



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Israel Intelligence Heritage
& Commemoration Center (IICC)

August 20, 2008

The Deterrent Relationship Between Israel and Hezbollah between 1982 and 2006¹



¹ This is a thesis submitted by Tomer Naveh for a Masters' degree at Tel Aviv University, October 2007. His thesis advisor was Prof. Ariel Merari. Naveh received his degree with distinction from the Security Studies Program. He served in intelligence in the Israeli Southern Command and in the Israeli Navy. [The full study in Hebrew appears on the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center website.](#)

Summary

This study analyzes the mutual deterrent relationship between Israel and Hezbollah as it existed between 1982 and 2006. Its objective is to provide a better understanding of the State of Israel's deterrent capabilities against terrorist and guerrilla organizations in general, and Hezbollah in particular.

Its point of departure is the discourse, which has grown stronger over the past decade, regarding the question of Israel's ability to use a deterrent policy against terrorist and guerrilla organizations. Its hypothesis is that by studying how Hezbollah ranks its interests and by investigating the relationship between Hezbollah and Israel, general insights will be gained as to the possibility of implementing such a policy against Hezbollah. Such insights will make it possible to determine whether a deterrent policy can be implemented against Hezbollah today and to draw conclusions regarding the possibility of improving its effectiveness. This study examines the development of the deterrent relationship between Israel and Hezbollah over five consecutive time periods, signifying central changes in how Hezbollah ranks its interests, making it possible to test Israeli deterrence under different conditions.

The study distinguishes between the inability of implementing a deterrent policy against a terrorist organization on the one hand, and the possibility of implementing efficient partial deterrence against a guerrilla organization on the other. It argues that to adjust the theory and policy of deterrence to the specific case of sub-conventional deterrence against a guerrilla organization such as Hezbollah, use must be made of research tools different from those used to examine conventional deterrence. Of those tools, ranking the organization's internal interests (instead of the balance of interests between the parties) is a useful index to test the very possibility of implementing deterrence, and further, to determine the manner of its implementation. Furthermore, deterrence against a guerrilla organization must be regarded as partial, incapable of existing as an exclusive policy of the State and necessarily combined with other political tools. On the practical implementation level, the study shows that successful

partial deterrence must focus on the organization's political interests and not on an attempt to directly prevent its violent actions.

The study also examines how the political echelons determine a deterrent policy, and present unique and different methods of policy implementation are presented which can be translated into operative deterrence. Finally, based on the findings, recommendations are made for activating deterrence in relation to a civilian population which will continue as the central tool for the implementation of Israel's deterrent policy.