

THE SECOND LEBANON WAR AND THE OPERATION PROTECTIVE EDGE / TZUK EITAN AS EXAMPLES OF ASYMMETRIC CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Paweł POKRZYWIŃSKI*

* *Institute of International Studies, University of Wrocław*
e-mail: pa.pokrzywinski@gmail.com

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Abstract:

In the article there are analysed characteristics of an asymmetry of a contemporary battlefield on the grounds of the Second Lebanon War in 2006 and the Operation Protective Edge / Tzuk Eitan in the Gaza Strip in 2014. In the beginning the author presents Polish and Israeli definitions of an asymmetric conflict and its manifestations. Further, there are described causes of both conflicts and capabilities the parties had at their disposal before the direct military confrontation. Then, there are specified forms as well as measures undertaken by the Israel Defence Forces in the fight against Hezbollah in South Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. The result is the characteristics of an asymmetry in the Middle East and the description of the evolution process of activity and structures of terrorist organisations and the Israel Defence Forces. This made it possible to show the process of learning and adjusting actions to the way the enemy operates, its potential and conditions surrounding both state and non-state actors.

Keywords:

the Israel Defence Forces, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Israel, Hezbollah, Hamas, an asymmetric conflict, the Arab-Israeli conflict

INTRODUCTION

Israel in its short history of statehood fought a great deal of struggles with its Arab neighbours. All the important and known from the history wars (the War of Independence of 1948, the Suez Crisis of 1956, the Six-Day War of 1967 and the Yom Kippur War

of 1973) took place between the Israel Defence Forces¹ and the armies of the Arab states, thus on both sides of the armed forces were "*specialised state bodies designated to protect and defend the state's interests (...)*"², which were subject to state institutions and had granted monopolies over the use of force. After having suffered from a number of military defeats, the Arab leaders refrained from any armed confrontations with Israel. Many radical Arab circles, including the Palestinians, decided to intensify their efforts within military and religious - military organisations. Due to this process, since 1980s the Israel Defence Forces have faced asymmetric threats that are of non-state nature and hence the way of conducting such conflicts has changed. Until today, *Cahal* has taken part in the First Lebanon War (1982-1985), and the First Intifada (1987-1993), the Second Intifada (2000-2005), the Second Lebanon War (2006), the Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), the Operation Pillar of Defence (2012) and the Operation Tzuk Eitan / Protective Edge (2014).³ All of the above conflicts and operations were carried out on one side by Israel as a state actor and on the other side by organisations, groups and social movements of the Arabs as non-state actors.

On the basis of activities of Hezbollah during the Second Lebanon War and activities of Hamas and the Israel Defence Forces during the Operation Tzuk Eitan, author endeavours to describe the nature and the forms of conflicts in the Middle East, in which the Israeli and the Arab parties are. Furthermore, the aim of the analysis of those cases is to prove that they bear attributes of a contemporary asymmetric conflict. The time lag between the Second Lebanon War and the Operation Tzuk Eitan is to help to highlight the learning process of participants, which is one of the features of an asymmetry. Based on the two examples, there are presented ways of adapting the methods of conflict participants activities to the requirements of a battlefield, terrain conditions and the specificity of the region. In the article the author tries to show the direction in which asymmetric conflicts in the Middle East evolve.

1. THE DEFINITION OF AN ASYMMETRIC CONFLICT

The glossary of national security issued by the National Defence Academy defines an asymmetric conflict as "(...) actions of two opposing parties (entities) of a varying scope and combat capabilities or traditional methods (ways) of operating, resulting in a situation where a party in an unfavourable position must use its particular strengths or take advantage of specific weaknesses of an opposing party".⁴ This definition shows that not only quantitative factors influence the character and the method of conducting military operations in such a conflict. Because of its location, a non-state party must exploit its advantage arising from: the knowledge of a terrain and the culture of the society residing there, ideological commitment, the difficulty of identifying an en-

¹ In his work the author uses the translation of the name of Israel Defence Forces from the Hebrew language (hebr. צבא הגנה לישראל – *Cwa ha-Hagana le-Israel*) as well as the acronym *Cahal* (hebr. צה"ל).

² *Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, the National Defence Academy, Edition 6, Warszawa 2008, p. 121.

³ In the study the English name of the Operation *Protective Edge* and the original Hebrew name *Tzuk Eitan* (Heb. צוק איתן) are used interchangeably.

⁴ *Słownik terminów ...*, op.cit, p. 167.

emy, the local community's legitimacy of its activities and condemning actions of an enemy. A non-state party tries to act so as to neutralise the advantage of an enemy or cause that any attempt to make use of it leads to problems.

In the Israeli magazine "Maarachot" issued by the Ministry of Defence, an asymmetric war is treated as a clash of a state army with forces that are not organised in the same way as the armed forces, for example a guerilla army or terrorist organisations. Non-state actors operate by rocket firing from urban centres, they use anti-tank missile launchers, set booby traps, organise bombings. All this in response to activities of land forces, the Marine Corps and the Air Force of Cahalu⁵. Such an approach to an asymmetric conflict proves that this term is understood by Israel as a confrontation between the state power and activities of organisations, groups that use terrorism, irregular actions and partisan fights. This is due to the Israeli soldiers and politicians' specific perception of threats to the security of the country. Recognition of the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Palestinian Hamas as terrorist organisations makes each of their attack on the territory of Medinat Israel authorise the government to a military response to the threat occurred.

Yaakov Amidror, the former head of the National Security Council in Israel, points out that because of its characteristics, size and population this country is reliant on the continuous functioning in an asymmetry. It has remained unchanged since 1948. This can be described by five elements:

- an asymmetry of space. By this term Amidror understands Israel's lack of strategic depth, in contrast to Syria, Jordan and Egypt. In the case of a traditional armed conflict an enemy must not be allowed to enter the Israeli territory. In addition the territory of the country is almost entirely located within the range of fire from Gaza, the West Bank and South Lebanon;
- the size of the population. Even if all the Jewish returned to Israel, the Arab states would still have a tenfold advantage. This adversely affects the mobilisation potential;
- the lack of adequate international support. According to Amidror's estimates, in the world there is an invariable group of sixty countries that usually vote against Israel. This sabotages all its requests and changes other countries' opinion on the activities of Cahal;
- decisions. Yaakov Amidror calls for attention to the fact that any Israeli military victory cannot even allow the country to force an enemy to change its national system into democratic or cease hostilities. If the Arab states win, Medinat Israel may stop to exist;
- measures which can be used. In respect of international and internal law, Israel cannot act as Russia in Chechnya or Hamas do. Unlike many world powers or terrorist organisations, Israel must operate in accordance with

⁵ A.Bar-Josef, A.Simchoni, *Lechima Asimetrit we-Tafisat ha-Bitachon szel Israel*, "Maarachot", Glajon 249, Februar 2010, p.5. [online]. [available: 05.01.15]. Available on the Internet: <http://maarachot.idf.il/PDF/FILES/0/112540.pdf>.

ethical and moral standards. This situation evidences that opinions on irresponsible and arbitrary *Cahal's* operations are untrue⁶.

Yaakov Amidror's view from the perspective of a former soldier and a person responsible for state security indicates that Israel is an actor with a worse starting position when it comes to a potential armed conflict and a confrontation with an enemy.

The discrepancy in defining an asymmetry shows that the perception of it depends on decision makers, internal policy of the state and the situation in the region. In the present case, Israel is the stronger party from the perspective of Hamas and Hezbollah, whilst Israel, despite its technological and military superiority, would claim to be disadvantaged in the conflict with the Arabs, not least because of the factors mentioned by Amidror.

2. THE SECOND LEBANON WAR

Drawing an Israeli patrol into an ambush and the abduction of two soldiers are considered reasons for the outbreak of the war. The case has appeared unclear until these days since Hezbollah previously made similar attacks with abduction. The leadership of the Party of God was aware of possible retaliation, but no one assumed that it would come so quickly.⁷ The Israeli authorities' fear of the growth of influences and structures of Hezbollah in Lebanon is thought to be the second reason for the outbreak of the conflict. *Cahal* together with the prime minister and the defence minister were waiting for a chance to weaken the potential of that organisation. In addition, too large number of objectives in such a hasty operation is emphasised (the elimination of Hezbollah's leadership, weakening the potential of the Party of God, rescuing soldiers held hostage, changes in Lebanon's internal policy) as well as their watering down during the war. The issue of ambiguities and the partial implementation of the objectives were taken up by Giora Eiland,⁸ a former soldier and an employee of the Institute for National Security Studies.

In 2006 Israel had one of the most advanced armies in the world. When it comes to the amount of artillery, soldiers or aircrafts its neighbours can surpass it, but in qualitative terms the Israel Defence Forces have a greater advantage.

The Party of God is put in the position of a loser when the state's potential is compared to the contents of the Hezbollah's arsenal. Still, the disparities significantly influence the way of operating which Hezbollah must learn. It should be taken into regard that the Party of God has undergone a sort of evolution from its establishment in 1982 when it applied bombings and abductions, then it began political and philanthropic activity in Lebanon, and at last it developed its armed wing and began to use armed struggle against Israel.

⁶ Y.Amidror, *The Range of Threats Against Israel*, „Military and Strategic Affairs”, Vol. 2, No. 1, June 2010, p. 11-12.

⁷ R.Ożarowski, *Hezbollah w stosunkach międzynarodowych na Bliskim Wschodzie*, Gdańsk 2011, p.98.

⁸ G.Eiland, *The Second Lebanon War: Lessons on the Strategic Level*, „Military and Strategic Affairs”, Vol. 1, No. 2, October 2009, p.11-12.

Table 1. The comparison of capabilities of the Israel Defence Forces and Hezbollah in 2006

	Israel	Hezbollah
Number of soldiers (including reservists) / fighters	576 300	2000-2500 + 10 000 the so called „part-time fighters”
Tanks (all types)	3657	-
Aircrafts	402	-

Source: R. Ożarowski, *Hezbollah...*, op.cit., p.105-106; A. Cordesman, *Arab-Israeli Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric Wars*, Washington 2006, p. 102, 115

In the arsenal of Hezbollah there was a large number of anti-tank weapons of the RPG-7, RPG-29, MILAN, TOW, Metis, Spandrel types,⁹ as well as Soviet or Iranian surface-to-surface missiles, which the Party of God was supplied with by Syria and Iran¹⁰.

1.1. Symptoms of an asymmetry in the Second Lebanon War

The conflict showed that technological and quantitative superiority does not provide full and guaranteed victory. Since 2000, when *Cahal* eventually withdrew the army from South Lebanon, Hezbollah has made a very good use of the terrain and the environment for defensive purposes. The large amounts of valleys, uplands overgrown with trees and bushes, winding roads, clustered buildings in combination with anti-tank weapons and improvised explosives (IED) gave an advantage to Hezbollah. In turn, physical conditions of South Lebanon made it impossible for Israel to fully implement principles of the doctrine on immediate and concentrated attack on the enemy so as to end the conflict within a short period of time.¹¹ *Cahal* was unable to carry out attacks with the support of armed forces, as easily as in military conflicts with Arab countries. Israeli units often stopped at the heavily fortified positions of the Party of God, bogged down in a long fire exchange often ending with the withdrawal to their previous positions.

In the Second Lebanon War, air forces¹² played the essential role for Israel. Israel decided to use the strategy of General Dan Halutz "*Environmental Air Control*," which consisted in taking over the land forces tasks by air forces (e.g.: destroying ammunition

⁹ A. Exum, *Hizballah at War. A Military Assessment*, [in:] "Policy Focus", No. 63, December 2006.

¹⁰ R. Ożarowski, *Hezbollah...*, op.cit., p. 107.

¹¹ *Doctrine*, Israeli Defence Forces, [online]. [available: 05.01.15]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.idf.il/1497-en/Dover.aspx>.

¹² In the doctrine of the Israeli army air forces have always played an important role as support for the fighting troops on land and weakens the enemy in the first days of fighting. Nevertheless, in the case when armoured units were halted and Hezbollah carried out rocket attacks, the most effective way of fighting were attacks from the air. The success of air operations was confirmed by then-Prime Minister in: E. Olmert, *In Retrospect: The Second Lebanon War*, [in:] "Military and Strategic Affairs", Vol. 6, No. 1, March 2014, p.10

magazines, preventing infiltration of the territory, destroying places which rockets into Israeli territory were fired from, attacking buildings of the Party of God) in order to reduce the presence of infantry in urban areas as well as losses among own soldiers.¹³

A significant role in the activities of Israel is always played by special units which carry out raids to the rear of the enemy, carry out reconnaissance in the depth of the enemy territory, destroy fortifications or guide the fire. During the Second Lebanon War the special unit of the Marine Corps *Szajetet 13*¹⁴ was used to destroy Hezbollah's fire positions, as well as the specialised unit *Jachidat Maglan*¹⁵ for operations behind enemy lines.

In its operations Hezbollah used some interconnected elements in order to reduce disparities of forces. The most important one was the camouflage and surprise. Militants of the Party of God used the terrain of South Lebanon to mask fire positions against the Israeli air forces. Additionally, the system of fortifications, bunkers and underground shelters, including underground tunnels, provided the possibility of a surprise attack, conducting a long exchange of fire and possibly an early withdrawal. Such organised defence showed that one cannot underestimate the ability of Hezbollah to carry out a conflict with a state actor.

The main difficulty for *Cahal* occurred in Hezbollah's activity in areas inhabited by civilians and launching rockets in the vicinity of public buildings (schools, hospitals). The presence of people not involved actively in a conflict is a kind of a natural cover, it prevents reprisal attacks and makes an enemy not willing to conduct combat operations in this area, as distinguishing a civilian from a fighter becomes very difficult. Suspecting the Party of God of using human shields is too far-reaching and is not a rule.¹⁶ In addition, the densely built-up areas, as well as ravines, winding roads pose a risk to mechanised units and tanks. Coordinated attacks with the use of IEDs and anti-tank weapons inflicted casualties on the Israeli army. The effective damage or elimination of tanks is estimated to be one-fourth of all armoured forces used during the Second Lebanon War.¹⁷

What worried the Israelis were rocket shootings within the territory of northern Israel. During the whole conflict there were fired 3790 rockets that killed 42 and injured 4262 civilians. The daily average ratio of fired missiles ranged from 150 to 180. Despite the amount of rockets fired on the territory of *Medinat Israel* mortality was relatively low. However, it cannot be ignored. Unexpected rocket attacks of varied intensity caused numerous losses in the infrastructure that had to be covered by local or central budgets, the police had to carry out temporary resettlement of the popula-

¹³ A.Cordesman, *Arab-Israeli Military Forces...*, *op.cit.*, p. 69-70.

¹⁴ *Israeli commandos stage Tyre raid*, „BBC News”, 5 August 2006, [online]. [available: 05.01.15]. Available on the Internet: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5247670.stm.

¹⁵ *Jachidat Maglan*, [online]. [available: 05.01.15]. Available on the Internet: http://www.yehida.co.il/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14&Itemid=56.

¹⁶ R.Ożarowski, *Hezbollah...*, *op.cit.*, p.116.

¹⁷ A.Cordesman, G.Sullivan, W Sullivan, *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War*, Washington 2007, p.111.

tion.¹⁸ Another consequence of such Hezbollah's action was to cause psychosis of constant threat among the Israeli society, discourage people from supporting the war and show that the Party of God with its capabilities may jeopardise the state.

Hezbollah gained an essential advantage thanks to support among local people. The Party of God is not only a political organisation acting on the political scene in Lebanon. In addition, it has been engaged in charity activities, it often helped financially victims of Israeli attacks and covered costs of reconstructing houses. It boosts its position not only among Shiites, but also among Sunnis, Christians and Druze. Support for Hezbollah was also the resultant of losses incurred by the *Cahal's* actions. As a result, the Party of God could gain legitimacy of their actions and disrupted the acquisition of informers for the Israeli army.

3. THE OPERATION PROTECTIVE EDGE / TZUK EITAN

The reasons for the last year's conflict in Gaza were complex. On June 12, 2014, three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped by the Palestinians, which was met with the immediate response of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who decided to begin the search operation "*Brother's Keeper*". In its course 10 residents of the West Bank were killed and 300 people along with the leaders of Hamas in the region were arrested.¹⁹ The Palestinians' actions resulted in the violent reaction of Israeli settlers who kidnapped an Arab teenager and killed him. This provoked a reaction of Hamas, which began rocket firing on the territory of *Medinat Israel*, and raids of armed groups through tunnels leading from the Gaza Strip. In response to this, on July 8, 2014 Benjamin Netanyahu decided to start the operation *Tzuk Eitan* against the intensification of terrorist acts, and to destroy underground tunnels of Hamas and weaken the organisation in the Gaza Strip.²⁰

In the last year's conflict, just as it was during the Second Lebanon War, Israel fought against a non-state enemy. Hamas was established in 1987, that is the same year when the First Intifada broke out. The new group was supposed to constitute an answer to corrupt and losing in the eyes of the population, secular PLO. From the beginning, the organisation set itself the goal of fighting against Israel and, similarly to Hezbollah, it consisted of political divisions and the military wing (Brigades *Izz al-Din al-Qassam*) which operated in a decentralised manner.²¹ Initially Hamas used bombings against civilians, soldiers and led anti-Israel demonstrations. Additionally, in order to gain sup-

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p.103.

¹⁹ Y.Lappin, *IDF kills two Palestinians wanted for kidnapping, murdering three Jewish teens*, „Jerusalem Post”, 23.09.2014, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/IDF-wounds-two-Palestinians-who-kidnapped-murdered-three-Jewish-teens-376124> [accessed on: 06.01.2015]; *Arrests made by IDF forces in Operation Brother's Keeper reaches 300*, „Jerusalem Post”, [online]. [available: 05.01.15]. Available on the Internet: [online]. [available: 05.01.15]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Arrests-made-by-IDF-forces-in-Operation-Brothers-Keeper-reaches-300-360077>.

²⁰ *Israel launches military offensive in Gaza*, „Al Jazeera America”, 7 July 2014, [online]. [available: 05.01.15]. Available on the Internet: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/7/7/israel-launched-deadlyairstrikesingaza.html>.

²¹ M. Jadwiszczok, *Antyizraelskie ugrupowania terrorystyczne i ich zwalczanie*, Toruń 2010, p. 94-95.

port among the Palestinians it developed social and charity activities supporting disadvantaged people in Gaza.

Only in the early 2000s did Hamas begin to shoot home-made rockets (*Qassam, and Qassam2*)²² into the Israeli territory. After the Second Lebanon War the Palestinians started to collaborate with Hezbollah through the exchange of experiences and joint training. The year 2006 is considered to be the beginning of the Hamas' use of guerrilla tactics and the change in the way of the Brigade al-Qassam's action. They began to use rockets more effectively, mortars were added and Katyusha missiles were purchased.²³ This shows that non-state actors in asymmetric conflicts can directly or indirectly benefit from joint experiences and make changes to operating methods so as to exploit advantages of its territory in connection with disposing the funds. In this case, says Shai Oseran, Hamas wanted to use Hezbollah's experiences of the Second Lebanon War, in order to balance their operational capabilities in guerrilla warfare with political aspirations.²⁴

3.1. The Operation *Tzuk Eitan* as an asymmetric conflict

Throughout the conflict, Hamas all the time conducted firing of rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. It drew upon this densely populated territory and the proximity of civilian and public utility buildings, due to which any possible counterattack caused problems for *Cahal's* air forces. In addition, Hamas prepared disposable fire posts which facilitated applying the tactics "hit and run". It caused that Israeli targeting systems localised place of firing projectiles, however, the time needed to make a counterattack was long enough for the Palestinians to escape. When it came to the use of fire the most frequently Israeli missiles damaged empty posts and buildings located nearby. During the entire operation *Protective Edge* Hamas and other Palestinian groups fired 4,500 rockets in total. It is estimated that approximately 200 exploded shortly after firing, 3600 fell on the territory uninhabited by civilians. The Israeli anti-missile short-range system *Iron Dome* intercepted 735 missiles, while 225 fell on built-up areas, causing many damages.²⁵ Such actions of Hamas show that the lack of real opportunities for a skirmish with the Israel Defence Forces is compensated by rockets and mortars, that is long – distance fighting. However, different effectiveness of such shooting due to the range of missiles has certain effects on an enemy. Undoubtedly, this is a psychological dimension. Each firing triggers an alarm and forces the population to quick escape to shelters.²⁶ No regularity of fire and its intensity tire civilians and

²² *Ibidem*, p.95-96, 100.

²³ A. Klein, *Report: Hamas weighing large-scale conflict with Israel*, „Ynet News”, [online]. [available: 05.01.15]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3310425,00.html>.

²⁴ S. Oseran, *Hezbollah-Hamas Cooperation: Motivations, Manifestations and Future Outlook*, „The ICT Working Paper Series”, Working Paper 24, October 2013 Herzliya.

²⁵ Y. Shapir, *Rocket Warfare in Operation Protective Edge*, [in:] *The Lessons of Operation Protective Edge*, (ed.) A.Kurz, S.Brom, Tel Aviv 2014, p.44.

²⁶ Israeli cities are equipped with an alarm system, in case there is rocket and mortars firing the message „*ceva adom*” (red colour, Hebr. צבע אדום) orders people to escape to shelters. Each house must have in his layout a shelter for a family, it is similar when it comes to blocks of flats.

force the increase in measures to maintain constant readiness of rescue and law enforcement services.

Another important aspect of the operation were tunnels. Hamas used them in three main ways: to transport people and traffick arms (from Egypt to Gaza, within the Gaza Strip and from Gaza to Israel) as shelters and magazines of weapons, drugs and ammunition, and to carry out raids into Israeli territory (the so called offensive tunnels).²⁷ Despite the fact that the Gaza Strip is a densely populated and built-up area, it is under constant observation of the Israel Defence Forces and intelligence. The movement of large groups of fighters, even in such a complex environment is very difficult. The tunnels as a means of movement and change of positions were not easy to quick detection, Israel had to make observations of the territory with the use of drones, air forces or specially designated units of land forces. In addition to this, tunnels gave the Palestinians a significant asset, which is a surprise. Owing to this, Hamas was able to conduct an unanticipated attack and withdraw groups in a short period of time. Taking advantage of tunnels is nothing new, but in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict they have been used on a mass scale and are the only means to cross the border and unobservedly penetrate *Medinat Israel*.²⁸

During the operation *Tzuk Eitan* Hamas used the strategy of blending into the crowd, made use of civilian infrastructure and led the fight in urban areas. Throughout the conflict there were situations when the Israeli army found weapons and ammunition magazines, improvised headquarters, fire and observation posts at homes. For adequate financial compensation Hamas held such places in order to camouflage their positions.²⁹ As a result, *Cahal* had difficulty in identifying fire and command posts of the Palestinians in the field. This made an unexpected attack possible, as inconspicuous places could suddenly become a point of resistance. Moreover, any attempt to liquidate such places causes a lot of problems. The adjacent buildings can result in losses among the civilian population, which does not facilitate the activities of the regular army.

During the last year's conflict Israel applied, like during the Second Lebanon War, air strikes and artillery fire so as to eliminate rocket positions of Hamas. Just as in the year 2006, in the course of the operation *Protective Edge* the command of the Israel Defence Forces wanted to eliminate (with minimum losses) the threat, that is Palestinian positions which mortars and rockets were fired from. Air forces used the intelligence information in order to select potential targets to eliminate. Israeli domination in the air was yet another time confirmed, but it did not always achieve the desired effects. Most air strikes resulted in the destruction of fire posts along with the surrounding

²⁷ U.Dekel, Operation Protective Edge: Strategic and Tactical Asymmetry, [in:] *The Lessons of...*, *op.cit.*, p.16.

²⁸ O.Einav, *From Gaza to Lebanon: Following Operation Protective Edge*, „INSS Insight”, No. 608, September 2014, p.1-2.

²⁹ Y.Schweitzer, *Defining the Victor in the Fight against an Army of „Terrorilla”*, [in:] *The Lessons of...*, *op.cit.*, p.22-23.

civilian buildings, schools, hospitals, which brought heavy losses in people not involved in hostilities.³⁰

After entering the territory of Gaza by the Israeli army, the command of *Cahal* set about the phase of finding and destroying tunnels of Hamas. According to Benjamin Netanyahu, air operations were not enough to ensure the success, hence, the responsibility for the completion of the operation *Tzuk Eitan* lied with the land forces.³¹ The detection of underground fortifications of Hamas was not an easy task. Israel saw the tunnels as a strategic risk, and this is why geophonic systems allowing to detect tunnels were systematically implemented into service. Despite this, the sensors did not fully fulfil their tasks. The Israel Defence Forces decided to introduce to action the Engineering Unit of the Special Engineering Corps *Jahalom* (Diamond, Hebr. יהלום) and the company *Samur* (Weasel, Hebr. סמור) organised within its structures, which are specialised in destroying fortifications, tunnels and bunkers, setting explosives, underground combat and sabotage missions.³² Using special units at destroying tunnels was to prevent excessive involvement of mechanised infantry troops in additional tasks. What is more, the use of specialised units reduced the risk of significant losses resulting from the blast of booby traps, the exchange of fire in unfamiliar surroundings or firing at the means of transport. Armoured personnel carriers and infantry kept guard, isolated certain areas and provided a fire support, whilst *Jahalom* and *Samur* dealt with the reconnaissance of tunnels networks, their infiltration as well as the final destruction. Throughout the entire operation *Cahal* destroyed 34 offensive tunnels running under the Israeli border.³³

Having learned from previous fire attacks and the Second Lebanon War, for several years Israel developed the project of the anti-missile defence system in order to protect its own citizens. As a result, there were achieved levels of protection of long, medium and short ranges. The representative of the latter is the above mentioned *Iron Dome*. According to the producers *Israeli Aerospace Industries* and *Rafael*, the biggest advantage of this system is its capability of assessing whether a trajectory of a rocket poses a threat to urban areas or not. If the calculations indicate that the buildings are possible to be fired, the missile interceptors are launched. *Iron Dome* is theoretically capable of defence against artillery shells, mortars and rockets.³⁴ 6 batteries of *Iron Dome* were involved in the operation *Tzuk Eitan*. According to Israeli experts and information revealed to the public, the system shows high efficiency. The effectiveness of the *Iron Dome* was up 90%.³⁵ It is difficult to assess the reliability of the data, be-

³⁰ G.Siboni, *Operations Cast Lead, Pillar of Defense, and Protective Edge: A Comparative Review*, [in:] *The Lessons of...*, *op.cit.*, p.32-33.

³¹ *Netanyahu: Israel may 'significantly expand' Gaza operation*, „Times of Israel”, 18 July 2014, [online]. [available: 05.01.15]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-israel-may-significantly-expand-gaza-operation>.

³² Y.Shapir, G.Perel, *Subterranean Warfare: A New-Old Challenge*, [in:] *The Lessons of...*, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

³³ *Ibidem*, p.53.

³⁴ R.Czulda, *Izraelska tarcza antyrakietowa*, ARMIA, 2013, p. 66.

³⁵ Y.Shapir, *Rocket Warfare in Operation...*, *op.cit.*, p.46.

cause Hamas and other organisations fired missiles at frequent intervals and with various effects, it is possible that some of them were not registered at all or missiles interceptors were not fired in their direction.

CONCLUSION

The Second Lebanon War and the Operation *Protective Edge* proved that in the Middle East in the Israeli-Arab conflict one deals with an asymmetry. It cannot be seen only through the quantitative or subjective prism. The actions of Hezbollah, Hamas and Israel's response show that there exists a multiplicity of features of the conflict recognised today as asymmetrical. First of all, the Party of God and Palestinian organisations try to base their actions on the knowledge of the terrain and the ability to exploit its assets against the better-trained and equipment enemy, which is the Israel Defence Forces. Building fortifications, underground shelters and tunnels is nothing new in similar conflicts, but in the Middle East it became a primary way to achieve a surprise effect of *Cahal* during the attack. The ability to use the terrain contains also operating in urban areas densely inhabited by civilians. In addition, the specificity of the Gaza Strip (a flat area, sparsely covered with vegetations, with a high density of buildings) or South Lebanon (highlands, winding and narrow roads, high saturation with vegetation) prevents the use of all the advantages of the doctrine of the Israeli army and forces it to search for alternative ways of action.

Another manifestation of asymmetric conflicts in the region is the use of anti-Israeli sentiments of the population of Gaza and Lebanon. Hamas and Hezbollah are able to benefit from such support during military actions against Israel. Apart from military activities, social and economic assistance is another asset of both organisations. This makes it easier to carry out attacks and raids into the Israeli territory as well as gain legitimacy for their own purposes. On the other hand, this state of affairs hinders the activity of the Israel Defence Forces when operating within those territories. Population antipathetic to *Cahal* hampers communication and acquisition of information, as well as poses a threat of a possible surprise attack.

Both organisations, Hamas and Hezbollah decentralise their commands in order to obtain greater flexibility and responsiveness to changes on the battlefield. The bottom-up initiatives of commanders of individual units support operating in particular regions of Gaza and South Lebanon. Israeli experts say that the mutual exchange of experiences caused that the organisations use the tactics of "*terrorilla*" (a combination of words *terrorism* and *guerilla*), linking terrorist activity with guerilla.³⁶ This shows that in both conflicts Hamas and Hezbollah tried to combine their potential, the terrain, the environment of civilians and the tactics of "hit and run" aimed at reducing the *Cahal's* advantage and paralysing its activities. In this aspect there is also indicated the creation of the doctrine of a victim, which is making an attack from the territory of civilian areas and waiting for a counterattack resulting in losses amongst population not involved in

³⁶ Y.Schweitzer, *Defining the Victor in the Fight against an Army of "Terrorilla"*, [in:] *The Lessons of...*, *op.cit.*, p.22-23.

the conflict.³⁷ It cannot be assumed beforehand that this action is intentional on a case-by-case basis, yet analysing both conflicts such a tendency can be observed.

In both conflicts, Arab organisations benefited from the equipment which in a vast majority was not the newest, nevertheless, it was used to halt the Israeli army and cause severe damage to it. Dissemination of rocket and mortar firing enables to lead the fight at a distance and attack not only soldiers but also civilian objects on the territory of Israel. Hamas and Hezbollah take advantage of a psychological effect, which is brought by such a way of fighting.

Another feature of an asymmetric conflict is a learning process. The evolution of the two organisations has shown that starting with bombings, abduction and incidental firing at objects it is possible to develop structures and a hierarchy on the level similar to state's armed forces. An important issue is learning from experiences acquired separately by Hamas and Hezbollah, and exchanging them in order to enhance creativity and capabilities.

Both conflicts have also shown that a state actor can adapt to the realities of an asymmetric conflict. A good example is the above mentioned Dan Halutz's strategy relieving the land forces by transferring their tasks to the air forces. Both conflicts have proved that the use of air attacks can bring the desired results reducing losses among own soldiers and equipment. In accordance with "*Environmental Air Control*", the land forces do not need to enter large numbers of soldiers into urban areas. Deployment of air forces improves precision of the operation and the selection of targets. Nevertheless, bombing in populated areas also increases losses among civilians and causes damage to the infrastructure.

During the First Intifada, the Israeli army began to specialise in non - conventional war activities. One can notice an increase in police actions and supervising ones aimed at controlling the situation. In the course of both conflicts special units were used on a large scale. This allowed the use of small, mobile and self-sufficient troops to decommissioning objects which could pose a threat to the armoured forces and mechanised infantry. *Cahal's* units specialised in guerilla tactics, engineering tasks and *mistaarawim*³⁸ tactics allow to create an element of surprise by penetration on the enemy territory in order to gather information, damage objectives which are difficult to reach, while minimising expenses and losses.

The experiences from the above described operations and other conflicts made Israel's decision-makers together with soldiers attempt to create their own system, which would protect against rocket or mortar firing. The *Iron Dome* system, although its effectiveness and economy is debatable, is the answer to such a threat. The location of

³⁷ G.Siboni, *Operations Cast Lead, Pillar of Defense, and Protective Edge: A Comparative Review*, [in:] *The Lessons of...*, *op.cit.*, p.27-28.

³⁸ *Mistaarawim* comes from the Hebrew verb *lehistaaraw* (להסתערב), which means becoming an Arab. Operators who make themselves similar to the Arabs, speak Arabic, are familiar with the Arabic customs and culture in order to infiltrate and work out an enemy and mount a surprise attack.

South Lebanon, the Gaza Strip and the small size of *Medinat Israel* mean that in the range of rockets there are many civilian purposes, airports, ports, tourist resorts, the critical infrastructure, the damage of which may lead to disturbances in the proper functioning of the state.

The described conflicts and their course, actions of both parties show that the modern world departs from a conventional conflict in favour of the clash between the potential of a state and non-state actors. The Second Lebanon War and the Operation *Tzuk Eitan* showed that the latter would use all of their assets, potential, the environment and their or the others' experience so as to reduce the dominance of state forces. Such action would also aim to use the simplest methods to prevent the stronger party from bringing about an early end to the conflict and force it to increase funds and resources used in military actions. More and more Israeli-Arab conflicts not only in the Middle East takes on such nature. They force state actors to search for new methods and ways to deal with such threats.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Paweł POKRZYWIŃSKI, – Bachelor of national security, a student of international security and Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław, the president of the Student Scientific Middle East Association of the University of Wrocław, the author of four scientific articles on the website bliskiwschod.pl and author of two articles in the "National interest - studies and materials" published in the Institute of International Studies, a participant of the Student-Doctoral Scientific Conference with the participation of Vice Ambassador of Israel, "Does Israel have the power? Hard power, soft power and smart power in the Israeli version" and the Student-Doctoral Scientific Conference "Where is the hope? Many faces of the Middle East conflict". The author's areas of interest are Israel's security systems, the activity of the Israel Defence Forces, radical Jewish groups and the specificity of the Middle East conflict.

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