



The recent events in Lebanon and the unprecedented Iranian attack on Israel reveal a convergence of ideas upon which Israel has increasingly relied over the past two decades: a fusion of intelligence, airpower, and the application of force in an attempt to dismantle the systems of its enemies.

Israel defines its adversaries as an interrelated set of elements that work together as part of a larger system. It attempts to find inroads into those various elements for intelligence-gathering and operations that seek to destabilize that system. It aims to shock its enemies into paralysis and render them unable to mount an effective counterattack. This is the central tenet guiding Israel's approach to overcoming resistance in the region.

But in the face of Israel's relentless application of force on the Lebanese resistance, what happened instead was the renewed resolve of Hezbollah's will to fight and the provocation of a direct response from Iran. Hundreds of missiles struck Israeli military infrastructure, their impacts recorded as they found their targets, and the psychological comfort provided by the so-called "Iron Dome" and "Arrow" missile defense systems began to disintegrate. Even then, Israel hastily declared the attack a failure. From the outset of this war, Israel has meticulously managed the flow of information, downplaying the damage inflicted by its enemies while amplifying the effects of its own operations.

Operational 'shock' and language of force

In the first major assault Israel carried out against the Lebanese resistance, it targeted Hezbollah's very tools of communication, transforming pagers and walkie-talkies into miniature bombs that left their users blinded, battered, or dead. The operation was meant to project an image of Israeli cunning and ingenuity, yet it lacked the heroism of soldiers grinding through battle.

All organizations must communicate, but turning communication tools into weapons sent shockwaves through Hezbollah's military and political membership, already entangled in low-intensity combat with Israeli forces across the southern Lebanese border. Coupled with a concentrated assault on leadership, this campaign struck at the heart of the resistance, taking out key figures and military commanders and eventually reaching the Secretary General of Hezbollah, Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah.

The operation was prepared over years, awaiting the opportune moment to utilize it to erode the determination of its opponents. In any major military confronta-

tion, Israel would have employed these tools as instruments designed to disorient and demoralize its enemy's fighting force and take away its will to fight. The operational shock it aims to induce is grounded in its belief that every "system" harbors key vulnerabilities; within these vulnerabilities lies the pathway to undoing the system.

As Israel escalates, intoxicated by its own perceived victories, the resistance in the region finds itself, paradoxically, both battered and more alive.

Having deployed some of its most surprising elements in the campaign, Israel now ascends the ladder of escalation, each rung a calculated step toward an uncertain end. The surprise once held in reserve has been spent, and with it, the path forward becomes all the more perilous. Israel's strategic objective is to embroil the U.S. in a war it has already demonstrated it is incapable of fighting alone.

As Israel escalates, intoxicated by its own perceived victories, the resistance in the region — unable to deny the operational successes of Israel's assassinations, mass airstrikes, and intelligence capabilities — finds itself, paradoxically, both battered and more alive. The blows that were meant to extinguish its resolve have also played a role in intensifying Hezbollah's fervor. A strange energy arises not from triumph but from the very encounter with loss.

Israel's attempt to coerce the Lebanese resistance into halting its "support front" for Gaza has not been reached. Israel now inches toward a deeper entanglement as a ground operation in Southern Lebanon slowly but steadily commences. It has now started to realize that it is one thing to achieve operational success, but entirely another to bend the will of resistance.

Israel might be able to conquer the south at great cost, but such a venture will sustain resistance against it for years to come. In light of this, the assassination of Nasrallah no longer seems like a calculated and measured strategy, but an impulsive act of vengeance and an expression of how deeply the Hezbollah Secretary General has lodged himself within Israeli consciousness.

His elimination was sought not merely to weaken Israel's adversaries, but to soothe the restless disquiet that his figure provoked. But now the specter of his death has served to fuel the resolve of the resistance, galvanizing the fighters awaiting the arrival of soldiers in their villages and the treacherous terrain of Lebanon's southern mountains and hillsides.

Israel expands and entrenches again

Israel, once pragmatic enough to retreat behind walls, now

Israeli soldiers move on the top of a tank near the Gaza fencing, on April 25, 2024.
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In Gaza and Lebanon, Israel is projecting its force while burrowing itself deeper into a quagmire. While it may achieve brief operational successes, it fails to extinguish the spirit of the resistance or coerce it into submission.

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Israel's forever war and what comes next



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OPINION

The pursuit of military excellence in Israel has been a hallmark of its relentless endeavor to compel the Arab world to yield to the theft and erasure of Palestine. Through force, Israel not only sustains itself by merging with the greater ambition of securing American hegemony over the region but also seeks the elusive affirmation of its fragile existence. This existence has been forged in violence and ethnic cleansing. This is why force becomes more than method — it becomes the only language through which the Israeli state can reproduce itself. It is not surprising, then, that innovation and creativity become the products of a society consumed in finding ways to kill.

finds itself expanding. In Gaza, it expands while burrowing itself deeper into a quagmire. In Lebanon, it initiates a ground invasion, hoping to erase the scars of past failures, seeking not only to cleanse but to dominate new territory.

But as it commits the bulk of its power to the north, Israel also risks the possibility of a historic strategic defeat. It mistakes operational or tactical success with the ability to induce shifts in the strategic theater, believing that with each strike, it draws closer to victory. But it risks getting caught up in a bloody war of attrition with an overstretched military, a semi-functioning economy, and a fractured society.

The oscillation between these states of pragmatic retreat and obstinate expansion suggests a nation caught in a perpetual cycle of conquest and entrapment.

Unlike Israel, the Lebanese resistance has yet to use its wide array of destructive weapons. It is not surprising that Israel has never been a strategic player, resembling Ariel Sharon, who took matters into his own hands and hoped for the best, but more often than not was forced to reckon with the long-term impacts of his actions — such as the rise of Hezbollah after Sharon's decimation of Lebanon, or the entrenchment of the resistance in Gaza in the wake of his brutal crackdown against the Second Intifada.

Israel's strategy is to borrow road, pushing the can down the road.

As Israel's expansionism continues, it will once again find itself at a crossroads: either retreat in the wake of fragile agreements or dig deeper and force new generations of Israelis to confront resistance at every turn. The oscillation between these states of pragmatic retreat and obstinate expansion, neither fully secure nor fully expanding, suggests a nation caught in a perpetual cycle of conquest and entrapment.

It seeks control yet never truly attains it.

Total dependence on allies

The successes Israel has witnessed in recent weeks are the result of a comprehensive investment in intelligence-gathering over the past two decades, particularly since it suffered a decisive blow in Lebanon in 2006. Israel spent its time developing, accumulating, and creating opportunities for operational triumph, employing a vast network of intelligence channels with its allies that serve to feed it information, multiplying its strength through the powers of NATO, cyberintelligence, AI, and other forms of intelligence-gathering.

Israel is granted the space to demonstrate its usefulness to the imperial center that backs it. But its triumph is no triumph of its own, but the product of the distant empire that furnishes it with arms, tools, and a flow of resources that it cannot claim to independently generate. In many respects, Israel mirrors Ukraine, clinging to its benefactors but with the difference that it is not standing against a single towering enemy, but against several enemies that are both numerous and elusive. This network of dependencies defines Israel's strength, which cannot be separated from its vulnerability.

On October 7, it was the Palestinian resistance that not only shocked but also tore open a profound rupture in Israel's self-perception. For days, Israel crumbled under the weight of its own disarray, desperately struggling to reclaim the territory briefly seized by Palestinian forces and killing, in the process, many of the fighters and its own citizens. In that moment, the image of invulnerability shattered, and what was left behind was not merely land, but a deeper unraveling — a story no longer able to sustain itself.

The forces that resist Israel yearn

for a long, grinding war of attrition where victory and defeat become indistinguishable.

Israel seems determined to stare into the abyss, laboring under the assumption that no matter how difficult the situation becomes, it retains the ability to reshape hardship into a narrative of unqualified success. This mindset reflects a deep-seated conviction in the utility of force as a primary tool in shaping its regional environment. The objective is not merely to degrade the material capabilities of its adversaries, but to fundamentally alter its relationship with both the region and the Palestinians. It wants the Arabs, and by extension, the Iranians, to submit.

But the forces that resist it are also invested in denying Israel a frictionless victory. They are organizations that yearn for a long, grinding war of attrition — a war without end that turns every battlefield into a cycle of endless struggle, where victory and defeat become indistinguishable. Israelis will spend more time on the frontlines than at beaches and drug-infused parties.

The operational shock that Israel sought to impose on the Lebanese resistance failed to extinguish its spirit or coerce it into submission; instead, it provoked a direct response from Iran, and continued resistance operations in Gaza.

Israel, with its reliance on assassination and its display of cunning intelligence operations, continues to speak of "closing the circle." Yet, for over a century, it remains ensnared in this endless process, striving to close these circles only to watch them reopen and expand. With each expansion, new generations and systems arise, defying Israel with impressive and unexpected resilience, shaking its military strategies and forcing Israel to confront a recurring question: "We have made great operational achievements. What comes next?"

