

**Examination of the Functioning of Local
Leadership in Local Authorities in a Time of
Danger during the Second Lebanon War
(July-August 2006)**

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Abstract

In the 19th and 20's centuries, nations and countries' main threat was a defeat in the battlefield, which was usually near the border with their enemies. By the end of the first decade of the 21st century the world faces a new era of threats; threats over the civilian front.

The development of weapons' technology and the existence of non-conventional weapons, the intensifying activities of terror organizations and massive natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods have made the civilians in the home front exposed to existential threats and vulnerable more than ever.

While a war in the battlefield is conducted by the army, which is professionally trained for this task, the civilians in the home front have to rely on the Local Government.

The Local Government is the closest governmental body to the civilians. The Mayor and the municipal administration know the residents best. They know the city, the residents' needs, their difficulties and strengths, and they are near enough to be able to provide the first aid when needed.

On June 2006 Israel was attacked by missiles that were shot by the Hezbollah terror organization in South Lebanon. The attacks that came without previous warning became a 33 day war, later known as "The Second Lebanon War". It was the first time

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since the War of Independence in 1948 that the home front was massively attacked for such a long period. So neither the civilians nor the government were prepared for it.

The war caught the home front in Israel unprepared. There were not enough shelters to host the residents, and most of the existing shelters were not fit to accommodate people. There was no strategic plan for how to cope with such a situation.

The Mayors who usually deal with the daily aspects of the city's life that include education issues, the supply of infrastructure services, public order, public health or economic development, had to face the management of an emergency situation, without being prepared for it.

This study analyzes how the Mayors and their municipal administrations coped with the new situation.

The research is based on a case study of two cities in the north of Israel that experienced for the first time an existential threat, where about 500 missiles hit their cities for 33 days.

The research analyzes the Second Lebanon War as a crisis. A crisis is defined in the literature as a situation where the existential threat is high, the decisions-making time is short and the surprise is substantial¹. The study examines the functioning of two Mayors and their municipalities in the aspects of response to the situation, in the residents' protection and life-saving, the management of the city under fire, the continuation of services' supply in emergency, the social treatment and the support provided to the residents and their contribution to their security assurance.

The research paradigm is qualitative and inductive. Its aim is to explore little understood phenomena and to find explanations for their causes, using the case study of the two cities.

¹ C. F. Herman, "*International Crisis as a Situational Variable*" in J. Rosenau, ed. "*International Politics and Foreign Policy*", New York, the Free Press, 1969, p. 68

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Three domains of knowledge helped me to explore the subject:

1. The Second Lebanon War, which is the event itself.
2. The Local Government in Israel who is the main player in this event.
3. Theories of crisis and emergency management.

The theoretical perspectives in these three fields and the in-depth interviews with seniors in the Government, the Army, the Police and the Local Government provided a comprehensive and comparative picture of the two cities' functioning during the War. I have also used content analysis of the documents, protocol and many articles written in this issue. The State Comptroller's Report, a special issue that investigated the management of the war in the home front, has been very helpful and enlightening in this process.

In the second stage I held 30 semi-constructed interviews with the population of the two cities, 15 from each. Since it is a case study research, the informants were chosen to represent different segments of the population: businessmen who run their business in the city, social workers, school principals and teachers, municipal employees, chairs of non-profit organizations in the city, volunteers and "ordinary" residents.

The main findings were:

1. The Mayor of the city plays the principal role in running the city under fire. Both, the residents and the Governmental (including the Army and the Police) bodies see the mayor as the person who should run the city in emergency, not any Army or Police Officer, even if they might be more qualified in managing emergency situations.
2. The main expectations from the Local Authority in the War were:
 - Providing safe protection to the residents - shelters or evacuation of families to safer locations in the country, and first aid to those who were hit or whose homes were damaged.
 - To ensure regular supply of water and food in the city and to provide food and water to those who can't get out of shelters and purchase it.
 - To ensure regular medical aid services, electricity, transportation, banking and social aid.

- To help the needy families, the children, the elderly and people with special needs.
- To manage the situation, to communicate with the residents and direct them how to behave and what to do.

3. There were significant differences in the functioning of the two cities during the War. The research found that although these are two close cities, similar size and demography, there were differences in the leadership of their Mayors as well as in the socio-demographic characteristics of the populations. Yet, the differences in the functioning outweighed these differences.

The most significant differences were found in the managerial functioning of the two Mayors, in the management culture of the two municipalities and in the community resilience of their residents. In all these parameters, the city of Zefat functioned significantly weaker than Karmiel.

Analyzing the functioning of Zefat and Karmiel, we can identify three pillars that have direct influence on the functioning of a city during such situations:

- The local leader - the Mayor.
- The preparedness of the city for emergency - the existence of an emergency management program, written regulations and trainings.
- The social and community resilience of the city's population.

These three pillars do not act in a vacuum. The environmental factors that have an impact on their functioning are the Army and in the larger circle - the Government. The Army might be involved and help the running of the city in such situations, as it did by the second half of the war, or not be involved with civilians' activities, as happened when the war started.

The second environmental cycle consists of the Government. The relationship between the Central Government and the Local one differs from one country to the other, and there are several models which describe these relationships. In Israel the relationship between the Central and Local Government fits the central control model that implies a high legal and financial dependency of the Local Authorities on the Government.

In a situation where the Local Authorities depend largely on the Government in the daily life, this dependency is only intensified in war time. The problem was that in the Second Lebanon War, the Government "disappeared". It was occupied with the war in the battlefield and the municipalities were left alone to struggle with a critical new situation.

An additional critical element that is missing for the management of the city in emergency is regulation. Regulation that imposes rules of the responsibilities of the governing bodies in emergency situations does not exist in Israel. There is a complex of non-updated and contradicting rules from the early years of the establishment of the state (from 1951) and a series of government decisions, but they are unclear, partial and sometimes contradicting. There is an urgent need for regulation that will clearly define each governmental body's responsibilities and the financial resources to fulfill them.

While writing this dissertation a new war erupted in Israel. On December 2008, after 8 years of rockets' attacks towards the cities in south Israel, the Gaza War started. It did not did not come as a total surprise as in the case of the Lebanon War, but here again the cities and their Mayors had to face the management of the city under fire.

These days we witness the Iranian President, Mahmud Ahamiidinegad's, threats to attack Israel as well as other western countries, and the subject of this research becomes even more relevant.

