian State of Jammu & Kashmir, the Indian government placed very stringent restrictions on its security forces, which prevented any crossing of the Line of Control. It did this to prevent escalation, and keep the rather suspect 'nuclear' threshold of Pakistan under check. A critical analysis of this policy would be attempted later in the study. Israel, on the other hand, imposes no such restrictions on the air force, which has been employed as the primary striking arm in its war against Hamas and the Hizballah. This has resulted in effective employment of air power across the entire spectrum of missions. In the light of Israel's struggle for survival, air power has been the primary instrument of deterrence and coercion against the enemies of Israel, and notwithstanding the limited success of air power in 2006, the increasing importance of air power for Israel's survival cannot be wished away. It is in similar vein that India needs to re-assess its objectives when it comes to dealing with unconventional warfare keeping in mind the various strengths and limitations of air power.

There appears to be no end in sight to the Lebanon imbroglio, as each side continues to adapt new strategies to attack the other. The war in south Lebanon ideally fits into 4GW as an unconventional conflict that rises above a sub-conventional conflict and falls short of a limited war because Israel, a recognized state, is fighting a non-state organization, the Hizballah, which is attempting to destabilize and replace it. This conflict is interesting, however, in
that the Hizballah is a militarily well trained outfit, which is equipped with sophisticated weapons of Russian, Chinese and Syrian origin, and is attempting to improve its own legitimacy through control, with the intent of gradually undermining the security and economic legitimacy of Israel. Hizballah also works hard at legitimacy in the international arena, as a way of applying international pressure on Israel. Israel, on the other hand, focuses primarily on legitimacy through control and security, while attempting to interdict Hizballah’s feeders through negotiations with Syria. Israel’s strategy in dealing with the Hizballah was to resist, and mitigate their attacks, while pursuing a peace agreement with Syria. The maintenance of the security zone in southern Lebanon had almost certainly reduced casualties to civil population. But the Israeli Defense Force has paid a high price in equipment and personnel. The border is lined with an extensive array of fences, sensors, weapons and security forces. Israeli forces conduct aggressive reconnaissance using aircraft, ground sensors and patrols, and engage Hizballah forces with on call helicopters, fixed wing aircraft and surface weapons. Additionally, Israel plans and conducts offensive operations against Hizballah infrastructure deep in Lebanon, and even in Syria. Tactically and operationally, most of Israel’s operations were successful, however, strategically, they did not reduce Hizballah’s effectiveness or will. Hizballah operations may have been interrupted for a short term by Israeli strikes, during which time they shifted focus to international Israeli targets. But they eventually returned with adapted tactics to reduce Israeli effectiveness. Israel was also very ineffective at undermining the legitimacy of Hizballah, either in Lebanon or internationally, hampered by media bias toward the guerrillas.

Many analysts, primarily from the Islamic world have hailed the 2006 Lebanon conflict as the beginning of the demise of Israeli military superiority in the Middle East, and the rise of the Hezbollah as the first military organisation since 1967 to pose a serious challenge to the Israeli Defence Forces. At the same
time, western strategic analysts have predicted that it is only a matter of time before Israel puts its house back in order and tackles the existing threat from the Hezbollah-Syrian-Iranian axis. If one were to take a holistic view of the entire operation, it would be to say that the sustained military successes of the IDF against the PLO and Hamas in the 1990s with their overwhelming technological and conventional military superiority lulled the IDF into complacency. The Israeli people too were getting tired of continuous war and have been looking for an elusive peaceful solution to the Palestinian problem.

The 2006 Lebanon war jolted the Israeli people and a complacent military back to a harsher reality, a reality that has now pitted the IDF against an unconventional enemy with tactically sound military leadership, unlike the fatigued Hamas and PLO leadership. The IDF found itself unable to shift focus rapidly and adapt to this new style of war fighting that saw the Hezbollah fighting a ‘near conventional war with guerrilla characteristics’. By displacing almost a million Israeli citizens from their homes in Northern Israel with their relentless rocket attacks, the Hezbollah have openly challenged the might of the IDF. They have tasted initial success, which is not likely to last very long knowing the resilience and operational acumen of the Israeli military leadership. The intense public debate that rages within Israel is bound to throw up interesting military solutions from the IDF. There is likely to be greater synergy between all arms and services of the IDF with particular emphasis on integrated operations. India would do well to keep track of doctrinal changes that emerge from Israel over the next few months in areas of unconventional warfare. Specialist study of the application of air power reveals that as a stand-alone campaign, the 2006 Lebanon war did not expose any weaknesses of Israeli air power. In fact, contrary to what distant observers of airpower felt, the air force performed exceedingly well. What it did not do was that it did not decisively produce a result that the world, and the Israeli people expected it to, and this

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63 Jasjit. Op cit,n.46 p.35
happened because of a strategic miscalculation of the level at which the war was fought. Opponents of full- fledged use of air power against a non-state actor cite the example of the Lebanon as a failure of air power without realizing that had ground forces moved in to Lebanon soon after air power had inflicted sufficient attrition on the Hezbollah, the conflict would have taken a different turn altogether. Therefore, the blame does not lie with the capabilities of airpower, but with the philosophy of employment which rested with a complacent political and military leadership. To support the argument of research, synergy and integration with other arms and services is vital if air power has to be relevant and effective. Using it in isolation will not work. That is the key finding of the Lebanon conflict of 2006. Bolstering this argument is the fact that in 2008, the Israelis used air power very effectively against the Hamas in Gaza by ensuring that the mistakes of Lebanon 2006 were not repeated. Key locations and leadership were targeted from the air after meticulous intelligence gathering and followed up with swift action by ground forces, demonstrating synergy of the highest order; something that was visibly lacking in 2006.

64 Israel reminds foes that it has teeth’, New York Times, Jan 3, 2009, p.23.