



SMALL WARS JOURNAL

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Getting it Right: What the 34-day War Has to Teach the US Army

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Introduction

As the United States fights wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and continues its counterterrorism efforts, the US Army is in the midst of transformation. This transformation is affecting nearly all aspects of the institution, to include organization, doctrine, and training. While many of the changes are logical based on the current operational needs to win the ongoing wars, the Army has based other changes on a future threat assessment that remains subject to debate. Technology and the availability of other resources have also shaped these changes.

The current transformation draws the wrong conclusion from the current US wars and does not pay adequate attention to the Israel-Hezbollah war of 2006, and that the current transformation does not prepare the Army to conduct hybrid warfare. Instead, the Army should adopt an organizational structure and training design capable of winning decisively against hybrid and conventional threats in the future.

What has been evident since 2002 has been the emergence of hybrid threats. These threats are irregular forces that fight using a mix of conventional and asymmetric means. Groups like Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, or Hamas conducting combat operations that mimic what we typically associate with state armies, including the use of off-the-shelf technologies, urban population centers for force protection, and sensitive infrastructure may be what the future of warfare holds for the US. Future adversaries may fight in this manner to mitigate the technological and operational advantages modern conventional forces possess. These groups also choose to stand and defend territory or their centers of gravity. This hybrid form of warfare renders the standard definitions of conventional, unconventional, and irregular warfare obsolete. The most obvious hybrid threats have shown an ability to conduct classic guerilla operations while also being capable of fighting protracted terrain or force-oriented battles against conventional forces. Hybrid warfare will require US forces to be able to simultaneously conduct conventional and irregular combat operations among civilian population centers. US forces may or may not have local security forces to support their combat operations. Going forward, US forces must expect to fight on an asymmetric battlefield regardless of the enemy force.

These hybrid threats have grown in capability and ambition. The violent groups that have been most prominent have shown an ability to move beyond classic guerilla operations and have compelled governments and their conventional forces to take heed. For the US, these irregular

forces have blurred the lines between conventional and irregular warfare as to make them nearly indistinguishable. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban fought several protracted battles against US forces in Afghanistan; Shia militias, insurgents, and al-Qaeda in Iraq have fought major engagements against US forces since the fall of Saddam Hussein's government. What makes these examples different from classic conventional warfare is that the irregular forces centered their efforts in built-up areas, used civilians and civil infrastructure in attempts to mitigate the conventional forces' weapons and targeting capabilities, and the irregular forces also used guerilla weapons and tactics like improvised explosive devices and ambushes to wear down the conventional force. This convergence of conventional and irregular warfare has nearly invalidated the old categorizations of warfare.

Army Transformation

In discussing the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review in May 2009, the Army Chief of Staff, General George Casey, said that the Army is moving away from a focus on conventional war in favor of centering on fighting irregular conflicts – counterinsurgencies and conducting stability operations, as failed or failing states can become safe havens or start points for attacks against the United States.¹ GEN Casey went on to say that the world is in an “era of persistent conflict,” which he defines as an extended time period of conflict between state, non-state, and political actors.² In describing this era, GEN Casey believes that while the nature of war never changes, the character of conflict does, and he went on to say that Hezbollah is the threat model of the future.³

Moving away from its Cold War structure, the Army has morphed into more deployable formations with a smaller logistical footprint that are more easily deployed in comparison with the Desert Storm-era, division-based organization. Many of the combat enabling functions typically held at the division level, like information operations, intelligence, and communications systems are now at the brigade level. Within the brigades, in order to create more brigades from the same number of Soldiers, there was a loss of one maneuver battalion. For example, a reconnaissance squadron replaced the maneuver battalion, resulting in a 30% reduction in the number of total battalions and reduced the brigade's ability to “put boots on the ground, which was based on the assumption of information technology covering for the lack of available forces.”⁴ Other notable changes included a reduction in air defense, engineer capability, and less fire support. These changes are logical based on the assumption that the most likely enemy the Army will face looks like a poorly equipped irregular force that occasionally chooses to fight a protracted engagement – a weak hybrid threat.

There are recent developments that have changed the way the Army conducts operations today. Army doctrine has evolved to include lessons learned in Afghanistan and Iraq, including a new counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine for the Army. COIN and stability operations have received

¹ Casey, George. Speech before the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Military Strategy Forum. 28 May 2009. Washington DC. <http://csis.org/event/military-strategy-forum-army-era-persistent-conflict>

² Casey Speech.

³ Casey Speech.

⁴ Ucko, David. The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the US Military for Modern Wars. Georgetown University Press, 2009. P. 154.

greater emphasis within doctrine and unit training. Due to operational necessity high-tempo combat operations beyond infantry squad and platoon battle drills, which have high utility in the ongoing fights, have not had much prominence. Second, the Army continues to increasingly develop and rely on advanced information technologies (IT) and precision guidance (PG) technology in order to leverage the traditional advantage in firepower that US forces have had since the end of World War II. Finally, despite setbacks with the cancellation of the Future Combat System, the Army continues its effort to maximize technology to reduce the friction and fog of war. These three developments may create unacceptable risk for the US Army. The fights in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, provide clear warnings to the Army as it continues to reorganize and refocus for operations in “an era of persistent conflict” where the US Army must be able to deter and defeat the hybrid threat Hezbollah illustrates; this type of threat is the likely future of conflict for “the next decade or so.”⁵

Israeli War of 2006: Hezbollah

Hezbollah demonstrated a military capability that presented a significant challenge to Israeli forces during the Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006, and these capabilities are becoming ubiquitous. Hezbollah showed a willingness and capability to stand and conduct a coordinated high-intensity, high-tempo fight using asymmetric tactics, techniques, and procedures by irregular forces. Tactically, Hezbollah fighters often engaged Israeli forces in extended firefights, some lasting anywhere between 4-8 hours of sustained and continuous combat. These extended engagements also occurred over differing ranges, including close quarters.⁶ This was a clear departure from their history of suicide attacks, bombings, and guerilla operations. Hezbollah chose to move away from the classic hit-and-run tactics and ambushes in favor of engaging the Israeli Defense Force in sustained direct fire combat.

Analysis has shown that for irregular forces to have tactical success, their close range ambushes must end before the attacked force recovers from the initial shock, otherwise the irregular force faces increasing risk of failure.⁷ However, Hezbollah’s decision to stand and fight has strategic benefit by increasing their support across the Middle East.⁸ The 2009 assessment from the DNI demonstrated that the potential for greater support to guerilla groups is a real risk.^{9 10} The United States cannot assume that future insurgencies or guerilla forces will not gain strength through external sources. As a result, the United States must continue to prepare for the type of conventional fight that Hezbollah was able to put up against the Israeli’s in 2006. Changes to the

⁵ Casey Speech.

⁶ Biddle, Stephen; Friedman, Jeffrey A. “The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy.” US Army Strategic Studies Institute. September 2008. Carlisle, PA. P. 35.

⁷ Biddle et al. P. 36.

⁸ MacGregor, Andrew. “Support for Hezbollah in Egypt Threatens Mubarak’s Stability.” Terrorism Focus, Volume 3. 7 September 2006. Viewed through the Jamestown Foundation website at http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=888

⁹ ADM Blair, Dennis. Office of the Director of National Intelligence Annual Intelligence Threat Assessment. 12 February 2009. Washington DC. P. 8.

¹⁰ ADM Blair, Dennis. Office of the Director of National Intelligence Annual Intelligence Threat Assessment. 12 February 2009. Washington DC. P. 15.

Army are supposed to reflect Hezbollah's demonstrated capabilities and its willingness to decisively engage a strong conventional force, but that capability is dubious.

Hezbollah executed substantial combat operations against the IDF and were able to sustain conventional-style defensive operations in the face of numerically superior forces and technology. Hezbollah's strength during the 2006 war is estimated to have been anywhere between 2,000 and 7,000 fighters. With this limited number of fighters, Hezbollah managed to decisively engage a significant portion of three Israeli divisions, which had been mobilized for the conflict.¹¹ There are several decisions Hezbollah made in its defense against IDF offensive operations which clearly demonstrated an ability to conduct warfare beyond classic irregular warfare. Hezbollah's 'village fighters,' local militia-style forces, mounted dug-in, static defenses of Lebanese towns with the task of attriting Israeli forces¹² and these forces were not front-line Hezbollah forces and were unable to withstand concerted Israeli attacks, but they were able to slow the Israeli tempo and thus neutralize the IDF's mobility advantage.

Hezbollah's use of civilian areas and civilians themselves posed a significant challenge to Israel's kinetic targeting of enemy forces, even with the use of precision munitions, due to difficulty in target identification and the probability of error for such weapons.¹³ Hezbollah also had several coercive means of damaging Israel's war effort, notably the threat of suicide bombers and rocket fire. The areas used to launch rockets were located in places where target identification was impossible, requiring the IDF to conduct ground assaults against defending Hezbollah forces.¹⁴ The use of such tactics and techniques essentially required the IDF to conduct close combat operations, reducing its ability to rely on long-range fires or close air support and to fight Hezbollah in prepared defensive positions. Hezbollah was able to mitigate Israel's long-range strike capability with the use of shorter-range weapons, forcing Israel to commit to fight in close areas on the ground.¹⁵ In the close fight, Hezbollah fighters often held their defensive positions even as Israeli forces closed to short ranges.¹⁶

Tactically, Hezbollah clearly had an ability to fight conventional forces at a fairly high level of complexity. They demonstrated a capacity to employ complex obstacles with direct fire overwatch, which required attacking Israeli forces to conduct deliberate breaching operations.¹⁷ Their fighters forced some Israeli units to react to multiple forms of contact simultaneously, which enabled them to close with those units to hand-to-hand range.¹⁸ Hezbollah fire discipline was effective and even. They were able to support by fire from multiple directions while integrating obstacles and antitank guided missiles (ATGMs).

Hezbollah effectively employed advanced combat systems, including medium and long-range rockets, unmanned aerial vehicles, and modern antitank weapons. They even used cluster

¹¹ Biddle et al. P. 56.

¹² Cordesman, Anthony. *The "Gaza War": A Strategic Analysis*. Final Review Draft: Circulated for Comment and Updating. Washington DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies. 2009. Pp. 81-83.

¹³ Cordesman. P. 44-45.

¹⁴ Biddle et al. P. 49.

¹⁵ Cordesman. P. 39.

¹⁶ Biddle et al. P. 37.

¹⁷ Biddle et al. Pp. 42-43.

¹⁸ Biddle et al. P. 39.

munitions in some of its 13,000¹⁹ 122mm rockets against civilian targets. This was Hezbollah's first documented use, and there may be further proliferation of these types of weapons to other non-state actors.²⁰ This suggests two things that may be of concern for US forces in the future. First, this non-state entity has access to weapons beyond what many consider available to guerilla forces. In Hezbollah's case, this is largely due to Iranian state support. Second, Hezbollah's use of these weapons hints at a higher level of training than normally associated with some local, ad hoc militia. There is a strong possibility that they have developed some training and doctrine in support of their paramilitary efforts. Hezbollah's Rocket Forces were largely inaccurate and in order to get their desired effects, but there was a framework for lethality.²¹

Hezbollah's AT forces used some of the most modern antitank systems²² against IDF armor and massed infantry and structures.²³ These AT systems were the cause of about 40% of IDF casualties,²⁴ including most armor crewmen and many infantrymen located in man-made structures.²⁵ In light of this, it is logical that the proliferation of advanced weapons will make non-state actors a growing threat to US forces in the future. The US has already faced these AT weapons. Iraqi insurgents have displayed a similar, though less advanced, lethal antitank capability.^{26 27}

Hezbollah employed UAVs, and their use has not only increased within western military forces, but also among guerilla and irregular forces. This is a capability that should be of greater concern for the US. Like other technologies in use today, it makes sense to expect an enemy to employ UAVs with similar capabilities as American UAVs – including night and thermal vision and to also use them as a weapons platform. Hezbollah's UAVs may have even been equipped with explosives and night-vision capabilities.²⁸ In Iraq, insurgents have seized US unmanned aerial vehicles, possibly for use against US forces.²⁹ It is not a stretch of the imagination to envision guerilla forces collecting intelligence or conducting strikes using off-the-shelf products adapted for their use as well as co-opting captured Western UAVs.

¹⁹ Casey Speech.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch. Lebanon/Israel: Hezbollah Hit Israel with Cluster Munitions During Conflict. 18 October 2006. See online at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2006/10/18/lebanonisrael-hezbollah-hit-israel-cluster-munitions-during-conflict>

²¹ Cordesman. P. 102.

²² Barabanov, Mikhail. "Russian Anti-Armor Weapons and Israeli Tanks in Lebanon." Moscow Defense Brief #2, 2009. See online at <http://mdb.cast.ru/mdb/2-2007/item2/item1/>

²³ Cordesman. P. 109.

²⁴ Casey. P. 27.

²⁵ Schiff, Ze'ev. "The War's Surprises." Haaretz.com. 18 August 2006. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=751958>

²⁶ Gordon, Michael R. and Rubin, Alissa J. "Operation in Sadr City Is an Iraqi Success, So Far." New York Times. 21 May 2008. P. A1.

²⁷ Rayment, Sean. "MoD Kept Failure of Best Tank Quiet." British Telegraph. 13 May 2007.

²⁸ Cordesman. Pp. 105-107.

²⁹ Hambling, David. "Insurgent American Drone Discovered in Baghdad Cache." Wired.com. 20 June 2008. See full text at <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2008/06/insurgents-unma/>

Hezbollah demonstrated a highly-developed command and control ability that further communication advances make more likely for future adversaries.³⁰ Hezbollah had conducted extensive planning for the fight with Israel³¹ and they used encrypted radio and ‘real time’ communications systems, including cell phones and computers.³²³³ Israel had difficulty in neutralizing these emerging capabilities.³⁴

Israeli War of 2006: IDF

The Israeli Defense Force had several difficulties in fighting an irregular force like Hezbollah due to their overemphasis in training and force structure on counterinsurgency operations. Lacking a solid training foundation, Hezbollah caught the IDF unprepared. Israeli leaders did not employ their forces effectively, partially because of a widely held line of reasoning that they would not be facing an enemy requiring conventional combat. Senior IDF leaders did not plan for a major ground offensive and were caught unprepared once the war had escalated to the point that one was required.³⁵ They employed their forces in a manner that placed them at a tactical disadvantage against Hezbollah’s antitank crews,³⁶ and these leaders employed mechanized forces without a sufficient appreciation of terrain as it relates to that type of force and also without adequate infantry, engineer, or fire support.³⁷

The IDF also had issues at the individual and crew-level as well. Training cuts in the IDF led to deficiencies in tactical and technical capabilities of soldiers and leaders.³⁸ The IDF focused on the soldier tasks at the fore in a counterinsurgency. Israeli armor crewmembers were not sound in the technical skills of armor employment in a conventional fight. The younger soldiers had more experience in “tracking down terrorists in refugee camps” than conventional mechanized maneuver warfare.³⁹ The IDF accepted risk in allowing the necessary crew-level skills to atrophy in favor of these other skills. Quite simply, the Israeli strategic outlook planned for a future devoid of large-scale high-tempo and conventional operations and encouraged a posture more in keeping with counterinsurgency operations. Nested within the national threat assessment, the IDF’s focus had shifted away from high-intensity conflict towards the lower-intensity threats it typically faced in Gaza and the West Bank.⁴⁰

Israeli Response

With this analysis of the shortcomings of the IDF against Hezbollah, consideration of how it affected the IDF is necessary. Israel and the IDF recognized most of these issues and took many

³⁰ Cordesman. P. 80-81.

³¹ Cordesman. P. 85.

³² Casey, George W. Jr. “Complex Operations and Counterinsurgency – Building the US Army of the 21st Century.” Military Technology. October 2009. Pp. 26-31.

³³ Biddle et al. P. 59.

³⁴ Cordesman. P. 44.

³⁵ Cordesman. P. 58.

³⁶ Cordesman. P. 109.

³⁷ Cordesman. P. 109.

³⁸ Cordesman. P. 52.

³⁹ Cordesman. P. 96.

⁴⁰ Cordesman. P. 58.

of these lessons to heart, making several changes to their structure, training, and preparation for future conflicts. One of the IDF's changes includes a greater focus on training of conventional combat skills and a doctrinal return to maneuver warfare. In terms of training, armor and artillery crews shifted their focus towards the tactical and technical employment of their weapons systems, and the IDF Armored Corps continued to train in urban terrain. They still acknowledge that the modern battlefield is 360 degrees and three-dimensional.⁴¹

The changes the IDF made to its training and doctrine were evident in its 2008 war in Gaza even though Hamas lacked much of the training, equipment, and capability of Hezbollah.⁴² The absence of another hybrid threat on par with Hezbollah since 2006 sustains Hezbollah as the standard on which to focus in defense planning at this time. The IDF has also increased its focus on cyber warfare and reducing the technological threat its enemies present.⁴³ The IDF has increased the influence of the intelligence unit that focuses on cyber warfare and is working to mitigate the effects of off-the-shelf technology available to Israel's adversaries. They are also in the process of bolstering its computer defenses against hacking and counterintelligence defenses. Israel has a much greater reliance on technology than the US due to its geographic and demographic constraint, but the similarity is an acknowledgement of the threat ability to leverage technology to gain parity against conventional forces. Israel has identified and sought to address their military weakness against the emerging hybrid threat and appears to be looking forward into the future and preparing for a potentially more dangerous security threat.

Future Trends

Hezbollah represents the most dangerous non-state actor the US can expect to face in the near future. Hezbollah has demonstrated a capability to integrate asymmetric warfare tactics into conventional combat operations using advanced weaponry while maintaining popular support despite their use of civilians as shields. This should not be a surprising accomplishment when considered alongside post Cold War conflicts between irregular and conventional forces since the end of the Cold War. Irregular warfare is becoming more conventional in appearance and more urbanized as populations trend toward more city dwelling.⁴⁴

By 2030, around 60% of the world's population will be urban,⁴⁵ and this demographic trend suggests that warfare will center on urban areas against irregular forces. Civilians will be greater factor in war plans. As the world's population gravitates towards urban centers, all types of forces are likely to find themselves interacting with non-combatants and civilians on the battlefield. For conventional forces, it means avoiding civilian casualties when possible, minimizing the destruction of infrastructure, and being prepared to provide rudimentary civil services in the absence of an effective host government. For irregular and unconventional forces,

⁴¹ Katz, Yaakov. "IDF Applying Lessons of War to Improve Use of Tanks." 20 march 2007. Jerusalem Post. 8 January 2010. <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1173879134547&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull>

⁴² Cordesman, Anthony. The "Gaza War": A Strategic Analysis. Final Review Draft: Circulated for Comment and Updating. Washington DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies. 2009.

⁴³ Oren, Amir. "IDF Dependence on Technology Spawns Whole New Battlefield." 3 January 2010. Haaretz.com. 8 January 2010. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1139464.html>

⁴⁴ Biddle, Stephen; Friedman, Jeffrey A. "The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy." US Army Strategic Studies Institute. September 2008. Carlisle, PA. P. 15.

⁴⁵ Casey. P. 27.

it probably means using non-combatants and civil infrastructure to mitigate the capabilities and effects of conventional forces and weapons.

With these trends in mind, it is not a great leap to envision US ground forces in situations similar to the major battles of Iraq in the future. The Army must be prepared to fight such battles while still maintaining the ability to fight and win a conventional war against a well-armed and trained regular army. Simply focusing on a narrow vision of the future is insufficient. It requires changes to our current tactical organization and training, and we can synthesize the recent Israeli experience with current US experience in the ongoing wars to identify a way forward.

We would be mistaken to assume that Hezbollah is a 'special case' because of its state sponsorship by Iran. Recent insurgent groups in Afghanistan and Iraq have received state support, and state sponsorship may even become an assumption itself. Most insurgencies receive some form of state support.⁴⁶ One of the disturbing developments in this analysis is that Iran continues to improve its conventional missile capability,⁴⁷ and could conceivably pass these improved capabilities on to non-state groups making future conflicts against Iranian-supported forces much more challenging. Iran has historically supported Hezbollah⁴⁸ and has supported the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. While irregular forces may not have direct state support, there is still a high probability that these forces will have some level of state backing, even if it is clandestine or covert.

The Future Threat

The United States faces a complex array of threats to our national security. Failed states may harbor non-state actors that launch attacks against the US homeland or threaten other vital national interests while insurgencies continue to destabilize regimes that are friendly to the United States and its allies. It is reasonable to argue that the Army must be prepared to defeat these non-state actors using means other than conventional military force. It may be misguided to assume, however, that a force focused primarily on defeating poorly equipped and loosely organized insurgencies will retain the requisite skills to confront a better equipped, prepared, and cohesive threat from hostile states or the hybrid threat best illustrated by Hezbollah. The Army should remain prepared for a wide array of threats, not just what it has faced in Iraq and Afghanistan. There are clear indicators that some traditional state actors may threaten US interests in five to ten years. The US may face a conventional threat from states or the US may find itself involved with states that have failed, at risk of failing, or may otherwise deal with non-state spoilers.

The threat of a major conflict, while seemingly minimal right now, should remain a focal point of US planning and force structuring because of the potential costs of such a conflict. Some states in the international system will continue to pose some level of threat to US security interests and the risks of unpreparedness for those risks could be stark. Security challenges

⁴⁶ Cordesman, Anthony; George Sullivan and William D. Sullivan. Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War. CSIS Press, Washington DC. 2007. P. 60.

⁴⁷ ADM Blair, Dennis. Office of the Director of National Intelligence Annual Intelligence Threat Assessment. 12 February 2009. Washington DC. Pp. 20-21.

⁴⁸ Baer, Robert. The Devil We Know. New York, NY. Crown Publishers, 2008.

between the US and another state may rise, even with another state that does not currently pose a threat. Several states are increasing their military capabilities, both physical and in cyberspace.⁴⁹

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Threat Diffusion

Anti-government forces, both insurgent/terrorist and militias, in Iraq have also shown a willingness and capability to engage in sustained combat against US and Coalition forces in Iraq. These forces have conducted guerilla operations that span the spectrum of warfare, ranging in size from squad to battalion-level.⁵¹ This is evident in the various episodes of high-tempo combat operations in Iraq against insurgent forces.⁵² US senior leaders have said that the Army will face hybrid enemies similar to Hezbollah and that in the future; these enemies may use new and emerging technologies against US forces.⁵³ In Afghanistan, al-Qaeda and Taliban forces have also shown an ability to use modern elements of warfare,⁵⁴ including high-tempo defensive operations against the International Stabilization Assistance Force (ISAF).⁵⁵

Over the course of the war in Afghanistan, the Taliban has improved its combat performance. They have improved their tactics to limit casualties and to take advantage of the limitations of the conventional forces they face. They may have gained increased access to foreign fighters who have trained them, increasing their lethality against the US and ISAF. Additionally, the Taliban have shown more discipline and capability to mount complex attacks against vulnerable targets.⁵⁶ Irregular forces, like the Taliban, are becoming more lethal and we should expect that this improved performance and greater ability will be a trend.

Lessons Learned

Proponents of the current trends within the Army would point to the success the Army has had in the major conventional-style battles in Iraq, such as the 2008 battle in Sadr City, and believe the US has adequately taken into consideration emerging threats. This is a mistake due to the notable differences between Hezbollah and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). Hezbollah was a much more capable fighting force and had terrain advantages JAM did not enjoy. In Sadr City, the US Army faced approximately 4,000 JAM militia fighters in a dense urban area that the Army was able to physically isolate en masse.⁵⁷ Compared to the smallest estimates of force in southern Lebanon, this is slightly more than half of the Hezbollah force that the IDF faced in southern Lebanon, and in a much smaller area. The JAM militia did not have an armament to match that of Hezbollah

⁴⁹ Markoff, John. "Before The Gunfire, Cyberattacks." New York Times. 12 August 2008. P. A1.

⁵⁰ Blair. P. 39.

⁵¹ Hoffman, Jon T. Tip of the Spear. Center for Military History. Washington DC, 2009.

⁵² There are numerous publications, official or otherwise, that chronicle several battles in which insurgent forces fought sustained engagements against Coalition forces in Iraq. These engagements involved US forces up to the brigade-level.

⁵³ Osborn, Kris. "US Army Focuses on Irregular Warfare." Defense News. 12 October 2009. P. 1.

⁵⁴ Biddle et al. P. 77.

⁵⁵ Cadieu, Trevor. "Canadian Armour in Afghanistan." Canadian Army Journal. Winter 2008. Pp. 5-6.

⁵⁶ DeYoung, Karen. "Taliban Surprising US Forces With Improved Tactics." Washington Post. 2 September 2009. Pp. A1, A4. See online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/01/AR2009090103908.html?hpid=topnews&sid=ST2009090104089>

⁵⁷ Gordon, Michael R. "US Begins Erecting Wall in Sadr City." New York Times. 18 April 2008.

and their level of training and preparation did not match that of Hezbollah. Elements of three Israeli ground divisions were engaged with Hezbollah's forces, whose preparation had clearly been extensive, during the 2006 war. While both are irregular forces, comparison between Hezbollah and JAM is not adequate. The militia elements in Sadr City in 2008 do not appear to have conducted the same level of preparation and planning as Hezbollah had previously, nor was any of the higher level collective training. While insurgent forces in Iraq have been more lethal than in other conflict areas due to the military training of many Iraqis under Saddam Hussein,⁵⁸ this increased ability did not translate in Sadr City. While individual engagements may be significant, there appears to have been an inability of the Shia militias in Sadr City to develop and implement a more coherent defense of the Baghdad district. Also, US forces were able to contain the JAM with the emplacement of concrete barriers, and this is not a technique that would be repeatable in even a less dense built-up area. The Army should not hold up this battle as a positive azimuth check. Sadr City 2008 was unique; the tactics, techniques, and procedures used may not be as effective elsewhere. Hezbollah fought Israel in a much wider region with greater freedom of maneuver which its weapons and preparation made it to be a very challenging enemy for the IDF.

Alternative Options

There are some alternatives defense policy makers and planners are considering for the future. While they have some validity and clearly have a place within the security tool kit of the US, they should not play the primary role. There is some discussion to use special operations forces as the primary organization in counterinsurgent and stability operations. Special operations forces are the best trained, best equipped, and best prepared troops the US can field across the spectrum of warfare. US Army Special Forces are arguably the best forces to conduct counterinsurgency/foreign internal defense operations. However, these forces have significant limitations when considered within the context of a larger-scale conflict. Put simply, there are not enough of these forces available to go around. Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced, nor can they be created after emergencies occur.⁵⁹ The major counterinsurgency and foreign internal defense efforts of the US in Afghanistan and Iraq have required conventional Army and Marine Corps forces to fill the gaps because of these facts, and in a future conflict this may again be a reality – especially if such a conflict lasts as long as Afghanistan or Iraq. The demands of future conflicts may present a mismatch between mission requirements and forces available. Special Operations Forces' small size limits their ability to conduct all of the necessary operations without external assistance.

Another alternative is to use technology to mitigate the risk of casualties and leverage emerging capabilities, enabling Army formations to have near-perfect battlefield information. This was one of the driving ideas behind the Army's pursuit of the Future Combat System whose success on the battlefield was predicated on information dominance and near-perfect situational awareness of battlefield threats. Elimination of the fog of war would reduce the requirement for protection and survivability. The reality of our experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan led to the cancellation

⁵⁸ Chivers, C.J. "Why Do Bullets Kill More Soldiers In Iraq?" *New York Times At-War Blog*, 19 August 2009.

⁵⁹ HQ US Army Special Operations Command. Command home page. 16 October 2008. <http://www.soc.mil/sofinfo/truths.html>

of FCS.⁶⁰ While the Army's technological advantage is unmatched even without FCS, there are clear limitations to technology. There is a real risk that reliance on technology makes it a crutch.

Counterinsurgency requires a measured use of force⁶¹ and the substitution of technology, like air power or area weapons, for a considerable ground force may be counterproductive. This has been the case in recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq where support for the war waned partially due to civilian casualties.⁶² US forces have realized that there are clear limitations to the capabilities of passive sensors. As a result, US ground forces have tended to place a greater emphasis on human reconnaissance.⁶³ Previous analysis has already arrived at the conclusion that sensors are unlikely to eclipse the Soldier.⁶⁴ The other danger of technology in the future is the risk of various forms of malware proliferating on the battlefield. As systems and platforms become increasingly networked, there are vulnerabilities that are part and parcel. The use of Trojan horses, worms, and other forms of cyber warfare by states or non-state actors may cripple weapons and communications systems US forces have increasingly come to rely on.⁶⁵ Future combat operations may see US forces engaged with irregular forces that may be able to exploit our use of technology, fight us with technological parity against us, or we may operate against states that command a technological advantage in some areas and use combat systems that seek to weaken US forces through security holes in computer and digital systems.⁶⁶

Peer competitors may destroy US technological capabilities. Since witnessing the US performance during Operation Desert Storm, other states have taken notice of the role technology plays in our warfighting efforts. Technology aids in our navigation, communications, and situational awareness. Excessive use of technology creates risk of overreliance. There is also a physical vulnerability in the form of anti-satellite systems from potential peer competitors.⁶⁷

A total US reliance on these systems would be nearly debilitating in the event of their loss. As our defense communication structure becomes increasingly dependent on technological issues like bandwidth, the US risks losing some ability to synchronize operations, communicate with dispersed forces, and leverage national assets not in theater. While the US government is working on improving its defenses against cyber attacks, the primary concern is defense against networked systems that may harm US systems and national interests, not necessarily tactical systems.⁶⁸ Advances in digital communications technology create new vulnerabilities for cyber attacks, and non-state actors like al-Qaeda have expressed a desire to conduct such attacks

⁶⁰ Hinton, Christopher. "Army to Cancel \$160 Billion FCS Program. 19 May 2009. Wall Street Journal Marketwatch. 11 December 2009

⁶¹ FM 3-24. P. 1-141.

⁶² Filkins, Dexter. "Afghan Civilian Deaths Rose 40% in 2008." New York Times. 18 February 2009. P. A10.

⁶³ Bowman, Tom. "Despite High-Tech Help, Marines Confront IEDs." National Public Radio. 29 October 2009.

⁶⁴ Biddle. P. 72.

⁶⁵ Markoff, John. "Old Trick Threatens The Newest Weapons." New York Times. 27 October 2009. P. D1.

⁶⁶ Gorman, Siobhan, Yochi J. Dreazen and August Cole. "Insurgents Hack US Drones." The Wall Street Journal 17 December 2009: A1, A21

⁶⁷ Jane's Information Group. Sentinel Country Risk Assessment. May 13, 2009.

http://www4.janes.com/subscribe/sentinel/CNAS_doc_view.jsp?Sent_Country=China&Prod_Name=CNAS&K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/sent/cnasu/cnaa015.htm@current#toclink-j3181242139143906 (accessed October 27, 2009).

⁶⁸ Sanger, David E.; Markoff, John; Shanker, Thom. "US Steps Up Effort on Digital Defenses." New York Times. 28 April 2009. P. A1.

against US systems.⁶⁹ If US government computer systems are subject to cyber attacks today, it should not be too far-fetched to imagine a future threat to tactical systems.

They use off-the-shelf technology like cell phones, the Internet, and civilian GPS systems that neutralize many of the US' advantages in technology.⁷⁰ Additionally, terror and insurgent organizations are using video and web-editing tools as weapons of information warfare. Al-Qaeda alone has released numerous such videos, including the most recent one in September 2009 predicting President Obama's downfall at the hands of the Islamic world.⁷¹ US and Coalition forces have regularly found computers, mobile phones, and other high-tech devices during combat operations in Iraq and the US uses cell phone transmissions in Afghanistan to track and target al-Qaeda and Taliban forces. It is clear that the enemies the US faces today have leveraged technology in their favor and that is unlikely to end.

Recommendations

The warfare model that Hezbollah utilized against the Israeli Defense Forces in 2006 is likely to be the threat model the United States Army will face in the future. To be prepared for future warfare, the Army should tailor its formations and training to prevent many of the challenges faced the IDF had against Hezbollah. The Army should consider several changes to its structure and training. Brigade Combat Teams need to be capable of dominating their battlespace across the spectrum of warfare with minimal external augmentation. The Army may want to consider more robust and flexible brigade-level organizations, as well as habitual pre-deployment task organizations that mix light, Stryker, and heavy battalions under one brigade headquarters. This would flatten the learning curve in an operational environment and would build familiarity and confidence within the formations. Stryker brigades may be a model for the rest of the Army. Divisions should control ISR and theater support assets usually seen at the corps-level.

Education must have a much greater emphasis at all levels because the experience within the ranks today will largely be gone within a decade barring another contingency. Education should provide a broad foundation that Soldiers can rely on in all environments when all else fails. Training should prepare Soldiers for specific situations that are more likely to change in a relatively short time. Both should expose Soldiers to both the wide spectrum of warfare.

Because of the hybrid threat, brigade formations should have considerable reconnaissance, engineering, fire support, and policing capabilities. Larger brigades do reduce the available pool, but each brigade would be more capable once deployed, negating the costs in strategic mobility and force generation. Further logistical analysis may see the trade-off as neutral in terms of strategic force projection.

⁶⁹ Blair. P. 38.

⁷⁰ McLeary, Paul. "High-Tech Weapons Are Standard Issue For Insurgents. Aviation Week. 13 February 2008. See full text at http://www.aviationweek.com/aw/generic/story_generic.jsp?channel=dti&id=news/DTIINSURTECH.xml&headline=High-Tech%20Weapons%20Are%20Standard%20Issue%20for%20Insurgents

⁷¹ FoxNews. "Al-Qaeda Releases Video Predicting Obama's Fall." FoxNews.com. 23 September 2009. See full text at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,554020,00.html>

The need for robust forces in small wars is clear⁷², but the need for major wars remains. Army forces will need to be educated, trained, and prepared for the hybrid threat. On the more irregular side, forces may be required to conduct limited offensive operations to seize the initiative from insurgent forces.⁷³ Maintaining the strategic initiative may require major combat operations with a more conventional flavor. Current strategy assumes that the US will field a sizeable ground force. In the initial "stop the bleeding" stage of counterinsurgency must protect the population, break the insurgents' initiative and momentum, and set the conditions for further engagement.⁷⁴ These actions happen simultaneously and clearly require a large ground force. Counterinsurgency places a premium on a large number of ground troops to implement such operations. Warfare against a state would inherently require a major response.

Conclusion

Israel made a strategic assessment that future conflicts in which it would be engaged would consist of low-intensity and counterinsurgency operations. Following withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, the IDF shifted its focus away from high-intensity, conventional operations in favor of the low-intensity stance. It changed the focus of its organization and training at the expense of competence at the other end of the scale, and the US Army may be following. The future threat is likely to look like the Hezbollah force that fought Israel in 2006, and in the future, the US Army may fight a similar organization or a conventional army and must be ready to win decisively against either.

The Army should maintain its core capabilities. First, it must be successful in the protracted counterinsurgency operations of today. Second, it must be able to build host nation (HN) capacity in terms of military and police capability and governance development, in order to prevent states from failing. Finally, the Army must be able to deter and defeat hybrid threats like Hezbollah and non-state threats while remaining prepared for conventional combat operations.⁷⁵ A recent US Army report concludes that the Army must be prepared to face, "complex, decentralized, and better-armed enemies," located amongst local populations.⁷⁶ Using the Israeli experience against Hezbollah in 2006 as a template may be useful as the Army prepares for a dynamic future. The Army should be a general-purpose force that is prepared to fight and win decisively against conventional forces and hybrid threats, yet also able to quickly refocus towards stability operations and counterinsurgency.

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⁷² FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency. Washington DC. 2006. P. 2-22.

⁷³ FM 3-24. P. 5-4.

⁷⁴ FM 3-24. P. 5-2.

⁷⁵ Casey Speech.

⁷⁶ Osborn, Kris. "US Army Focuses on Irregular Warfare." *Defense News*. 12 October 2009. P. 1.

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