

Online Store
NOW OPEN!



the weekly
Standard

INSTANT ACCESS - SUBSCRIBE NOW

HOME

RECENT ISSUES

BLOG

NEWSLETTER

SEARCH

ABOUT US

STORE

SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

Log-In Email:

Password:

Remember me

[Register](#) | [Forgot Password?](#) | [Change Password](#) | [Update Email](#)

The Gaza Aftermath

Most Israelis think they won this round.

by Max Boot

02/02/2009, Volume 014, Issue 19

[Increase Font Size](#) | [Printer-Friendly](#) | [Email a Friend](#) | [Respond to this article](#)

Jerusalem

Another war, another debate. When I was last in Israel in August 2006, the war against Hezbollah was just winding down and a great debate was starting. Who won? The results were equivocal enough that both Israel and Hezbollah could claim vindication. Although Hezbollah had lost 600 or so of its fighters, it could take heart from the fact that it managed to hit Israel with hundreds of rockets that killed 43 civilians and had managed to slow down the Israeli military juggernaut and kill 118 soldiers.

The intervening two and a half years in the murky Middle East have provided more evidence for both sides to support claims of victory. For Hezbollah, there is the fact that it has managed to fully rearm itself and is now believed to have more missiles than it did before the war with Israel. It has also managed to extend its sphere of control. After its armed spree in Beirut last year, it won veto power over the Lebanese government.

But there is also evidence that Hezbollah was surprised and caught off guard by the ferocity of Israel's retaliation for the kidnapping of its soldiers; senior Hezbollah leaders said as much. And though the recent hostilities between Israel and Hamas would have been the perfect opportunity for Hezbollah to renew hostilities while Israel was distracted, it declined to do so. When a few rockets were fired recently from southern Lebanon into northern Israel, Hezbollah officials rushed to reassure Israel that they were not responsible. This suggests

that Israel had managed to establish some degree of deterrence against this terror organization.

But that is not how most Israelis or most Arabs saw it. What they took away from the 2006 war was the perception that Hezbollah had stood up to Israel better than any previous adversary. Israelis lamented, and Arabs celebrated, that this was the first war Israel had not won, at least not decisively. Israel engaged in a collective soul-searching over what went wrong which led to the firing of the defense minister and the armed forces chief of staff and to the convening of a commission to draw lessons from what was widely seen as a bungled operation.

Since then, Israel has worked slowly and methodically to reestablish its deterrence. Two small steps in this process were the aerial bombing in September 2007 of a suspected Syrian nuclear reactor and the car bombing in February

2008 (widely believed to be the work of Mossad) that killed Hezbollah terrorist mastermind Imad Mugnyiah in Damascus. A far bigger step occurred on December 27 when Israel launched what turned out to be a three-week onslaught into the Gaza Strip after Hamas dispensed with a six-month ceasefire and resumed firing rockets into southern Israel.

Hamas, like Hezbollah, survived the war not so much because of its military prowess but because of Israel's self-restraint. Destroying Hamas would mean high casualties among Palestinians (and possibly among Israeli soldiers). Even worse from the Israeli public's perspective, it would force Israel to resume the role of occupier that it gave up in Gaza in 2005, because no conceivable alternative--not the "international community," and not Fatah--could come into Gaza on short notice with any hope of displacing Hamas as the effective administration. Not wanting to run the Gaza Strip again and not wanting to experience the possible alternative of Somalia-style chaos on its southern border, Israel chose to fight a highly limited war against Hamas--more like a punitive expedition really.

CONTINUED

12 Next >
[Print This Article](#)



@WeeklyStandard.com

[A Budget Deficit](#)

Obama's big-government plan and the GOP's uninspiring alternative.

by *Matthew Continetti*

[Embracing Genocide](#)

The Arab League honors the butcher of Sudan.

by *Joseph Loconte*

[The Master of Misdirection](#)

How Obama maintains his popularity.

by *Fred Barnes*

[Bailing Out Nicaragua](#)

Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega turns to the United States, not to Hugo Chávez.

by *Jaime Daresblum*

[A Question for the Economists](#)

Is the overly predicted life worth living?

by *Harvey Mansfield*

[Obama's Sudan Policy Imperative](#)

Reining in Bashir and bolstering South Sudan.

by *Leonard A. Leo & Nina Shea*

MONSTERS ALIENS ONLY ON TELEVISION

Office DEPOT **hp** PRESENT

THE MONSTER MAKEOVER SWEEPSTAKES

Other Stories By Max Boot

[America's Teams](#)

(11/28/2008)

Football is serious business.

[The Talking Cure](#)

(06/13/2008)

Sometimes it makes things worse.

[We Are Winning. We Haven't Won.](#)

(01/31/2008)

America has a chance at a historic victory in Iraq, but only if we don't pull out too many forces too soon.

[Bill Walsh, 1931-2007](#)

(08/01/2007)

A man with a talent for picking talent.

[Howard's End](#)

(05/25/2007)

Australia's prime minister no longer connects with voters.

[Search](#) [Subscribe](#) [Subscribers Only](#) [FAQ](#) [Advertise](#) [Store](#) [Newsletter](#)
[Contact](#) [About Us](#) [Site Map](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

© Copyright 2009, [News Corporation](#), Weekly Standard, All Rights Reserved.