Hizbullah: Has Israel Met Its Match?

M. Shahid Alam considers the evidence

ON January 31, when the Winograd Commission submitted its final report on the Second Lebanese War of July 2006, this was a first in Israeli history: a report on why the Israeli military had failed in a war.

The Winograd Commission offers a quite honest appraisal of some aspects of the July 2006 War. It acknowledges that it was "a serious missed opportunity." Israel had "*initiated* a long war, which ended without its clear military victory (italics added)." The Commission notes that a militia "of a few thousand men resisted, for a few weeks, the strongest army in the Middle East, which enjoyed full air superiority, and size and technology advantages." Nothing could reverse Israel's handicaps: not even a massive ground offensive launched in the last days of the war.

Yet, after this clear-headed assessment, the Commission stumbles. It blames Israel's military setback on "serious failings and flaws" in decision-making, preparedness, coordination between the civilian and military leadership, and strategic planning. In other words, the Israeli military's poor showing in July 2006 was not the result of any fundamental shift in the balance of forces. These failures were the result of a few bad judgments, inadequate preparation, and less-than-optimal coordination between different branches of the Israeli military: all of them errors which



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