

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE “DEFENSIVE SHIELD” OPERATION AS A TURNING POINT IN ISRAEL’S
NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY**

by

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ABSTRACT

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The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians had ebbs and flows during the last century. The principle agreement between Israel and the Palestinians signed in 1994 was one of the milestones in that conflict and planted hopes for peaceful end of that conflict. The violent conflict that began in September 2000 was a bitter remainder that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is far from being solved. This conflict began while the two participants had different intent and perspectives. During that conflict Israel had to change its national security strategy and used different means to achieve its strategies. In this paper I will provide a historical background to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and information about Israel's national security strategy. Secondly, I will explore the internal Israeli debate regarding Israel's borders. Thirdly, I will discuss former Prime Minister Barak's policy, and Prime Minister Sharon's policy. I will evaluate the leadership challenge of General Mofaz as the Chief of Staff of the Israeli military. Finally, at the conclusion of this paper, I will analyze the strategic consequences of the "Defensive Shield" operation.

THE “DEFENSIVE SHIELD” OPERATION AS A TURNING POINT IN ISRAEL’S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

The Israeli-Arab conflict has been part of the political situation in the Middle East for more than a century. That conflict began as violent activities between two communities and became a conventional war during the 1950s, 1960s and the 1970s¹. At the eve of the new millennium, the most difficult part of the conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian straggle, seemed to be only one step from resolution. Exactly at that point, the “Ebb and Flow” conflict began, and heightened already sensitive issues in both communities. While Israel had an ambiguous strategy at the beginning of the conflict and changed its strategy and its governments during that conflict, the Palestinian Authority, meanwhile, had a clear goal and a well-defined strategy. The “Defensive Shield” operation, which began on March 30 2002, dramatically changed the results of that conflict. That change was a direct result of Israel’s new strategy and a result of strategic leadership by Israel’s administration.

Firstly, I will provide a historical background about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and about Israel’s national security strategy. Secondly, I will explore the internal Israeli debate regarding Israel’s borders and the approaches regarding the Judah, Samaria and The Gaza Strip areas. Thirdly, before analyzing the nature of the “Ebb and Flow” conflict I will discuss former Prime Minister Barak’s policy, Prime Minister Sharon’s policy and the difference between the two. Strategic leadership poses a challenge, especially during an era of war. I will evaluate the leadership challenge of General Mofaz as the Chief of Staff of the Israeli military and the way he responded to that challenge. Finally, at the conclusion of this paper, I will analyze the strategic consequences of the “Defensive Shield” operation and the connection between the “Ebb and Flow” conflict and the Global War against Terrorism declared by the President of the United States of America.

Israel’s National Security Strategy

The “Ebb and Flow” conflict, as mentioned above, is part of a long conflict known as the “Israeli-Arab” conflict and has been occurring for more than one hundred years. The best way to understand the “Ebb and Flow” conflict is to analyze it in the context of the history of Israel’s national security strategy. By doing that one can better understand the differences between Israel’s administrations. In addition to the historical background, national security strategy is one of the fundamental requirements of any country and also one of the main sources on which states base their policy. To deploy a military force effectively, either for defensive or offensive

purposes, a state should have a valid national security strategy. Although the Jewish people and their culture have existed for thousands of years, the state of Israel is relatively new. From the very beginning of Israel's existence as a state and even before it was established fifty-seven years ago, national security issues have been one of the highest priorities of Israel. The existence of Israel has been, and still is, challenged by its neighbors and by surrounding countries². The paradox is that while Israel definitely needs a national security strategy, currently it does not have a valid one. The main reason for the absence of an Israeli national security strategy stems from internal pragmatic and ideological debates regarding these main components: borders, depth and demographic issues. These debates are the main reason for the differences between the first Prime Minister Sharon's administration and the former Prime Minister Barak's administration.

Historical Background

On November 29, 1947, the UN approved the right of the Jewish people in the land of Israel to establish a Jewish state. A few hours after that decision, the Arabs in the land of Israel (or Palestine) and in the countries around Palestine began a war to destroy the emerging state. On May 15, 1948, the state of Israel was created, and the result was the beginning of Israel's independence war. The results of that war were: Israel was established as a state and cease-fire borders were put into place between Israel and its neighbors. Another result was that Israel could not afford to lose this conflict since losing a decisive war would be the end of Israel as a state. In addition the newborn country had most of its population within striking distance of its borders. Judah and Samaria (or the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip were not under Israel's control (as well as the Golan Heights and Sinai Desert but these are not part of this paper). That meant that Israel had no depth blurring the distinction between the tactical and strategic levels. Additionally, Most of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) was composed of reserve soldiers. Moreover, Israel's economy was very weak, the extreme effort, to establish the state and to survive, directed most of the resources towards security concepts. Furthermore, the most alarming outcome of the Israeli war of independence was the understanding that that war was not the last one. It was clear that 1948 war was the first round of war for Israel as a state, and that the Arab neighbors of Israel were going to continue their efforts to destroy Israel.

Consequently, led by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion in the 1950s, Israeli strategic leaders developed the country's first framework for addressing national security. The background for that strategy was the result of the 1948-49 war: first, Israel's lack of depth required fighting on the enemy's territory, second, an army of reservists and a weak economy

compelled Israel to seek a brief decisive war. Finally, the understanding that Israel cannot afford to lose any war prioritized the effort to achieve military superiority against Israel's enemies. The "end"³ in that strategy was the survival of Israel; the "way" was the offensive doctrine at the operative and tactical levels, and the "means" were using all the resources of Israel to achieve that end: military force, economy, society, policy, and international diplomacy. This national security strategy was based on two main components: quality and blitzkrieg. The quality component required Israel to remain superior qualitatively (the "qualitative edge") to its enemies. The blitzkrieg component required that when a war began, Israel should seek decisive battle in the enemy's territory as quickly as possible. The expected outcome was a decisive victory over enemy military forces in the shortest time possible. This would create deterrence relationship between Israel and its neighbors, or at least postpone the next violent conflict. In other words, Israel's enemies would clearly understand that any aggressive violence against Israel would result in decisive defeat and great military force damage. In that way, Israeli "quality" was supposed to defeat the enemy's quantity and to impose deterrence.

The victory in the 1967 Six Day War was a direct result of the application of Israel's strategy. After only six days of combat, Israel defeated three Arab neighbors and some of their allies in their own territories and through decisive battles, devastated those enemy forces. Consequently, Israel expanded its borders. In the south, Israel had strategic depth in the Sinai desert, and in the north it had operational depth in the region of the Golan Heights. Moreover, the Jordan River Valley provided additional operational depth to the east of Israel. In addition, a new issue rose from the Six Day War: demography. By controlling the West Bank and The Gaza Strip, the demographic situation between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea dramatically changed. Any decision about the future of the West Bank and the The Gaza Strip, at that time as well as today, had to consider not only the security argument but also the demographic issue. These two components, borders and demography, should have caused a change in Israel's strategy; Israel however, did not adapt its strategy. Within the past three decades, Israel had reached peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, which definitely changed the assumptions of the previous strategy of Israel. The major change was that the existence of Israel was an accepted fact, although some countries in Israel's region would have been more than happy if Israel disappeared⁴. Therefore, Israel had an excellent strategy that was one of the primary causes for the enormous victory in 1967. That strategy of Israel had to be changed but, because of various reasons, that would be mentioned, it did not.

Judah, Samaria and the Gaza Strip

Judah, Samaria and the Gaza Strip were part of the British Mandate in Palestine. In the 1920s the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea was considered as one unit. Geographically it was difficult to distinguish between the various parts of the land of Israel. These areas were separated from the state of Israel in November 1947, mostly because of a demographic issue; to separate between the Jewish people and the Arab people. Twenty years after that decision, the two peoples were mixed together. In the immediate aftermath of the war Israeli control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and their population shocked the Arab World, but after that shock the subsided what the Arabs called, "occupied territory" became the main argument against Israel in the Arab World. U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 became the main argument between Israel and the Arab World. While the Israeli interpretation of that decision was that Israel should withdraw from parts of these territories, the Arab interpretation was that Israel should withdraw from all the territories. On November 22, 1968, the Arab League decided not to recognize Israel, not to negotiate with Israel, and not to create peace relations with Israel. Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian president in 1977, made a brave step and began a direct peace process with Israel. However, Sadat was the only one at that time that made that incredible step. In 1988, the Palestinian people began uprising against Israel in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, yet the uprising gradually declined during 1992. In 1993, P.M. Rabin created shifts in Israel's strategy by beginning the Oslo process.

The main shift in Israel's strategy, led by P.M. Rabin, was that for the first time Israel's government recognized the right of the Palestinians to have a country. The principle that Israel would give land and might receive peace was new in Israel's policy. The Declaration of Principles signed on September 13, 1993 showed clearly that principle: "**Aim of the Negotiations**: The aim of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations within the current Middle East peace process is, among other things, to establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, the elected Council (the "Council"), for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338⁵ⁿ. According to the Oslo agreements, the temporary agreement should have lasted after five years. During these years Israel and the PA, however, were supposed to negotiate and reach permanent agreement to end the conflict. In September 1996, the relationship between Israel and the PA returned violent. The PA initiated violent events inside the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. These

incidents took place for about a week and then stopped. Both sides had casualties, but after that week Israel and the PA went back to the negotiation table. As mentioned previously, the temporary agreement should have been replaced by a permanent agreement, to finish more than a century of conflict. A major attempt to reach an agreement was at Camp David in August 2000. The participants in that meeting were PA Chairman, Arafat and his aides, P.M. Barak and his delegation and US President Clinton. The aim of that summit meeting led by President Clinton was to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but the summit meeting failed and on September 30, 2000, the “Ebb and Flow” conflict began⁶. Before analyzing the “Ebb and Flow” conflict, one should understand what was the Palestinian approach led by Arafat and what was the Israeli approach led by P.M. Barak.

The Palestinian Side

The Palestinian initial goal was to create a Palestinian state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. This country was supposed to be the state of all the Arabs who lived between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea before 1948. The question of the borders of this state was and still is open. On one side was the Fatah party that wanted to establish the Palestinian state beside Israel (at least as a beginning). This party insisted that East Jerusalem would be the capital of the Palestinian state, and that the refugees from 1948 and 1967 would have the ability to return to their former lands. According to Fatah, the Palestinian state would be a secular state. There were, moreover, the religious parties: Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which wanted to establish a Palestinian state to replace Israel. According to their view, that state would be an Islamic state, the capital would be Jerusalem and the refugee’s right to “return” was not negotiable. The major differences between these parties were: in the short term do the Palestinians recognize Israel as a state? And the long term, will the Palestinian state will be secular or religious? Therefore, the will of the Palestinian side of the conflict was at least to establish a state in Judah, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip. This state was intended to include East Jerusalem and the refugees would have the right to return to Israel.

The Israeli Internal Debate

Israel is a democracy; therefore, its policies and goals changed as a result of its elections. The Israeli side of the conflict had an ambiguous goal because of Israel’s long internal debate in defining Israel’s main interests. Furthermore, that debate divided the people of Israel into three main groups: the leftist ideological parties, the right-wing ideological parties, and the pragmatic parties (that have diverse opinions). The main argument was and still is about the border issue of Judah, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip. Since various aspects of the debate about Israel’s

border exist, this paper will explain two approaches: the pragmatic approach and the ideological approach.

The Pragmatic Approach

The West Bank lies in the center of Israel. The distance between major cities in the West Bank and major cities in Israel is only a few miles and sometimes less than a mile (the distance between Jerusalem and Bethlehem is less than a mile). The width of Israel between the Mediterranean Sea and part of Samaria is less than ten miles. That means that Israel cannot afford a hostile state in the West Bank. More than 1.5 million Arabs, however, live in the West Bank; therefore, Israel cannot afford to control their life under a military government. On the other hand, Israel cannot give them Israeli citizenship because that would dramatically affect the proportion of the Jewish majority. In addition, more than 250,000 Israelis citizens live in Judah and Samaria and these citizens are spread all over the West Bank. The argument from the pragmatic point of view concerns which parts of the West Bank would remain inside Israel borders.

Some pragmatists think that Israel should not wait until the Palestinian Authority (PA) becomes a real partner, and that Israel should withdraw from most of the West Bank. The argument, furthermore, considers whether the Israeli border should include only areas that are vital for Israel's security and settlements that are close and connected to Israel's territory and that have large populations. Others think that Israel should not give any territory to the PA until it works peacefully with Israel. The definition of what areas are vital for Israel's security is also not clear. Some think that in real peace, Israel does not need any territory for its security, since they claim peace is not dependent on security. Others pragmatists think that Israel must hold areas like the Jordan Valley and more areas. In addition to security and demographic aspects, Israel needs to consider the water issue. Under most territory in Judah and especially Samaria, a mountain aquifer exists, which supplies more than 50% of the water to Israel's population. Giving these territories to the Palestinians could cause problems with one of the vital natural resources of Israel. The pragmatic conclusions vary from giving most of Judah and Samaria to the PA, to not giving it any territory at all.

Besides the pragmatic aspect, the ideological debate also exists. Leftist parties, a small minority in Israel, claim that the West Bank and the Golan Heights are Arab territories that Israel conquered during the 1967 Six Day War. Therefore, Israel should return the Golan Heights to Syria and create a Palestinian State in Judah and Samaria. According to this group represented by the leader of Meretz party Yosi Beilin, Israel should do this as soon as possible because,

they do not consider it Israel's territory. The other ideological parties, represented by the Mafdal party and by Hihood Haleumi party, are the right wing. According to that group, all the Biblical land of Israel should be Israel's territory. The only reason that the state of Israel is on the land of Biblical Israel is the religious and historical connection between the Jewish people and that land. Their point is that Judah and Samaria are the heart of biblical Israel, and that giving these lands to anyone does not make religious or Zionist sense. Therefore, Israel should not give any territory to any Arab country or authority.

Since the pragmatic and ideological aspects are mixed and combined, it is difficult to distinguish between the two because every Israeli Jewish citizen, especially the leaders are aware of the tension between these aspects. Actually, one of the reasons that Israel did not make the decision about its borders is that it is extremely difficult to find the best combination between the pragmatic needs and approach and the ideological issues. Therefore, every Israeli government decides what its approach to the borders issue will be. One of the consequences of the borders issue is the national security strategy and the government policy.

Barak's Government Policy

The Barak administration's policy was based on the leftist side of the pragmatic part of Israel's political system, and parts of Barak's coalition were from the ideological Leftists parties. The policy at the time stipulated that Israel should create a Palestinian state with the borders of almost the entire West Bank and the Gaza Strip with some minor borders corrections. Even with the sensitive issue of Jerusalem, Barak's policy was accommodating and flexible towards the Palestinians. Barak's administration, however, insisted that in general the refugees would not return to Israel. The refugee issue was in consensus between the left and right wing parties in Israel. The second issue that Barak's government insisted upon was that agreement reached during the summit meeting at Camp David, was supposed to end the conflict.

Consequently, Israel's national security strategy maintained that the presence of the IDF and the settlements in Judah, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip were temporary. In addition, the purpose of military activities was to contain any conflict mainly by defensive operations. The main goal was keeping the PA forces in condition so that they could keep the order in the Arab cities in the West Bank and The Gaza Strip. As a result, the Israeli government ignored the flagrant violations of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement by the Palestinians in order to keep the process progressing. Israel's army did not identify the Palestinian police as an enemy, even though they sometimes ignored terror activities that occurred from their territory and sometimes even actively involved. Israel's policy stated that the "Declaration of Principles" agreement was

the most important strategic progress for Israel; therefore, Israel should make every effort to succeed in that process.

Barak's era was characterized by optimism. It seemed that Israel and the Palestinian people were at the end of a long and bloody conflict. The mood in Israel was that this time both sides were serious in striving to reach a lasting peace agreement to the conflict forever. Examining two important facts, however, prove useful for a better understanding that situation. First, when P.M. Barak attended the summit in Camp David, he did not have the majority in the Israeli Parliament (knesset). Second, the fact that the Palestinian Authority prepared its forces for violent conflict before, during, and after the summit showed that Arafat knew⁷ before he arrived in the US for the Camp David summit, not only that the summit was going to fail but also that a violent conflict would occur during September 2000⁸.

Ultimately, the violent conflict began on September 28, 2000⁹. During the beginning of the conflict, the goal of the IDF was to contain the conflict inside the West Bank and The Gaza Strip and not to damage the PA forces. Barak's administration wanted to halt the conflict and return to negotiate with the PA. The violent conflict and especially the fact that it was prepared and led by the PA, was evidence of the failure of Barak's policy. P.M. Barak tried to save the process in the "Sharm al-Sheikh" summit, but he went there with only a quarter of the Israeli government backing him, so that summit failed, too. Barak was succeeded by P.M. Ariel Sharon in the early election in February 2001.

Sharon's Government Policy

The first Sharon administration's policies totally differed from Barak's policy. P.M. Sharon concentrated on the short term, on defeating terror groups and stopping the killing in the streets of Israel. As soon as Israel realized that the PA agencies and the PA Chairman Arafat were part of terror activities, Israel changed the rules referring to the Palestinian Authority. Israel's main goal was defeating the terrorists even if the consequences were harming the Palestinian Authority. Followed by this method the agencies that were actively part of terrorist activities were defined as enemies, even though they were part of the Palestinian Authority. Therefore, the "Declaration of Principles" died at the beginning of the "Ebb and Flow" conflict, and the burial was when Israel changed its prime minister. Sharon's long term policy was ambiguous, since he did not define the way to combine pragmatic needs and ideological approaches. The consensus in Israel about the urgent need to stop the terror attacks and the understanding that the Oslo process could not continue under these conditions were enough to supply Sharon's government with internal legitimacy to shift away from the former strategy.

However, the world saw this conflict differently. The Palestinian position that the Israeli conquest was the reason for what they claimed “spontaneous civilian resistance”, and therefore Israel was the aggressive side and Palestinian behavior acceptable. The claim that Israel was violating the Oslo agreement by attacking inside the Palestinian territory and the propaganda that showed Israeli forces moving against children and women provided legitimacy to terror activities. Arafat, who held the Nobel Prize for peace, managed dual diplomacy and part of the international countries believed he truly sought peace. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the heart of US, however, dramatically changed the international map. From that day on, international tolerance and legitimacy for terrorist activities changed extremely. Gradually, the Israeli approach stipulated that nothing can ever justify terrorist attacks. The events of September 11, 2001 and later evidence¹⁰ that Israel showed to the world that Arafat himself¹¹ was involved in terrorism supplied international support for Israel to shift from the Oslo process strategy¹².

“Ebb and Flow” as a War

The Definition of War

Sharon’s policy created changes in the “ends” and “ways” of the Israeli army. The “Ebb and Flow” conflict shifted dramatically the way in which conflict was conducted. Theoreticians and scholars throughout history defined and redefined the war phenomenon. Clausewitz’s definition was the most acceptable definition, or at least acceptable as a starting point to define war in the modern world. The Clausewitzian definition for war stated “war is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will”¹³. Very simply, this definition means that there are at least two states or two authorities, or a couple of entities in conflict. Another meaning is that their wills are clear; furthermore, and the main point was that both sides believed that by using force they could enforce their will upon the enemy, or at least protect their own will. While evaluating whether a conflict is a war, looking for these issues proves mandatory.

Clausewitz redefined war in other ways as well: “War is nonetheless a serious means to a serious end”¹⁴, “War is an act of policy”¹⁵, and “War is merely is the continuation of policy by other means”¹⁶. These definitions, however, do not contradict the first definition. When Clausewitz called war a means, he meant that war was subordinate to an end, or, in other words, war was subordinate to the basic will that the state wanted to compel its enemy to do. The last definition added that the will was the policy, or that the politicians and not the army were responsible to define the will.

Clausewitz continued and claimed that “at least at first sight, any additional expenditure of time, any suspension of military action, seems absurd.”¹⁷ This idea under the subtitle “an interruption of military activity is not explained by anything yet said”¹⁸ was not clear. If, as Clausewitz stated, war was subordinate to policy, then why was there any problem by suspension of military action if the politicians thought that this would advance their ends? Perhaps if Clausewitz had lived in the 21st Century and understood today’s technology, then he might have reached a different conclusion: the control that a government had on war was absolute. In addition, Clausewitz divided the nation into three sections: the first is the people, the second is the military leader and his army, and the third is the government. This Clausewitzian triangle created the will of the state or country: how and when to use its army.

It could be understood that Clausewitz defined war as forcing the political object defined by the government upon the enemy. The decision to use force for achieving the goals depended on the relationship between the people, the military, and the government. According to Clausewitz, once there was a decision to use force, the only reasonable decision to suspend the action was to achieve a better military position; otherwise, it was considered absurd.

Is “Ebb and Flow” a War?

As mentioned previously in the definition of war there were at least two sides. In the Israeli-Palestinian case, the Palestinian Authority and Israel were indeed on two opposite sides, each side having its own ends and goals. The Palestinian goal was to create a Palestinian state in part of the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. That country was supposed to be the state of all the Arabs who lived between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea before 1948. Furthermore, that state was intended to include East Jerusalem and the refugees who would have the right to return to Israel.

As mentioned earlier at the beginning of “Ebb and Flow”, P.M. Barak was from the Leftist party. This administration agreed to establish a Palestinian state, but without parts of East Jerusalem and without the return rights for the Palestinian Arab refugees back to Israel. Therefore, the will of Israel was not clear at the beginning of the conflict. That ambiguous policy meant that at the beginning of the fighting the IDF’s main goal was to contain the struggle and to try not to damage the PA. The IDF rules of engagement limited the forces: not to enter into the PA territory and to limit the use of tanks, and other weapon platforms. In other words, the policy was to fight with one hand tied so Israel could go back to the negotiation table as soon as possible. Therefore, at the opening of the conflict, one side used extreme power to compel its will, while the other side used very limited power to try to achieve an ambiguous end. One side

started war, according to the Clausewitzian definition, and the other side did something different.

That situation, however, does not fit the Clausewitzian definition of war. Fortunately for Israel, it was strong enough to contain the struggle, but it caused elections. The meaning of elections was that the people from Clausewitz's triangle influenced the system and thereby caused a shift in the government that consequently caused a shift in Israel's will. The new will of Israel was to reduce the terrorist attacks against Israelis to a minimum by limiting the ability of the terrorists to harm Israel's population. In order to impose Israeli will on the PA, the Israeli government gradually increased the power that it used. Going back to the triangle, the people and the government increased their acceptance of the military to compel the Israeli will upon the PA.

The PA triangle at the time produced an opposite result. The government, led by Arafat, thought that Israeli society was weak enough so if the PA used more force they could impose their will upon Israel, basically by forcing Israel to bring international forces into the conflict¹⁹. The PA did not ask its people their opinion, and Arafat was a charismatic leader who created a consensus for his policy, at least for the part of using power against Israel²⁰. While the third angle of the PA triangle was not clear it was known, however, that the Palestinian forces took passive and/or active parts in terrorist activities. The major terrorist organization, the Tanzim²¹, was under the direct command of Arafat, so that clearly explained the PA's policy of using force at that time.

That conflict kept increasing. The Palestinian force peaked in early 2002.²² Until then, Israel gradually increased the power it used and began using its forces inside the Palestinian territory. However, Israel started to understand that this conflict was indeed war only during March 2002. When Israel realized that it was war, it deployed reserve units and changed its strategy from a defensive to an offensive²³. This conflict becomes a "war" in March 2002. The base for this statement is on Clausewitz: "... but always the collision of two living forces. The ultimate aim of waging war, as formulated here, must be taken as applying to both sides."²⁴ Before March 2002, Israel tried to solve the conflict diplomatically. In March 2002 retired American General Zinni came to Israel as a Special Envoy of the US President, but he failed in his attempts to prevent further escalation. Israel acted effectively (as a "life force") only when it began to deploy its reserve and active duty forces into the PA territory at the end of March 2002.

That shift in Israel's strategy was the point that made this conflict a war, according to Clausewitz's definition. There were two different entities that had two opposite wills, and each tried to compel its enemy to do its will. On the Palestinian side it was not clear that all the

terrorist organizations were subordinate to the political ends, but it was clear that all the terrorist organizations tried to achieve a common minimum political end which was to establish a Palestinian state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. On the Israeli side it was clear that the military end was subordinate to the political ends.

Another phenomenon that took place during this war was the high intensity of government involvement. On the Palestinian side, the involvement included sending official forces to participate in terrorist attacks²⁵. On the Israeli side, the government was involved by forcing the army to approve almost every mission in the PA territory. That involvement declined during "Defensive Shield" operation, but the Israeli government's involvement was the exact thing that Clausewitz said was absurd to do. While Clausewitz's perspective could be understood, as a military officer, however, it appears that involvement made the military activity a real continuation of diplomacy by other means. However, creating such a major shift in the Israeli society and especially in the IDF was a big leadership challenge.

The Leadership Challenge

Leadership at the strategic level was challenging in several ways. First, characterizing the ambiguities of the strategic environment was challenging. Secondly, defining a vision in an uncertain and changing atmosphere at the strategic level was part of the components that creates that challenge. Thirdly, needing a strategic leader to create a major shift in large parts of the population was an almost impossible challenge. The Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Force, General Shaul Mofaz, had to deal with these exact leadership challenges during the "Ebb and Flow" conflict²⁶.

The Israeli Defense force is composed of drafted soldiers. Since every eighteen-year-old adult in Israel is required by law to be drafted into the IDF, the IDF is what the Israelis called "the people's army". Despite the fact that the IDF is a hierarchical organization, the soldiers' motivation is influenced also from society and from the mood of its people. Therefore, a strategic leader in the IDF had to understand and consider the environment in this society when making decisions. Although the leader was not led by public opinion, in order to be more effective, however, the leader should not ignore the mood of the people. As mentioned previously, Barak's era was characterized as an optimistic period that peace was 'around the corner', and that the emerging conflict was an accident. The IDF Chief of Staff (COF) at that time, Gen. Shaul Mofaz, had to find a way to make the shift from a defensive approach²⁷ towards an offensive approach²⁸. This challenge was directed at the Israeli Prime Minister also, but in this paper, the focus is only on the IDF COS leadership.

Another challenge that Gen. Mofaz had was to convince his subordinates and the public that it was possible to go into the Palestinian cities with an acceptable level of casualties. The international experience with fighting inside hostile cities showed that the odds were against the offensive side and that it often costs many casualties (Stalingrad is the most famous example)²⁹. Furthermore, the Israeli experience in urban warfare was the same and fresher in the minds of the generals and the public. The experience from the combat in Suez City in 1973 and from the battle in Beirut in 1982-83 showed the complexity and the sacrifice that characterized urban warfare. Therefore, a leader had to make every possible effort to find a solution for the terrorist attacks before raising the option to conquer cities. However, raising the option was not enough. Gen. Mofaz had to convince the army and the public that it was not just **a way**, but also **the way** to fight effectively against Palestinian terrorists. To make a shift in public opinion about an argument that was considered impossible in the collective memory or that was going to lead to a catastrophe was indeed a tough leadership challenge.

Another shift that the Chief of Staff had to lead was to build confidence at the tactical level that it could fight in urban areas. The "Ebb and Flow" conflict was not a surprise for the IDF; nevertheless, in most scenarios, no one really thought about the option of going into the cities in the West Bank³⁰. Consequently, the tactical units neglected urban warfare and the idea that the professional ability to fight needed to be improved. The intensity of the conflict stretched the army; hence, the training and drills became on-the-job-training. Furthermore, the situation in the reserve units was worse than in the active army units. The reserve units normally drilled once a year, with little attention to urban warfare training. The confidence of these units regarding their ability to fight in urban areas was not very high. In addition, fighting against terrorist groups was much more difficult than conquering a city. In most cases, the terrorists did not volunteer to show themselves. The professional challenge was objectively high, especially considering the lack of training by the tactical units. The strategic leader, General Mofaz, had to find a way to lead his army to victory, even though there were many difficulties to face.

Therefore the leadership challenge was to transfer the public approach from the feeling that the wishful peace was close than ever (or was already here) toward an approach that there was still some way to go before reaching the hopeful peace and there are going to be some fights on that way. The internal challenge was to create the confidence that the IDF had the ability to win in the urban areas.

Leadership and Strategy Leadership

Scholars, leaders, and researchers have been analyzing the leadership phenomenon for decades; therefore, there was more than one definition for leadership. Linda Smircich and Gareth Morgan suggested leadership was “realized in the process whereby one or more individuals succeed in attempting to frame and define the reality of other.”³¹ The three components in this definition³² included the leader, the others or the group that was led, and the definition of the reality, goal, or vision. Since reality has more than one interpretation succeeding in defining the reality of others, as suggested in this definition, was a complicated mission, especially if, as a result of this interpretation, the led were supposed to do something that they did not want to do or that could endanger their lives. The tension between the leader and his or her followers was and still is inherent in the leadership phenomenon.

That tension increased when leading at the strategic level, since the ambiguity characterized at the strategic level raised doubt that the interpretation given by any leader was the correct interpretation. Smircich and Morgan defined strategic leadership as “...providing a conception and direction for organizational process that goes above and beyond what is embedded in the fabric of organization as a structure, i.e. a reified and somewhat static pattern of meaning.”³³ The way that strategic leaders handled tension and the perceived ‘correct’ interpretation, according to Smircich and Morgan, was by providing a concept and direction toward the future. The leader framed the future of the organization, he or she provided a future concept, and then showed the direction of how to achieve that future goal. If the strategic leaders did this then they would overcome the tension and the complicated reality of arguing about the past and the present.

Kouzes and Posner gave the answer to the request question of how to conceive the future. In their article³⁴ Kouzes and Posner claimed that leaders were forward-looking. A leader made sense for his or her subordinates, not only for the present but also for the future until accomplishing the goals by focusing in the future or zooming out. The method that they introduced was “the vision”. According to Kouzes and Posner, the vision was an ideal and unique image of the desired future. The process of defining the vision was a combination of science (possibilities) and art (image of desired future). Although Smircich and Morgan did not analyze the vision as was explained above³⁵, they did recognize that strategic leadership was about “providing... direction... that goes above and beyond what is embedded in the fabric...” Therefore, the way that Smircich and Morgan suggested to accomplish the goals (or vision) was by managing the meaning. Combining these two articles could result a strategic leader focused in the future. The outcome should be a vision and management of meaning. The vision desired

the ideal of the future organization above and beyond the present situation of the organization. The management of meaning was the ability to lead and to focus human energy to make that vision a reality.

The “Ebb and Flow” Case Study

In the “Ebb and Flow” case study, the three components of leadership were easily distinguished: the leader (Chief of Staff), the followers (his direct subordinates and the entire Army), and the reality that should have been interpreted was the Israeli – PA conflict. The potential tension between the leader and his followers was there as mentioned in the leadership challenge above. The result of a vision, any vision, that the COS would have decided would have caused some of his followers to risk their lives and some to deny his interpretation. Furthermore, trying to define a vision in complex circumstances as it was in those days was a more challenging task. What was the ideal and unique future, if any, that he wanted to attain? In addition, the ability to manage the meaning was complicated because of the poor reputation that urban warfare had and the lack of training in that particular warfare. The combination of all the above circumstances caused a major leadership challenge to Gen. Mofaz.

The Chief of Staff’s vision was to attack the terrorist groups wherever they were. That meant to change the strategy of the army from a defensive to an offensive mode. Moreover, the result was that the IDF should prepare to conquer the Palestinian Cities.

Gen. Mofaz’s Methods

The main method of Gen. Mofaz was to declare that Israel would fight against terrorism in every place that it existed. Gradually he gave more details about his vision that Palestinian cities would have to be attacked with ground forces. By doing that, the IDF COS reduced the criticism of his vision. Gen. Mofaz moreover, showed evidence to the media that the leaders of terrorist groups roamed freely in the PA territory, and that the PA was an active participant in terrorist activities. By showing that, he presented the option of invading PA cities to the public. Consequently, the IDF monitored activity in the nearby PA cities and gradually reduced the territory of the PA³⁶. This method was part of “managing the meaning” of the civilian population.

The method that Gen. Mofaz used to “manage the meaning” of the military part was different³⁷. The COS frequently visited combat units and asked the battalion commanders and the brigade commanders their opinions. From these meetings the COS heard directly from the tactical level what was really happening, including the confidence of the commanders with their missions. The other benefit was that he spread his vision and managed the meaning for his subordinates. More than once he discovered that leaders at the tactical level were much more

confident with the mission than the leaders at the operative level, and that the tactical commanders thought that their units were adapted for urban warfare. The next step was sending the active army infantry units into the PA cities and into the refugee camps. These successful attempts showed that the IDF had the ability to be engaged in urban warfare, and that even though the history of urban warfare was considered catastrophic under these circumstances; the IDF could and would succeed.

The most effective combination of vision and “management of meaning” was the “Defensive Shield” operation, which was actually a war between Israel and the PA. The IDF conquered the PA cities within that operation and the Israeli forces that participated in that operation included active army and reserve units. The fact that more than a hundred percent³⁸ of the soldiers in the reserve units reported for duty showed that the people and the army had indeed made the transition that Gen. Mofaz tried to achieve. Even though it caused a massive entrance into urban hostile areas, the public and COS subordinates followed the vision of attacking terrorism in every place that it existed.

“Defensive Shield” Operation as a Turning Point

The “Defensive Shield” operation was, without doubt, the turning point of the “Ebb and Flow” conflict. The Israeli offensive effort against terrorist groups and the massive entrance of IDF troops into the Palestinian cities dramatically changed the security situation in Israel. From chart 1³⁹ it is clear that the IDF’s activities to prevent suicide bombers were dramatically more effective than before the “Defensive Shield” operation. That achievement proved more valuable because the Palestinian attempts to encourage suicide bomber attacks significantly increased after the “Defensive Shield” operation and during years 2003 and 2004. The aftermaths of that operation were first, effective war against terrorism groups. Second, Clear evidence to the Israeli public and to the international community of the involvement of the Palestinian Authority in promoting terrorism and Arafat was subsequently isolated in his Muquata⁴⁰. Third, an understanding that the Oslo process would not continue subsequently in its current form and, therefore, a new frame for achieving peace in that region should be formed. Finally, more secure life for Israeli citizens inside Israel.

Effective war against terrorism - the graph in chart 1 shows that, the Palestinian attempts to murder Israeli civilians increased after the “Defensive Shield” operation; however, despite that fact, they did not succeed. The number of the prevented attempts by the Israeli military shows that the counter-terrorist operations have been very successful. That success was and still is, very important for the Global War against Terrorism declared by the United

States President. The effectiveness⁴¹ of the conventional army in decreasing the murder and fear that terrorist groups attempt to plant in an innocent population is an important milestone in the global war against terrorism.

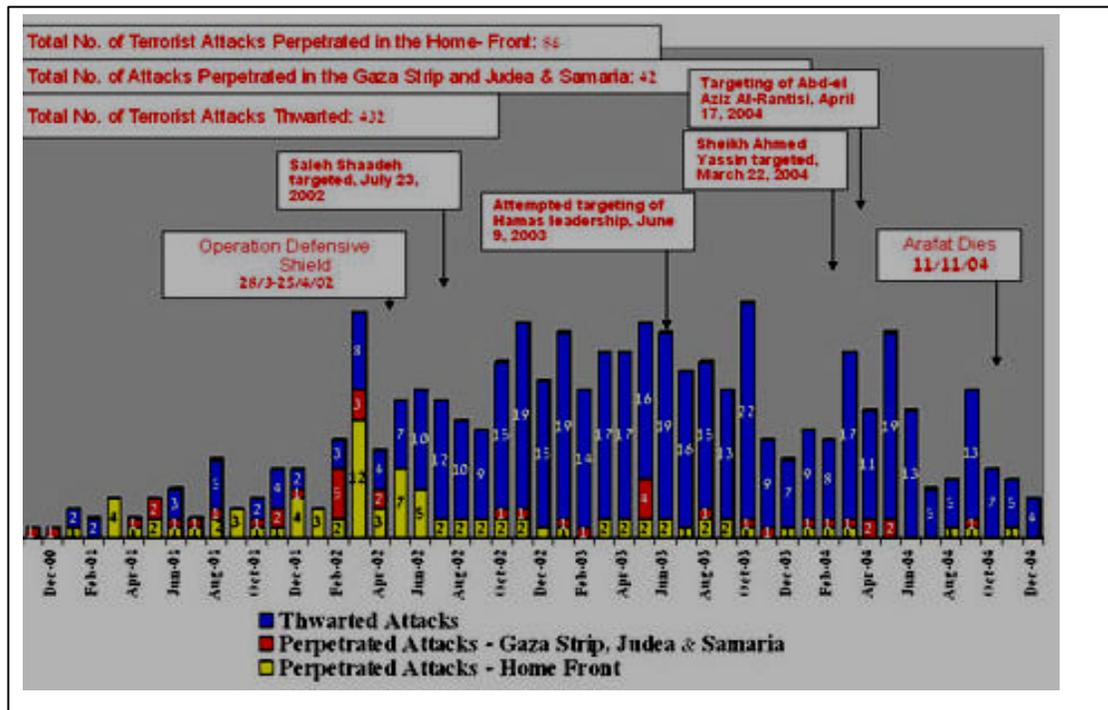


Figure 1

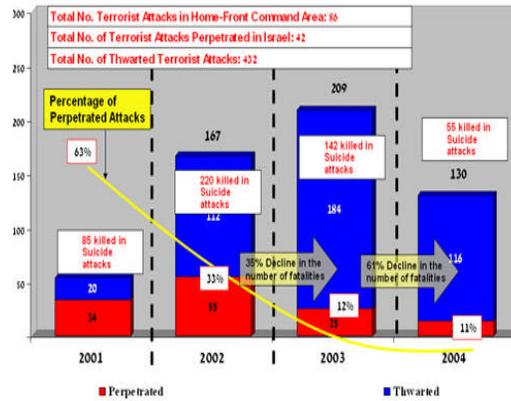


Figure 2

Involvement of the Palestinian Authority in terrorism- after the “Defensive Shield”

operation, Israel showed evidence to the world, especially to the US and the EU, that the PA was involved with terrorism and that the Intiphada was not a spontaneous reaction of the Palestinian street, but that it was well-prepared and organized by the Palestinian Authority. That fact was not only to convince the world that the Israeli approach was the correct approach, but also to cause reconsideration regarding the Palestinian will for peace. The feeling that the Oslo process was a well-organized fraud by Arafat became more and more common in and out of Israel.

Challenge for Oslo Process

As a consequence of the previous outcome, the internal Israeli debate between the pragmatists was reshaped. More and more previous Oslo supporters changed their attitude towards the result that there was no partner in peace on the Palestinian side. Therefore, when P.M. Sharon declared that Israel was evacuating the Gaza Strip unilaterally, former Oslo supporters backed that program. The fundamental difference between the Oslo process and the unilateral programs was that in the Oslo process Israelis and Palestinians reached an agreement by negotiating. In contradict in unilateral programs Israel did what it thought was in its best interests without involving the PA. That shift from negotiation toward unilateral action was a direct result of the Israeli public disappointment in the Palestinians and their representatives.

Security for Israeli Citizens

Following the unilateral way of thinking, which characterized Sharon's administration policy, the top priority of the government was to provide security to its citizens. The most important effect of the "Defensive Shield" operation was the incredible decline of terrorist attacks inside Israel. Defending Israeli citizens remained the top priority in Israel's national security strategy throughout the fifty-seven-year existence of Israel, even though the threats have been changed from conventional warfare towards terrorism.

During these years, Israel changed its interpretation regarding the concept of peace with the Palestinians. The previous interpretation, led by pragmatic leftists was forming peace between two equal entities. Their philosophies were creating peace by reaching an agreement based on the common interests of the two peoples. The main point was establishing the Palestinian state with the Palestinians and gradually normalizing relations between the two countries. When P.M. Barak attended to the peace summit in Camp David with the goal of ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he was willing to give much more territories to the PA than any former Israeli administrator. As the first sign of the collapse of the Oslo peace process, the summit failed and Barak's declared that Arafat was not a partner in peace. The violent events that followed that summit set the stage for the new peace concept.

Israel's new strategy was therefore a different interpretation for the concept of peace. Peace was now divided into at least two parts: security and other aspects. This was the reason why P.M. Sharon did not talk about his long-term program when he was first elected. According to the unilateral approach, Israel would take actions to promote its interests with or without coordination with the Palestinians. The "Defensive Shield" operation, the fence and the evacuation from The Gaza Strip were results of this policy. The "Defensive Shield" operation was the de facto turning point. When Israel's active duty and reserve units entered into the Palestinian cities, the shift in the Israeli policy became a reality.

Conclusion

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict had been continuing for more than a century. Israel had been changing its strategy numerous times during its fifty-seven-year of existence. Ben-Gurion's strategy was based on two fundamental components, quality and blitzkrieg, and that strategy was valid until the Six Day War. After the major changes in reality, Israel had an ambiguous strategy about the future of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The reason for the ambiguous strategy was the internal Israeli debate about considering the status of these territories. The Oslo agreements led by P.M. Rabin and followed by Barak's policy tried to end that conflict by

negotiating between equal entities. Their policy did not succeed, however, and the violent war that has been occurring since September 2000 was the direct evidence that their peace policy collapsed.

P.M. Sharon led different a policy unilateral policy and the “Defensive Shield” operation represented that new policy. The offensive effort made inside previous Palestinian territories as well as considering Palestinian forces as Israel’s enemies changed that conflict to be a war and showed beyond any doubt a major shift in Israel’s strategy. Gen. Mofaz, the IDF Chief of Staff in those days, faced an enormous leadership challenge. His challenge was to create a shift in three wide circles: the public, his direct subordinates and the entire army active duty as well as reserves. The best expression of Mofaz’s success was the fact that more than a hundred percent of the reserve soldiers showed up at the first day of the “Defensive Shield” operation.

The consequences of the “Defensive Shield” operation were important in the local arena as well as in the international environment. The fact that a conventional army dramatically reduced the ability of terrorist groups to succeed in terrorist activities, despite the fact that their motivation to continue suicide bomber attacks increased, has been a milestone in the Global War Against Terror. Furthermore, the relatively secure environment afforded the Israeli government to practice more components of its strategy. The fence in the West Bank and the disengagement from the Gaza Strip were similar activities in the same policy of unilateral action. The coming elections in the Palestinian Authority in January 2006 as well as in the coming elections in Israel in March 2006, will determine if Israel will continue with its unilateral policy rather than going back to the negotiation table.

Endnotes

¹ The 1956 war was different because UK and France were part of Israel’s allies.

² Except Egypt and Jordan that have peace agreement with Israel.

³ Apply to the US Army War College model of “Ends, Ways and Means.”

⁴ Declaration as recently heard from Iran’s president.

⁵ http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/oslo_eng.htm

⁶ That conflict will be analyzed on page

⁷ The Israeli army prepared to the conflict before the summit and during the summit. The IDF knew that Arafat wanted to establish the Palestinian state as a result of war so they could claim victory upon Israel instead of getting a state as a present.

⁸ Efraim Karsh, Arafat's war, Tel-Aviv, 2004 Ma'ariv Book Guild (Hebrew edition), chapters 8,9,10.

⁹ The names of the conflict were: Israeli name- "Ebb and Flow" represents the relationship between Israel and the PA from the eyes of Barak's administration. Palestinian name- "Intifada al Aqsa", meaning of that name is spontaneous civilian react for the danger to the Mosque in Jerusalem.

¹⁰ Documents that were captured in the Mukata'a in Rammalla showed Aarafat's involvement clearly. (I personally have been their and transferred the documents to the Israeli intelligence).

¹¹ Efraim Karsh, Arafat's war, Hebrew edition, chapters 12, 13.

¹² Ronen Bergman, "And The Authority is Given", Hebrew edition, chapters 6,7,8.

¹³ Carl von Clausewitz, On War, ed. And trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton NJ :Princeton Univ. Press, 1984) pp. 75 (in the continues Clausewitz. On War. Pp 86 .)

¹⁴ Clausewitz. On War pp. 86.

¹⁵ Clausewitz. On War. pp. 87

¹⁶ Clausewitz. On War. pp.87

¹⁷ Clausewitz. On War. Pp 82

¹⁸ Clausewitz. On War. Pp 81

¹⁹ Efraim Karsh, Arafat's war, Hebrew edition, chapters 11.12.

²⁰ Efraim Karsh, Arafat's war, Hebrew edition, chapters 11.12.

²¹ The military part of the Fatah party (Arafat's party)

²² Exhibit 2

²³ According to Israel's doctrine the active duty army is supposed to conduct the military activities mainly defensive operations. When the reserves units are called usually it means that Israel is shifting to offensive operations.

²⁴ Clausewitz. On War. Pp 77

²⁵ Efraim Karsh, Arafat's war, Hebrew edition, chapters 11,12,13. and Ronen Bergman, "And The Authority is Given", Hebrew edition, chapters 7,8,9.

²⁶ . The focus will be in the leadership of the Chief of Staff, even though he was not the only strategic leader in that arena, and that there are more factors in this case.

²⁷ It is an accident so let us try to reduce the damage

²⁸ That accident was on purpose, we need to fight against the terrorist groups and leaders.

²⁹ Stalingrad is an example for the damage that relatively small force can cause much greater force in urban area. The famous battle was in WWII between the Russian – defending – and the Vermacht.

³⁰ The scenarios were at the ‘peace era”

³¹ Linda Smircich and Gareth Morgan, Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, Vol. 18, 1982 by NTL institute. Pp. 258.

³² And in most definitions that I saw.

³³ Linda and Morgan, pp 260

³⁴ “envision the future” by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, Chapter 5 of The Leadership Challenge, 3rd Edition, 2002, pp 109-139. I also used Clif croffords summery

³⁵ I think that this concept was not common in the eighties of the 20th century.

³⁶ During the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002 the IDF surrounded the PA cities and limited the ability of transportation between the cities.

³⁷ This is my personal experience as a battalion commander at that period of time.

³⁸ Israeli reserve units are arranged with “overstrength” personal members so that when mobilized it is technically possible to achieve over 100 percent mobilization.

³⁹ Exhibit 1. From the IDF web site.

⁴⁰ The Palestinian government building in Rammalah .

⁴¹ Exhibit 2. From the IDF web site.