

# ESCALATION AND DE-ESCALATION OF WAR OBJECTIVES: THE ANALYSIS OF ASYMMETRIC WAR IN LEBANON (2006)

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## **Abstrak**

*Tulisan ini mencoba untuk memperkaya perdebatan dan diskusi di antara akademisi di bidang hubungan internasional dan kajian strategis terkait dengan penjelasan kemenangan aktor yang lemah terhadap aktor yang kuat dalam perang asimetris. Sejak dahulu akademisi di bidang kajian strategis telah mencoba untuk menemukan eksplanasi mengenai cara aktor yang lemah dapat memenangkan perang asimetris meskipun inferior dalam elemen-elemen kekuatannya. Para akademisi dalam bidang kajian strategis sebelumnya telah mengajukan beberapa hipotesa antara lain yang mencakup tipe rezim, perbedaan kepentingan sampai dengan interaksi strategis. Dalam artikel ini, penulis mencoba untuk menggarisbawahi signifikansi dari munculnya elemen ketidakpastian pada tataran operasional-taktis sebagai salah satu faktor yang berkontribusi dalam membentuk kondisi yang bersahabat maupun tidak bersahabat bagi aktor yang lemah dalam perang asimetris. Dalam analisa ini, Perang Lebanon pada tahun 2006 dijadikan sebagai studi kasus perang asimetris antara aktor yang kuat dan lemah. Hasilnya memperkuat asumsi bahwa tidak terdapat satu variable utama namun kombinasi dari beberapa variabel yang dapat menjelaskan hasil dari perang asimetris.*

*Kata kunci: konflik asimetris, interaksi strategis, eskalasi, de-eskalasi, taktik operasional, pertahanan Israel, Hezbollah.*

## **Abstract**

This article tries to enrich the conceptual debate and discussions among international relations and strategic studies scholars regarding explanations of weak actor's victories against strong actors in military conflicts. For longtime strategic studies scholars have tried to find the most relevant and valid explanations on the reasoning on how a weak actor can achieve victory in asymmetric conflict despite overwhelming inferiority in terms of power. Previous strategic studies scholars have proposed competing hypothesis ranging from regime type, balance of interests to the types of strategic interaction between the two actors. In this essay, the author would like to underline the significance of fog of war or uncertainty as a significant contributing factor during strategic interactions at tactical-operational towards shaping either a favorable or vice-versa unfavorable war conditions for the weak actor to modify pre-war political objectives of the asymmetric conflict. In this analysis, the 2006 Lebanon War is taken as a case study of the asymmetric conflict between the strong and weak actor. The result strengthened the notion that there is no single variable but a multitude of variable which explains asymmetric conflict outcomes.

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**Keywords:** asymmetric conflict, strategic interaction, escalation, de-escalation, fog of war, tactical-operational, Israel defense forces, Hezbollah

**“The fact that War is about Winning does not necessarily mean it is about Victory. One can win a war without necessarily achieving victory. The point is that War is about Politics and consequently victory in the end is a political matter”**

– Prof. J.Boone Bartholomees

## **Introduction**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 1990 in front of a sellout crowd in Tokyo Japan, all of boxing fans around the world are expecting to see Mike Tyson (the undisputed heavyweight boxing champion) to deliver a knockout punch to his contender, James “Buster” Douglas within the first five round with the expectancy to see “Iron Mike” retain his world heavyweight boxing title. What happens next was an event that nobody in the international boxing community predicted: James Buster Douglas, the under-rated contender won the fight via a technical knock-out (42-1) against all predictions even the bookmakers. This illustration shows an interesting phenomenon in study of international relations: How can strong actor lost to a weak actor despite all of the quantifiable power superiority including on all elements of its national military power such as military capabilities and technology? Can a single factor or a multitude of factors explain this phenomenon? **If as the Realism school of international relations scholars implies hard power in the form of superior military power as the main ingredients of victory in Wars? Then how can these contradictions be fully explained?**

Various scholars of strategic studies have offered competing hypothesis regarding the possible explanations for this phenomenon ranging from balance of interest, regime type, and the types of strategic interaction at tactical-operational levels to a more recent explanations on wars of choice. In this article, the author will not try to falsify or approve the above theories, but rather provide a possible alternative explanations based from the case studies which are being analyzed (the first phase of military operation during the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War). In this article, the author would like to describe the various arguments by

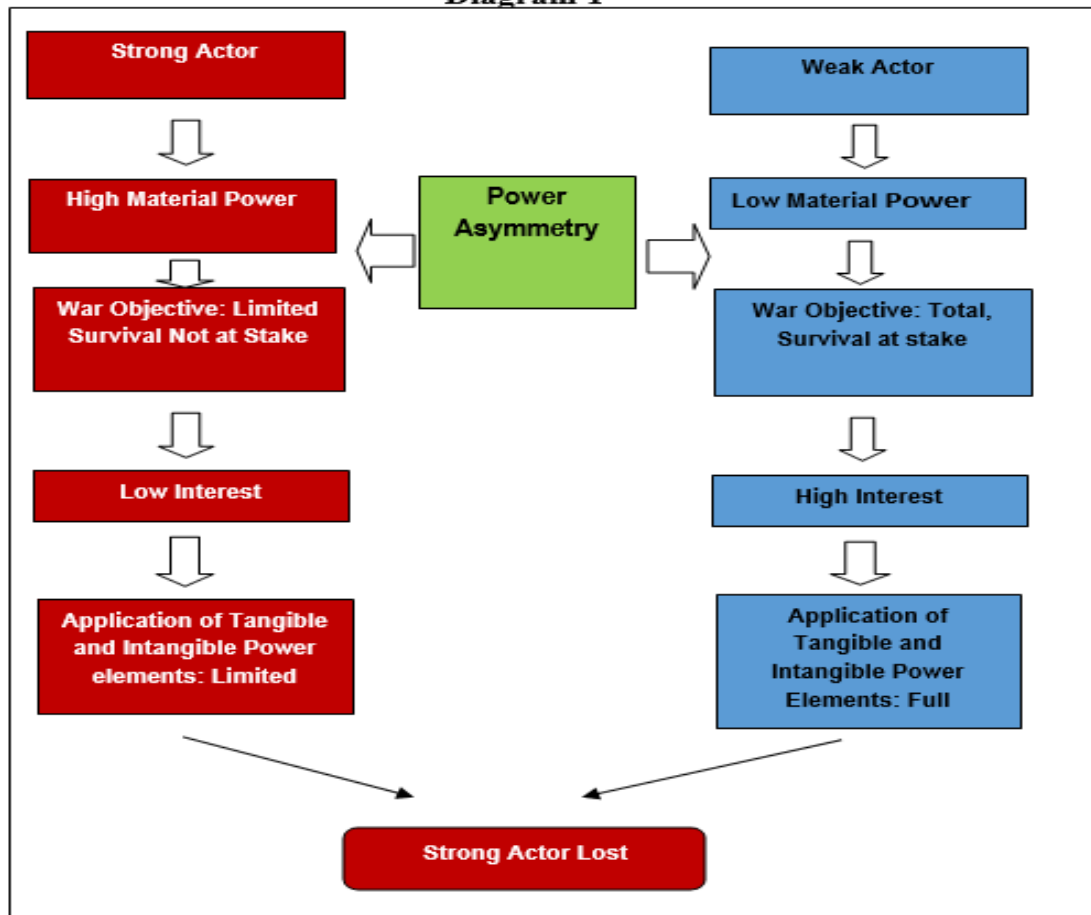
various strategic studies scholars on this issue and then tries to elaborate on how his assumption can complement their theories based from the case studies.

This article is divided into several sections. The first section discusses about the various explanations offered by international relations and strategic studies scholars based from the variants of Realism theories and Liberalism which can explain outcomes of asymmetric conflicts. Meanwhile, the second section elaborates on the outcome of the 2006 Lebanon War including its chronology and the main reasons for the need to study the conflict including propositions by the author on the possibility of escalation and de-escalation by weak actor based from uncertainty at tactical-operational level caused by the fog of war. The third section focuses on the strategic interaction between the strong actor (Israel Defense Forces) and the weak actor using the strategic interaction theory proposed by Professor Ivan Arreguin Toft and the outcome based from the interaction. The fourth section is comprised of War Outcome and Objectives which provides the relevance of the author's propositions based from the result of the 2006 Lebanon War based from the strategic interaction of both actors. Finally, the fifth section contains lessons learned for the International Relations and strategic studies epistemic community based from the findings of the case studies and recommendations for future studies on the area of asymmetric conflict.

## **Literature Review**

In his seminal work in world politics journal in 1975 titled, "*Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars*", Andrew Mack emphasized the actor's resolve or interest as the most valid explanations of a strong actor's failure and success in asymmetric conflicts. His premise is based from the fact that the greater the relative gap in power, the less resolute and more politically vulnerable the strong actor compared to the weak actor. Consequently, according to Andrew Mack, the strong actor lost the war because of domestic public pressures (democratic regimes) and or countervailing elites (in authoritarian regimes).

**Diagram 1**



Source: Andrew Mack, Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict, World Politics Journal, 1975

Andrew Mack also noted the disparity in the relative interest in the conflict between the strong and weak actor whereas the latter's would be higher due to its basic existence and survival at stake due to the potential of either military occupation or colonialism as another variable which can explain this phenomenon. The higher interest of the weak actor according to Mack suggest their maximization of intangible power aspects such as combat motivation or non-conventional combat methodology which can compensate weakness in material power based from the research conducted on the Vietnam War as shown below:

During the same period, few strategic studies scholars such as Jeffrey Record informed about the relevance of third-party intervention and external assistance as a

justifiable explanation for the weak actor victory in their asymmetric conflict with a more powerful adversary. On this assumption, Jeffrey Record highlighted the massive support given to North Vietnamese Army and the Vietcong by the Soviet Union during their war with the US as part of their way to expand the communist ideology in Southeast Asia based from his research on war outcomes based from non-external and external assistance as indicated below:

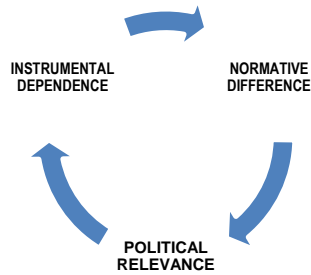
**Table 1**

<b>Name of Asymmetric Conflict</b>	<b>Period /Years</b>	<b>Weak Actor (with External Assistance)</b>	<b>Weak Actor (without External Assistance)</b>	<b>Conflict Outcome</b>
Vietnam War	1965 – 1973	NVA and Vietcong		Weak Actor Win
Soviet Afghanistan War	1979 – 1989	Mujahedeen Fighter		Weak Actor Win
US Civil War : North –South War	1854 – 1861		North Militia	Weak Actor Lost
Boer- UK War	1899 – 1902		Boer Fighters	Weak Actor Lost

Source: Jeffrey Record, Iraq and Vietnam : Differences, Similarities and Insights : Carlisle PA : Strategic Studies Institute

Meanwhile, scholars from Liberalism school of international relations have also tried to offer their perspectives on this phenomenon. One such scholars, Gil Merom underlined the fragility of democratic states with superior military power to conduct protracted military campaigns against weak actor. Merom elaborated with emphasizing the reluctance of democratic states to escalate the level of violence needed to defeat the weak actor. This is due to their domestic political structure and in particular the creed of some of their most articulate citizens and the institutional makeup presented to their citizens. Merom assumptions are based on three interrelated and integrated factors which are as follows:

**Diagram 2**



Source: Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, Cambridge University Press 2003

Based from the diagram above, Gil Merom believe that the instrumental dependence of democratic regimes to its citizens on the human resources for war implementation and conduct of war campaigns. Furthermore, there is a huge normative difference between democratic governments with their domestic constituents on the limit and tolerance of military actions towards the weak actor. Finally, Gil Merom also underlined political relevance whereas there is a great degree of influence of civil society and political parties in a democratic society on the policy choices taken by their governments during wartime.

Years later, prof. Ivan Arreguin Toft from Harvard University in his article titled, *“How the Weak Wins War : a Theory of Asymmetric Conflict”*, stated that the most credible explanations on asymmetric conflicts lies in the types of strategic interaction between strong actor and weak actor in the operational levels during military conflict. He argues that there are four types of strategic interactions that is possible whereas the same-type of strategic interactions (e.g direct vs direct) will result in success by the strong actor. On the other hand, different type of interactions (e.g direct vs indirect) will result in victory by the weak actor as the illustration below shows:

**Table 2**

**Weak Actor  
Strategic Approach**

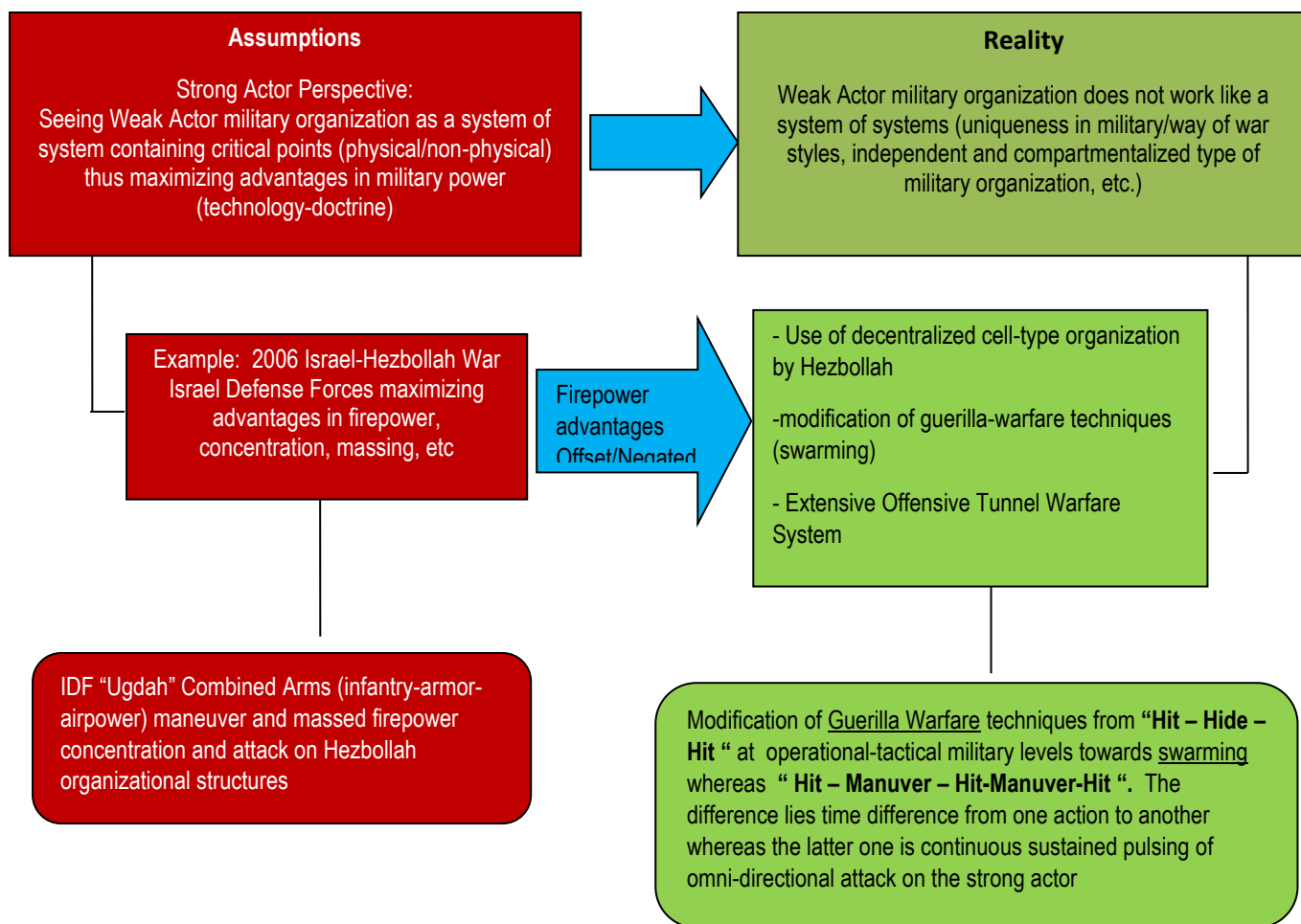
	<b>Direct</b>	<b>Indirect</b>
<b>Strong Actor Strategic Approach</b>	<b>Direct</b> Strong Actor	<b>Indirect</b> Weak Actor
	<b>Direct</b> Weak Actor	<b>Indirect</b> Strong Actor

Source: Ivan Arreguin Toft, *How the Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*, International Security, 2006

Professor Ivan Arreguin Toft proposed four possible outcomes as a possible hypothesis of weak actor victory in asymmetric, which are the following: (1) *When strong actor attacks using direct strategy and weak actor defends using direct strategy, all other things being equal, strong actor should win quickly and decisively*; (2) *when strong actor attack using direct strategy and weak actor defends using indirect strategy, all other things being equal, weak actors should win*; (3) *when strong actor attacks using an indirect strategy and weak actors defend using a direct strategy, all other things being equal, strong actor should lose* and; (4) *strong actors are more likely to win same-approach interactions and lose opposite approach interactions*. On the contrary, the hypothesis proposed by Prof. Toft does not answer the question on why strong actor doesn't always employ the strategy oriented towards same-approach interactions.

Other strategic studies scholars such as Jeffrey White and Ron Tira based their assumptions on the ability of the weak actor to negate or make the firepower and technological superiority advantages irrelevant or ineffective on the strategic interaction at tactical-operational level. Regarding this hypothesis, Ron Tira in his memorandum titled, *"The limitations of Standoff-Firepower Based Operations: On Standoff Warfare, Maneuver and Decision"* describe the weakness of advanced weaponry possessed strong actors which are oriented towards the achievement of cognitive-strategic collapse of the weak actors through the disruption of key/critical junctures through the use of stand-off firepower capability. In other words, Ron Tira believes that seeing the weak actors organization as a system of systems which contains critical points that can be '*paralyzed*', '*isolated*' and '*decapitated*' without understanding the differences of war styles in cultures, variations in decision-making system and nationalism as an interdependent variable is a valid reason for the attainment of political objectives in an asymmetric conflict. In other words, the physical destruction of for instance of leadership, command and control structures does not have lasting impact of the weak actor will to fight as the illustration bellows shows:

**Diagram 3**



Based from the diagram above, it is clearly evident that the superior firepower advantages of IDF can be maximally offset or negated by the use of unique and non-conventional methods of warfare by Hezbollah. However, if Carl Von Clausewitz stated that *“war is merely the means towards a political objectives”*, then who can claim victory in this asymmetric conflict between a state and non-state organization? How can winning and losing



be measured and determined between strong and weak actor? Thus, Ron Tira theory has not fully answered the question among strategic studies scholars on major factors determining weak actor victory in an asymmetric conflict with the strong actor.

More recently from the year 2005 and onwards, some international relations scholars have tried to explain the correlation between War objective/goals of the strong actors with the outcome of the war. In June 2007, Patricia L. Sullivan from University of Georgia Athens, in her journal of conflict resolution publication titled, "*War Aims and War Outcomes: Why Powerful States Lose limited Wars*" produced a hypothesis that strong states select themselves into armed conflicts only if their pre-war estimate of the cost of attaining their political objectives with the use of military force falls below the threshold of their cost tolerance. The more the actual cost's exceed the state pre-war's expectation, the greater the risks that it will be forced beyond its cost-tolerance threshold and in the end forced to withdraw before attaining the political objective of the war. The academic scholar from the University of Georgia Athens also stressed that the achievement of war aims by the strong actor on the weak actor is determined by the dynamics of destructive capacity (military capabilities) and cost tolerance towards human and material cost of victory for militarily strong states.

## **2006 Lebanon War**

The 2006 Lebanon War between Israel Defense Forces and Hezbollah and eventual outcome has been studied by strategic studies scholars and military decision-makers for years as a classic example of this asymmetric conflict phenomenon. How could the strongest military in the Middle East with all its superiority in all components of military instruments could not achieve its political objective against a non-state adversary far inferior both in budget, numbers and military capability?

The Israel Defense Forces before the conflict started according to various military analyst had reached a level of 'invincibility' due to their continuous military modernization and development programs and had built up a cumulative deterrence perception on its past and potential adversaries based from their military campaign victories in 1949, 1967 and 1973. Thus, the outcome of the 2006 Lebanon War raises questions not only about the relevance of military power towards the achievement of political objectives but also the

meaning of winning and losing in an asymmetric conflict as stated by former Defense Minister of Israel Moshe Aren who remarked, *“Israel had lost to a very small group of people, 5000 Hezbollah fighters, which should have been no match at all for the IDF. This conflict could have some very fateful consequences for the future”*. His statement was supported by the internationally renowned magazine *“The Economist”* who stated that, *“by surviving this asymmetrical conflict, Hezbollah effectively emerged with a military and political victory from the conflict.”*

The 2006 Lebanon War itself began after the abduction of two IDF Soldiers on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2006 by Hezbollah during their routine patrol at the Lebanon-Israel border. The events triggered a military operation by IDF on Southern Lebanon named *“Operation Change of Direction”* which lasted for more than 30 days and ended with the IDF having achieved none of the pre-war objectives which according to military expert Anthony Cordesman from US Think-tank Center for Strategic and International Studies include ; (1) *Destroy the Iranian Western Command before Iran could go Nuclear* ; (2) *Restore the Credibility of Israel Deterrence after the Unilateral Withdrawals from Lebanon in 2000 and countering the image that Israel was weak and was forced to leave* ; (3) *Force Lebanon to act as an accountable state and end the status of Hezbollah as State within State* ; (4) *Damage or cripple Hezbollah with the understanding that it could not be destroyed as a political force and would not continue to be a major political actor in Lebanon* ; (5) *Bring the two soldiers that the Hezbollah had captured alive without major trades in prisoners held by Hezbollah-not the thousands demanded by Nasrallah and Hezbollah.*

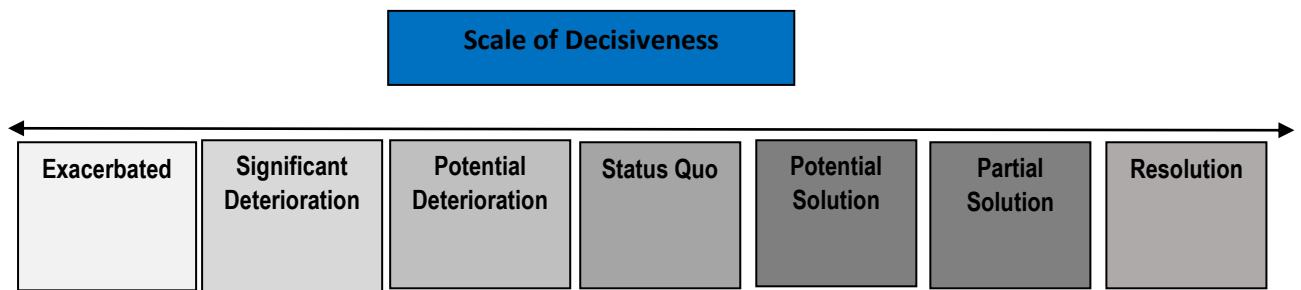
The use of military force by Israel to achieve the five objectives is based on the necessity to implement the grand strategy of cumulative deterrence which is based on the assumption that the use of military instruments over an extended period of time combined with non-military instruments will create a condition that changes the adversary’s motivation to engage in Israel militarily as mentioned by Doron Almog below ;

*“Cumulative Deterrence is based on the simultaneous use of threats and military force over the course of an extended conflict. First, its effectiveness is measured in terms of the number of military victories accumulated over the duration of the conflict, which we think of assets in the victory bank. Second, over time these military victories produce increasingly moderate behavior on the part of the adversary and a shift in his strategic, operational and tactical goals until there is absence or near absence of direct conflict”*

The strategy of cumulative deterrence has been successful in gradually shaping a change in objectives of Arab States from total annihilation/defeat of Israel towards more moderate objectives from the period of 1980's based from the accumulation of military victory from 1948 – 1973 (victory bank). However, the strategy achieved the opposite results during the 2006 Lebanon War against a non-state actor (Hezbollah) supported by a State actor (Iran). The question is how?

In attempting to answer that question which also has been discussed previously from various perspectives by strategic studies scholars, the author would like to reiterate the importance of understanding what can be considered 'winning' or 'victory' in an asymmetric conflict?

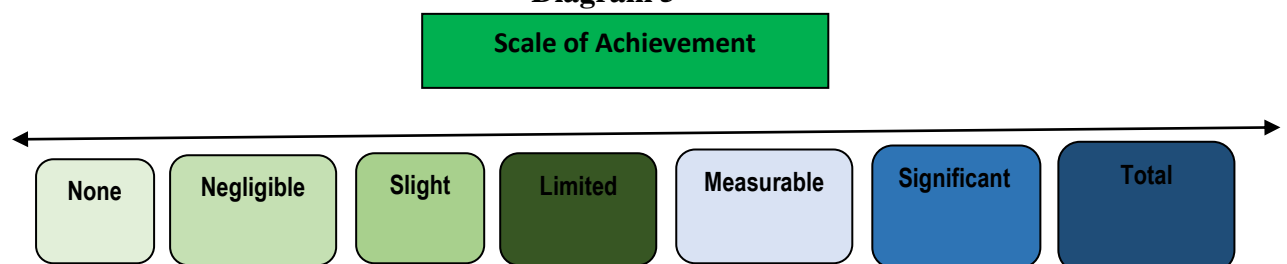
**Diagram 4**



Source: Colin S. Gray, *Defining and Achieving Decisive Victory* (Carlisle, Pa.: USArmyWar College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2002).

Previous strategic studies scholars such as Colin Gray and William Martel believe that the lasting condition of 'victory' occurs on a multiple sliding scales. Gray for instance, considered the achievement of 'victory' condition for the strong actor is based on the coherence and interactions between two independent variables known as the scale of decisiveness and scale of achievement as shown below; The scale of decisiveness as shown above according to Gray shows the variance in political outcomes from the conflict ranging from exacerbation (war does not solve the problem and increases the political problem) to resolution (war resolves the political objective).

**Diagram 5**



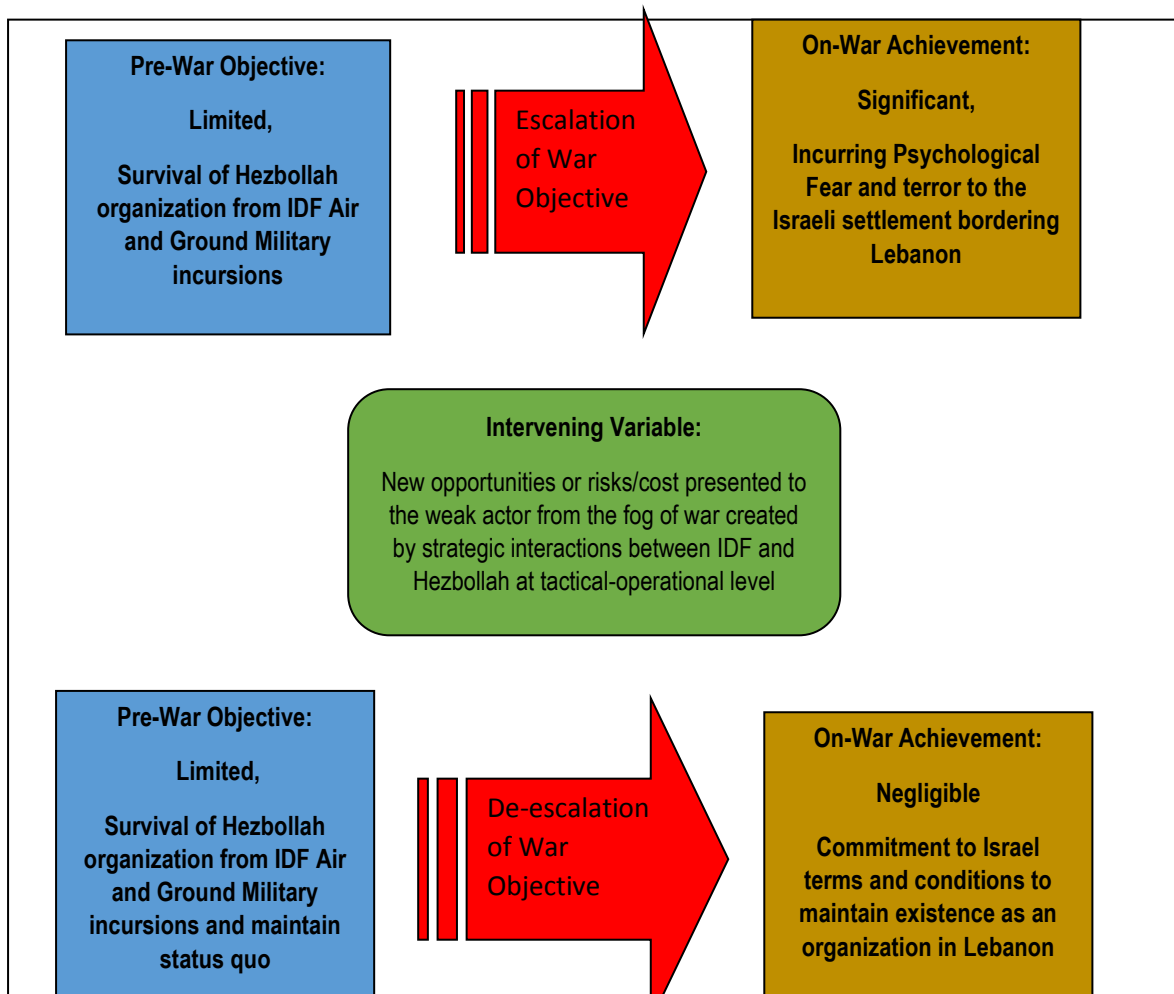
Source : Colin S. Gray, *Defining and Achieving Decisive Victory* (Carlisle, Pa.: USArmyWar College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2002).

Meanwhile, the scale of achievement categorizes how well did the strong executes their military campaign are used for measurement in tactical and operational levels.

The author argues that the scale of achievement, in this case on the asymmetric conflict between Israel Defense Forces (strong actor) and Hezbollah (Weak Actor) is the product of not only ‘pre-war objectives’ but also ‘on-war objectives due to the ‘fog of war’ developing over the duration of the 33 days of war between the two parties which will not only creates challenges but also opportunity for the weak actor to either escalate or de-escalate the scale of asymmetric conflict achievement targeted as shown below;

**Diagram 6**

**Escalation and de-escalation of Weak Actor Objectives**



Based from the diagram above, the author would like to emphasize the impact of the ‘fog of war situations’ during the duration of the asymmetric conflict towards the shifts in the weak actor scale of achievement pursued and achievement as the main indicator of the condition of ‘winning and losing’ in the asymmetric conflict between the two quantitatively power asymmetric actors. It implies that the more opportunities presented to the weak actor during the tactical-operational interactions during the duration of the war, the higher is its achievement outcome. On the contrary, the more risks/cost presented to the weak actor during its battlefield interactions, the lower its achievement outcome.

In analyzing the success of Hezbollah against Israel Defense Forces during the 2006 Lebanon War, the author would like to first analyze the strategic interaction between IDF and Hezbollah at tactical-operational level using ‘strategic interaction theory’ proposed by Professor Ivan Arreguin Toft from Harvard University and then correlate it with its hypothesis on the escalation and de-escalation of war objective based from the results of the strategic interaction at the tactical-operational levels.

First of all, the Israel Defense Forces operation in Lebanon under the nickname “operation change of direction” began on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2006 and was effectively ended on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2006 with a ceasefire. Operation Change of Direction itself based from various sources gathered is composed of two types of military operations but the author in essay will only focus on the strategic interaction on the first type of military operation (air bombing campaign).

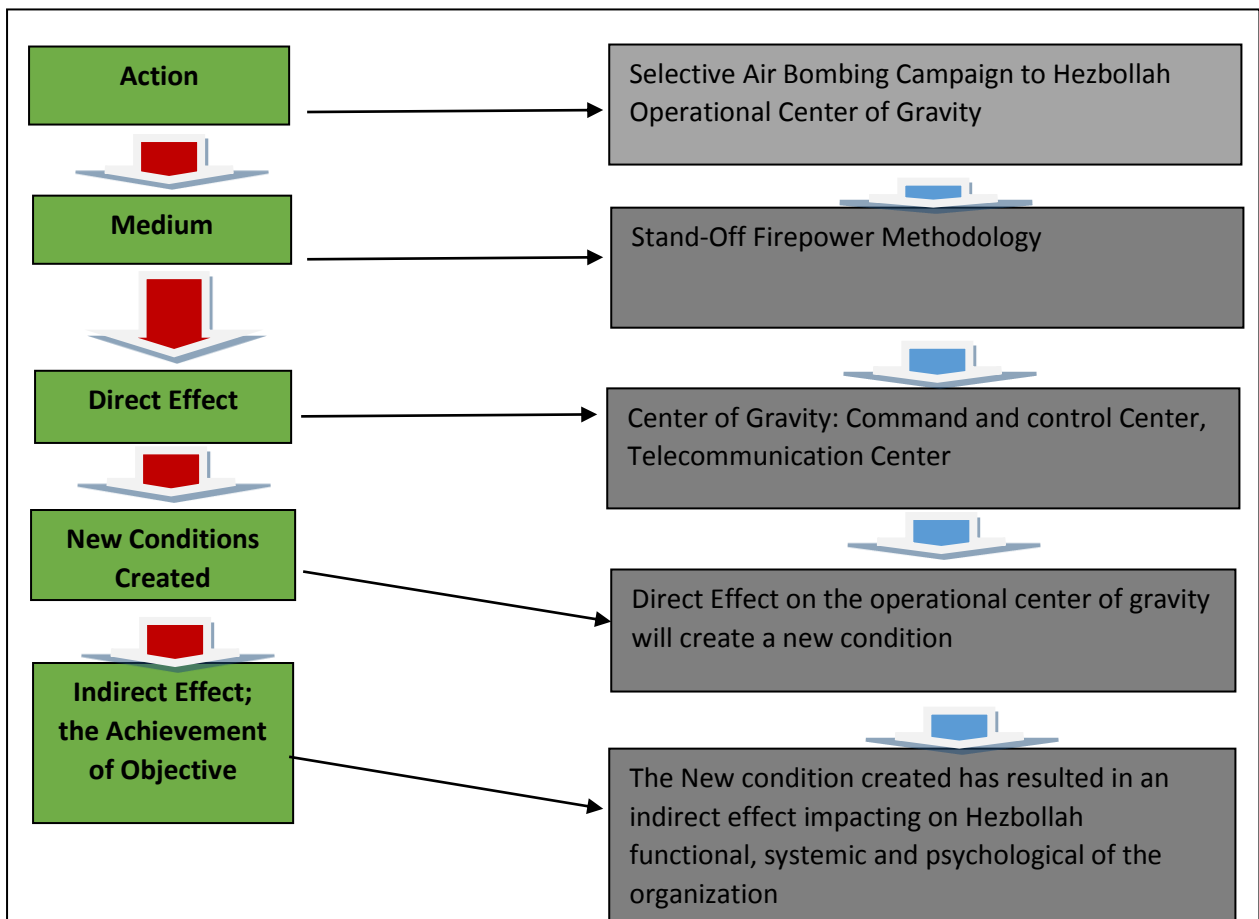
**Table 3**

	<b>Types of Offensive Military Operation</b>	<b>Classification of Military Operation</b>	<b>Approach based from Strategic Interaction Theory Ivan Arreguin Toft</b>	<b>Strong Actor Approach based from Strategic Interaction Theory</b>
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1	<b>Air Bombing Campaign</b>	<b>Shock and Awe Bombing</b>	<b>Barbarism</b>	<b>Indirect</b>
		<b>Stand-off Firepower Bombing</b>	<b>Barbarism</b>	<b>Indirect</b>
2	Combined Infantry & Cavalry Campaign	Ugdah Division mechanized infantry ground attack Special Forces Operation	Conventional Attack	Direct

Based from the table above, the first phase of IDF military operations in Southern Lebanon is composed of shock and awe bombing and stand-off firepower bombing campaigns. The shock and awe bombing campaign is a strategic bombing campaign designed to weaken the spirit of Hezbollah to fight and erode Lebanese public support towards the non-state organization. The targets of the shock and awe bombing campaign were mainly physical infrastructure that has or may be potentially used by Hezbollah. The objectives of the shock and awe bombing campaign is to change the public support of Hezbollah in Lebanon from acceptance to rejection to targeting of civilian physical infrastructure such as bridges, airport, electricity power generator.

**Diagram 7**



**Source:** Wendy H. Burnett, Assessing the Results of Effect-Based Operations : The Relationship Between Effect-Based Operation and the Psychological Dimension of Warfare, USAWC Strategy Research Project, US Army College

Meanwhile, stand-off firepower bombing campaign is designed specifically to eliminate and degrade Hezbollah military capabilities. The concept is an IDF modification of the US Airforce Colonel Johnny Warden concept on effect-based operations which is based on the specific targeting of adversary's center of gravity to create a first tier effect (direct) and second tier effect (indirect) as elaborated by Wendy H. Burnett below;

Based from the example above, effect-based operations is an action using concentrated firepower on the center of gravity in which the effect on the operational center of gravity will create a new condition which then stimulated the establishment of a greater condition indirectly.

In order to overcome the strategic shock and awe air bombing campaign and stand-off firepower based operations implemented by the IDF, Hezbollah uses the strategy of indirect defense (guerilla warfare) using rockets operation on Israeli territories especially those bordering Southern Lebanon as shown below ;

**Table 4**

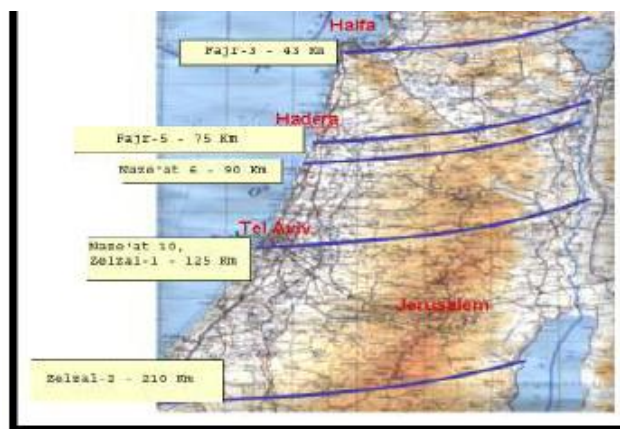
<b>Types of Defensive Military Operations</b>	<b>Defensive Strategy</b>	<b>Weak Actor Approach based from Strategic Interaction Theory</b>
Short-Range rockets Operations	Conventional Warfare	Direct
Medium range and Long-Range rockets Operation	Conventional Warfare	Direct

The rockets operation by Hezbollah to overcome the offensive air bombing campaign is composed of two types of military operation namely short-range missile operation using the inaccurate katyusha missiles which if it used in large quantities on the large Israel settlement bordering could cause a massive psychological impact. The potential impact of the short-range katyusha missiles are further elaborated by David Makovski and Jeffrey White as follows :

“Sustained fire could only be achieved on targets by the short range katyusha rockets. By their very numbers and small detection signature, the short range rockets posed the most difficult threats. Capable of being launched singly or in groups, remotely or with timers, difficult to detect prior to launch and requiring only minimum crew and logistics support structures, these World War II era weapons posed a serious challenge”

Meanwhile, the medium and long range rockets campaign conducted by the Shia Non-State organization utilizes modern rockets such as Fajr and Zelsal type rockets provided by Iran and Syria. These rockets can reach the major cities of Israel as shown below;

**Picture 1**



The medium and long-range rockets is composed of a few types of rockets which most of them are produced in Iran and Syria which according to Yifthah Shapir from INSS think-tank can be categorized as follows ;

**Table 5**

Rocket Types	Name of Rockets	Calibre (in millimeters )	Distance (in kilometer)
Medium to Long Range Surface to Surface Rockets	Extended Katyusha	122 millimeters	35 kilometers
	Fajr-3	240 millimeters	43 kilometers
	Uragan	220 millimeters	70 kilometers
	Fajr-5	333 millimeters	75 kilometers
	Khaibar-1	302 millimeters	100 kilometers
	Zelsal-2	610 millimeters	210 kilometers



Source : Uzi Rubin, The Rocket Campaign Against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War, Mideast Security and Policy Studies No.71, Besa Center, 2006

The main objective of using these medium-long range land-based rockets by Hezbollah is to give the impression to the strong actor that they have the operational military capabilities to reach the civilian population in major cities such as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv as mentioned by David Makovski and Jeffrey White as follows;

“The long-range rockets gave it a psychological weapon capable of striking into the heart of Israel. The more numerous medium-range rockets were a serious threat because they covered the important population and economic centers of Haifa and could be fired in a concentrated salvo from a single launch vehicle”

One of the characteristics which differs the short range with the medium-long range rockets is that the latter usually are attached to a mobile platform such civilian truck which can only be effectively utilized in an exterior environment.

### **Strategic Interaction between IDF and Hezbollah**

The strategic air bombing campaign based from two types of military operation which are shock and awe bombing and stand-off firepower bombing is categorized into barbarism strategy which according to Professor Ivan Arreguin Toft can be described as an indirect strategy. Meanwhile, Hezbollah utilization of short range combined with medium-long range rockets is categorized as an indirect strategy as shown below;

**Table 6**

<b>Offensive Military Operation (IDF as Strong Actor)</b>	<b>Strategic Approach based from Ivan Arreguin Toft theory</b>	<b>Defensive Military Operation (Hezbollah as Weak Actor)</b>	<b>Strategic Approach based from Ivan Arreguin Toft theory</b>
Shock and Awe Bombing Campaign	Indirect (Barbarism)	Short-Range Rockets Operation	Direct
Stand-off Firepower Bombing Campaign		Medium-Long Range Rockets Operation	

The implementation of stand-off firepower bombing campaign by IAF is based on the assumption that Hezbollah as an organization functions as a system whereas an attack on its critical nodes or center of gravity will create a systemic impact that in the end will change the non-state organization behavior towards the strong actor. A renowned expert on this type of military operation, elaborated the objectives of stand-off firepower based operation as follows;

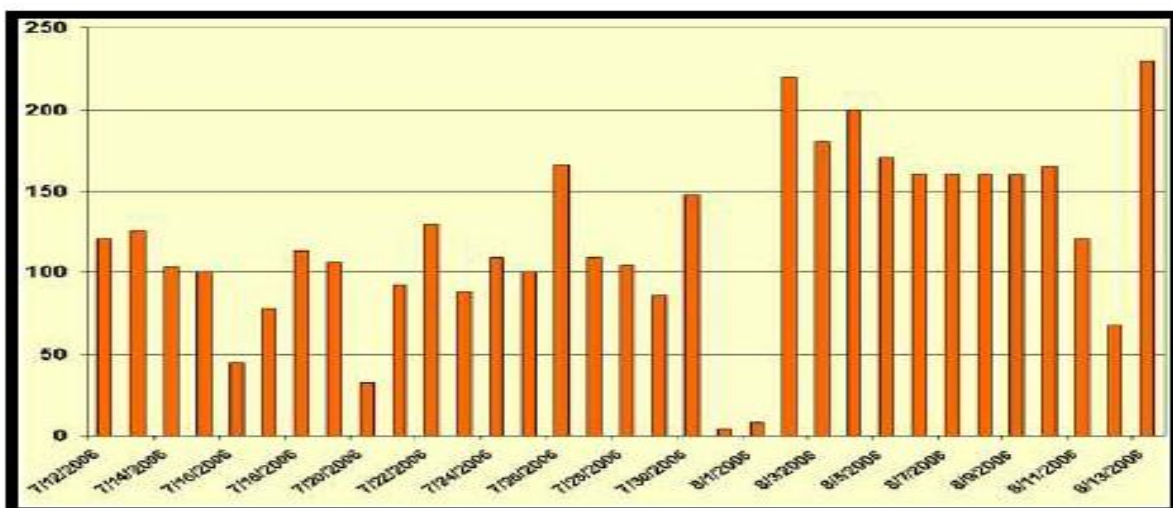
“ stand-off firepower based operations tries to bridge the gap between what the shooter knows how to do and the required military objective in an indirect way, by means of the effects. The idea is that the targets are to be destroyed in a manner that will paralyze the enemy’s system and suppress its operational effectiveness (functional effects). This will create a sense of helplessness and distress that unbalances the enemy, lead to its cognitive strategic collapse and drive it to want to terminate the war immediately (cognitive effects), while it succumbs to SFO user war objective”

The original idea of the IDF General Staff Command is to use its fighter jets squadron to implement the strategy in order to eliminate the rockets threats of Hezbollah especially the medium-long range rocket threats which are further elaborated by Ron Tira below ;

“According to General Staff’s orders for the Second Lebanon War, the commander had to plan the direct use of force (principally aerial force) to generate a complex chain of causal connections; destruction of the targets that would create a functional effects on the enemy’s system that would in turn spark cognitive effects on its leadership, which would then generate the expected behavioral change namely to accept Israel’s conditions and remove the threats of surface to surface rockets.”

**Graph 1**

**Intensity of Hezbollah Surface to Surface Rockets to Israel Territory**



Source: Uzi Rubin, The Rocket Campaign Against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War, Mideast Security and Policy Studies No.71, BESA Center, 2006

However in reality, over the duration of the 33 days of Operation Change of Direction conducted by elements of IDF, the shock and awe and also the stand-off firepower based operations has not achieved its desired impact. This is clearly indicated by the ability of Hezbollah to maintain effective consistency and continuity of its rocket campaigns into the strong actor territorial areas including residential areas bordering Southern Lebanon as shown in the graph below by the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies as follows ;

As shown by the Graph above, Hezbollah has been able to effectively continue its surface to surface rockets operations with an average of 75 rockets per day despite massive aerial bombing campaigns by the IAF. The non-state organization has also been able to increase the volume of the rockets campaign in the last 10 days of operation change of direction by the strong actor military. On this aspect a missile defense expert Uzi Rubin noted the following;

“In all, the Hezbollah dominated the battle of Rockets. Throughout the campaign, it managed to maintain a steady stream of rockets into Israel, in spite of the incapacitation of the Iranian rockets and in the face of furious Israeli onslaught. The Hezbollah controlled its rate of fire during the entire campaign, increasing and decreasing at will. It reserved its severest onslaught during the last days of the campaign, signaling to Israel and the rest of the world at large that the Hezbollah, its command and control structure and the discipline and morale of its troops had survived whatever the IDF could throw at it during the 33 days of incessant fighting”

The limitation of both the shock and awe and also the stand-off firepower based operations is largely due to seeing the Hezbollah organization as a system which contains key center of gravity or critical vulnerability nodes. However, in reality perhaps based from continuous organizational learning experience on its dormant war with Israel, the non-state organization adopted a decentralized and self-sufficient independent rocket units based from a feed-forward logistics methods as specified by military analyst Andrew Exum below ;

“Once again Hezbollah gave its operational units a large degree autonomy, often leading the rocket teams to their katyusha rockets during the first few days of the war giving simple mission-type instructions and not returning until after the fighting had ceased”

The decentralized command and control system of the non-state organization is also supported by a feed-forward logistics whereas the rockets stockpiles are already placed in tunnels years before the IDF military operation began in Southern Lebanon in 2006. The

existence and sophistication of these tunnels were further elaborated by Nicholas Blanford below;

“Without questions, the way in which the rocket teams were maintained and used their weapons were impressive, but they were aided by the preparations the Hezbollah made years before the war, entrenching their short-range rockets to evade detection and withstand bombardment.”

His statement was further supported by Uzi Rubin which are as follows;

“in what was clearly an intuitive yet brilliant tactics, multiple rocket assemblies some improvised from steel tubes held together with a concrete were placed together in a small superbly camouflaged concrete bunkers, dug inside thick natural groves or agricultural plantations, making them virtually invisible to air surveillance.”

## Picture 2

### Hezbollah Stationary Rocket Launchers made from multiple-rocket assemblies



Source : Uzi Rubin, The Rocket Campaign Against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War, Mideast Security and Policy Studies No.71, BESA Center, 2006

The picture above also shows an intricate knowledge of physical terrain and its utility and limitations for rockets operations. The use of stationary multiple tube launchers fitted with katyusha rockets in mountainous areas well covered by natural plantations on the picture is a clear indication of the mastery of terrain warfare. It also shows a knowledge of the effective of rockets both in urban and rural areas.

Another factor which has been instrumental in overcoming the firepower centred aerial bombing campaign by IAF is the failure to comprehend what is meant by ‘center of gravity’ from the presumptive of the weak actor. The idea behind stand-off firepower based operations lies in its definitions of ‘physical quantitative material’ as key nodes such as command and control infrastructure and communication centers. On the contrary, this asymmetric conflict shows that the center of gravity is unique in each weak actor depending on three factors organization style, environment and perception about winning and losing. In the case of Hezbollah, the center of gravity lies in continuous external motivation and support from Iran and public support from the Lebanese public which sees the positive impact of Hezbollah hearts and minds campaign for years.

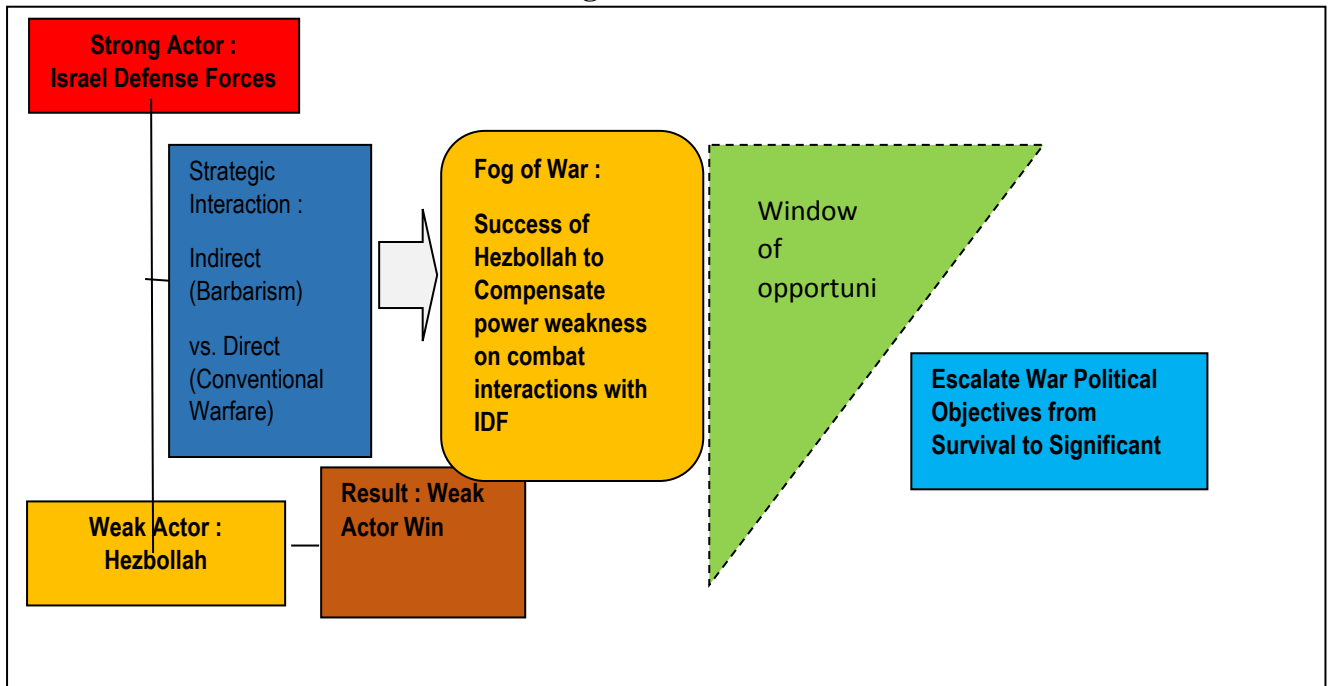
### **Result of Strategic Interaction Strong Actor vs Weak Actor (First Phase Operation Change of Direction)**

Overall, despite the heavy burden given to IAF with 10.000 combat sorties, only 7.000 credible targets were destroyed. This is well below the high standards of IAF as shown during previous conflicts such as 1967 and 1973 Wars. Furthermore, as previously been elaborated, the Hezbollah were able to effectively sustain its rockets fire into the civilian population in Israel over the duration of the conflict. In addition to that, there was a wrong perception on what constitutes the adversary’s central of gravity on the part of the IDF General Staff Headquarters. Thus, the weak actor based from strategic interaction theory proposed by Professor Ivan Arreguin Toft has won the first phase of the 2006 Second Lebanon War. The next question is, how this outcome is affecting the war objectives of the weak actor.

### **War Outcome and War Objectives**

The author has previously mentioned the impact of ‘fog of war’ on the weak actor escalation and de-escalation of objectives based from interactions during the tactical-operational levels. Based from that, it would like to emphasize that the ‘fog of war’ or uncertainty conditions as a result of combat interactions between two quantitatively power disparate actors, presents either a ‘window of opportunity’ or ‘close of opportunity’ for the weak actor to modify their war objectives (escalate or de-escalate) as shown below;

**Diagram 8**



The favorable shaping of the fog of war conditions towards weak actor political objectives in the 2006 Lebanon War has major implications towards the confidence of the weak actor which in turn can escalate its previously minor war objectives towards major war objectives.

## **Conclusion**

Based from this essay, the author would like to emphasize the importance of not only pre-war political objectives of war between strong actor and weak actor in an asymmetric conflict but also modification and alteration of war objectives based from uncertainty conditions resulting from fog of war which can either favor the strong or weak actor depending upon the results of interactions at tactical-operational levels of war.

Specifically, the escalation or de-escalation of war objectives based from either the opening of window of opportunity or close of opportunity does not depend on a single variable at tactical-operational levels of war but also a multitude of variable which includes but not limited to incompatibility of high technology against a weaker opponent who utilizes low-tech, combat motivation, battlefield terrain and public support.

More importantly, this essay also discovered that the window of opportunity or vice-versa the close of opportunity also depends on the disparities of the winning targets since Operation Change of Direction began in July 2006. On this matter, the targets set by the IDF higher command was too high which implies the lower possibility of window of opportunity from the fog of war occurring. On the other hand, Hezbollah as the party on the defensive has already set a lower set of expectations since the conflict started and thus when experienced with a fog of war can utilize and maximize the window of opportunity to alter or modify their war objectives.

The author also believes and recommends the necessity of further study and research in the future on outcomes of asymmetric conflict which specifically focus on evolution of organizational capabilities of the weak actor and strong actor especially over a period of time. Based from this research, the author discovered the need to further study this aspect due to indirect findings related to the status and image of the IDF as a unifying institutions in the Israeli society and the strengthening of Hezbollah operational capabilities over a period of ten years as a result of continuous learning in a post-modern organization and strengthening of external support. To conclude, **during his post-match interview after his upset win against Tyson, James ‘Buster’ Douglas stated that his only intentions in the match was to aim for a draw and stay the distance, anything else would be a bonus.**

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