



When did the First Lebanon War end?

Lecture by Dr. Reuven Erlich at a seminar held by the Israeli Center for Defense Studies, June 12, 2014

Overview

1. In my lecture, I will attempt to examine the question of when the First Lebanon War ended, as part of a seminar dealing with the end of wars in the history of the State of Israel, held by the Israeli Center for Defense Studies, established by Israel Galili. I will also attempt to point out the role of the First Lebanon War in the broader historical context of Israeli policy since the Yom Kippur War.

2. **When did the First Lebanon War end?** What is the logic behind each possible end date? What is the methodology that can be used to determine the end date? I will try to answer these questions from my perspective **as a historian and academic** (who wrote a number of books dealing with Syria, Lebanon, Israeli and Zionist movement policy in Lebanon), **combined with the perspective of an intelligence officer who has specialized in Syrian-Lebanese affairs, spent three years in Lebanon** during the First Lebanon War and served as the deputy of Uri Lubrani, Coordinator of Israeli Government Activities in Lebanon.

Versions regarding the end date of the First Lebanon War

3. The First Lebanon War is a controversial war to this day. Almost from its inception, not only was there no consensus on its goals or how it was conducted, **but even its name and end date are disputable**. For reasons that I will discuss in detail below, I believe that the war **ended in January 1985** and prefer to use the name (given to the war after the fact) **the First Lebanon War** and not Operation Peace for Galilee.

4. What is agreed and clear is the date of the commencement of the military operation - **June 6, 1982**. With regard to the **end date**, there are **three versions**, each with its own logic:

a. **August 31, 1982** - according to this version, it was an “**operation**” that **lasted nearly four months** and was called **Operation Peace for Galilee** (the formal name of the operation, as decided by the Israeli government on June 5, 1982). This military operation ended after the evacuation of the terrorists and the Syrian army from Beirut (August 31, 1982) under an indirect agreement between Israel and the PLO, through American mediation. Yasser Arafat’s departure from Beirut to Tunis on August 30, 1982, symbolized the ostensible end of the operation but not the end of the war. This is because **a series of dramatic events took place** in September 1982: the murder of Bashir Gemayel (September 14), the IDF entering West Beirut, the Sabra and Shatila massacre by the “Lebanese Forces” (September 16), and the IDF’s withdrawal from the western part of the city (September 30). These dramatic events undermined the foundations of Israeli policy in Lebanon and opened a new chapter in the war.

b. **January 14, 1985** - according to this version, **it is not an operation but a prolonged war**, which lasted about three years. This is because Israel remained in Lebanon for another 32 months after ousting the terrorists from Beirut, in order to enable the political leadership to try **to extract political gains from the war**. During this period, Israel experienced an **Israeli-Lebanese agreement that collapsed** (the so-called agreement of May 17, 1983), **and Israeli-Lebanese security talks that failed** (the Naqoura talks, November 1984 - January 1985); on the ground, the IDF ceased to be the initiating force and focused on defending itself against a **guerrilla war that claimed many IDF losses**. This period formally ended with a **decision by the Israeli government on January 14, 1985**, re the unilateral withdrawal of the IDF to the Israeli-Lebanese border and the establishment of a security zone in which SLA and IDF forces operated until May 2000.

c. **May 24, 2000** – according to this version, **the war lasted for about 18 years**, until Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000. Between 1985 and 2000, a buffer zone was established north of the border with Lebanon (the “security zone”) to protect northern Israel from terrorism. During 15 years, a guerrilla war was waged between the IDF and the SLA, on the one hand, and Hezbollah (an organization founded by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards under the auspices of Syria in 1982) on the other. On May 24, 2000, the IDF left the security zone and withdrew unilaterally to the border line overlapping the international border (the so-called Blue Line). Following the withdrawal, the SLA collapsed and Hezbollah took over the security zone and South Lebanon in

general, acquired a firm grip on Lebanese internal politics and became the frontline terrorist arm of Iran, which threatens Israel to this day.

Some methodological observations on the issue of the end of wars

5. US President Barack Obama, in a speech to the Muslim world at Cairo University (June 4, 2009), concluded with the words: **"It's easier to start wars than to end them."** US presidents before him learned firsthand that it was easier to invade Afghanistan and Iraq, and even record military victories there, than to end them on a tight schedule and remove the US from these countries, under the auspices of a stable and sustainable political agreement.

6. **How to end military operations** is a subject discussed by politicians, historians and political scientists, and can be found in many books and articles. I won't discuss the issue in depth here, but I will say that regarding the end of wars, in my opinion we can distinguish **between three main models**:

a. **Destroying or vanquishing** the enemy, following which a **one-sided surrender agreement** is achieved. This may be manifested in the physical destruction of most of the enemy's military power, occupation of enemy territory and the loss of the enemy's ability and will to fight (a striking example, Germany and Japan after World War II).

b. **An agreement or arrangement (solid or flimsy), sometimes rooted in a legitimate external framework such as a UN resolution, an international conference or the auspices of a superpower** (e.g., the Treaty of Versailles after World War I, the armistice agreement after Israel's War of Independence). Sometimes the international framework exists, but without a bilateral or multilateral agreement or arrangement (e.g., Security Council Resolution 425 at the end of Operation Litani, Security Council Resolution 1701 at the end of the First Lebanon War, etc.).

c. **The *de facto* or *de jure* end of the war through unilateral military moves on the ground, which are not rooted in a firm political agreement that could preserve the achievements of the war.** This refers to both **stabilization of the occupying army** along new lines in territories occupied during the war (1967) and **unilateral withdrawal from the occupied territory** (the Sinai Campaign, 1956; the First Lebanon War, 1985).

7. A country that initiates a war, such as Israel in the First Lebanon War, **strives to end it with a political agreement, to be achieved after a military victory or victories.** Such an agreement **would politically legitimize military achievements** and would reflect the strategic logic behind going to war. It would also help to preserve the achievements made on the battlefield for as long as possible (it is well known that military achievements on the battlefield are a perishable asset).

8. **In reality, of course, the situation is much more complicated.** **First**, countries and leaders do not always formulate clear war goals; **Second**, countries often prefer not to reveal their goals in order not to provide the enemy (and sometimes opponents from within as well) with valuable information that would reveal their true intentions. **Third**, even if the war goals were achieved, in whole or in part, it still happens that **the state that initiates the military operation "gets an appetite" (for example, as a result of the occupation of land) and expands its military goals and moves during the war (the 1967 Six Day War, for example); Fourth**, sometimes the occupied country is unstable, with a weak central government, and it is difficult or even impossible to sign a sustainable political agreement with it. Israel's prolonged floundering and difficulties in the so-called "Lebanese swamp" and its difficulties vis-à-vis the weak Lebanese government are comparable to the US Army's prolonged stay in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the difficulties of the US vis-à-vis the local regimes in these countries.

9. The model of the First Lebanon War is, in my opinion, **a model of the end of a war in a unilateral manner**, without a political agreement and even without UN sponsorship. **This was after one basic goal** (the destruction of the Palestinian terrorist infrastructure) which underpinned the war **was fully achieved.** However, an additional goal (a peace agreement with Christian dominated Lebanon) **was not achievable**, despite Israel's efforts. This is because it **ignored the political and social realities in Lebanon and the Middle East (the weakness of the Christian camp, Syria's influence in Lebanon – and furthermore, Israel's political and military inability to shape regional regimes and arrangements).**

10. When a country initiating an operation or war sets **unrealistic political goals (or when, during the war, it examines the possibility of expanding its goals in impossible directions), this could lead to prolonged floundering of its army in the occupied country;** to a high cost in human lives; to public and political pressure to withdraw unilaterally; and to serious damage to its economy, morale and national prestige. **Not only the case of Israel in Lebanon, but also that of the United States**

in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq proves this basic truth. Therefore, it is of great importance to formulate realistic and achievable war goals, rooted in the military and political capabilities of the attacking or defending country.

Goals of the First Lebanon War

11. Israel's goals in the First Lebanon War are also a **controversial** issue. This is because the war, which began on June 6, 1982, had **stated goals** and also **additional goals** that were unclear or unstated. There were goals derived from the operational plans of the IDF that predated the war, and/or an Israeli government announcement from June 5, and there were also strategic goals like establishing a "new order" in Lebanon and the entire Middle East, which were considered undeclared goals. I will not delve deeply into the subject, about which much has been written and said, but I will speak my mind briefly, because this is relevant to the issue of the end of the war, for which we are gathered here today.

12. After Ariel Sharon was appointed Defense Minister (August 1981), the IDF gradually formulated the **Oranim¹ Plan**, an operational plan for an operation in Lebanon, whose goals went beyond previous concept of eliminating the terrorist infrastructure in South Lebanon (which was a sort of extended version of the 1978 Operation Litani). The goal of the plan was **the elimination of the Palestinian terrorists' military and political infrastructure in South Lebanon and Beirut**, removal of the Syrian army from the area of Beirut and the establishment of a "legitimate government" in Lebanon, which would be part of the free world and would maintain peaceful relations with Israel. Achieving these goals inevitably involved conflict with the Syrian army in Lebanon. However, the operational concept was that the effort should focus on destroying the terrorist infrastructure, **and the conflict with Syria should be postponed and limited insofar as possible** (complete removal of the Syrian presence in Lebanon **was not included among the goals of the operation/war**).

13. On June 5, 1982, the Israeli government convened and decided to order the IDF **to launch Operation Peace for Galilee**. The declared goals of the operation were more modest and ambiguous than those of the Oranim Plan, even though a careful comparison of the two shows that the difference between them is insignificant (at least according to some interpretations).

¹ "Oranim" is the Hebrew word for "pine trees".

14. The Israeli government's decision of June 5, 1982, related to the military objectives of the war and the political achievement required at its end:

a. **Destruction of terrorist infrastructure:** the decision stated that the IDF should be charged with the mission of: "removing all the settlements in the Galilee from the range of fire of the terrorists concentrated there, their headquarters and their bases in Lebanon." In practice, in the first phase of the operation, the IDF was permitted to reach the Awali River (the 40 km line). However, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon soon made it clear that **the intention was also to eliminate the terrorist infrastructure in Beirut** (Ariel Sharon: "In making its decision to act, the government never decided that the terrorists would enjoy immunity beyond the 45 km line," Ma'ariv, June 18, 1982).

b. **The policy towards the Syrian army, whose frontline forces hindered the IDF's northward progress, was based on a government decision:** "When carrying out this decision, the IDF must not attack the Syrian army unless it attacks our forces." This is because the IDF, moving northward, passed through areas where the Syrian army was deployed, in Shouf and the eastern sector of South Lebanon (called "Fatahland") and the southern part of the Bekaa Valley. Thus, the destruction of terrorist bases in these areas required a confrontation with the Syrian army **but not necessarily its absolute defeat and removal from Lebanon. Most of the fighting between the IDF and the Syrian army took place from June 8 to June 11**, after which the IDF continued the campaign against the Palestinian terrorists (some Israelis argue that this was a strategic mistake on the part of the State of Israel, because without defeating the Syrian army and ousting it from Lebanon it was impossible to achieve a peace agreement with the Lebanese government).

c. **The desired political achievement - "the State of Israel continues to aspire to sign a peace treaty with independent Lebanon, while preserving its territorial integrity."** This goal received clarification from Prime Minister Menachem Begin, in his speech in the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament (June 29, 1982): "A Lebanese government will come, it will establish an army ... Later we'll sit down with the Lebanese government and sign a peace treaty with it ... Gentlemen, this is what we want ... To renew the alliance with Lebanon, as it existed in ancient times ... " (Israeli Information Center, Jerusalem).

End of Operation Peace for Galilee

15. According to the official definition used by the IDF, "operation," unlike war, is the name given to an overall military effort undertaken within the framework of a limited war, such as Operation Defensive Shield (2002) or Operation Cast Lead (December 27, 2008 – January 18, 2009). A war, in contrast, generally lasts longer than an "operation," involves a larger order of battle and, for the most part, the civilian population is exposed to more extensive fighting. **As for the First Lebanon War** - combat that continued for three years (or 18 years, according to another version, which I will discuss later), in which a large IDF order of battle participated and large-scale political resources were invested, does **not** meet the definition of an "operation." **Therefore, the term "operation" can refer at most to the first four months of the war.**

16. **The period of combat, which the government decision called "Operation Peace for Galilee," ended with the evacuation of the terrorists and the Syrian army from Beirut after a two-month siege.** The evacuation was achieved through political negotiations between Israel and the PLO, conducted by US mediator Philip Habib. The negotiations ended with an evacuation agreement known as the Habib Plan. **On August 20, 1982, the fighting ended.** The first Palestinian terrorists left Beirut on August 21, under the supervision of a multinational force deployed in Beirut. **Their evacuation and the withdrawal of the Syrian army ended on August 31. From the perspective of the PLO and Fatah, that date marked the end of the war and, moreover, the end of the period of Palestinian military and political presence in Lebanon,** which began after the Six Day War (1967) and the events of Black September (1970).

17. **From the perspective of the Syrians,** the war started by Israel (which they called "the Israeli invasion of Lebanon") has not ended. However, **it included the start of a new phase** that they did not expect (the Syrians' assessment was that the Israeli attack would be directed against the terrorist infrastructure in South Lebanon). **In the new phase of the fighting, the Syrians played an important role,** albeit not in direct combat against the IDF but through the **use of proxies** - Lebanese organizations, mainly (but not only) Shiite organizations (Amal, Hezbollah), which they activated against the IDF and against the Multinational Force in Lebanon (the US, France). Even from the perspective of **other Lebanese players** (Christians, Druze, Shiites and the Lebanese government) **the war did not end in September 1982.** On the contrary - **the problematic part of the war (from their perspective) had only just begun.**

18. I believe that, following the evacuation of the terrorists from Beirut on August 31, under cover of an agreement brokered by the US, the State of Israel could have (and should have) declared the end of Operation Peace for Galilee and withdrawn unilaterally from Lebanon. Had it done so, Operation Peace for Galilee might have ended completely differently and might even have gone down in history as a successful military move. However, **such a decision was not made and was not even taken into consideration by the Israeli political leadership. This is because the political goal, which was mentioned in the government decision of June 5, had not yet been achieved, namely – a peace treaty with Christian dominated Lebanon**, which was supposed to be the second peace treaty with an Arab country, after the peace treaty with Egypt.

19. While the military goals - the destruction of the Palestinian terrorist infrastructure and even the destruction of the Syrian army (if Israel had wanted to do so) - **were achievable, the political-strategic goal that the Israeli leadership aspired to was not achievable. It was a mirage, whose pursuit was unnecessary and involved the IDF spending an additional 32 months in Lebanon, a stay that was both unnecessary and futile.** During these long months in which the IDF foundered in the “Lebanese swamp,” Israel got entangled with the Shiite population, Hezbollah began to gain power and act, under Iranian and Syrian guidance, and a guerrilla war that claimed many victims was waged against the IDF. Therefore, one can say that **September 1982 marked the end of the (relatively short) total war, which can be called Operation Peace for Galilee, but the overall military campaign that began on June 6, 1982, was still far from over.**

Government Decision 291 (January 1985) - the end of the First Lebanon War

20. If the political leadership in Israel needed a clear signal that the political-strategic goal, which underpinned the war, was not viable, **it came on September 14, 1982, with the assassination of President-elect Bashir Gemayel – the pivot on which Israeli policy in Lebanon was based.** The new president, Bashir’s brother **Amin Gemayel**, was a highly problematic figure for the State of Israel. **The situation was further complicated after the massacre of Sabra and Shatila** perpetrated by the Christian Lebanese forces, which followed the assassination of Bashir by a Syrian proxy. The massacre led to local and international criticism of the war and a complete repudiation of the war and the logic behind it. The Israeli public raised an outcry that led to the appointment of the **Kahan Commission**, which investigated the Sabra and

Shatila incidents and the responsibility for them, which ultimately led to a **political earthquake in Israel**.

21. Nevertheless, even after these dramatic events, **Israel continued to pursue the mirage of an agreement with Lebanon**, which would allow the withdrawal of the IDF and the end of the war. While the IDF, which was deployed in Lebanon, was under increasing pressure of a guerrilla war (and losses), and while the Israeli home front was seething, Israel made **two attempts to end the war with a political or security agreement** that would allow the removal of the IDF from Lebanon:

a. **The so-called May 17, 1983 Agreement** - this agreement was reached following negotiations which took place between Israel and Lebanon (led by Amin Gemayel) and brokered by the US. The negotiations were conducted alternately in Khaldeh (south of Beirut) and Kiryat Shmona (northern Israel). While Israel sought to reach a full peace treaty that would ensure security and normalization with Lebanon, Lebanon refrained from signing a full peace treaty with Israel due to heavy pressure from within and without, exerted by Syria. In the end, a compromise was reached and an agreement was attained, which was less than a peace treaty and more than security arrangements. The agreement included security arrangements and a timetable for the withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon. **The stumbling block in the agreement was disregarding Syria's great influence and its ability to undermine any agreement that was not to its liking**. Through its proxies, Syria did indeed mount an all-out war against the agreement and against its opponents in Lebanon. In the end, Amin Gemayel replaced the American orientation with Syrian orientation, resulting in the non-ratification of the agreement and, subsequently, **its cancellation by Lebanon on March 5, 1984**. In addition, the Multinational Force that had entered Beirut after the withdrawal of the Palestinian terrorist organizations and the Syrian army was forced to leave Lebanon, under the pressure of guerilla warfare and terrorism orchestrated by Syria and Iran.

b. **The security talks in Naqoura (November 8, 1984 - January 24, 1985)** – ostensibly, after the collapse of the May 17 agreement, Israel should have withdrawn unilaterally and ended the war. **However, it wasted another unnecessary year staying in Lebanon**, during which the IDF continued to sink in the “Lebanese swamp,” and tried to convert the peace treaty into a **security agreement with Lebanon**. The Israeli-Lebanese security talks took place in Naqoura, a Lebanese village near the border with Israel. The talks were

conducted under the auspices of UNIFIL and included 14 meetings between delegations of officers from Israel and Lebanon. While Israel proposed security arrangements, the Lebanese demanded the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 425, adopted in 1978 at the end of Operation Litani (the resolution stipulated a unilateral withdrawal by Israel to the international border). The Lebanese (influenced by Syria) considered the Armistice Agreement of 1949 as the only framework regulating the relationship between the two countries, and did not agree to any security arrangements proposed by Israel. **This led to the failure of the talks and was behind the Israeli government's decision to unilaterally withdraw from Lebanon.**

22. **Decision 291 of the Israeli government from January 14, 1985**, regarding the withdrawal from Lebanon, **formally ended the military campaign that began on June 6**. The decision included three **main elements**:

- a. **Redeployment of the IDF** along the northern border of the State of Israel.
- b. The Israeli government would do everything necessary **to ensure the security of the Galilee**.
- c. The IDF's withdrawal from Lebanon in three stages. In the third stage, IDF would deploy itself along the international Israel-Lebanon border, **while maintaining a zone (i.e., a security zone) in South Lebanon, where local Lebanese forces (SLA) would operate, with the support of the IDF.**

1985-2000: Was the "security zone" period part of the First Lebanon War?

23. **Israeli Decision 291 was carried out in January - June 1985**. Most of the IDF forces withdrew unilaterally from Lebanon; and thus the war ended with a government decision, just as it began with a government decision. **The IDF was redeployed on the Israeli side of the border, the security concept was changed** (the "security zone" concept), and **Palestinian terrorism stopped** (and was replaced by Hezbollah attacks). **A new situation was created in the domestic Lebanon arena** (weakening of the Christian camp, Syrian dominance rooted in the Taif Agreement). **Israel ceased its intensive involvement with domestic Lebanese affairs** (apart from running the SLA) and the idea that it was possible to reach a peace treaty with the Lebanese government and establish a pro-Israeli Christian regime **proved to be a mirage. A**

buffer zone (the "security zone") was established along the border with Israel, on the basis of the pre-war buffer zone controlled by Major Saad Haddad, where intense fighting took place between the IDF and SLA, on the one hand, and Hezbollah on the other (June 1985 to May 24, 2000).

24. **These characteristics are completely different from Israel's military and political conduct in the First Lebanon War.** The underlying concept of the "security zone" was the goal of **protecting northern Israel from Shiite terrorism** (Hezbollah) through a combination of (limited) activities by the **IDF and (extensive) activities by the SLA** (about 2,500 people) **in the security zone**. This took place amid attempts to reduce the risk of uncontrolled escalation and the formulation of "rules of engagement" among all relevant players (Israel, SLA, Syria and Hezbollah).

25. **The 15 years of the "security zone" policy marked a new era**, based on a different security concept, different goals, different IDF operating methods in Lebanon and a different attitude of the Israeli leadership to Lebanon and to Israel's policy in Lebanon. **Therefore, this was not a continuation of the First Lebanon War but rather a new policy** which, to a great extent, was a return to **the Israeli policy during the years that preceded the outbreak of the war**. Instead of a buffer zone known as the South Lebanon Region (1975-1982), an expanded security zone was established; Instead of Major Haddad's militias, a Lebanese militia force was established, the upgraded SLA headed by General Lahad; Instead of a Palestinian terrorist infrastructure, a military-political-social Hezbollah infrastructure was established in southern and northern Lebanon, which took the lead in fighting the IDF and the SLA in the security zone.

26. The major difference between the period preceding the First Lebanon War and the period after it is that **before the war Israel was the proactive element in the Lebanese internal affairs**, which at one time even rose to the top of Israel's national strategic priorities. After the war, however, since the early nineties, Israel found itself integrated into a broad political process (The Madrid Process). **Thus, Lebanon remained a burden** to the Israeli policy in which **the IDF (unenthusiastically) waged** a lost war against Hezbollah, supported by Syria (which had become the dominant player in Lebanon). In the war over the security zone, Israel did not get any support from the Christian camp, which had lost power, or from the public and politicians in Israel, for whom Lebanon had become an anathema.

27. Maintaining the security zone in such problematic strategic circumstances **involved a high price in terms of IDF casualties, which Israeli public opinion was**

not prepared to accept. In the end, the IDF withdrew unilaterally from the security zone due to pressure from within, and the security zone collapsed. However, unlike the **Lebanon war, which ended in a retreat without a political framework, this time the IDF's withdrawal, based on UN Security Council Resolution 425, received the support of the UN and the international community. Based on this political framework, the IDF withdrew to a new boundary line, delineated by the UN, overlapping the international border (the so-called Blue Line).**

28. During the domestic Israeli public debate, **opponents of the IDF's stay in the security zone made an attempt to present** the security zone period (1985-2000) **as an integral part of the First Lebanon War.** To the numbers of dead and wounded from the First Lebanon War (654 soldiers killed, 3,884 wounded), **opponents of the IDF's stay added the IDF soldiers killed and wounded during the fighting in the security zone** (usually between 10 and 30 deaths per month). The objective of the opponents of the security zone was to increase the number of soldiers killed in Lebanon, a figure of great public sensitivity, in order to mobilize public opinion and put pressure on the political leadership and, indirectly, on the IDF as well, to vacate the security zone and disengage from Lebanon.² For the reasons stated above, I believe **that this is a new period and a new policy,** which differs from the policy during the First Lebanon War.

The Second Lebanon War

29. **Even after the withdrawal on May 24, 2000, calm was not achieved on the Israeli-Lebanese border,** though the scope of incidents between the IDF and Hezbollah **decreased significantly.** However, Hezbollah's provocative attack (killing/kidnapping three IDF soldiers), which was based on a miscalculation by Hezbollah (as Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah acknowledged after the First Lebanon War), led to further military campaign by Israel, **which lasted 34 days. The Israeli campaign ended with UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which**

² An expression of the attitude that linked the First Lebanon War with the "security zone" period can be found in the words of Yossi Beilin, a prominent supporter of the unilateral withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon in September 1997: "Had so many soldiers not been killed in the security zone, about 300 soldiers have been killed since Operation Peace for Galilee, including the soldiers who were killed in the helicopter disaster, the question of Lebanon would not have become a matter for public debate ... Since 1982 some 1,000 soldiers have been killed. A huge number by all accounts. If someone had told the public that the war in Lebanon and the security zone would cost us one thousand dead soldiers, would anyone have mounted this war? The question is not relevant today, but this thought is constantly present" ("**The Security Zone in Lebanon: A Second Look,**" a collection of articles based on the conference held on September 10, 1997, at the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; article by Yossi Beilin: "Unilateral withdrawal of the IDF from South Lebanon" [in Hebrew, translation by the ITIC]).

regulated the end of the war. The military activity began on **July 12, 2006**, (with the kidnapping of the three IDF soldiers), **ended on August 14, 2006**, and was named (after the fact) the Second Lebanon War. Like the First Lebanon War, the second war was controversial and “merited” its own commission of inquiry (the Winograd Commission).

30. Despite the relatively short duration of the fighting in Lebanon, the Israeli government decided to call it a **war** and not an **operation**. The Final Report of the Commission to Investigate the Lebanon Campaign in 2006 (January 2008) states: “The government did not want the war, did not intend to go to war, and did not know that it was going to war. **Only on March 25, 2007, did the government decide to call the military campaign in the summer of 2006 a war ...**” (Winograd Report, pp. 33, 46).³ The Ministerial Committee for Ceremonies and Symbols recommended the name the Second Lebanon War. The reason for its decision to use the term “war” rather than “operation,” despite the short timeframe of the war, **was explained by Minister Eitan Cabel, a member of the Committee:** “It would have been wrong to go against the feelings of the public. One cannot disregard a million people who stayed in bomb shelters; one cannot disregard the dozens of fathers of sons who fell in the war and civilians killed...” (Ynet, March 21, 2007). **Thus, by formally adopting the name the Second Lebanon War, the name the First Lebanon War was also adopted (implicitly and in retrospect).**

31. **Were the goals that the decision makers set for themselves realized at the end of the war?** A perusal of the Winograd Commission Report reveals that, like the First Lebanon War, **once again the decision makers’ goals were a mixture of realistic and unrealistic goals.** This time, unlike the First Lebanon War, in the first stages of the war the IDF chose to avoid a ground operation insofar as possible, and certainly not to engage in a widespread ground operation. Even when the IDF contemplated a ground campaign, **its military thinking focused on South Lebanon,** and did not reach remote districts **such as Beirut or the Beqaa Valley in Lebanon,** like the First Lebanon War

³ Previously, a number of names were given to what became known as the Second Lebanon War by the IDF and the media. The IDF called it Change of Direction. Subsequently it was called, among other things, the War of the North and Operation North. Ehud Olmert, in an article in the journal of the Institute for National Security Studies, Army and Strategy, writes: “**It would be an exaggeration to use the word war** for the military effort carried out by the State of Israel in Lebanon in the summer of 2006” (Ehud Olmert: The Second Lebanon War - A Look Back, Army and Strategy, March 2014).

32. A perusal of the Winograd Commission report reveals that, **while the IDF and decision makers were deterred by a ground operation and the investment of large ground forces** (against a backdrop of the trauma of the First Lebanon War)⁴ **the political and military leaders strived for a political achievement, and often a far-reaching one.** Against relatively modest (and realistic) objectives such as the return of the kidnapped soldiers to Israel (or the return of their bodies), damage to the power of Hezbollah, deployment of the Lebanese army along the border with Israel and immediate cessation of rocket fire at Israel, **was the requirement for the “full and complete implementation” of UN Security Council Resolution 1559.** The interpretation given to the implementation of the resolution was: disarming all the armed militias (i.e., disarming Hezbollah), removal of Hezbollah from South Lebanon, preventing the redeployment of Hezbollah in South Lebanon, implementation of the sovereignty of the Lebanese government over all Lebanese territory, and prevention of weapons smuggling from Syria to Lebanon (Winograd Report, p. 86, p 140). In retrospect, these goals have been proved unrealizable in practice.

33. Moreover, in a speech to the Knesset on August 14, 2006, **Prime Minister Ehud Olmert praised the “severe blow” to Hezbollah's military infrastructure**, including the organization's long-range rocket capabilities and huge weapons arsenal (Winograd Report, p. 226). **In retrospect, the blow to Hezbollah's military infrastructure proved to be a rapidly perishable achievement:** Hezbollah restored and **soon upgraded its military capabilities**, with an emphasis on upgrading its long-range rocket infrastructure, **with the support of Iran and Syria.**

34. In retrospect, it can be stated that **the main and significant achievement of the Second Lebanon War was strengthening Israel's power of deterrence against Iran and Hezbollah**, which prompted them to change the pattern of Hezbollah's military activities, as conducted since May 2000 (despite Hezbollah's propaganda campaign about the "divine victory" achieved during the war). This achievement, combined with Iranian regional and international strategic considerations, led to an **unprecedented state of calm along the Israeli-Lebanese border**, and a **substantial change** in the situation that prevailed along the border with Lebanon, not only since May 24, 2000, but since the Six Day War (1967).

⁴ Ehud Olmert, in his article "The Second Lebanon War - A Look Back," writes: "The appetite to enter territories where there is no need to be is an appetite that should be restrained, and we did indeed enter the fray in Lebanon with a restrained appetite on this issue."

The Lebanon wars from a historical perspective

35. After the Second Lebanon War (July 2006), **calm prevailed along the Israeli-Lebanese border and is still in effect today**. This marked the (temporary?) end of a stormy period, which began with the establishment of the terrorist organizations in Lebanon (1967-1971), continued with the Lebanese Civil War, the collapse of the Lebanese government and the imposition of the "Syrian order" on Lebanon (1975-1991). During a period that lasted about 30 years, which were fraught with political and security challenges laid at Israel's doorstep, military operations were carried out by the IDF in Lebanon, which I propose to call the **Lebanon Wars**. This period began with Operation Litani (1978). It was followed by the First Lebanon War, Operation Accountability and Operation Grapes of Wrath during the period of the security zone, and the Second Lebanon War (see Appendix).

36. The Lebanon Wars **began after the Yom Kippur War (1973)** which, in retrospect, **marked a change in the nature of the Arab-Israeli wars in the Middle East**. In this era, which lasted from 1948 to 1973, the IDF fought against the regular armies of the Arab countries (1948, 1956, 1967, 1969-1970 and 1973). In the new era, which began after the Yom Kippur War, the IDF wages its wars **against terrorist organizations**. During this period, the IDF fought **against terrorist organizations originating in Lebanon** (Palestinian terrorist organizations until 1982 and Hezbollah ever since) **and against Palestinian terrorism, originating in Judea and Samaria and in the Gaza Strip** (the First Intifada, the Second Intifada, operations Defensive Shield, Cast Lead, and Pillar of Cloud).⁵ Some of the operations and wars in this period **were initiated by Israel**, but throughout most of this period, the State of **Israel defended itself and reacted to terrorism, guerrilla warfare and acts of violence**, initiated by Hezbollah or Palestinian terrorist organizations.

Looking to the future

37. **In recent years, most of the attention regarding the fight against terrorism has focused on the Palestinian arena, whereas calm has been achieved along the Israeli-Lebanese border since July 2006. Will this calm last over time?** It is hard to assume that it will, since no significant change has occurred in Lebanon, which is still a source of potential terrorism against Israel, mainly on the part of Hezbollah. **Hezbollah was involved in terrorist attacks against Israel around the globe** with the support

⁵ To these operations we should add Operation Protective Edge, which was carried out after the time I gave this lecture.

of Iran, and the risk that it will resume terrorist attacks from the Israeli-Lebanese border exists. Moreover, Iran and Hezbollah are devoting considerable resources and efforts to building an extensive military infrastructure, based on the perception that it will be used against Israel in the future. To this end, Hezbollah is building a large arsenal of rockets, **which has been upgraded compared to 2006 in terms of both quantity and quality**. Hezbollah may use this arsenal against Israel in accordance with Iran's strategic considerations.⁶

38. In addition, during the civil war in Syria, **organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad have established a presence in Syria and Lebanon**, posing a new **kind of terrorism risk** for Israel. Furthermore, the involvement of Iran and Hezbollah in the civil war in Syria, and their attempts to establish a terrorist infrastructure in the Syrian Golan Heights, may cause a deterioration with Israel, whether by their own decision or as a result of miscalculation.

39. Most of the Lebanon Wars ended with UN resolutions or flimsy understandings between the warring parties. One of them ended with a unilateral Israeli withdrawal without a political framework. Some of them led to short periods of relative calm along the Israeli-Lebanese border and some led to longer periods. In some of them, limited areas of land were occupied, and in some extensive areas (all the way to Beirut and to the Beirut-Damascus highway). However, they all failed to establish fundamental and sustainable solutions to all the existing problems between Israel, Syria, and Lebanon, including the problem of terrorism. Removing the threat of terrorism over Israel's northern borders will be a direct result, first and foremost, **of internal political changes in Lebanon and Syria, and regional political changes, which will lead to peace agreements between Israel, Syria, and Lebanon**. Such a new reality is still a long-term vision, **which cannot be realized in the current upheaval in the Middle East**.

⁶ During the Second Lebanon War, Hezbollah had about 20,000 rockets. In the summer of 2012, Hezbollah's rocket arsenal included about 60,000 short, medium and long-range rockets. In the summer of 2014, their rocket and missile arsenal included, according to data presented at the Herzliya Conference by Brig. Gen. Itai Brun, head of the IDF Military Intelligence research division, about 100,000 short-range rockets; several thousand medium-range (up to 250 km) missiles; and several hundred long-range missiles and rockets. According to Brig. Gen. Brun, "Hezbollah continues to build its force and equips itself with weapons that could match our aerial and marine superiority – surface-to-surface missiles, rockets, and shore-to-sea missiles." Brun added that they were clearly making an effort to acquire precision attack capability such as GPS-guided rockets, with "Iran being the primary source of know-how" (Haaretz, Yedioth Ahronoth, June 10, 2014).

Appendix

IDF wars and operations in Lebanon and how they ended (1978-2006)

1. **Operation Litani** (March 14-21, 1978) ended with UN Security Council Resolution 425 and the establishment of UNIFIL in South Lebanon.

2. **The First Lebanon War (1982-1985):**

a. **Operation Peace for Galilee** (June 6 - August 31, 1982), ended with the withdrawal of the Palestinian terrorist organizations and the Syrian army from Beirut, under the supervision of a multinational force, all this under an indirect agreement between Israel and the PLO through American mediation (the so-called Philip Habib Agreement).

b. **The guerrilla war against the IDF in Lebanon** (September 1982 - June 1985), ended with a unilateral IDF withdrawal and the establishment of the security zone, without a political settlement.

3. **The “security zone” period** (June 1985 - May 24, 2000), ended with the withdrawal of the IDF to the international border (the so-called Blue Line) on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 425, with the support of the UN and the international community. During this period, two noteworthy operations took place:

a. **Operation Accountability** (July 25-31, 1993), ended with a ceasefire brokered by the US and tacit understandings between Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Hezbollah on the rules of engagement, which removed civilians from the circle of combat.

b. **Operation Grapes of Wrath** (April 11-27, 1996), ended with written understandings between Israel, Syria and Lebanon about the rules of the engagement, which removed civilians from the circle of combat, and the establishment of a "Monitoring Group" that supervised the implementation thereof.

4. **The Second Lebanon War** (July 12 - August 14, 2006), ended with UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and the IDF withdrawal from the territories occupied in South Lebanon during the war.