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The Israeli-Hezbollah War of 2006:
The Media As A Weapon in Asymmetrical Conflict

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Abstract

Based on content analysis of global media and interviews with many diplomats and journalists, this paper describes the trajectory of the media from objective observer to fiery advocate, becoming in fact a weapon of modern warfare. The paper also shows how an open society, Israel, is victimized by its own openness and how a closed sect, Hezbollah, can retain almost total control of the daily message of journalism and propaganda.

Introduction[*]

For 34 days in the summer of 2006, the world's attention was once again riveted on the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean. There, in Lebanon, a lovely country of cedar trees and sectarian strife, a bloody war erupted between Hezbollah and Israel.

It quickly became apparent that this was not the traditional war between Israel and an Arab state; it was rather an asymmetrical war, the new prototype of Middle East conflict, between a state (Israel) and a militant, secretive, religiously fundamentalist sect or faction, such as, in the case of Lebanon, Hezbollah, the "Party of God," often referred to as a "state within a state," or, in the case of the Gaza strip, Hamas, the radical wing of the Palestinian movement that refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist as an independent nation.

New York Times columnist David Brooks has described these various groups in three ways:[1] as "subnational," like the Mahdi Army in Iraq; "supranational," like the unofficial alliances linking Hezbollah and Hamas to Iran and Syria; or "transnational," like communication networks, such as the two Arabic-language newspapers published in London and distributed throughout the Arab world, and even more crucial to understanding this asymmetrical warfare, the two cable television networks: (1) Al-Jazeera, the most popular TV network in the region broadcasting out of the Persian Gulf sheikdom of Qatar, and (2) Al-Arabiya, the second most popular network, broadcasting out of nearby Dubai, another Persian Gulf sheikdom. Al-Jazeera brilliantly reflects and feeds the mood of the Arab streets, which is hostile to the West and Israel, while Al-Arabiya, financed by Saudi and Lebanese businessmen (a few with ties to the royal

family in Saudi Arabia), advances a similar but more cautious agenda. In their coverage, both exploit the most sophisticated technology to carry their reports into the cafes and castles, huts and hamlets of the Middle East.

Also in this "transnational" world of media interconnectivity, at the very apex, stands the Internet, perhaps the most revolutionary technology in the modern world. During the summertime war in Lebanon, it helped produce the first really "live" war in history. True, during the first Gulf War of 1991, two American networks did broadcast one "live" report each from liberated Kuwait, and during the second Gulf War of 2003, many networks did "live" broadcasts along the U.S. invasion route from Kuwait to Baghdad. But not until this war have networks actually projected in real time the grim reality of the battlefield—pictures of advancing or retreating Israeli troops in southern Lebanon, homes and villages being destroyed during bombing runs, old people wandering aimlessly through the debris, some tailed by children hugging tattered dolls, Israeli airplanes attacking Beirut airport, Hezbollah rockets striking northern Israel and Haifa, forcing 300,000 to evacuate their homes and move into underground shelters—all conveyed "live," as though the world had a front-row seat on the blood and gore of modern warfare.

To do their jobs, journalists employed both the camera and the computer, and, with the help of portable satellite dishes and video phones, "streamed" or broadcast their reports from hotel roofs and hilltops, as they covered the movement of troops and the rocketing of villages—often, (unintentionally, one assumes) revealing sensitive information to the enemy. Once upon a time, such information was the stuff of military intelligence acquired with considerable effort and risk; now it has become the stuff of everyday journalism. The camera and the computer have become weapons of war.

For any journalist worth his or her salt, this should spark a respectful moment of reflection. Not only did this new and awesome technology enable journalists to bring the ugly reality of war to both belligerents (and others around the world), serving as a powerful influence on public opinion and governmental attitudes and actions; it also became an extremely valuable intelligence asset for both Israel and Hezbollah, and Hezbollah especially exploited it.

If we are to collect lessons from this war, one of them would have to be that a closed society can control the image and the message that it wishes to convey to the rest of the world far more effectively than can an open society, especially one engaged in an existential struggle for survival. An open society becomes the victim of its own openness. During the war, no Hezbollah secrets were disclosed, but in Israel secrets were leaked, rumors spread like wildfire, leaders felt obliged to issue hortatory appeals often based on incomplete knowledge, and journalists were driven by the fire of competition to publish and broadcast unsubstantiated information. A closed society conveys the impression of order and discipline; an open society, buffeted by the crosswinds of reality and rumor, criticism and revelation, conveys the impression of disorder, chaos and uncertainty, but this impression can be misleading.

It was hardly an accident that Hezbollah, in this circumstance, projected a very special narrative for the world beyond its ken—a narrative that depicted a selfless movement touched by God and blessed by a religious fervor and determination to resist the enemy, the infidel, and ultimately achieve a "divine victory," no matter the cost in life and treasure. The narrative contained no mention of Hezbollah's dependence upon Iran and Syria for a steady flow of arms and financial resources.

For Hezbollah, the 2006 summertime war was more than a battle against a mortal enemy; it was a crucial battle in a broader, ongoing war, linking religious fundamentalism to Arab

nationalism. Will victory be defined as an open door to modernity or to a new caliphate? That is

a key question. The whole Arab world is often framed as a "politically traumatized region,"

wrote *Washington Post* columnist Jim Hoagland, caught in the "morbid interim between the

dying of an exhausted political and social order and the birth of a still-unknown way of life."[2]

Hezbollah saw itself as a resolute leader in shaping the Arab future.

   Like Hamas and al-Qaeda, it appreciated the central importance of the communications

revolution sweeping through the region. These three radical groups believe, according to Steve

Fondacaro, an American military expert, that it is on the "information battlefield" that the

historic struggle between Western modernity and Islamic fundamentalism will ultimately be

resolved. "The new element of power that has emerged in the last thirty to forty years and has

subsumed the rest is information," he said. "A revolution happened without us knowing or

paying attention. Perception truly now is reality, and our enemies know it."[3]

   One Australian expert on counterinsurgency, now on loan to the State Department, Colonel

David Kilcullen, agreed. "It's now fundamentally an information fight," he explained. When

insurgents ambush an American convoy in Iraq, he said, "they are not doing that because they

want to reduce the number of Humvees we have in Iraq by one. They're doing it because they

want spectacular media footage of a burning Humvee." He then gave another example: "If bin

Laden didn't have access to global media, satellite communications and the Internet, he'd just be

a cranky guy in a cave."[4] Maybe, but in fact bin Laden does understand the enormous power of

modern communications. Whenever he has a message for the world, he simply tapes it and gives

it to Al-Jazeera. He knows it will be broadcast throughout the world.   When bin Laden wanted

to help tip the 2004 presidential election in the U.S. to the incumbent, George W. Bush, he

criticized Bush in a taped message delivered to Al-Jazeera. In Washington, such an approach would be called "media manipulation," and it works there as it does in the Middle East.

Whether "sub," "supra" or "trans" this fusion of radical, revolutionary politics and ultramodern communications technology, as witnessed in the Lebanon War of 2006, has come to define the very nature of asymmetrical warfare. A key consequence of this new warfare is that the role of the journalist in many parts of the world has been dramatically transformed—from a quest for objectivity and fairness to an acceptance of advocacy as a tool of the craft. If once the journalist aspired to honest and detached reporting, now it has become increasingly acceptable for the journalist to be an activist player and a fiery advocate. 24/7 cable news has placed a premium on provocative chatter, not on substantive discourse. Many journalists in the Middle East, born into a culture of submissiveness to centralized authority, have always seen themselves as players and advocates, but this has not been the norm in Europe or the United States, and this change is both noteworthy and disturbing.

The War

The war in Lebanon began on July 12, when Hezbollah launched a surprise attack across the Israeli border. In the attack, eight Israeli soldiers were killed and two were captured. If Hezbollah's leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, had calculated that the attack would trigger a moderate Israeli response, leading to an ultimate exchange of prisoners, as was the pattern in the past, he obviously miscalculated, which he later admitted.[5] For, almost immediately, as if forewarned, Israel sent an armored force into southern Lebanon and ordered thousands of troops and reservists to head to the northern part of the country. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert did not have to announce that Israel was preparing to move back into southern Lebanon for the first time since 2000, when Israel unilaterally withdrew after obtaining a U.N. assurance that Hezbollah would be disarmed—somehow. Everyone understood that Israel suddenly found herself fighting a two-front war—in Lebanon and in Gaza. On June 25, Palestinian militants had crossed the Gaza-Israel border, exchanged fire with Israeli troops and then, while retreating, captured an Israeli soldier.[6] The Israelis had quickly retaliated, leading to a renewal of Israeli-Palestinian fighting in Gaza, which Israel had also evacuated unilaterally the previous summer. The question was asked: was Hezbollah's precipitating provocation deliberately coordinated with Hamas' cross-border raid? Nasrallah, who served not only as Hezbollah's political and spiritual leader but also as its only official spokesman throughout the war, told reporters that Hezbollah had been planning its attack for months, but then he added: "The timing, no doubt, provides support for our brothers in Palestine."[7]

In Lebanon, the war escalated swiftly. Israel launched a massive air—and later ground—campaign against Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon and in a Shiite suburb of Beirut, known as "Security Square." Because Hezbollah functioned as a quasi-military force within its

populace, protecting it, feeding it, housing it, and in general caring for its needs, the Israelis were quickly accused of hitting civilian targets with an indiscriminate callousness amounting to war crimes. On August 3, Human Rights Watch specifically accused Israel of war crimes.[8] Few seemed to note that before the war, on May 27, Nasrallah had actually—and publicly—embraced the guerrilla tactic of hiding soldiers among civilians. "[Hezbollah fighters] live in their houses, in their schools, in their churches, in their fields, in their farms and in their factories," he said, adding, "You can't destroy them in the same way you would destroy an army."[9] By war's end, it was clear that Nasrallah was right. Hezbollah, though severely wounded, remained a fighting force in defiant objection to all U.N. resolutions calling for it to be disarmed.

Israel defended its military operations by citing two relevant articles in international law: using civilians for military cover was a war crime, and any target with soldiers hiding among civilians was considered a legitimate military target. Israel's foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, framed her government's argument in cold language. "When you go to sleep with a missile, " she told *The New York Times,* "you might find yourself waking up to another kind of missile."[10]

Israel's defense, though, fell on deaf ears, not only among diplomats but also reporters, as daily evidence mounted of civilian deaths. Hezbollah, whenever possible, pointed reporters to civilian deaths among Lebanese, a helpful gesture with heavy propaganda implications. Early in the war, reporters routinely noted that Hezbollah had started the war, and its casualties were a logical consequence of war. But after the first week such references were either dropped or downplayed, leaving the widespread impression that Israel was a loose cannon shooting at anything that moved. "Disproportionality" became the war's mantra; even if Israel did not start the war, so the argument went, it responded to Hezbollah's opening raid with a disproportionate display of military strength, wrecking Lebanon's economy, destroying its infrastructure,

inflaming political passions and killing civilians with reckless abandon. "And for what?" Lebanese asked. "For eight soldiers?" Rarely in the coverage was there "proportionate" mention of Israeli civilian deaths suffered during Hezbollah's sustained rocket attacks.

A graphic example of "disproportionality" popped up on television screens on July 30, when the Israelis bombed the Shiite village of Qana in southern Lebanon, and, according to early reports, killed 54, 56 or 57 Lebanese civilians, mostly women and children.[11] Journalists rushed to the scene. One survivor was quoted as saying that there were "63 people from two families" hiding in the basement of the building that was hit and that then collapsed. A Lebanese government spokesman said that 54 people had been killed. A Human Rights Watch official on the scene said that actually 28 bodies had been found in the wreckage and another 22 had somehow escaped, leaving a number of others in the "unaccounted for" category. Most reporters used the higher of the two estimates, some describing the scene as a massacre. It made for more sensational copy.

Whether the accurate figure was 28 or 54, the attack was an unmitigated disaster. Many innocent people were killed. The Israelis apologized for the loss of life but explained that they were firing at a rocket site next to the building. The location of the rocket site put the Israelis in a difficult position—choosing either not to destroy the rocket site or to destroy it but also run the risk of killing civilians and thereby earning a blast of international condemnation.

Everyone knew—or should have known—that in 1996, during an earlier 16-day war with Hezbollah, the Israelis had also struck Qana and hit a U.N. compound filled with refugees, killing 106 civilians. Then, too, there had been international condemnation of the "massacre," and then, too, Israel had apologized.[12]

Both sides became hardened to the tragedies of war. Over the 34 days of the 2006 conflict, Hezbollah rained an estimated 3, 970 Katyusha rockets and longer range missiles on military— and civilian—targets in northern Israel, and then it hit the densely populated port city of Haifa, scattering Israelis to underground bomb shelters, where they lived for the better part of a month.[13] Hezbollah also threatened to hit Tel Aviv but never did, perhaps because Israel had destroyed its longer-range missiles in the first week of the war.[14]

Towards the end of the conflict, as the devastation spread and casualties rose, there was a chorus of calls for a ceasefire. The United States, for a time, stalled, apparently hoping that with each day and week of deliberate delay Israel could finally succeed in defeating Hezbollah. But in this regard Israel failed, and Hezbollah prevailed. It was often said during the Vietnam War that if the guerrillas did not lose, they had won; and if the U.S. did not win, it had lost. During the Lebanon war, neither side lost, nor won. Led by the U.S. and France, the U.N. finally agreed on the terms of a ceasefire.[15] One condition was that Hezbollah had to disarm, and military shipments from Iran and Syria had to stop. Yet Hezbollah did not disarm; it proclaimed that it had achieved a "divine victory" and after a few months it even made a dramatic bid for absolute political power in Lebanon, trying to drive its political opponents from office. Nasrallah also boasted that Hezbollah still had 20,000 rockets and missiles in its hidden arsenal.[16]

After every war, like somber drumbeats rolling across the field of battle, casualties are counted and bodies buried. In this war, Lebanese casualties were much higher than Israeli casualties, but both sides suffered grievously from a war that seemed especially cruel and long. By war's end on August 14, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that 162 Israelis had been killed during the war—43 civilians, 119 soldiers.[17] Lebanon's Higher Relief Council estimated that 845 Lebanese had been killed—743 civilians, 34 soldiers and 68 Hezbollah

fighters.[18] Hezbollah provided no official estimates of its own losses, but Israel figured that it

had killed 500-600 guerrilla fighters.[19]

Coverage

1. "Disproportionality"

No theme resonated through the coverage of the Lebanese war more forcefully than the repeated

assertion by Arab and Western reporters that Israel responded "disproportionately" to

Hezbollah's initial provocation. Though eight soldiers had been killed and two captured, it was

said that the provocation was similar in style to others that took place over the years, both sides

expecting the U.N. or the U.S. to intervene and negotiate first a ceasefire and then a prisoner

swap, and that the Israeli response thus seemed wildly out of kilter—and, therefore,

"disproportionate."

Whether it was first the media focusing on this theme and then Hezbollah exploiting its

propaganda value, or whether it was Hezbollah deliberately drawing journalists to this story day

after day (though given the almost daily damage, this was hardly necessary, since journalists

would have focused on it anyway) there appears to be little doubt that the media everywhere

emphasized the theme of "disproportionality" from the opening day of the conflict, as though

nothing else measured up to it in importance.

The theme was obvious in most of the reporting. Let us engage for a moment in what

scholars call "content analysis." Look at the headlines, the photographs and the television

reports, measure the time devoted to them on television and the space set aside for them in

newspapers, check the nationality of the "victims" (sometimes referred to as "martyrs" by Arab

reporters)—and you are quickly able to spot the media's approach in covering this war. Was it,

as Fox President Roger Ailes might ask, "fair and balanced?" Or, was it tilted or biased in one direction or another?

Asharq Al-Awsat is one of the two Arabic-language newspapers published in London and then distributed throughout the Middle East. From July 13 to August 16, the paper ran 24 photographs related to the war on the front page; all but two of them showed the death and destruction in Lebanon caused by Israeli attacks.[20] The Arab reader of this paper could have drawn only one conclusion—that Israel was guilty of converting Lebanon into a "killing field." Only once, July 31, did *Asharq Al-Awsat* show a photograph of the destruction that Hezbollah rockets were causing in Israel. This imbalance (22 to 1) could hardly be defined by a Western yardstick as "objective journalism," but it could still be explained in the context of Middle East journalism, where many Arab reporters feel a nationalistic, religious or cultural prejudice against Israel. Therefore, by featuring 22 front-page photographs of the devastation caused by Israeli bombing of Lebanon and essentially ignoring Hezbollah's attacks against Israel, *Asharq Al-Awsat* was only doing what came naturally—it was playing to the prejudices of its readers, who felt sympathy for their Arab brethren under Israeli fire. Asharq Al-Awsat was selling papers.

Further, if you were watching Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, and switching back and fourth, and if on occasion you asked the question, "Who is really the aggressor in this war?" (which started when Hezbollah staged a cross-border raid and killed eight Israelis) your answer would be Israel, and the answer would surprise no one. Media Tenor, the highly-respected media research organization in Germany, found, first, that Al-Arabiya ran 214 stories on the subject, and, second, that 94 percent of them referred to Israel as the "aggressor."[21] Al-Jazeera ran 83 stories on the subject and 78 percent of them reached the same conclusion. All of these stories, showing pictures of Israeli attacks against Lebanese targets, were presented as examples of

"disproportionality." Why Al-Arabiya ran twice as many stories on the subject was not explored

or explained.

Another survey by Harvard's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy

examined headlines and photos on Al-Jazeera's website. Fifty percent of the photos portrayed

Israel as the aggressor, only six percent portrayed Hezbollah as the aggressor. The headlines

made an attempt to strike a more balanced picture but did not get far: Israel, labeled as the

aggressor 39 percent of the time, Hezbollah 13 percent of the time.[22] Most Arab news

organizations now have their own websites, which provide a separate universe of news,

information and opinion but reflect essentially the same editorial opinion. While not yet

profitable, these websites are moving from loss leader status to profit centers.

By comparison, if you were watching the BBC for war coverage, you would have seen a

somewhat more balanced approach. The BBC ran 117 stories. Thirty-eight percent fingered

Israel as the aggressor, only four percent fingered Hezbollah. The BBC then said that both Israel

and Hezbollah were equally to blame for the war. BBC coverage generally tipped against Israel,

perhaps in response to public opinion. According to a YouGov poll of British viewers and

voters, 63 percent believed that Israel's response to Hezbollah's attack had been

"disproportionate." Only 17 percent thought it was "proportionate."[23]

However, if you were watching American television, you would quickly have concluded that

Fox cable news favored Israel, CNN tried to be balanced, and the three major evening news

programs on ABC, CBS and NBC were more critical of Israel than of Hezbollah. It was a time

of saturation coverage. In the first two weeks of the war, they ran 258 stories, an average of 18

stories a night, representing the heaviest period of international coverage since the failed coup

attempt against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in the summer of 1991**.** More than half of

the stories (133) focused on Israeli attacks against Lebanon, 89 of them on Hezbollah attacks against Israel.[24] Negative-sounding judgments of Israel's attacks and counter-attacks permeated most network coverage, except on Fox, where the coverage of Hezbollah's activities was decidedly negative.

A man-in-the-street interview on the NBC Nightly News on 7/21/06: "They (Israelis) are destroying everything. We do not understand for what, because they kidnapped two soldiers? It's not a reason."[25]

Reporter David Wright on ABC World News Tonight on 7/17/06: "That kind of destruction is what leads many ordinary Lebanese to view the Israelis as villains. Whether or not they approve of Hezbollah, they hear the bombs raining down."[26]

On the front pages of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post,* Israel was portrayed as the aggressor nearly twice as often in the headlines and exactly three times as often in the photos, according to another Shorenstein Center survey.[27] Although neither The Times nor The Post stressed the theme of "disproportionality" on their front pages, both made frequent references to it in their stories, analyses and editorial columns.

Another major theme in the coverage of the Lebanon war had to do with traditional Arab feelings of "victimization." Both Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya hit this theme frequently. Al-Arabiya, for example, stressed Lebanese victimization in 95 percent of its stories, according to Media Tenor.[28] In other words, the viewer could not escape the belief that Israel was the aggressor and the Lebanese were the victims. Al-Jazeera, though, hit this theme in 70 percent of its broadcasts about Lebanon, a high percentage but still 25 percent less than Al-Arabiya, which coincidentally meant Al-Jazeera was emphasizing this theme with the same frequency as the four top television programs in Germany.[29] Most television networks around the world ran many

more stories from Lebanon than from Israel, and the stories all focused on Lebanese deaths, destruction and devastation, which led to the obvious conclusion: in this war, as in other Arab-Israeli conflicts, the Arabs were portrayed as the victims.

On the other side of the coin of victimization is said to be an equally strong Arab feeling of humiliation, which often finds its expression in the question: how come Israel consistently defeats the Arab nation? Al-Jazeera's editor, Ahmed Sheikh, recently addressed this question in the German weekly *Die Weltwoche:* "It gnaws at the people in the Middle East," he said, "that such a small country as Israel, with only about seven million inhabitants, can defeat the Arab nation with its 350 million people. That hurts our collective ego."[30] Sheikh sees the Arab nation as one nation, which is interesting and even understandable within the context of romantic 20th century nationalism. Until the Lebanon war, Israel defeated one, two or three Arab states at a time. Now, it faces not just states but tribal sects, religious factions and "states within states," such as Hezbollah. Asymmetrical warfare has added a critical new factor to any calculation of winners and losers. In strictly military terms, Israel did not lose to Hezbollah in this war, but it clearly did not win. In the war of information, news and propaganda, the battlefield central to Hezbollah's strategy, Israel lost this war. How it will attempt to control the media message in the next war is likely to be a hot topic of discussion in Israeli war councils. One question is whether a democracy can—and should—make such an effort.

2. Internet as Intelligence

UNIFIL was the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. It consisted of roughly 2,000 troops

stationed along the Lebanese-Israeli border from 1978 until the end of the 2006 war. Its mandate

required "full impartiality and objectivity."[31]

During the war, it published information on its official website about Israeli troop

movements, information that in military circles might well be regarded as "actionable

intelligence."

Take, for instance, its posting of July 25, 2006:

"Yesterday and during last night, the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) moved significant

reinforcements, including a number of tanks, armored personnel carriers, bulldozers and infantry,

to the area of Marun Al Ras inside Lebanese territory. The IDF advanced from that area north

towards Bint Jubayl and south towards Yarun."[32]

Or, its posting of July 24, which disclosed that IDF forces stationed between Marun Al Ras

and Bint Jubayl were "significantly reinforced during the night and this morning with a number

of tanks and armored personnel carriers."[33]

It was part of UNIFIL's responsibility to report violations of the ceasefire, including troop

movements, to the U.N., but presumably this information was to be conveyed through

confidential channels, not on the Internet, where the information in wartime could be as valuable

as hard, military intelligence suddenly exposed to the light.

These postings, similar to others during the war, coincided with heavy fighting in the region.

Israeli units came under severe Hezbollah attack. It is impossible for outsiders to know whether

Hezbollah used the information provided by UNIFIL, which was available to anyone with a

laptop, or whether Hezbollah depended primarily upon information provided by loyal local

supporters. However, no UNIFIL posting during the war contained any specific information

relating to Hezbollah's military movements, perhaps because they were not visible to UNIFIL or

perhaps because UNIFIL did not choose to see the movements.[34]

Either way, Hezbollah, fighting an asymmetrical war, could easily have benefited from

UNIFIL's web postings; indeed, it would have been foolish for them not to accept UNIFIL's gift.

Israel, a democracy caught in such a guerrilla-style war, found itself unable to benefit from the

daily postings, because they contained no useful intelligence about Hezbollah's movements.

3. Access

Reporters always complain about access; specifically in this war they complained about not

having had enough access to the battlefield. Their complaints were directed primarily at Israel,

which tried to accommodate the needs of hundreds of foreign correspondents attempting to cover

the conflict. Complaints were rarely directed at Hezbollah, which controlled media access with a

bookkeeper's rigidity. Once, Hezbollah conducted a media tour of a southern suburb of Beirut

inhabited by Shiite supporters whose homes and apartments had been badly damaged during

Israeli air strikes.[35] The point was to again use the media as a weapon in the propaganda war for

public approval, and the media did not mind being used, though they were forced to pay a price.

Foreign correspondents were warned, on entry to the tour, that they could not wander off on their

own or ask questions of any of the residents. They could only take pictures of sites approved by

their Hezbollah minders. Violations, they were told, would be treated harshly. Cameras would

be confiscated, film or tape destroyed, and offending reporters would never again be allowed

access to Hezbollah officials or Hezbollah-controlled areas.

So far as we know, of all the reporters taken on this guided tour, reminiscent of the Soviet era, only CNN's Anderson Cooper described the rigid ground rules for what they were—an attempt to create and control a story.[36] And Hezbollah succeeded. All of the other reporters followed the Hezbollah script: Israel, in a cruel, heartless display of power, bombed innocent civilians. Casualties were high. Devastation was everywhere. So spoke the Hezbollah spokesman; so wrote many in the foreign press corps. At one point, apparently on cue, a Hezbollah minder signaled for ambulances to rev up their engines, set off their sirens and drive noisily down the street. The scene was orchestrated, designed to provide a photo op, and reporters went along for the ride. It was for them a rare look "inside" Hezbollah. For Hezbollah, it was another successful play to the gallery.

But, on any given day, reporters and cameramen in Beirut went off on their own with no official chaperones. They hired cars and rode along rutted roads toward southern Lebanon. The main road was pocked by bomb craters, bridges blown away and craters so wide and deep they looked like lakes. Many of the small, picturesque villages, bombed and shelled by the Israelis, still served as Hezbollah strongholds. The cameramen didn't need Hezbollah's permission to film the devastation, but if in the wreckage they saw young men with guns, they were warned not to take pictures of these Hezbollah fighters, else their cameras would be confiscated and they might run into trouble returning to Beirut—an indirect warning, which most reporters took seriously. Even without these pictures, though, reporters still had a good story—old men and women caring for young children and surviving in the grimy grit of war, as Israeli tanks and troops snaked their way through the countryside. Throughout the conflict, the rarest picture of all was that of a Hezbollah guerrilla. It was as if the war on the Hezbollah side was being fought by ghosts.

Only Kevin Sites, who calls himself a "sojo," or solo journalist, claimed to have no trouble getting through to Hezbollah fighters, though he provided evidence of getting through to only one.[37] His reports appeared on a pioneering Yahoo! News website called "Kevin Sites in the Hot Zone," where he filed more than 100 pieces from various war zones. In a July 28 piece, Sites reported from a small village north of Tyre, where he met "Hussein" in his home. The interview was arranged by a "source," who presumably served as an interpreter. "Hussein" was "polite" and "resolute" and after a while pulled from his bedroom closet "an American-made M-16 assault rifle," "a rocket-propelled grenade launcher" and a "green shoulder harness full of ammunition clips." "Hussein" was said to be waiting for a "call south" but in the meantime was "looking for Israeli spies." "Sojo"-style journalism places a supreme priority on the professional integrity of the reporter, who travels alone and files his or her reports using a backpack of digital technology.

Anthony Shadid, an Arabic-speaking reporter for *The Washington Post,* drove one day to the Litani River, where he came upon the unusual scene of a score of men pushing and pulling two trucks laden with supplies.[38] "Don't take pictures," one of the men shouted. Another told Shadid, "We're not scared of anything but God," and he pointed to the sky. "There's God. God is above the airplanes." He meant the Israeli bombers. A Lebanese Red Cross official reminded Shadid, "It's forbidden to take pictures." Shadid wanted to know if these men were Hezbollah fighters. The official nodded. Clearly, none of the men wanted to talk to Shadid. One pulled his black t-shirt over his face. Another put his left hand over his mouth.

Not so, on the Israeli side of the war, where officials made a clumsy effort to control and contain the coverage but essentially failed. Hour after hour, day after day, newspapermen and anchormen found many ways to avoid Israeli censorship or obstruction—and cover the war,

which was their job. Newspaper copy from all over the world was studded with frequent

references to interviews with Israeli troops, generals and ministers. Jonathan Finer, a reporter for

The Washington Post, had no trouble interviewing, by his count, two dozen Israeli soldiers "at

army bases, hotels, artillery batteries and staging points for their entry into Lebanon since the

heaviest ground fighting began last week."[39] Several soldiers expressed surprise that it was

taking them so long to defeat Hezbollah. One was quoted as saying, "Most of the time we only

see them when they want to draw attention to themselves, then they kick us from behind." Finer

also interviewed an Israeli general, who gave an on-the-record assessment of Hezbollah's anti-

tank missiles. Finer's experience covering the war on the Israeli side was not uncommon.

Network anchors, representing cable TV operations from Al-Jazeera to Fox, set up their

cameras along the Israeli-Lebanese border, like birds on a clothes line, one next to another, so

they could do live and frequent reports from the battlefield. Even in the dead of night, the

anchors, using special cameras, were in a position to observe Israeli tanks and troops preparing

to cross the border into Lebanon and to report live when the action began. As waves of Israeli

armor moved into southern Lebanon, people everywhere, presumably including Hezbollah, could

see on their screens what was happening. This was after all a war being carried live to every TV

set and computer in the world.

And yet the grumbling about access from reporters of every nationality continued for weeks

and months after the war ended. On August 28, 2006, the Mideast Press Club, an initiative of

The Media Line News Agency in Jerusalem, sponsored a panel discussion of eight journalists

who covered the war. They represented ABC News, *The New York Times*, The London *Times,*

Al-Jazeera, Associated Press, Kol Yisrael, Haaretz (Israel) and Al-Ayyam (Palestine).[40] Simon

McGregor-Wood, Jerusalem bureau chief for ABC News, said: "The principal issue…was

getting access to the battlefield. … We did not get the access we should have got, that we wanted to get."[41] Steven Erlanger of *The New York Times* echoed the same complaint, drawing a distinction between access provided an Israeli journalist and access provided a foreign journalist: "The question is whether the foreign press is able to have any access."[42]

   Still the depth and breadth of the coverage seemed to belie the common complaints about access. Stephen Farrell, bureau chief for the London *Times,* shared his colleagues' concerns about access but showed how individual initiative could surmount the difficulties. "What I did was I just went out," he related, "found a hotel where you could see across the border and stood there with binoculars for most of the three weeks. And it's astonishing…It can be uncomfortable. It can be prickly. It obviously can be dangerous getting in there. But if you just stuck to driving along the border with binoculars, occasionally slipping across the field, going a couple of hundred meters in (we probably shouldn't be telling this), and getting right up there, up front, you see stuff that can't be censored, that can't be filtered."[43] Walid Omary, Jerusalem bureau chief for Al-Jazeera, described how Israeli police followed his television crews and accused them of "giving information to the enemy," and yet he deployed three television crews to Al-Jazeera's daily coverage of the Israeli side of the war—"one in Haifa and one on the border and a third in Jerusalem." They filed two long television stories every day—"one about the people, the civilians, and the other about the political and military activities."[44] One example on August 8, 2006, so graphic it stands almost as a repudiation of the complaint about access, showed correspondent Elias Karram doing a 10-minute live report in the dark, as Israeli troops crossed the border into Lebanon under heavy shelling. Many missiles traced a graceful arc across the sky until they thudded with deafening reverberations into Hezbollah positions in Lebanon.[45]

Israel did provide access to the war, in part because it could not stop reporters from using their personal guile and modern technology to cover it. Hezbollah provided only limited access to the battlefield, full access to an occasional guided tour, and encouraged visiting journalists to check its own television network, Al-Manar, for reports and information about the war. Al-Manar was to Hezbollah what Pravda was to the Soviet Union.

3. Live—"Broadcast via Broadband"

Using an appealing, alliterative phrase, Al-Arabiya's director of news and current affairs, Emile Nakhle, defined live coverage of the Lebanon War in a way most TV producers would appreciate. "We introduced," he explained, "broadcast via broadband. In places not accessible by car, in the middle of conflict areas for example, a sole reporter with a laptop and small camera can shoot, edit, feed and do live interviews."[46]

Live coverage of war, now a fact, was only a theoretical possibility a decade ago. A former ABC News diplomatic correspondent, Barrie Dunsmore, raised that possibility a dozen years ago in a research paper he wrote for the Shorenstein Center entitled "The Next War—Live?"[47] He interviewed many experts, including generals. What would you do if a reporter revealed the exact location of your troops during a battle—and did it live on television? he asked one general named Colin Powell. "I'd have locked all of you up," Powell replied, adding, "The American people would have stripped your skin off." At the time, Dunsmore's paper generated an understandable buzz among strategic thinkers—what in fact would presidents and prime ministers do if faced with a communications technology so sophisticated and so miniaturized that journalists would be able to observe and describe an ongoing war, as it was happening? What effect would such live broadcasts have on public opinion? What effect on the journalists?

Would live reporting from the battlefield engender a renewed sense of responsibility and caution? The questions came much more easily than the answers, for everyone knew that if Dunsmore's hypothesis sketching the future of journalism during wartime was accurate, then the world was entering a new phase that would affect the very nature of journalism and war. And indeed that is exactly what has happened. For journalists, armed with the new technology, it would have been challenging enough just to cover wars between states—traditional wars. But now the challenge has become much more daunting: the coverage of asymmetrical wars between states and radical, religious, ideological groups, creating political, diplomatic, journalistic and military dilemmas few fully grasp or understand.

   "Broadcast via broadband," in the context of asymmetrical warfare, involves an unimaginable convergence of hi-tech gadgetry and populist journalism, enriched by millions of bloggers (one source estimated 63 million as of January 2007)[48] offering their opinions, influencing policy and public opinion, questioning decisions by officials, doubting the credibility of journalists, presenting commentaries as well as photographic evidence—in a nutshell, scrambling opinion with fact and affecting the course and conduct of a war. Farrell of the *Times* believed that in this war "everybody is going to look at you and everybody is going to criticize you…There are so many blogs and so many organizations out there [with] scrutiny that if you were to read it all, you wouldn't be doing any journalism."[49]

       Well-organized, angry and self-righteous pro-Hezbollah and pro-Israeli blogs sent millions of messages throughout the war, simply overwhelming the media with criticism of copy that did not reflect their version of reality. The effect was nonstop pressure on journalists to look over their shoulders—to conform either to extremes on both sides or to stick to the middle of public opinion. If "disproportionality" was the theme of the day, most reporters would try to do

stories supporting or rejecting the theme but always keeping it in play. It was easier and safer to be in step with the public than to be walking into the wind.

Hezbollah, as we know, understood "the information battlefield." It was sophisticated about its nooks and crannies. For example, *Newsweek* reported that one photograph of a "rescue worker holding up what appears to be the corpse of a child whose body is nothing but tatters of flesh below the waist" was so gruesome that the American media refused to publish it.[50] But Hezbollah, with no such inhibitions, ran the photograph on its satellite television station and then e-mailed it around the globe.[51] Hezbollah focused on Lebanese victims, rarely mentioned its own casualties, and accused Israel of aggression. Two value systems were clearly in collision: one didn't go with the gruesome photo, one did go with it, in fact deliberately spread it far and wide, wanting nothing more than to use any and every weapon of "information" to defeat Israel.

There was also the case of two other photographs shot and later altered by freelancer Adnan Hajj, who covered the war for Reuters until August 7, when he was fired. To wash its hands of Hajj, Reuters then quickly removed all 920 of his photographs from its database.[52] One of the two photographs showed a suburb of Beirut after an Israeli air attack. Dark smoke rose from a devastated building. It was an arresting photograph that caught the horror of war, and naturally it appeared in newspapers around the world. Were it not for an American blog site called Little Green Footballs, run by Charles Johnson, it might have won a prize for wartime photography. But with determination and ingenuity, Johnson found that the photograph had almost certainly been doctored. He compared it with others shot of the same building at the same time and discovered that in Hajj's photograph the dark smoke was darker—and there was more of it.[53] The other Hajj photograph of an Israeli jet streaking across southern Lebanon showed three

flares being dropped from the plane. Upon later examination, it was learned that only one had been dropped.[54]

Twice Hajj had altered photographs, not presumably to contrive events where none existed but rather to heighten the drama of real events ("to hype the story," an old journalistic sin) and perhaps deliberately to worsen Israel's image in the world and, by comparison, to soften Hezbollah's image. Hajj denied that he had wittingly doctored the two photographs, saying he was simply trying to remove dust marks in poor lighting.[55] We may never know the absolute truth, but Hajj's photographs served to heighten doubts about journalistic credibility. "Fauxtography," they were called. Johnson (and many others in the West) thought the incident proved that Hezbollah would exploit any advantage to win the war of images—in its strategy, as crucial an element as winning the war itself.

Ravi Nessman of the Associated Press said that photo editors were examining "hundreds and possibly thousands of photos a day," looking for the perfect representation of the ravages of war and always asking themselves: are these photos real, are they doctored, are they fake? "There is a lot of anger over the photos," Nesssman added.[56]

There was a lot of professional embarrassment, too. Salem Daher, described as "a Lebanese civil rescue worker" was shown in German newspapers and television in late July carrying the body of a dead boy from one location to another so that, it was said, different groups of cameramen could shoot the scene. Once he was shown reloading a body into an ambulance so they could get a better shot. Cameramen dubbed him "The Green Helmet," because he was always wearing a green helmet and always enthusiastically steering them to better pictures of Lebanese casualties.[57] Was Daher just eager to get on television? Or was he doing someone's

bidding? The cameramen did not seem to care so long as they got their pictures. But at what price?

Other examples of shoddy photo journalism, involving even *The New York Times*, dotted the landscape of postwar reflection. On August 17, *The New York Times* ran a disturbing photo of a southern suburb of Beirut (perhaps the same one toured by CNN's Anderson Cooper and photographed by Hajj) that had been largely leveled by Israeli air strikes. Jerusalem bureau chief Stephen Erlanger was upset by the publication of the photo, because it lacked context. He told the Mideast Press Club that it "bothered me a great deal. We did a satellite photo of southern Beirut, of Dahia, which was quite destroyed and we didn't print near it a larger photo of the rest of Beirut, which I think was a failure to provide context." He meant "the rest of Beirut," which was essentially undamaged.[58] On another day, the *Times* ran a photograph of a Lebanese man in Tyre being rescued from the rubble of a building bombed by the Israelis. The caption read: "The mayor of Tyre said that in the worst hit areas, bodies were still buried under the rubble, and he appealed to the Israelis to allow government authorities time to pull them out."[59] On August 9, the *Times* ran a correction after bloggers noticed that the same rescued man, looking clean and composed, was seen in other photographs shot after the Israeli raid. Was it a staged photo? Was it the same Lebanese man?

Rarely did the media use photographs to show that Hezbollah fired its weapons from residential neighborhoods in clear violation of international law. This was rare, because Hezbollah did not allow reporters to film such military activity. Yet, on July 30, the Sunday *Herald Sun* in Australia did just that.[60] It published photos that, in its own words, "damn Hezbollah" for conducting military operations in populated suburbs. In one photo of a "high density residential area," Hezbollah was shown preparing launch pads for "rockets and heavy-

caliber weapons." In another men were firing an anti-aircraft gun "meters from an apartment block" where laundry was drying on a balcony. The newspaper said that the photos were "exclusive," shot by a "visiting journalist and smuggled out by a friend." The photos had to be smuggled out of Beirut, because Hezbollah would never have allowed them to be shot—they proved that Hezbollah was in fact conducting military operations from heavily populated Beirut suburbs, which was considered a war crime.

It might have been on that day that Al-Jazeera's Beirut correspondent, Katja Nasr, was doing a live feed of an Israeli missile strike near a funeral procession. In her report, no Hezbollah fighters appeared. "The people were taking part in a funeral procession for the martyrs that fell from Israeli airstrikes yesterday on a residential building," she reported, using the loaded word "martyrs" for those killed in the Israeli attack. Many Arab reporters used the same word; no Western reporter ever did, except on occasion to define its meaning. "More than 30 people were killed, one-third of them children. Entire families were killed in the strike, including a mother and her two children, a family of six." Men carried coffins wrapped in the red, green and white flag of Lebanon. Nasr's was a powerful report, accurate but incomplete, slanted but true.[61]

Balancing photographs for fairness may be one of the most difficult jobs in contemporary journalism, assuming a professional desire to be responsible. "Photos are trickier than words," said Bill Keller, executive editor of *The New York Times,* "because their content is in large measure emotional, visceral." Unless photos are doctored, "you can't edit their content. You can't insert a 'to be sure' paragraph in a photo."[62] David Friend of *Vanity Fair* magazine continued this theme. "They succinctly capture so many layers of meaning in a confined space," he explained. "It's the artistic equivalent of atomic power, where you have so much energy in a small space that it has to explode."[63] For Jon Banner, executive producer for ABC's "World

News Tonight," emotions ran so combustibly high during the Lebanon war that he could not imagine a more difficult story to cover fairly. His solution was always to run one story from Lebanon and one from Israel on every program.[64]

Such a solution, though, may suggest a balance in time and space, creating an impression of fairness (one story here, one story there), but it does little to address the journalistic question of bias, unintended or otherwise. Let us say that a reporter with no recognizable bias leaves Beirut to cover an Israeli attack on Tyre. He sees the devastation and he talks to Lebanese survivors. All tell their tales of woe—losses, shortages, societal discombobulation. If he is a television reporter, he does his report on location—he may even do it live, the camera focusing on him and then over his shoulder on an old woman hugging a little girl. If he is a newspaperman, he has more time and writes his story later in the day, probably from his hotel room in Beirut. The Tyre story, whether on TV or in the morning paper, contains no loaded words, no suggestions of Israeli recklessness or Hezbollah propaganda—nothing is contrived, hyped, or exaggerated.

And yet because it is seen and read in the context of the reality of this war, it can be seen as yet another example of Israel's disproportionate reaction to Hezbollah's opening attack—and therefore as an example of a totally unintended bias in the report. Critics of Israel can say the Tyre report proves their point, but deep down they would still not be satisfied. There's that question in their minds of proportionality. For example, if our hypothetical reporter covers a similar story of a Hezbollah rocketing of an Israeli village, in which a number of Israeli civilians are killed and wounded, this effort at journalistic balance would still be judged to be unfair. Why? Because, according to this line of reasoning, the Israelis killed and destroyed much more than Hezbollah killed and destroyed, and the difference in numbers ought to be reported time and again. Fairness, balance and proportionality can only be achieved in this manner.

Supporters of Israel's position tend to dismiss the proportionality/disproportionality debate as misleading and foolish. Scholars say that if the media had the technology during World War II to show photos and videotape of Allied bombing attacks on German and Japanese civilians, and to hear their tales of woe on 24/7 cable news programs, the morality of the war (though unlikely the outcome) would have been significantly different.

Keller of the *Times* said that the issue is so irresolvable that he refuses to pander to the prejudices of his critics. "They don't want you to be balanced in your coverage; they want you to portray the morality of the war as they see it."[65] Scholars have coined a term for this problem—it's called "hostile media effect," meaning partisans tend to believe that the media generally paints them in a negative light. In one experiment, researchers showed 144 informed television viewers six news segments about the 1982 Israel-Lebanon war. Viewers with a pro-Arab sentiment thought they saw 42 pro-Israeli references and 26 anti-Israeli references. Viewers with a pro-Israeli sentiment, watching the same news clips, thought they saw 16 pro-Israeli references and 57 anti-Israeli references. Both sides were positive they were right.[66]

Conclusion

On Al-Jazeera and other Arab media, the Lebanon war was often referred to as "the Sixth War."[67] The first war, by this reckoning, was in 1948, when Israel was founded by a vote of the United Nations on land many Arabs considered their own. From the second war in 1956 through to the fifth war in 2000, when the second Intifada erupted, Israel defeated a succession of Arab armies and states, expanding from a tiny, divided enclave into a small but powerful, nuclear-armed state. "In the eyes of the Arab world, it's all connected," explained Samer Shehata of the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University. "Israel's attack on Lebanon,

its occupation of Palestinian and Syrian land, it's all part of the same story."[68] The Arab narrative is one of a continuing conflict with Israel, one battle leading inexorably to another with intervals reserved for rest, training, recruitment and the acquisition of new weaponry. Therefore, the conflict ends only when Israel ends. It is a narrative woven tightly into the fabric of Arab politics and psychology, denied only occasionally in the Arab media, though frequently in the chambers of international dialogue. It fashions the contours of Arab journalism.

Is there then such a thing as objective journalism in the Middle East, a journalism that can report on the ups and downs of Israeli policy with a degree of detachment? According to Walid Omary, a Palestinian journalist with an Israeli ID card from the village of Sandala between Afula in Israel and Jenin on the West Bank, the answer is no. "Objectivity and balance do not exist in the Middle East and in this region especially," he said.[69] With degrees from Hebrew and Tel Aviv universities, Omary is an accomplished journalist, who rose to become Jerusalem bureau chief for Al-Jazeera. "My village was under the attack of missiles from Lebanon and my relatives were under attack from the Israelis in Lebanon, which means, to give good balance, to try to give good coverage—is not easy at all in this area."[70] Omary added a personal dimension to the chronic Arab predisposition to see Israel as an unwelcome, foreign intrusion into their neighborhood.

When Hezbollah rocketed Israel during the war, many Palestinians enjoyed the spectacle of Arabs hurting Jews. Abdelraouf Arnout, the Jerusalem correspondent for the Palestinian newspaper Al Ayyam, said that the Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, had become a hugely admired "symbol" of Arab resistance among the Palestinian people.[71] Daoud Hussein, a Kuwaiti actor, speaking on the Al-Jazeera call-in program, "Voice of the People," praised Nasrallah and prayed for his victory against Israel. "If there was just one Nasrallah in every Arab country—

one person with his dedication, intelligence, courage, strength and commitment—Arabs would not have had to suffer stolen land and defeat at the hands of Israel for 50 years."[72] Call-in shows naturally reflect popular mood and opinion, but news broadcasts are supposed to be based on the principles of fairness and objectivity. In the Middle East, where the Arab-Israeli conflict is an inescapable fact of life, these principles are rarely observed. During the war, according to Yoni Ben Menachem, general director of Kol Yisrael, Israelis were convinced that Al-Jazeera presented a "distorted picture of what was going on," especially in its reporting from Lebanon. "They were not reporting objectively," he said. "They were making some propaganda for Hezbollah."[73]

Add one other crucial ingredient to this journalistic wartime stew of charge and countercharge—and that was the Internet. This was a live war, in which the information battlefield played a central role. Here the Israelis suffered from the openness of their democratic society. They succumbed to the public pressures of live 24/7 coverage. They couldn't keep a secret. Hezbollah, on the other hand, controlled its message with an iron grip. It had one spokesman and no leaks. Hezbollah did not have to respond to criticism from bloggers, and it could always count on unashamedly sympathetic Arab reporters to blast Israel for its "disproportionate" military attack against Lebanon.

Nik Gowing, a respected BBC World anchor, warned at a recent Harvard conference that the "new asymmetric information—the new level of accountability and public perceptions in a time of crisis" exposed "the vulnerability of traditional institutions of power and influence."[74] Israel, in this context, was the "traditional institution," made suddenly "vulnerable" by the flow of "asymmetric information." Gowing gave an example of how "in a time of crisis and tension, public perceptions can be created by the new media matrix." During the war, even though Israel

still had military censorship, technically, "you could be up there on the northern border [of Israel] filming, uplinking live war: live war of soldiers moving into south Lebanon, live war of anti-tank missiles immobilizing Merkava tanks." Such reporting, common on the Israeli side of the war, had "a fundamental impact on the reputation and the image and the fear factor created by the IDF." The bloggers helped spread the impression of Israeli "vulnerability." Gowing said "it was the bloggers and the calls to radio stations, which were highlighting the vulnerability of the Israeli defense forces."

Whether the flavor of journalism is American or Qatari, both march to their own drummer, both convinced their principles best define good and honest journalism. Efforts at reconciliation are likely to fail, at least in the near future. Yet both schools of journalism, however different they may be, are strongly influenced in their practice by what might be called "the new media," that combustible mix of 24/7 cable news, call-in radio and television programs, Internet bloggers and online websites, cell phones and iPods. The upshot is a new kind of populist journalism, which strongly influences the story that is being covered. Indeed, the journalist or, in this new age, the commentator, often becomes part of the story.

During the Lebanon War, for example, the bloggers had more influence over the flow of the story than they had had during any other war. Ravi Nessman, the senior Jerusalem correspondent of the Associated Press, thought the influence of the bloggers, especially in the United States, was "unprecedented."[75] When the bloggers [in the U.S.] discovered that photographs had been doctored, "the credibility of the bloggers…skyrocketed and our credibility plummeted." Nessman added, "After that everything that we did was suspect. And that makes it very difficult to cover a war, to have honest people who are trying, who are not doctoring photographs, who are not taking one side or the other, but who are trying to present the truth of

what is going on there, and have everything we say be examined, which is fair, but basically be questioned as a lie, and starting with that premise that the media is lying."

The Lebanon War produced a bumper crop of stories both good and bad, growing out of a new kind of asymmetrical warfare waged by a state on the one side and a religious, nationalistic guerrilla force on the other side. Will Israel seek to change the ground rules for coverage of the next war? And even if the effort were made, could it succeed? In an open society, ground rules may be announced, but they are not likely to be observed or enforced. During the 2006 summertime war in the Middle East, it was Israel versus Hezbollah, led by the charismatic Hassan Nasrallah, and because Israel did not win the war, it is judged to have lost. In Iraq, in the not too distant future, it may well be the United States versus the Mahdi Army, led by the equally charismatic Sheik Moqtada al-Sadr. The challenge for responsible journalists covering asymmetrical warfare, especially in this age of the Internet, is new, awesome and frightening.

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