



Israel and Weak Neighboring States: Lessons from the Israeli Experience in Lebanon



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The Arab Spring reshaped the set of threats that Israel is facing. Rather than fearing the strength of their Arab neighbors, Israelis are now concerned by their weakness. Israel has a long and painful experience with neighborly weakness, as it had to deal with some ramifications of the weakness and then collapse of the Lebanese state. The following paper investigates the history of Israel's response to the threat posed to it from Lebanon since the 1960s, and highlights a number of significant lessons-learned, as Jerusalem faces again the "threat of the weak".

Regime instability in a number of states in the Middle-East created a new challenge to Israel: the adverse spillover effects of weak neighboring governments.¹ In this paper I review Israel's 1965-2012 involvement with a weak state, Lebanon; and draw relevant lessons. The Lebanon experience is instructive. First, the length of time allowed Israel to experiment with a variety of strategies. It therefore charts the spectrum of potential responses whilst providing a test for their efficacy. Second, the Lebanon experience is the formative military experience of Israel's current military leadership. Both the current and previous chiefs of staff served in the 1990s as commanding officers of Israel's Lebanon Division. Third, using the specific case of Lebanon allows focusing the discussion around a concrete example despite the differences between the cases.

The paper continues in four parts. First, I outline the nature of the new threat. Second, I explore the reasons for Lebanon's weakness. Third, I analyze Israel's experience of dealing with the challenges of the weak Lebanese state. In the last part I summarize possible relevant lessons from Israel's Lebanon experience to the emerging threat of weak states.

A. Old and New Threats

Israel's security doctrine was developed to deal with the threat of strong states. However, the political instability in the region created a new set of threats: those that result from its neighbors' weaknesses. State weakness is a continuum that spans from difficulties in providing some services within a functioning state, to failed states. Weakness could be measured, in the order of significance as: (1) the state's inability to control the means of violence in its territory, (2) the rejection of the state's legitimacy by

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¹ For a discussion of other new threats as perceived by Israel see: Ahikam Moshe David, "Director of Military Intelligence: the Region May Erupt", *NRG*, 27 August 2012.

the majority of its citizens, (3) the state's inability to provide basic public goods to its citizens due to a resource gap, or due to institutional failures.²

Three weak states – Egypt, Syria, and Libya - present an immediate challenge to Israel. Two other states with a history of weakness – Lebanon and Jordan – might also join the challengers. At the same time, weakness in all these states presents Israel also with opportunities.

The challenges for Israel in three-fold. Strategically, Israeli doctrine is based on deterrence. However, disintegration of the central authority eliminates clear targets to be deterred. Operationally, existing or new Middle East regimes under threat might initiate armed action against Israel in an effort to buttress public legitimacy. Moreover, the collapse of strongly armed states such as Libya and Syria may lead to transfers of arms, including non-conventional weapons, to radicals including non-state actors. Finally, the difficulties our neighbors are facing in exerting effective control over their border areas with Israel have the potential of creating spheres of action against Israel, most notably, terror attacks into its territory. Israel already faced a number of armed attacks from Sinai in the summers of 2011 and 2012 but a similar threat may evolve from the Golan Heights front.³ Ineffective law enforcement in border regions may lead to further challenges such as easier transit of illegal labor immigrants, drugs, and criminal elements. Israel may also have to deal with the flow of refugees.⁴

As these lines are written in the summer of 2012 early signs of the “threat of the weak” emanates primarily from Egyptian Sinai. However, as noted, Israeli officials warned that that the Syria may soon pose a similar challenge to Israel. Israel's two other neighbors, Lebanon and Jordan are stable for now, but as they face significant internal challenges they may present Israel with a similar problem. The challenge of the weak is not limited to Israel's immediate neighbors, but also extends to other regional actors. For example, the collapse of the Libyan regime, over a thousand miles away from the Jewish state's borders, released large quantities of advanced weapons that according to Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister, “upgraded Hamas' abilities”.⁵

B. Lebanon as a Weak State: A Brief Overview

The weakness of the Lebanese state is primarily a result of its inability to create a collective identity that would supersede the continued significance of communal-religious identities; and the failure of state institutions to adapt to power shifts between these communal-religious groups.⁶ The more traditional religious and ethnic identities of

² Robert I. Rotberg, “Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators,” *Wilson Center: Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity*, 7 July 2011. See: www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/failed-states-collapsed-states-and-weak-states-causes-and-indicators.

³ See for example: Ahikam Moshe David, “Concern about Penetrations from Syria to Israel”, *NRG*, 20 July 2012.

⁴ “Barak Touring the North: If There Will be Need to Stop Waves of Immigrants from Syria, They will be Stopped”, *Walla*, 19 July 2012.

⁵ “Remarks by DFM Ayalon following the escalation in the south”, Israeli MFA website, 10 March 2012, www.mfa.gov.il/MFAHeb/Diplomatic+updates/Events/Remarks_by_DFM_Ayalon_100312.htm?wbc_purpose=Basic&WBCMODE=PresentationUnpublishedIsrael-medical-Japan-21-Mar-11.

⁶ Latif Abul-Husn, *The Lebanese Conflict: Looking inward* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), p. 9.

Lebanon's diverse population kept their central role throughout the postcolonial evolution of the state.⁷ Moreover, Lebanon absorbed in 1948-1949 a large Palestinian refugee population that both added to the ethnic mix and imported the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into the fragile Lebanese context. The institutional arrangement of the state, a sect-based power sharing, allowed for effective management but also replicated the state's weakness by maintaining the political role of the various communities. Moreover, the institutional architecture did not adapt to the changing demographic reality by which the previous dominant group - the Christian Maronites – was no longer in the plurality. This led to the development of another weak state attribute: the state's loss of control over the means of violence. First, under the 1969 Cairo accords that allowed the PLO extra-territorial rights in Lebanon⁸, and then in the 1975-1990 Lebanese civil war.⁹ This further led to partial occupation of Lebanon by Syria and Israel until 2000 and 2005 respectively.

C. Israel in Lebanon

1. Early Days: 1967-1982

Beginning in 1965, but especially following the 1967 War and the ejection of the Palestinian armed groups from Jordan by 1971, Palestinian groups began to launch attacks from south-Lebanon into Israel. As noted, the 1969 Cairo agreement between Lebanon and the PLO gave the latter a de-facto right to attack Israel from Lebanon.¹⁰ Between June 2, 1965 and May 9, 1982, the Israeli media reported 587 attacks from Lebanon by various Palestinian armed groups on targets in Israel.¹¹ Most of the attacks were on the civilian settlements in Israel's northern region, the Galilee.¹² South-Lebanon was attractive as a base for action against Israel for a number of reasons. Beyond the weakness of the Lebanese state, Lebanon offered favorable human¹³ and geographical¹⁴ terrain as well as proximity to the Palestinian political leadership that was situated in Beirut.

In the 1970's Israel tried a number of strategies to deflect the threat. First, Israel punished the Lebanese state for Palestinian actions. Perhaps most notably, Israel did

⁷ For a detailed analysis of the process see: Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

⁸ For an interesting comparison between Jordan and Lebanon's handling of the challenge posed by the PLO in the late 1960s see: Farid El Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon 1967-1976* (London: I.B Tauris Publishers, 2000), pp. 110-127.

⁹ For a detailed description and analysis of the war see: Adam Arnon. *To Die in Beirut: The Lebanese Civil War 1975-1990* (Hod Hasharon: Astrolog, 2007) [Hebrew].

¹⁰ Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle-East* (Cambridge: Center for International Affairs, 1979), pp. 80-81; Trevor N. Dupuy and Paul Martel, *Flawed Victory: The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the 1982 War in Lebanon* (Fairfax, VA: Hero Books, 1986), p. 29.

¹¹ This data does not include two types of attacks when they did not cause to casualties: mines that were planted in Israeli territory and attacks with firearms. See: Ofer Ben-David, *The Lebanon Campaign* (Technoseder, location unknown, 1985), pp. 117-137 [Hebrew].

¹² Benny Morris, *Righteous Victim: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict*, (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2003), p. 468 [Hebrew]

¹³ Morris, *Ibid*, pp. 467-469

¹⁴ Moshe Bar-Kochba, "Operation Kalahat 2", *Ma'arachot* 14, August 1988, pp. 312-313; Moshe Tamir, *Undeclared War* (Tel-Aviv: Ma'arachot, 2005), pp. 73-74 [Hebrew].

so in the 1968 attack on Beirut's airport. Israel also tried denial as its forces routinely raided Palestinian bases in Lebanon. In that period Israel also tried targeted assassinations, most notably in an April 1973 attack on the private residences of senior PLO officials. In 1978 Israel escalated its response. Following an attack on a bus in Israel that killed 37 civilians, Israeli forces entered southern-Lebanon for a few weeks (operation Litani) and dismantled Palestinian armed infrastructure killing some 300 Palestinian combatants. Israel withdrew back to the international border within a few weeks, only after the United Nations deployed there a Peacekeeping Force, UNIFIL.¹⁵ During the 1970's Israel further used a local Lebanese militia that opposed the Palestinians and established by 1978 three small enclaves near the Israeli border. However, further rounds of Palestinian attacks and Israeli retaliation continued and by the early 1980's the 6,000 strong PLO force in Lebanon as well as smaller forces from other Palestinian armed groups¹⁶ were effective enough to force Israel to agree to a formal US brokered cease-fire with the organization.¹⁷

2. War: 1982-1985

Israel perceived the 1981 cease-fire as a temporary measure, and sought a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian threat via war.¹⁸ On June 6, 1982 Israeli forces invaded Lebanon.¹⁹ Formally, the Israeli government declared that the attack (named operation Peace for the Galilee) was to "remove the Galilee settlements from the range of [the] terrorists in Lebanon".²⁰ Later in the summer it emerged that Israel had wider war goals: to eject the political leadership of the Palestinian national movement from its seat in Lebanon's capital, possibly annihilating it as a significant political actor,²¹ and to secure the election of a pro-Israeli Lebanese President that would sign a peace agreement with Israel. It seems that Israeli officials also hoped that the war would force the Syrians to leave Lebanon.²²

By the end of the summer Israel achieved almost all its goals. By mid-June, 1982 Israeli forces secured their control over south and central Lebanon including the outskirts of the capital Beirut. On August 23, 1982 Israel's ally, Bashir Gemayel, was elected President of Lebanon. By September 1, 1982, and following US and French intervention, the PLO's political and military operatives left Lebanon. Syria – bruised by clashes with Israeli forces - vacated the capital Beirut.

Yet, Israel's success was short lived. On September 14, 1982 President Gemayel was assassinated and replaced by his pro-Syrian brother, Amin Gemayel. While the

¹⁵ Morris, *Ibid*, p. 470; Willem-Jan van der Wolf and Claudia Tofan (eds.) *The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon* (Nijmegen The Netherlands: Wolf Legal Publishing, 2010) .

¹⁶ Reuven Avi-Ran, *The Lebanon War: Arab Documents Volume II* (Tel-Aviv: Ma'arachot, 1997), p. 13 [Hebrew]

¹⁷ Morris, *Ibid*, p. 475.

¹⁸ Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 37; Yehuda Vagman, "One Goal Too Many", *Ma'arachot* 413, July 2007, p. 5 [Hebrew].

¹⁹ The immediate impetus was an attempt on the life of Israel's Ambassador in London.

²⁰ Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *War of Deceit* (Tel-Aviv: Schocken, 1984), p. 389.

²¹ Fredric C. Hof, *Galilee Divided: The Israel-Lebanon Frontier 1916-1984* (Boulder: Westview, 1984), p. 98.

²² Morris, *Ibid*, p. 486.

Lebanese government signed on May 17, 1983 an end-of-hostilities-agreement with Israel, it cancelled it under Syrian pressure on March 5, 1984.²³ The prolongation of the Lebanese civil war in areas under Israeli control forced Israel to invest resources in controlling the various fractions.

In 1984 Israel left its positions near Beirut and withdrew south, to the line of the Awali river. Israel still held on to southern and parts of central Lebanon with the hope of guaranteeing at least limited security arrangements in return for withdrawal. Yet, the Nakure talks (November 1984-January 1985) between Israel and Lebanon also failed.

3. The Security Zone: the Unintended Campaign 1985-1990

By early 1985 Israel realized that it will not be able to secure its northern sector through an agreement with Lebanon. As a result, Jerusalem adopted a unilateral defensive strategy that was intended to prevent penetrations (but not shelling) into Israeli territory. The new approach included three elements: (1) A strong defensive posture alongside the international border, (2) the deployment of a pro-Israeli Lebanese militia (the SLA),²⁴ in a “security zone”²⁵ north of the border, and Israeli military support in the “security Zone” for the SLA.²⁶

In the first few months of the redeployment, significant aspects of the new defensive posture advanced as planned. However, by 1986 the 2700 soldiers strong SLA was crumbling under a renewed wave of attacks by Shiite organizations, mostly Amal and Hezbollah.²⁷

This crisis led to further policy readjustment. Israel reoccupied some of the fire bases it transferred earlier to the SLA and began attacking Hezbollah posts in an effort to ease the pressure of the SLA. The Israeli military presence will remain in place until 2000. Israel also launched a “hearts and minds effort” that included modest material support for the local population including permits for locals to work in Israel. The combination of a renewed Israeli efforts and the internal Amal-Hezbollah fighting in the late 1980’s led to a dramatic decline in the number and effect of Hezbollah’s attacks in south Lebanon in the years 1989-1990. During those years Israel still dealt with, and responded to, a

²³ Kristen E. Shulze, *Israel's Covert Diplomacy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 142.

²⁴ The idea had its formal origins in the defunct 17 May 1983 Israeli-Lebanese agreement. In the annex to the agreement the Lebanese government undertook to create a “security region” in south Lebanon in which it would: “Enforce special security measures aimed at detecting and preventing hostile activities as well as the introduction into or movement through the security region of unauthorized armed men or military equipment. See: Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Agreement Between Israel and Lebanon - 17 May 1983, www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1982-1984/114%20Agreement%20between%20Israel%20and%20Lebanon-%2017%20May%201983.

²⁵ The area, some 1,000 Sq. KM, was about 10% of Lebanon’s territory see: Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 22.

²⁶ Israel considered other options including long term deployment in Lebanon (in different formations). A third option was to withdraw to the international border. See: Reuven Erlich, *The Concept of the Security Zone and the Test of Reality*, in: *The Security Zone in Lebanon: A Reconsideration* (Jerusalem: Davis Institute for international Affairs 1997), p. 13 [Hebrew].

²⁷ Yossi Peled (with Ronit Vardi), *Ish Tsava* (Tel Aviv: Maariv, 1993), p. 338 [Hebrew].

small number of Palestinian attacks. On November 25th 1987, for example, a Palestinian operative glided from Lebanon and attacked an Israeli army base close to the border, killing 6 soldiers.

4. A Renewed Hezbollah Effort: 1990-1997

In late 1990, Hezbollah renewed its efforts against Israel. The organization transformed its approach and adopted a more traditional guerrilla tactics. It constructed small and well concealed outposts, ambushed Israeli forces, made extensive use of mortar fire and later anti-tank missiles. Hezbollah was also effective in using the media. The organization was also able to deter Israel from targeted assassinations, after it punished Jerusalem Hezbollah's Secretary General by staging two attacks on Jewish and Israeli targets in Argentina. In 1993 the number of Hezbollah attacks went up 80% and Israel sought a systemic response to Hezbollah's challenge Israel's strategy²⁸ was to force Syria to contain the organization. The Israeli method included the use of firepower not only to destroy Hezbollah targets but mostly some three hundred thousand Lebanese from south and central Lebanon (beyond the "security zone") to flee their homes. Israeli planners hoped that the humanitarian crisis will force the Lebanese government to ask the Syrian one to contain Hezbollah. Despite the questionable moral strength of this strategy, it did lead to an American arbitrated informal agreement in which Israel and Hezbollah agreed not attack civilians (in Israel or in Hezbollah controlled areas). Attacks on Israeli military targets in the security zone were, in effect, permitted. A similar operation in April 1996 was concluded by a written agreement, in effect, between Israel and Hezbollah, in which both parties agreed to accept rules of the game, similar to the ones agreed upon in 1993. This time, the rules were accompanied with a four way monitoring committee (Lebanese-Syrian-Israeli-French). In the meantime Israel also made some changes to its operations on the ground, and adopted a more aggressive posture towards Hezbollah by developing a combat capacity tailored to the Hezbollah challenge.²⁹

5. In the Shadow of withdrawal: 1997-2000

Although in immediate military terms Israel had become more effective against Hezbollah, some aspects of Israeli civil society began questioning Israeli policy there. This was a result of a large number of casualties in 1997 (mostly due to a helicopter accident that killed 73 soldiers). To this point, the IDF controlled public critique, mostly conducting Lebanon operations by a small number of mostly conscription soldiers, coupled by a limited and controlled access to media. A number of grass roots movements (*four mothers, the movement for leaving Lebanon*) combined forces and

²⁸ Operation Accountability, 25-31 July 1993.

²⁹ Changes were made both on the general staff HQ as well as in the northern command. More resources were directed towards the forces on the ground and a special unit – *Egoz* – was set up especially to fight Hezbollah. Its existence was kept a secret for over a year. On the Northern command level, General Levine encouraged special operations, including long range attacks on Hezbollah targets deep in Lebanon. He also appointed a social assistant for special Ops, Moshe Tamir. Levine further changed his approach to operation independence on the ground and gave preference to initiative over strict adherence to standard procedures, even in cases where initiative led to casualties.

gained greater public traction. In 1998, the Likud led cabinet announced that Israel is willing to accept the 1978 UNSCR 425, which called for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Its implementation however was delayed until the security measures could be worked out. The debate now was not about leaving Lebanon, but under what conditions. The killing of Israel's most senior officer in Lebanon in February 1999 in the midst of a bitter political campaign led the candidate that would eventually win the elections, Ehud Barak, to commit himself to leave Lebanon when elected. Israel tried again to secure its northern border as part of a broader agreement with Syria (1999-2000), but one the negotiation failed in early 2000 Israel completed its withdrawal by May 2000.

6. 2000-2012: Containment and then War

Upon its withdrawal Israel moved to a stated policy of deterrence, but effectively practiced containment.³⁰ Despite the strong warnings by Prime-Minister Barak and the Chief of Staff Lt. General Shaul Mofaz, Israel responded in a measured way to an October 2000 abduction of three Israeli soldiers that were patrolling the border with Lebanon. Israel held on to this policy even when five Israeli civilians (as well as one military person) were killed by Palestinians that penetrated from Lebanon.³¹ Israel adopted containment as its preferred policy for a number of reasons: (1) its desire to focus on the security challenge posed by the second Palestinian Intifada and not open a second front; (2) the deterrent posture of Hezbollah; (3) a desire not to get embroiled in another ground assault on Lebanon; (4) a preference not to interrupt internal processes in Lebanon that seemed favorable to Israel.³²

Yet, in the summer of 2006 Israel, unexpectedly, launched into a 33 day operation (later named the second Lebanon war) against Hezbollah. Yet, a massive air and a limited ground operation did not end effective Hezbollah shelling on Israel's northern sector. However, since 2006 Hezbollah was careful not to provoke Israel and did not initiate attacks against it. Looking back then from 2012, the 2006 operation did create a deterrent effect against Hezbollah.

D. Lessons

Caveats: Paraphrasing Tolstoy, if all strong states are strong in the same way, every weak state is weak in its own way. And so, while the lessons of Israel's engagement in Lebanon are instructive they should be adapted to the realities created by the Arab Spring. First, Syria and Egypt offer different types of weakness. While Syria is torn by a civil war, Egypt's government is legitimate but suffers from an under-resourced and ineffective force in Sinai. Another important difference is that Israel and Egypt are parties to a 1979 peace agreement; and that Israel and Syria are parties to a 1974 disengagement agreement.

³⁰ The Commission for the Review of the events of the 2006 Lebanon Campaign (the Winograd Report): Partial Report, April 2007, p. 44.

³¹ Ibid. p. 41

³² Ibid. p. 45

Weakness invites other challengers: The Lebanese experience shows that the most significant problem emerging out of a weak neighboring state is the arrival of other foes into the spaces the state abandoned. The PLO in the 1970's and Iran via Hezbollah posed over the years the gravest danger to Israel from the Lebanon. Indeed, Israel's biggest current concern, for example, is that Hezbollah will be used by Iran to deter Israel from attacking Iran. The emerging threat from Egypt, and possibly from Syria,³³ suggests that global Jihadi elements might do the same.

Manage the problem - do not expect to resolve it: Israel's experience in Lebanon shows that a weak neighbor is a challenge that defies permanent solutions. Israel's attempts to solve the militarized challenge posed to it from a weak Lebanon spans more than four decades. During this time Israel tried, as noted above, to coerce the Lebanese state, Israel's non state challengers, and strong states that supported the non-state actors. It used a variety of tactics including attacks on the assets on the weak state (1968), assassinations of leaders of challenging groups (both PLO and Hezbollah in 1973 and 1992 respectively), the creation of a local militia (1976-2000), small militarized incursions (1970s), and large scale invasions (1978, 1982), deployment of international forces: both UN mission (1978-) and actual Western combat forces (1982-1983). Israel also tried to secure a us brokered cease-fire (1981-1982) a peace agreement (1983), a military agreement (1984) and to inflict a humanitarian crisis (1993, 1996). Only two types of activities led to a decline in the threat Israel faced: third party brokered cease-fire (1981-1982), and large scale invasions (in 1978 and 1982). The latter, however, created a new set of threats that ultimately dwarfed the original threat they removed.

Variables out of Israel's control have a major effect: Moreover, the magnitude of the threat posed to Israel over time was not simply a result of the clash between Israel and its foes. Indeed, the internal constraints these foes faced – like the late 1980s Hezbollah-Amal conflict – had a significant effect on their ability to attack Israel. This is a lesson in humility and the limits of Israeli force. It also means that Israel can secure some of its goals by diplomatically (or otherwise) developing internal constraints on the freedom of action of non-state actors in a weak state. The immediate implication is that Israel should develop as many channels as possible to understand, and maybe even effect, internal developments in Syria and Egypt. Israel should re-engage Turkey as Ankara is perhaps best positioned to understand and affect internal events in Syria. In the Egyptian context Israel should gain a better understand and access to the international actors that Cairo is engaging in order to solve its internal economic crisis.

Beware of grand solutions: Israel's most dramatic effort to resolve the adverse security effects of a weak Lebanese state – the 1982 invasion -- ended in a strategic blunder. While the PLO was removed from the Lebanon, Syria got stronger. More significantly, Hezbollah was created as a result of the war, rose to national leadership position and created an ongoing security challenge for Israel. Looking back from 2012, the greatest challenge posed by Hezbollah – an indeed the most undesirable outcome

³³ Syria's Deputy Prime Minister stated recently that his country had become a "base" of Al Qaida. See: "Syria's Deputy Prime-Minister: We have become a Base for Al-Qaida", *Globes*, 24 August 2012 [Hebrew].

of the 1982 war – is the fact that the organization plays an important part on Iranian deterrence against Israel. In other words, a 1980s operational problem had become a strategic issue by the first decade of the 2000s. This change was unexpected from a 1982 Israeli perspective, demonstrating that in the unstable multivariable environment of weak states grand moves have a greater chance to backfire. In the context of Egypt and Syria this lesson highlights, for example, the extreme caution Israel should exercise in taking action that might endanger the peace agreement with Egypt.

International actors can help, but will not resolve problem: Since 1975 a number of international actors tried to stabilize the Lebanese system, or aspects of it. These included a Syrian force authorized by other Arab countries, the United Nations force in south Lebanon (UNIFIL), and direct deployment of American and French forces in the country in 1983. With the exception of the Syrian intervention, none of these forces was able to deliver security. With the exception of UNIFIL, they were all dragged into internal Lebanese fighting. The immediate implication is that Israel should be realistic regarding Washington's ability to guarantee its interest in Egypt. More specifically, continued attacks on the multinational force on the Sinai might lead to its withdrawal. Similarly, if Syria will experience militarized international intervention, we should accept that it will not necessarily secure our northern border.

Temporary institutions and arrangements can last and can be transformed: This is perhaps most obvious in the case of UNIFIL, the UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon. It was created in 1978 by the UN following Israel Operation Litani. In 2006 it was expanded and strengthened following the 2006 Second Lebanon war. As in Lebanon, both in Egyptian Sinai and the Israeli-Syrian Golan front, there are international peace keeping organizations: The Multinational Force and observers (MFO) and the Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) respectively. Despite the limitations of both³⁴ the Lebanese experience shows that they can be altered in a way that could adjust them to the new emerging security realities. The immediate implications are that Israel should develop ideas regarding possible adaptation of the existing international forces in Sinai (MFO) and the Golan (UNDOF) in a way that could mitigate the new threats. These could include ideas about a new force structure or new types of operations.

Need for constant attention: Israel's fundamental failure since the early 1990's is that it did not adjust its security posture, the one based on the self-declared security zone, to the changing reality. The security zone was constructed in order to deflect the pre-1982 threats of Palestinian attempts to shell or to penetrate Israel. However, by the early 1990s the main foe that evolved was Hezbollah that focused its efforts on Israeli forces in Lebanon, rather than on Israel's civilian population. Israeli forces on the ground were slow in adapting to the new challenge, and the political leadership changes its position only in 2000 when it ordered an Israeli withdrawal from the region. At least in part, Israel's failure is a result of inattention by the political leadership and the higher military

³⁴ Aharon Levran, *The UN as an element in the security arrangement in the northern border*, Memo 13, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel-Aviv, February 1985 [Hebrew].

levels. The main threat during this decade was still Syria, and more broadly Israel was busy with the peace process and the possibility of a political arrangement with Damascus which will include a Lebanese component. With a similar instability in Egypt and Syria, Israel might benefit from a more constant and rigorous policy process which will include a periodical review of the nature of the challenge, the options for meeting it, and for the relevance of existing solutions.

Policy agility: Similarly, the unstable nature of the challenge further warrants a willingness to develop and execute policy changes in short order much as Israel experienced in Lebanon.

Look at the opportunities: Alongside the complex set of problems that a weak state inflicts on its neighbors, these states also provide opportunities for the latter. In the case of Lebanon, Israel was able to develop a relationship with a significant element on the Lebanese society, the Maronites. Though this relationship may have contributed to the debacle of the 1982 invasion, they nevertheless allowed Israel access to an elite group in a neighboring country, which has been an old goal of Zionism. The challenge of the weak further creates an internal institutional opportunity, namely, openness to new ideas both in framing the challenge as well as in developing ideas to respond to it. In the context of the current weakness in Syria and Egypt, there are a number of opportunities:

- The possibility to develop of new sets of mutual interests with regional and international players. Most notably with Turkey over Syria, and with the Egyptian government over its effective control in Sinai, and the movement of African immigrants.
- The possibility of new opportunities to communicate with a wider set of actors in the Arab world, including former elites, and challengers to the existing regimes. The massive political and social dislocation in both societies may allow some of its members to be willing to explore talks with Israel and Israelis.
- In the internal Israeli arena the weakness in Syria in Lebanon could be used by the progressive camp to highlight Israel's strength when compared to the crumbling Syria and Egypt. In turn, a greater sense of security might allow a future Israeli leader to take greater risks, at least in the Palestinian front.
- In the internal Israeli front, the need to re-shape Israeli policy in the face of the Syrian and Egyptian weakness will most likely create a rare moment of openness in the foreign and security establishments. This creates an opportunity, including for progressives to affect policy.
- Finally, the nature of the challenge of the weak, entails many times a regional solution such as the one Israel sought with Syria and the US in the late 1990s regarding Lebanon. This creates an opportunity for progressives prefer a higher level of regional involvement to advance their agenda.

Develop wide analytical frameworks: As noted above, some of Israel's failures were a result of a limited understating of the nature of the challenge as was the case in the self-declared security zone in the 1990s. Similarly, Israel did not understand the possible effects of its 1982 invasion on the internal Lebanese dynamics, and in particular of the Shiites. Therefore, going forward, Israel will benefit from analyzing the problems of a weak state with the widest possible lens well beyond a limited military view. This conversation will benefit from opening it up to scholars and practitioners who may lack military understanding have a good sense, for example, of the human terrain in the places under review. In the context of the questions at hand such an analysis inter alia should include an in-depth understating of the nature of state weakness, the local society and cleavages, nature of external actors, and set of constraints. Israel will benefit if it will engage experts and civil society actors in the formulation of its policies regarding its neighboring states.