Military and Strategic Affairs

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The Test of Consciousness:
The Crisis of Signification in the IDF

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The Czech philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) claimed that as we are thinking creatures amassing life experiences, assisted by language and descriptive capabilities and endowed with the ability to judge, draw conclusions, and make decisions, and as we are constantly in search of truths, from time to time there occur conceptual developments in our understanding of reality, followed by linguistic developments.[1] Husserl, who preceded the era in which post-modernism has assumed intellectual hegemony, also claimed that "to live always means to live in the certainty of the world. To live alertly means to be alert to the world, to be 'aware' constantly and tangibly of the world and of yourself as living in the world."[2]

In an article entitled "The Third Lebanon War: Target Lebanon," Giora Eiland points to some lessons learned in depth by the IDF as a result of the Second Lebanon War, and the serious efforts made to implement them. One of the lessons concerns the quality of command centers and the nature of the command and control processes. According to Eiland, once the efforts were made, we may assume they yielded fundamental improvements, at least in the first years after the war. Another important lesson is that of military thinking, which Eiland assesses the IDF has not yet fully internalized. These two items on the military's agenda include subtopics such as intellectual thinking, ongoing critical examination of

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fundamental assumptions, and a creative approach, along with a clear, cohesive operational concept, clarity of language, and the existence of processes that ensure coherence and synergy in the use of force.[3]

These lessons, as well as the host of conclusions drawn by the IDF from the post-Second Lebanon War debriefings and investigations about the language and validity of the documents on doctrine, the applicability of operative plans and their assimilation, and the clarity of commands and their rationale, all point to a crisis of signification. This crisis, which has dogged the security establishment as well as its civilian and military foundations, began its slow growth in the early 1990s. Those were the days of trial and error in the pursuit of settling the conflict in the Middle East or managing it in ways more convenient to Israel. Many sectors within the public were tired of war and of internal struggles, especially in the security-political arena. New approaches adopted in the art of war were not always properly adjusted to Israel's reality, with concessions to post-modern, global ideas[4] imparting a transition to peace-seeking militarism or reflecting new definitions of old military goals.[5]

The crisis encompassed four dimensions worthy of study: (a) the meta-strategic dimension, linked to the policy of containment adopted by Israel; (b) the social dimension, linked to internal social and political processes that regularly sent conflicting messages to the IDF and gave different − sometimes even contradictory − meanings regarding its responsibilities and the expectations of it; (c) the military-conceptual dimension, linked to a new understanding of the use of force that while tried by the IDF failed to define the principles of optimal use of force in the face of challenges and constraints; and (d) the military-organizational dimension, linked to the organizational culture and new language that crept into field ranks, with lofty concepts that were difficult to understand and assimilate.

The two intra-military dimensions of the crisis of signification that engulfed the IDF were not approved by the top command structure and emanated without prior warning from command and control bodies, with the exception of the State Comptroller.[6] They stemmed in part from the failure to formulate a concept of the use of force and combat doctrines that would provide a response to the new complex reality facing Israel and give clear, goal-oriented meaning to the understanding of the enemy and its methods.

This essay examines each of the four dimensions of the crisis of signification along with their origins, components, and relative weight. Not only individuals but also organizations – including the army – weave webs of meaning around their existence and crises of consciousness damage their performance and ability to act. The proper management of operational meanings, which reviews a list of probabilities one by one, their opposites, and their aptness, is thus a tool for more successful execution of tasks by any organization, especially the military, which must often deal with critical tasks while putting lives at risk.

The Grand Strategy: The Policy of Containment

On October 7, 2000, nearly five months after the IDF's withdrawal from the security zone in southern Lebanon and a few days after the outbreak of the second intifada, three Israeli soldiers were abducted from the Mt. Dov sector.[7] Despite the declarations by the prime minister about the high cost Israel would exact if the state, its citizens, or its soldiers were attacked after the withdrawal to the international border,[8] the government chose not to allow this severe event to foment unrest along the northern border. This was in effect the start of the "era of containment."[9] The restraint and forbearance chosen by the Israeli government were later evident after a shooting attack on the road between Shlomi and Kibbutz Matzuva,[10] as well as after an abduction attempt that was foiled near the Rajar checkpoint and the attempted infiltration of the Gladiola fortification on Mt. Dov that same day.[11]

The policy of containment, called by then-Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz "a wise policy,"[12] sought to set in place a pattern of conflict management to prevent deterioration along the northern border. From its inception, the framers of the policy justified it along several lines: it avoided opening another front in addition to the Palestinian one, which at the time was placing a taxing burden on the IDF's regular forces and reservists; it allowed the economy in the north to continue to flourish, and it maintained the calm for the residents of the north who for years had lived under sporadic attacks; it allayed the fear of returning to the "Lebanese quagmire" and the "cycle of responses and counter-responses"; it allowed for changes in the internal power structure of Lebanon; and it garnered international sympathy and helped erode Hizbollah's legitimacy given the restraint Israel demonstrated in face of the organization's provocations. These interests tipped the scales even

at the cost of the image of Israel's "giving in to terrorism" and despite the fear, which proved prescient, of Hizbollah's growing strength.

The practical conclusion that the IDF drew from the government's political directives[13] was to downplay Hizbollah's provocations, see them as localized events, and contain them before they developed into a campaign with strategic ramifications. In other words, the IDF exhibited passivity and resorted to limited, measured responses to acts of hostility, usually in the form of standoff fire. For years, and even during the war itself, this reality made it conceptually difficult to classify operational targets and did not create the appropriate circumstances either to define missions or, as shown below in a different context, to define methods of operation. After the war, Moshe Kaplinsky[14] explained:

> In my opinion, our failure to change the general mindset of the army grew even worse because of the approach that developed on the northern border since the withdrawal from the security zone in May 2000, at whose center lay the principle of "sit and wait." The primary mission was simply to prevent kidnappings, and nothing more. The security of IDF soldiers was defined as of overriding importance. The combination of all these elements, together with our inability to say, "That was then – this is now. From this point onwards, the situation has changed," was among the central causes – if not the central cause – for the manner in which the war was conducted.[15]

After the withdrawal from the security zone, the IDF thinned out the forces stationed on the northern border and streamlined means for achieving long term stamina and absorbing attacks. Patrols and activity along the northern border were reduced in an attempt to lower the friction with Hizbollah and the risk to IDF soldiers, especially border abductions. Open-fire directives were changed and soldiers' mandates to respond to hostile activity from the other side of the border were curtailed.

The new line of fortifications built along the international border with Lebanon, at the cost of over NIS 1 billion, was adapted to the low signature operational concept.[16] Because of budgetary constraints, front-line fortifications were closed, and beginning in 2002 reservists replaced regular soldiers on the northern border. In addition, the deployment of technological means such as cameras and sensors along the border

was never completed and intelligence gathering efforts were thereby weakened.

In face of the policy of containment, Hizbollah, which grew steadily stronger, adopted a policy of targeted, measured attacks punctuated by long periods of calm. This brinkmanship highlighted the asymmetry already in existence between Hizbollah and the IDF and demonstrated the extent to which the IDF's responses to Hizbollah's provocations were too little, too late. Israel's retaliation lagged behind Hizbollah's initiatives and left the organization with the power to determine when to act and how to fulfill its objectives of upsetting the IDF's mindset and that of the country, its civilians, and elected officials.

Some in Israel harbored reservations about the policy of containment and its strategic objectives. Within the IDF, and even more so among the residents of the north, there were those calling on the government to release the safety catch, put an end to the policy of restraint, push Hizbollah back from the border, and restore self-confidence to the frightened residents of the north. Some accused the government of leveling empty threats when it asserted it would settle scores with Hizbollah and cast the IDF as a paper tiger.[17]

Although in practice the policy of containment was implemented from the IDF's withdrawal from Lebanon on May 24, 2000 until the morning of July 12, 2006 and under the governments of Prime Ministers Barak, Sharon, and Olmert, the roots of this policy are actually to be found seven years before the withdrawal, during Yitzhak Rabin's tenure as prime minister.

On July 31, 1993, after seven days of fighting in Hizbollah villages in southern Lebanon, Operation Accountability came to an end, and an informal agreement between the sides was reached with American mediation; the agreement was known as the Operation Accountability understandings.[18] At that stage, the talk was of containing the events in southern Lebanon and preventing them from causing an overall deterioration that included potential Syrian involvement. Controlling the flames was considered imperative at the time lest an escalation, to the displeasure of the United States, derail the Madrid process, which had seated Israeli and Syrian representatives together for bilateral negotiations.[19]

Israel derived the term "policy of containment" and particularly its abstract meaning from the American experience in the Cold War. In an article published anonymously in 1947 entitled "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" and in a telegram sent a year earlier by the article's author, American diplomat George Kennan[20] proposed including a central component of consciousness psychology in US relations towards the Soviet superpower. In Kennan's vision, the policy of containment included restraint as well as assertiveness and alertness: the United States would be careful not to maneuver the Soviet Union into a corner without leaving it a dignified way out. Some of Kennan's notions regarding containment, defined in *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security*, allowed the United States to concentrate its forces in key locations critical to its interests instead of attempting to defend difficult borders.[21] In later years, Kennan made the following seminal statement:

> Anyone who has ever studied the history of American diplomacy, especially military diplomacy, knows that you might start in a war with certain things on your mind as a purpose of what you are doing, but in the end, you found yourself fighting for entirely different things that you had never thought of before...In other words, war has a momentum of its own and it carries you away from all thoughtful intentions when you get into it.[22]

The policy of containment that the political-security echelon passed on to the IDF disrupted the mindset of both commanders and soldiers. It muddied the principle of striving for contact, and planted doubts as to the nature of responses to offensive enemy activity. Without addressing the statement made by GOC Northern Command Udi Adam, that "the practical meaning [of the policy of containment] was ceding Israeli sovereignty of the northern border and giving Hizbollah free rein to act on the border,"[23] one could say that the containment policy, which was tantamount to strategic handcuffs and operational restraint, eroded the longstanding IDF approach, namely that the IDF had no choice but to strive for decision, or at least neutralize the enemy's military force in every round of violence, at whatever cost. David Ben-Gurion, the father of Israel's security doctrine, stated: "If they attack us in the future, we want the war to take place not on our soil but on enemy territory, and attack rather than defend."[24]

The Social Dimension: From Nuclear Reactors to Spider Webs

In the early 1990s, after the collapse of the USSR and the crumbling of the Soviet bloc, which was an aegis for the Rejectionist Front; after the American invasion of Iraq and its establishment as the sole leader of the international community, including the Middle East; and after the Madrid Conference to promote peace in the Middle East, there was a convenient platform for a policy of making peace with the Arab world. In Israel, peace was viewed not only as a cherished yearning, which would include recognition of Israel and its acceptance by the other Middle East states, but also as a fundamental component of its strategic considerations.[25]

The atmosphere of peace that took hold in Israel, where many had long tired of war, also swept through the IDF. Israel's wars since the state's inception and the human toll they exacted had greatly eroded the immediate and almost self-evident willingness to enlist in support of any military move. The Israeli public was hungry for a life of calm without emergency situations and the obsessive concern with security. It was eager to lighten some of the burden of reserve duty and sought easy answers to difficult existential questions in post-modern patterns of thought. Years after the words "no more wars, no more bloodshed" echoed through the region, the hope that swords would be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks was swelling. The message that the civilian leadership was sending was, "a time for war – and a time for peace."[26]

Still, yesterday's enemy, which now became the partner or partner-in-peace, included elements that sought to undermine that peace. In a dichotomous division between the enemies of peace and peace partners, the significance of the word "enemy" was lost. Moreover, since the mid-1990s, Israel has found itself in an acute identity crisis. This crisis intensified with the many twists, turns, and reversals of the Oslo process. The absence of public consensus on the correct road to pursue and the proliferation of ideas on the justness of Israel's conduct have robbed the state of a valuable cognitive resource essential to an army and its soldiers. A cognitive problem emerged in understanding the phenomenon of war and the functions of the army in an era of appeasement facing enemies whose shifting categorization made it difficult to understand concepts such as deterrence or decision in a confrontation. This also complicated

earning support for the war on terrorism and terrorist organizations that enlist public opinion both within Israel and within the international community in order to undermine Israel's self-confidence.

The struggle for an Israeli identity expressed in part in a struggle over the nation's collective memory, narratives, myths, and shared values is an important factor in the enemy's psychological warfare estimations, notwithstanding Israel's image as a state with nuclear capabilities and clear military strength. Hence the dismissive words of the Hizbollah leader: "Israel may have nuclear weapons and heavy weapons, but, as God lives, it is weaker than a spider web...There was a time when we feared Israeli threats, planes, tanks and gun ships that impinged on our sovereignty of the skies, on land, and in the air, but that time is long since gone."[27]

The Military-Conceptual Dimension: Levers and Effects

In the early 1990s, discussions began in the IDF about formulating a new understanding of force application. The echoes of the Scud missiles from Iraq that landed on Israeli soil and the lessons learned by the Americans from the 1991 Gulf War gave rise to new thoughts regarding firepower versus ground maneuver in warfare. The new understandings lent greater weight to the psychological and cognitive dimensions of a "limited engagement" in an age of "asymmetrical warfare," in particular to the concentration of effort to change the mindset that would stop terrorist organizations from acting against Israel and perhaps even bring them to the negotiating table. The authors of the new approach referred zealously to the enemy as a complex "system" against which it was necessary to apply "levers" and "cumulative effects" whose power lay in their ability to cause cognitive collapse.

The IDF was tempted by this "sterile" approach, which departed from the bloody encounters typical of ground maneuvers, and lowered the risk to soldiers from anti-tank missiles, suicide bombers, or combat in the "nature reserves" in southern Lebanon or in densely populated areas strewn with booby traps and explosives. It was also free of the bothersome political ramifications embedded in the occupation, patrolling, and clearing of territories, and retaining them over a long period of time.[28]

The ouster of the ground maneuver as a central component of military decision and the adoption of "indirect levers" and "effects-

based operations" (EBOs) required a cognitive change involving both an emphasis on undermining the enemy's intentions by stressing damage to the enemy's military capabilities and a different attitude to firepower – from being a supportive element in the battle for decision to a primary element in attaining effects. Moreover, territory, which in military thought was traditionally considered an asset, now came to be seen as an encumbrance. In the new understanding, no response was provided to the challenge of rocket fire at Israel's civilian front.

The "system" model did not fit Hizbollah fully, as it is an organization not constructed as a system with critical intersections and clear centers of gravity or slow-moving forces. Hizbollah is a decentralized, flat organization, endowed with unique methods of entrenchment. It disappears into the environs and deploys in a densely populated rural setting. Its arrays of launchers, defenses, command, control, and logistics are dispersed in various positions in wooded terrain and in urban centers. The organization has created for itself both strategic stamina, as expressed in extensive and scattered stockpiles of ammunition and easy to operate weaponry, and operational depth that allow it to deploy over large areas deep in Lebanon and from there launch long range missiles at Israel's rear from different distances and far apart from one another. Moreover, the organization has autonomous end-units that take their own initiative, thereby increasing its operational weight.

In addition, Hizbollah uses civilians as human shields, and the shelter they provide Hizbollah operatives lends the organization much propaganda value. Its relative insensitivity to damage to state structures and infrastructures, the distress of civilians, and the number of casualties in its ranks made the operational and tactical notions underlying the system model ineffective and almost impossible to apply in terms of firepower, orders of battle, objectives, sectors, successes, and methods of warfare. To a great extent this limited the cognitive advantages Israel could have accrued using aerial or artillery standoff fire in the context of an operational understanding that preferred "the creation of effects" and "levers" over classical conquest of territory.[29]

The Military-Organizational Dimension: Objectives and Swarms[30]
Language is a critical component in the organizational culture of an army. Verbal language is the medium for inter-organizational communication,

including the definition of military objectives and targets, and it creates an intelligible common cognitive denominator to match ideas with their execution and to connect the commanding echelon with the planning and operational levels. In the Second Lebanon War, unclear, unfocused commands were given regarding the soldiers' actions and the achievements that were expected of them. A lack of clarity about the objective at the conceptual and planning levels was compounded by unclear language. More than once, the formulation of the commands described the desired effect of the action rather than the manner of executing the action itself.

One of the terms that presented more than a few difficulties during the days of fighting was "taking control," as distinguished from "occupying." While in a naval or aerial battle "control" over a sector is enough to neutralize it, on the ground only occupation and defeating the enemy – including clearing the area of combatants and active positioning in the central locations in the heart of the territory, at times accompanied by a symbolic planting of the flag – are likely to neutralize a sector. In the military discourse and practice formulated since the 1990s, the term "occupation" has carried political connotations, linked to the reality in the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria, and therefore there was a clear impetus to excise this term from public discourse. Consequently, terms such as control, symbolic control, massive control, deepening the hold, surrounding, and clearing emerged as vague linguistic substitutes attempting to define a mission that had to be carried out or to describe a mission that had already been carried out.

Another term lacking clarity that emerged from the war was "disruption." In the early days of the war and until August 8, 2006, the Northern Command issued a command to "disrupt" the activity of the terrorists launching Katyusha rockets at the northern part of the country, using precision fire from the ground. This command pertained to the narrow strait between Israel's border in southern Lebanon and the so-called Yellow Line (the Litani River) that was the limit of the IAF's responsibility during the fighting. This term, associated more with electronic systems and automatic data processing, replaced the established terms in the IDF lexicon, "harassment" or "neutralization," which were goal-oriented and familiar, and had clear denotations.[31]

The re-conceptualization of terminology is not necessarily reason for a crisis of signification as long as the new terms are transmitted to the fighting units and their commanders, both in the regular army and the reserves. However, the terms that made their way into operational and tactical layers in the golden years of think tanks in the IDF were not systematically introduced or taught in ongoing training. They were couched in esoteric abstractions, lacked clear, unequivocal meanings, and were void of basic familiar military terminology (objectives, intentions, methods, forces, and missions).[32] The language of commands that was supposed to be intelligible to all, simply formulated, and free of terms lacking operational purpose became clumsy and open to different − even contradictory − interpretations.[33] Thus, the chief IDF tool for commanding soldiers at the various levels, the reservists in particular, was lost.

Among the terms from the new unwritten doctrine and the linguistic patterns accompanying the changes in understanding the enemy that found a foothold in the IDF General Staff and trickled into the sector commands and various field ranks were "absorbent tissue,"[34] "maneuver of opinion,"[35] "snailing,"[36] "swarming attack" or "one-night sting."[37] These were not fully understood at all ranks in the regular army and the reserves.[38] Justifications for commands from upper to lower echelons were couched in terms of "directives," "instructions," "discussion summaries," "recommendations," "advice," and "proposals" by senior commanders or at the General Staff − but never "commands," as if to downplay the commanders' authority. The clear, formative cognitive tool of military language was gone because of the fear of assuming responsibility.[39]

An Exposé, in Place of a Conclusion

On July 12, 2006, a short time after the news broke of the abduction of two IDF soldiers in the northern sector, the "Hannibal protocol" went into effect and the government gathered for an emergency session. Israel, long under the influence of the containment policy, embarked on a high intensity military operation. The abduction and the fire on northern population centers met with an unprecedentedly aggressive response. The speed of the response and the rejection of any delay in order to prepare for a thoughtful military deployment reflected the Israeli fear of the belief that has become entrenched within the various terrorist

organizations, especially Hizbollah, that Israel is so weak that it would find it difficult to extricate itself from international efforts and pressures to desist from undertaking the response that was called for.[40] Moreover, Israel viewed this activity as an opportunity to effect a fundamental change in the reality that became entrenched since the IDF withdrawal from the security zone, and also psychologically undermine the enemy's self-confidence that had grown in the interim and endowed the enemy with a feeling of might and prestige – in its own eyes, in the eyes of its Iranian and Syrian patrons, and in the eyes of its fellow terrorist networks waging war against Israel.[41]

The transition from the containment policy to an offensive, taking-charge policy and from a low signature operation to a brisk military move surprised Hizbollah.[42] Yet this type of high intensity, focused activity following a restrained, measured era undoubtedly creates cognitive problems not only for the enemy but also for any army that suddenly finds itself in the midst of an abrupt about-face, from limited passive conduct to energetic, initiated activity. No doubt the result is cognitive uncertainty. The fact that the fighting lasted for 34 days while the army was losing fighters and the rear was exposed to uncontrolled missile and rocket fire undermined the IDF's confidence in its own abilities and, in terms of consciousness, affected its understanding and performance.[43]

The war revealed a failure stemming from the (mis)understanding of the use of force. The failure was the result of ongoing, defined damage to targets with major psychological importance to the organization, its commanders, its leaders, and its home front. "Effects," which meant tackling only the enemy's intentions using overly-decentralized forces, without concentration, efforts, or momentum that are in fact capable of causing the enemy to collapse and wresting a decision against its capabilities, were set aside. It became clear that the power of the classical maneuver had not disappeared in terms of using ground forces, conquering territory, clearing them of combatants by way of concentrating forces, making optimal use of forces, storming enemy targets, taking offensive initiatives, maintaining continuity, providing role models, and demonstrating professionalism and dedication to the mission.

More than three years after the Second Lebanon War and with the experience of Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, it is clear that the IDF is

successfully tackling the military-organizational dimension and has progressed in understanding the essence of the military-conceptual failure preceding the war in Lebanon. Nonetheless, as a result of conflicts and rifts in political stances and the lack of unanimity about the many layers of the conflict with the enemy, the social dimension has not yet been solved. Cognitively, no new grand strategy has emerged. Although the policy of containment seems to have vanished, Israel still lacks the initiative in terms of dictating the moves and maintaining the military balance, even with regard to Hizbollah's massive rearming, which may yet find expression should hostilities break out. This dimension no doubt affects the clear formulation of the use of force, e.g., one that adopts a systematic operational approach of initiating limited, creative punitive operations or acts designed to damage infrastructures and deter the enemy, in short – actions that would deny Hizbollah its leading role in the violent haggling over the land and would continuously force it to cope with challenges to its own survival.

Notes

1   Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by David Singer (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), p. 244.
2   Ibid., p. 145.
3   Giora Eiland, "The Third Lebanon War: Target Lebanon," *Strategic Assessment* 11, no. 2 (2008): 9-17, http://www.inss.org.il/upload/ (FILE)1226472866.pdf.
4   A discussion of post-modern and global changes in the last decade of the twentieth century may be found in Avi Kober, "Low-Intensity Conflicts: Why the Gap between Theory and Practice?" *Defense and Security Analysis* 18, no. 1 (2002): 15-38.
5   See Uri Ben-Eliezer, "From a Nation in Uniform to a Post-Modern Military: Military Politics in Israel in the New Era," in Stuart Cohen, ed., *A Culture of Democracy* (Bar-Ilan University and the Israel Democracy Institute), Vols. 4-5, pp. 55-97.
6   See Israel State Comptroller's Annual Reports: Report No. 44 for 1993, pp. 1067-78; Report No. 46 for 1995, pp. 894-900; Report No. 51A for 2000, pp. 109-48; Report 52A for 2001, pp. 82-109; and Report No. 57A for 2006, pp. 45, 61-66.
7   On October 7, 2000, an IDF patrol was ambushed at Point 590 in the region of the Shab'a Farms. Staff Sergeant Adi Avitan, Staff Sergeant Benny Avraham, and Staff Sergeant Omar Suad were killed and their bodies abducted to

Lebanon. After 1,210 days, on January 29, 2004, the soldiers' bodies were returned in a hostage exchange with Hizbollah.

8   Prime Minister Ehud Barak: "I have made it clear in completely unequivocal terms how Israel will conduct itself should any entity in Lebanon try to attack our citizens or soldiers after Israel withdraws to the international border. I have announced that Israel would view this as an act of war and that no target or element in Lebanon will be safe from a harsh response." See speech made in the Knesset, May 25, 2000.

9   Winograd Commission Interim Report, 2007, p. 44.

10 IDF officer Lieutenant German Rozhkov, a deputy commander of a Nahal company, and five civilians were killed on March 12, 2002, in a shooting attack by two terrorists who penetrated Israel from Lebanon, dug themselves into a hill west of the Shlomi-Matzuva road, and fired light weapons and threw hand grenades at passing cars. In addition, seven other civilians were injured in the incident.

11 On November 21, 2005, a Hizbollah attempt to abduct a soldier from the village of Rajar was made during an exchange of fire, under the cover of which a terrorist cell infiltrated the local council building in the village. Twelve soldiers and civilians were injured in the incident. The same day, there was another incident when terrorists approached the Gladiola fortification in the Mt. Dov sector and opened fire at the soldiers manning it. *Ynet*, November 21, 2005.

12 Shaul Mofaz, in his summary of the annual intelligence assessment submitted on March 5, 2004: "We must continue with the wise policy we have used to date in an effort to restrain the northern system and 'crack it' and we must complete our preparations for a possible confrontation in a way that will allow us to neutralize Hizbollah's rocket structure with maximal efficiency and speed." The Military Secretariat, April 19, 2004.

13 Gabriel Siboni, "From Gaza to Lebanon and Back," *Strategic Assessment* 10, no. 1 (2007): 66-69: "The supreme job of any military is to achieve the grand strategic objectives as defined by the political leadership, even if in many cases the military is an important partner in defining these objectives. Once defined, these objectives become the goals of the political leadership." See http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=26.

14 Maj. Gen. Kaplinsky was deputy chief of staff in 2005-2007.

15 Moshe Kaplinsky, "The IDF in the Years before the Second Lebanon War," *Military and Strategic Affairs* 1, no. 2 (2009): 32, http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1268646037.pdf..

16 Low signature is a way of functioning in a ground war and creating operational patterns with a low profile. See Gal Hirsch, *A War Story, a Love Story* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot Press, 2009), p. 141.

17 Shlomo Buhbut, Chairman of the Front Line Forum and Mayor of Maalot, in letter to Prime Minister Ehud Barak: "It is wrong to tie the hands [of the IDF] when it comes to responding appropriately... You must desist from the

policy of restraint... I am sorry to say that it is seen as moral bankruptcy and weakness on the part of the nation's leadership." *Haaretz*, November 3, 2000.

18 See Reuven Erlich, *Israeli Involvement with Agreements, Settlements and Understandings on the Lebanese Arena in the Last 30 Years: Background, Data, Lessons and Conclusions*, Tel Aviv, Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center (IICC), 2006.

19 See statement by Maj. Gen. (ret.) Rehavam Zeevi (Moledet) in the Knesset: "When Hizbollah operatives renewed their terrorist attacks in the security zone, the IDF barely reacted, at the government's request, so as not to kill the joy of the understandings. Operation Accountability could have stopped the attacks also in the security zone, but the government was overjoyed by achieving the limited understandings and did not demand that these be applied also to this sector...To a great extent, Syria is responsible for Hizbollah operations. It dominates the organization's supply routes and has the ability to rein it in. But Syria enjoys the fact that Hizbollah continues to attack Israel, to destroy and to maim. And the Jews continue to come to peace talks with them." Speech in the Knesset, August 30, 1993.

20 "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," was published in *Foreign Affairs* and signed by X. On February 22, 1946, George Kennan, deputy head of the diplomatic mission stationed in the USSR, sent a telegram to the Secretary of State in Washington, D.C., which was called "The Long Telegram."

21 John L. Gaddish, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 57-59.

22 George Kennan in an interview with Albert Eisele in *The Hill*, September 26, 2002.

23 Partial report of the Winograd Commission (2207), p. 47.

24 David Ben-Gurion, *Singularity and Destiny* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot Publications, 3rd ed., 1980), p. 142.

25 Minister of Foreign Affairs Shimon Peres, after the signing of the Taba Agreement: "The personal security of Israel will be ensured by a strategic map in which no foreign army will set up camp, from the Jordan River in the east to the Mediterranean in the west, and from the Mediterranean in the west to the border with the Gaza Strip. The only army that will be deployed in this area and in its military sites is the Israel Defense Forces. The IDF will be responsible for the safety and security of the State of Israel, for the safety and security of Israelis, for the safety and security of Israeli settlements, and it will be as interested in fighting terrorism as in fighting the other side." Speech in the Knesset, October 23, 1995.

26 Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, announcing to the government the Declaration of Principles about the interim arrangements of an autonomous entity and the exchange of letters with the PLO: "If and when peace comes, the peace we want so much, our lives will change from one extreme to the

other. We will no longer have to live by the sword… After one hundred years of violence and terrorism, after wars and suffering, we have a great opportunity today to open a new chapter in the history of the State of Israel, there is hope that we can stop the tears. New horizons are opening up for us in the economy, in society, but above all I want to say to you: this is the victory of Zionism, a Zionism that earns the recognition of its most sworn and bitter enemies." Speech in the Knesset, September 21, 1993.

27 Hassan Nasrallah in a speech made on May 26, 2000, in Bint Jbail, after Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon.

28 See final report of Winograd Commission, 2008, Chapter 7, p. 254, as well as statement by Brig. Gen. Itay Brun in the summary of the Second Latrun Conference on the topic of "The Ground Maneuver in the 21st Century," September 16-17, 2008, pp. 37-40.

29 Lt. Gen. (ret.) Dan Shomron: "Once upon a time you clubbed your enemy over the head and that had a definite effect. The State of Israel must win. And here – we didn't. Victory was not presented as an objective in this war. They didn't tell the IDF that it had to win, but only that it had to generate 'effects,'" *Yediot Ahronot*, January 5, 2007.

30 The method of the swarming attack entails the advance of many small, decentralized forces, and is contrary to the principle of gathering and concentrating force at a single point. See Winograd Commission Report (2008), Chapter 8, p. 318.

31 The Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee report on the subject of lessons generated by the Second Lebanon War, December 2007, p. 78.

32 See Yehuda Wegman, "The Limited Engagement: A Failure," in Haggai Golan and Shaul Shay, eds., *The Limited Engagement* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publications, 2004), pp. 252-53: "In tandem with destroying the infrastructure of the existing doctrine and basic concepts, senior IDF ranks were busy importing a new language of military concepts that was accompanied by a new system-wide situation assessment. These concepts were festive, replete with high-sounding words and inspirational ideas."

33 See statement by Maj. Gen. (ret.) Yoram Yair: "I don't understand the syntax of the Hebrew. You're talking about a method of fighting but not about the objective you have to reach. On the basis of this, no commander in the field can understand what you want from him," *Yediot Ahronot*, October 13, 2006.

34 Absorbent tissue is a military unit operating in the snailing configuration (see below).

35 "Maneuver of opinion is the support for or undermining of the snapshot of the current and future reality as seen by leaders, segments of society, or individuals, in order to change an understanding, assessment, position, or decision. A maneuver of opinion is generated by preplanned friction producing consciousness and physical configurations strengthening one another; in order to maneuver the enemy's opinion, it is necessary to

increase the friction of consciousness." Nir Shmuel, "The Nature of the Limited Engagement," in *The Limited Engagement*, p. 26.

36 Snailing consists of reducing the surface area of the sphere of possible contact with a terrorist cell in order to reduce the number of targets exposed to risk.

37 The Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee report on the subject of lessons generated by the Second Lebanon War, December 2007, p. 81.

38 Col. Tamir Yedai, Commander of the Golani Brigade: "I'm a Golani guy, I don't understand cheeps and chirps." Quoted in Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *The Spider's Web* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2008), p. 246.

39 See Gabriel Siboni, "Command in the IDF," *Strategic Assessment* 9, no. 4 (2007): 72, http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=47.

40 Amir Peretz: "I think that the atmosphere in the government was that there was unanimity of opinion that it was necessary to take significant action and respond unequivocally. I don't think that even those who were asking questions doubted the need for taking action and executing it." Testimony of Minister of Defense Amir Peretz before the Winograd Commission, pp. 33-34.

41 Prime Minister Ehud Olmert at a graduation ceremony at the National Defense College on August 1, 2006, at the height of the war: "Twenty-one days ago, Hizbollah, a terrorist organization, was considered to be the dread of many who saw it gather strength from year to year, gather the most modern, sophisticated weapons in the world, train its fighters, organize them, take over a nation and prepare to serve as the long arm of the strategic battle of other nations, in particular Syria and Iran... Twenty-one days later this threat will never again be what it once was."

42 Hassan Nasrallah on Lebanese television on August 27, 2006: "Had I thought that taking soldiers hostage would result in such a war, even at a 1 percent probability, I would definitely not have ordered it."

43 "The lack of understanding and the failure to fully internalize the fact that the fighting in Lebanon was a war in every sense of the word was a crucial component in the flawed results of the use of military force in the war." See Winograd Commission Report (2008), p. 408.

Naval Firepower and its Role in Land Battles

Gideon Raz

"The air force alone cannot do it any longer…Israel's navy must make the sea a part of its strategic depth." [1]

Out of the Box

Inside the crowded geo-strategic box that is Israel's domain, the western sector is the only open border and is thus both the Achilles' heel of Israel enemies and a great opportunity for the IDF. At the same time, technological improvements on the enemy's side and its growing arsenal of a wide range of rockets and missiles are a severe threat to Israel in every land battle. In the sea domain the navy enjoys many advantages: it is a constant presence in the arena, it is difficult to track, its activity is possible in almost every weather condition, the sea medium affords ways to avoid detection, it operates beyond range of enemy's weapons (which is not the case for most air force and ground troops bases), and it allows a large scope of armaments on a single naval platform.

The IDF must build its naval force to take advantage of this situation. Indeed, other militaries have already acted on this insight. The American navy, for example, is making ever-growing use of sea-to-surface missiles (such as the Tomahawk and similar weapons), complementing the activity of its land and air forces. By contrast, the IDF has yet to realize the full potential of incorporating naval force as an integral part of land battles using accurate long range missiles fired in salvoes from the sea.

Over the last decade, several dramatic changes in the nature of war have taken place in the Middle East, requiring thought, analysis, and

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lesson-learning – i.e., a different implementation of operational action. First, precision ordnance technology has become more available and relatively affordable. Second, technological advances allow excellent fire control and spotting. Third, the enemy, equipped with unprecedented numbers and types of missiles and rockets, threatens the depth of Israel. Fourth, naval platforms have the potential to launch hundreds of guided missiles into the depth of enemy territory. In addition, in recent years broader questions regarding a significant change in the navy's role in Israel's security structure have been discussed.[2] An in-depth examination of the subject is beyond the scope of this essay.

The Threat

In the past, the IDF readiness was for a scenario of attack against Israel by enemy forces maneuvering in order to conquer territory. Currently, rocket and missile fire are a core component of the enemy's threat equations. Consequently, Israel cannot continue to defend itself in the same way in its current borders, especially given that technological advances narrow the edge the IDF has always enjoyed, and given the reference scenarios with regard to the next war. The State of Israel, with its locales, bases, and infrastructures, is all within enemy range. The trend suggests that the enemy's weapon ranges will only continue to grow, their accuracy will improve, and their destructiveness will increase.

The Sea as Strategic Depth

In a lecture dealing with Israel's strategic depth, Dr. Yuval Steinitz[3] claimed that for the first time since 1967 technological developments have allowed Arab militaries to circumvent their aerial inferiority and harm Israel's military infrastructures and strategic junctures (via guerilla and missile fire). Naval platforms, which are mobile, carry large numbers of cruise missiles (and other precision arms), and supported by satellite capabilities, can play a central role in offense missions. In terms of the capacity to carry weapons, the naval platform is equal to many fighter jets. While naval platforms too are vulnerable, the naval battlefield has become sophisticated and endowed with technology in ways that strengthen Israel's superior capabilities. The solution proposed herein lies not in transferring offense capabilities from the air force to the navy, rather in using the two in a complementary, successful fashion.

The Shore Cannot Be Sunk: An Historical Overview

Historically, what typifies the duel between naval attack vessels and costal defenses is the inherently inferior position of the naval force. Unlike a ship, the coast as a platform cannot be sunk, and its firepower, stamina, and land-based arms, quantitatively and in terms of precision, could outstrip anything found on ships. This force ratio was true in the past when both sides had access only to cannons. The introduction of long range, high precision weapon systems, however, has greatly altered this equation.

Until recently, the utility of attacking ground targets from the sea was limited, primarily because of the limited weight of the projectile in the shell. Such utility is certainly less valuable than attacking the same targets from the air or land, especially when taking into account the risk involved in vessels making their way to an appropriate spot where to launch an attack.

During the World Wars, classic naval fire assistance was that of battleships and large cruisers spitting heavy fire and wreaking massive destruction on shore. Today, because of changes in the vessel structure, there is a need for alternative weapons to the heavy cannons. The trend is towards armament based on high precision missiles and rockets, and a reduced need for great fire volume. Technological developments in rockets and missiles and the changes in military vessel structure on the one hand, and changes in surface defenses on the other, require a reexamination of the question of attacking enemy targets on the shore and farther inland using naval forces.

Standoff Fire Using High Precision Arms

Standoff fire[4] is a method of using arms to realize control of the operational area from a distance; it involves the identification of solutions for maximal damage to the enemy from a distance, using advanced weapons and technology. This approach has a substantive advantage in everything linked to the ability to operate in areas where it is difficult to carry out large scale ground maneuver.

Attrition ratios on the battlefield of the future and the drive to maximize the potential of current weapon systems have prompted the IDF to adopt a fighting doctrine based on weapons that are able to address the attrition problems of the future battleground. These arms,

including precision weapons, are supposed to damage the enemy's weapon systems located deep in its territory. The technologies available in the field of precision armaments enable the development of weapon systems capable of attaining these operational goals.

Precision Fire from the Sea: The American Navy

Non-classified data about developments in the American navy present a similar picture to the one in the IDF of emerging needs of fire assistance from the sea. Surveys of American journals highlight the navy's transition from its historical function of controlling the sea to one of much greater support for and impact on battles on land. Owen Cote[5] stresses that the technological improvements in long range precision armaments are occurring rapidly. The bulk of the mission of damaging enemy targets deep in enemy territory is borne by the air force. Yet because of the density and improvements in surface-to-air missiles, this is becoming increasingly difficult, requires more resources, and is liable to cause substantial damage to the air force. Today, the surface-to-air missile threat is handled with massive use of the Tomahawk cruise missiles. The American navy has come to the conclusion that there is a demand for long range precision weapons from naval platforms, especially in light of technological developments in the fields relevant to that type of weapon.

In another essay, Todd Morgan also claims that long range precision arms on naval platforms can generate valuable support to land forces.[6] The mobility of naval vessels and their ability to fire from the sea at any time of day or night and in virtually any kind of weather, either in planned operations or in response to immediate calls by ground forces, are highly significant components in managing a land campaign. Firepower from the sea could in many cases cancel or reduce the need for complex operations of air and ground forces.

Israeli Fire from the Sea: An Overview

Sea-to-surface shelling operations have played an important role in naval history, and widespread use of naval artillery to bombard shore targets has occurred throughout the world. Noteworthy in the Middle East context are the use of the Egyptian destroyer *Ibrahim al-Awal* in the Sinai Campaign; the shelling of the Egyptian and Syrian shores by Israeli naval vessels during the Yom Kippur War; the shelling of terrorist targets in

Lebanon during Operation Litani and Operation Peace for the Galilee; the shelling of terrorist targets in Beirut by the *USS New Jersey*; and most recently, the shelling by the Israeli navy of Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip during Operation Cast Lead.

In the Yom Kippur War, Israeli navy missile boats shelled the Syrian shore.[7] In addition to neutralizing the Syrian navy, the Israeli navy had a twofold purpose: to damage strategic installations and to force the Syrian army into defending the coast line. Fuel storage containers were damaged, affecting fuel and electricity supply throughout Syria. Israeli missile boats forced the Syrians to allocate armored forces and artillery to strengthen shore defenses at the expense of units on the Golan Heights front. The war also saw the introduction of the Gabriel sea-to-sea missile, fired on Egyptian shore targets, as well as massive bombardments of fortifications, radar stations, and coastal batteries. The targets were located all along the Egyptian coast up to the Libyan border.

As part of the fighting against terrorist organizations on the Lebanese coast line, much use was made of naval bombardments because of the proximity of terrorist bases to the coast. This activity, which started in the mid 1970s, peaked during Operation Peace for the Galilee and continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Some of these shore operations involved the Gabriel missile. Missile boats usually worked alongside land forces, as relatively small 76 mm naval cannons were used for shelling. However, the rapid rate of fire compensated for the small size; Operation Litani and the siege of Beirut are good examples.

Fire at Land Targets from the Sea

Should the IDF act to give the navy the capabilities to use precision weapons from the sea as an integral part of the land campaign? The subject invites the following questions: What can be learned from the navy's experience to date in the field of naval fire support? What technical options are available or expected in this field that could possibly be integrated into the navy's existing naval platforms? Would the provision of naval support fire be consonant with the force's overall purpose and missions? Finally, does the IDF have a requirement for significant naval surface fire capabilities, in addition to standoff fire capabilities from the air and ground?

Today, in order to damage targets deep in enemy territory it is necessary in most cases to use the air force. But is that, in fact, the most efficient way to operate? Could a long range ballistic missile not provide a faster, more efficient, and more economical response at a much lower risk, given that Israel's airfields would likely be under enemy missile and rocket threat, while high quality enemy targets would be defended by dense surface-to-air missile systems? The enemy's widespread use of rockets and missiles creates a new situation for the ground crews at air force bases.

Some argue the need[8] to internalize at the earliest possible opportunity the significance of improved precision long range missiles, used either intelligently by the IDF or by the enemy. It is assumed that the enemy rather than the IDF begins hostilities, and then the first hours and days require the air force to make preventive steps a priority instead of diverting resources to attacking targets deep in enemy territory. With today's technology, the missiles in many cases can substitute for planes, and thus it is necessary to plan and operate the order of battle accordingly.

When hostilities break out – whether initiated by Israel or its enemies – the air force will likely be burdened with missions to ensure aerial superiority and neutralize immediate threats to IDF troops and the civilian rear. At the same time, the navy is likely to find itself in a convenient position for operating effective fire at selected targets along the shore and deep in enemy territory. The enemy will presumably have capabilities of firing salvoes of rockets and missiles liable to paralyze the ground systems, airfields, and logistical systems for certain periods of time.

Attacking ground targets from the sea[9] is important given that Israel's stationary systems are all within rage of enemy rockets and missiles. This new reality requires the IDF's firebases to be decentralized, and it is likewise important to create another firebase operating outside the enemy's weapon range. Here the navy can assume a significant role. The naval force would enhance the inventory of weapons that would be possible to operate at any given time against targets in enemy territory. In addition, the technology available in Israel and elsewhere allows the arming of the navy's platforms with appropriate weapon systems. This was not the case in the past.

The sea zone enables operating[10] from it with more freedom, as it is less threatened in comparison to the air force and allows the launching of precision weapons at long ranges. In general, naval platforms can carry more weapons, are harder to locate, and can serve to launch special operations in order to hit targets, such as command and control centers and surface-to-surface missiles. The sea theater has advantages in long range operations,[11] in changing weather conditions, and in conditions of political uncertainty. It provides access to valuable targets (strategic and tactical), civilian targets (national, economic, and government infrastructures), and military targets, including those difficult for the air and ground forces to reach. The decisive advantage lies in range, the amount of time the naval vessels can remain in the area, the size of force that can be employed, the flexibility in orchestrating the action, and the ability to remain concealed.

Discussions in the IDF[12] have stressed the need to prepare standoff fire in tackling enemy fire at airfields that would interfere with aerial activity. In addition, in the winter months aerial activity would likely be curtailed for prolonged periods because of weather conditions (though the Israeli air force might question this conclusion). Therefore, it is necessary to consider standoff fire in three dimensions: in the air, on land, and at sea. The assessment is that Hizbollah is preparing to launch some thousand rockets per day. In light of this threat, the IDF must prepare to use fire, both statistical and precision in tandem, depending on the type of targets and their surroundings. There are even individuals in the operations division at the General Staff[13] who see the inherent advantages in the navy acquiring the ability to operate fire from the sea as a component of land battles. There is an advantage to ships already at sea that are ready to operate, without having to launch them for specific missions, while these ships are themselves not under threat, unlike troops stationed on land. In addition, the naval force is in a position to arrive in low signature at the location of attack. However, the incorporation of the air force in land battles is well established, works effectively with tried and tested procedures, and therefore the IDF does not naturally seek alternative or additional ways to operate. The stance of the air force is that it is capable of handling the problem of high trajectory fire aimed at its bases, and that the force is obligated to meet all its missions despite the threats to its bases. Today in military confrontations most of the fire volume is in the

form of standoff fire.[14] The relevant battle takes place on the ground, and the sea medium should be viewed as a continuation of the same battle on the ground.

Technological Feasibility of Naval Fire Support

While ordnance technology allows the operation of some existing standoff fire systems currently used on land to be used from the sea as well, the sea is clearly an environment that poses fewer risks. Although all the ordnance already in service in the IDF and those in various stages of development in the defense industry cannot be listed, there is a set of missiles and drones that could be modified for effective use from the decks of various naval platforms of varying sizes – from small boats and light ships used by naval commandos and small coastal patrol boats to missile boats and ships used by the navy. The decks of naval vessels can serve as platforms for takeoff of various remote controlled vehicles, drones, and different "loiter" type as well as "shoot and forget" missiles.

The navy has the technical capability[15] to install launching infrastructures both on missile boats and auxiliary vessels. Installation on auxiliary vessels is simpler, requires fewer resources, and can be effective with relatively little warning. To ensure that the naval force has an impact on a land battle, it must prepare an infrastructure on naval platforms with the capability of launching 200-300 guided precision weapons every 24 hours aimed at planned as well as random targets in enemy territory. Such scope of ready-to-fire missiles requires coordination with auxiliary vessels having appropriate deck space in addition to special installations on the missile boats themselves.

In contrast to installations on missile boats, which would be permanent fixtures, installations on auxiliary vessels would be based on kits (containers) that could be loaded onto ships and transported fairly simply and quickly, and at relatively low cost. The kit would include the weapon system container with command and control equipment and a firing console (for communicating with the missile until its launch). The other containers would contain the missiles in launchers. The vessel's infrastructure would allow repeated loading of missiles on launchers according to need. A vessel that has launched all of its missiles would return to port or to an anchorage for reloading.

The Development of Long Range Precision Armaments

When the objective is the destruction of specific targets, precision is the most important component. The dimensions of the missile are a function of the weight of the warheads and the cruising range. The more that precision of the hit is improved, the more it will be possible to reduce the weight of the warhead. Precision weapon systems[16] may greatly reduce the need for massive shelling in order to achieve the desired effect on land. The reduction in a massive fire volume hinges on the ability to achieve the required result by launching one or two precision missiles. In addition, by increasing launch range, it is possible to increase both the numbers and the types of naval platforms likely to provide bases for the launch of precision weapons.

Long range precision weapons development is in its early phase and is far from being fully mature. Thus, this type of ordnance will likely continue to develop and in time its costs will also drop. This obligates decision makers already to adopt and direct the capabilities inherent in the technology and to incorporate naval launch capabilities to destroy targets deep in enemy territory from a distance. The investment at this early stage of incorporating the technology will increase the return relative to investment with the development of various types of long range precision ordnance. The cost of investment in improving ordnance is measured relative to the precision achieved: as precision improves the cost drops. The most significant component in improving precision is the GPS. The precision of impact within a radius of 2-3 meters is a reasonable assessment.

The price of a missile is relatively higher than an artillery salvo. Therefore this type of fighting is suitable for high quality pinpoint targets rather than for covering large areas with fire. Missile fire can be more effective against pinpoint targets; impact is usually precise, compensating for the relatively small warhead. Launching of the newly developed missiles can be carried out from long distances. At present, missiles and rockets play a larger role, thanks to both improved precision and range and because they are more adaptable to the types of naval platforms in service.

The American navy is testing types of missiles to find a substitute for cannons and provide the response for the need to attack targets on land with fire from the sea. Among other missiles, the navy is looking at

MLRS and HIMARS rockets, systems capable of engaging the enemy at ranges of up to 85 km. It seems that the following systems are the leading contenders: the Tomahawk (SLAM), the Standard missile (sea-to-air), and the ATACM (Army Tactical Missile) rocket to be fitted with GPS systems for improved precision. The navy has repeatedly postponed making a decision about the type of weapons intended to provide sea-to-shore fire because of the ongoing debates on the type of vessels to use for littoral activity.

In May 1999 the commander of the US navy[17] decided to modify the missiles in navy inventory – in terms of range, precision, and damage effect – to attack targets on land. He preferred this approach to attempting to modify the army's weapons for use at sea. Technology available in the world and in Israel allows arming the navy ORBAT with appropriate systems, which was impossible in the past.[18] The Israeli navy notes that there are no technological difficulties in retrofitting ground rocket and missile systems for use on naval platforms.

The technological challenges in adjusting launchers for use at sea lie in the firing equation of the launchers platforms (to handle the problem of the ships' rolling); good continuous communication with the missile (of the hovering type); and inter-force command and control systems. The ranges of existing missiles are sufficient so that air force involvement is not a condition of operation to extend the IDF's reach into the depth of enemy formations. There is an availability of guided precision weapon systems of ranges suitable to operational requirements. It is important to stress that the physical dimensions allow installation on platforms already in service in the Israeli navy.

Command and Control

Standoff fire in general and from the sea in particular requires the use of ground forces, the air force, and the navy, in locations sometimes quite distant from one another, with the need for complete coordination and reference to a joint and fully updated database. Command and control systems have become more centralized. In order to create a relative advantage it is necessary to maximize the capabilities of fighting systems. Doing so requires coordination and synchronization among all the bodies operating in the campaign and allocation of resources based on the battlefield status.

Technological developments grant the capability of operating effective weapon systems and the ability to cooperate[19] with systems of different bodies by using advanced planning and coordination systems at different fire support bases. Adopting multi-force integrated systems would allow the force at sea to operate smoothly in tandem with the ground troops and assist with fire immediately upon request. A necessary condition is that the naval force be thoroughly networked in intelligence and command and control systems with the ground forces and the air force.

The ability to operate precision fire and launch precision ordnance from the sea at short notice should be attained. The assumption is that in many cases there will be vessels in locations capable of reaching selected targets at a given time that are preferable operationally to the locations offered by the fire support bases on land or from the air. The units of the naval force must be networked (computerized) with the battlefield on land. The communications systems must provide a reliable solution for the required ranges among the various bodies operating on the battlefield, on land, in the air, and at sea. The naval force must be equipped with the required planning and coordinating means that will insure it the ability to operate the missile systems effectively against the selected land targets. Inter-system coordination and the creation of a joint tactical picture are crucial to efficient support by naval surface fire. In future operations, fire support from the sea will involve a range of weapon systems and planning and guidance systems that will be integrated in the systemic fire-support coordination system. The objective is to provide the naval force the capabilities required for close fire support, preventive fire, and depth fire in the integrated land battle. The naval force would be incorporated into an integrated system of planning and coordinating fire support. The development of such an integrated system would ensure the capabilities required to provide fire support to units fighting on the battlefield on land in the twenty-first century.

The IDF's fire support effort must be based on a combination of the capabilities scattered among the various forces and outfits. The effort will derive from the objective of each entity. This requires a common language, coordination, command, control, communication, timing, and data accessibility. The navy must be prepared to be incorporated into fire support centers used at various levels − General Staff, regional command, and division. The requirements of the naval attack forces are:

a. Maintaining weapon launching means suited to the various types of targets
b. Adjusting ordnance to types of targets
c. Ability to operate in every kind of weather
d. Ability to operate with a minimum of preconditions
e. Ability to operate soon after identification of a target

Regarding command and control:

a. Determining attack plan – method and timing
b. Receiving the information required by the naval force
c. Receiving results of attack and its analysis

Integrating Naval Participation in Land Battles

Utilizing the naval force embodies the power to influence the land operations. The weapon systems on the decks of the naval platforms must have the capability to apply fire towards targets on land at long ranges and with great precision. A naval force is built to remain in place for extended periods. It must be an efficient center for continuous and current intelligence gathering and be prepared to apply fire on short notice. The navy must be built to win the naval campaign and must be prepared to be integrated into the operations on the ground, to affect events on shore and deep in enemy territory. This means that the navy must understand the doctrines of the ground forces. The operational philosophy must be adapted to technological developments, to systems developments, and their introduction into service. The navy must thus promote inter-force cooperation that leads to expanding its missions to include the participation in ground battles. Therefore, the navy must work to adapt missiles and other guided precision arms in various stages of development and integration in the IDF for the employment at sea.

The objective of the naval battle lies on land. The naval battle does not exist for its own sake. The primary goal of navies is to achieve superiority at sea in order to support ground troops, by providing fire support from the sea and by executing naval outflanking maneuvers. History shows that the great naval battles were linked to events on land, often directly. In our time, the direct effect of the naval force is manifested by sea-to-surface fire via the launching of various rockets; aerial attacks from naval carriers and naval gunnery; and landing forces of varying sizes.

The primary requirement of a navy has always been to ensure the control of the sea (in the relevant arena). Today, emphasis lies in the tactical coordination between the navy and the activity of the ground troops. The answers to the question of how the naval force can overpower the shore fort (i.e., the enemy's gunnery and shore-to-sea missiles) is to attack from a direction or a range that lies outside the scope of the shore fort's capability. It is preferable to neutralize the power center of the fort early on by attacking and neutralizing the detection and control systems. The mobility of naval vessels, in addition to the capability to fire from the sea at any hour of the day or night and in virtually every kind of weather, either as preplanned or on request by ground forces, is a highly significant component in managing the ground campaign.

The existence of firepower from the sea often cancels or reduces the need to carry out complex air and ground operations. When a naval force acts independently it has the capability of damaging concentrations of enemy forces, logistical centers, and control facilities. Precision fire from the sea can greatly reduce the cost of operational patterns in use today, which consist almost entirely of attacking from the air. Precision fire from the sea should not be viewed as a replacement of air force activity, but the navy does have the capability of providing a continuous solution for all times of the day when the air force is engaged in other activities or with regard to targets densely protected by surface-to-air missile systems.

The tension[20] between the need to maintain a navy that is capable of achieving and maintaining control of the naval arena and a navy with capabilities of influencing ground battles does not require a concession of either goal. Adopting long range precision ordnance systems to be used against targets on land will altogether prevent a conflict between the two goals. The new capabilities can be applied in two different ways: one, expanding the contribution of the naval force as part of the effort of the ground campaign; two, reducing the number of vessels to participate in the ground effort – thanks to the new weapons – in order to steer more resources towards controlling the naval arena. The navy must maintain continuous naval presence to ensure its control of the arena. By virtue of this presence it has the potential ability to operate and influence the ground campaign in its operational environment.

There are those in the IDF who claim that the navy must retain its primary function – obtaining naval superiority in order to defend the

country from the sea and to ensure commerce to and from the state – and that it has no business extending its purview to include the land operations. The counterargument is that the navy must promote inter-force cooperation that expands its missions related to the ground campaign and that the force must act vigorously to adapt guided precision ordnance in stages of development and integration into the IDF to be employed from the sea.

The fighting philosophy of the navy is offensive.[21] Gaining sea-to-land fire capability serves this philosophy and expands the current deterrence that the naval force creates. The navy must strive for a situation whereby as soon as hostilities break out, it will be able to destroy enemy systems affecting its operations, including radar stations, coastal batteries, and shore-to-sea missiles.

Conclusion

The IDF's major opportunity on Israel's western border is also a major threat. Unless the IDF succeeds in capitalizing on its naval superiority and the open border on the west, it will have to handle more difficult conditions in the arena where it will not enjoy the advantages it once had. The geo-strategic box in which Israel is located will in all probability grow more constraining, and the IDF will have to look at the future prospects and act accordingly. The trends of the future are clear:

a. Israel's space will only grow smaller and the Arab urban sprawl will grow and consolidate.

b. Technological improvements in anti-aircraft systems and their density are liable to decrease the air force's room to act.

c. The Arabs have identified Israel's weakness (the rear and infrastructures) and will increase their numbers of missiles and rockets.

d. Bases and strategic sites will be increasingly exposed to high trajectory precision weapons.

e. Technology will allow easier, more accurate control of lethal guided ordnance.

f. Technology and naval platforms allow massive launching of precision ordnance with ever-growing effectiveness.

This reality requires decision makers to adopt and steer the abilities inherent in the technology and already integrate sea launching

capabilities to destroy targets deep in enemy territory. The investment at this early stage of integrating the technology will increase the return relative to investment with the development of various types of long range precision ordnance. The naval medium enjoys many advantages and Israeli technological superiority, and it must therefore be integrated with the other fighting forces. The stress is on integration rather than on replacement of aerial and ground capabilities. Using the potential of naval fire support capabilities would allow ground forces and the air force to operate more freely in the first critical hours and days of the next campaign. Ignoring this insight is liable to result in a future catastrophic blunder in the country's national security doctrine.

Below is a paragraph from Alfred Mahan's book, which seems particularly apt in the context of this essay:

> The seaman who carefully studies the causes of success or failure...will observe also that changes of tactics have not only taken place *after* changes in weapons, which necessarily is the case, but that the interval between such changes has been unduly long...Changes in tactics have to overcome the inertia of a conservative class; but it is a great evil. It can be remedied only by a candid recognition of each change... History shows that it is vain to hope that military men generally will be at the pains to do this, but that the one who does will go into battle with a great advantage — a lesson in itself of no mean value.[22]

In addition to the main task of the naval force – ensuring the nation's sovereignty at sea – the navy must be ready to integrate at a moment's notice in any land campaign. Such use of the naval force means applying fire from the sea and outflanking the enemy and landing troops, and otherwise assisting ground forces from the sea. It appears that the Israeli navy[23] intends to adopt this approach and adapt the missiles and precision ordnance that the IDF is integrating in naval platforms. These platforms are versatile and missiles boats are capable of carrying certain missiles in sufficient quantities for specific missions. In addition, it is possible to adapt large vessels to this task and outfit them with large amounts of guided precision ordnance of various types.

At this stage let us return to the question of whether there is any point in discussing naval fire at enemy targets on land. It is necessary to take into account the answers to the following questions:

a. What can be learned from the navy's experience of fire support? We know that since the introduction of missile boats into service in the 1970s, the navy demonstrated its capability in the 1973 Yom Kippur War and in fighting against terrorists of applying effective naval surface fire against enemy targets on shore, taking into account the limitations of the weapon systems available at the time.

b. What are the existing technical options and those we can expect to see in the future? We know that every type of naval platform in service today, as well as those planned for the future, can be outfitted without any particular technical difficulty with the range of missiles and guided precision ordnance currently in IDF use and due for introduction in the future.

c. Would fire from the sea be in line with the general purpose and missions of the navy? The answer is unequivocal: the mission of the navy is to control the naval arena in order to operate from it towards the land arena, in coordination with the air and ground forces, demonstrating its advantage at the sea arena.

d. Does the IDF need significant capabilities in naval surface fire in addition to its existing standoff fire capabilities from the air and on land? The answer to this question too is clear: the naval medium is the only one that is not under threat or within range of enemy ordnance, and it is possible to operate from it against enemy targets – whether previously selected or occasional – along the coast and deep in enemy territory with greater freedom.

On the basis of existing and anticipated data, the IDF and the defense establishment should engage in focused efforts at the staff level to examine the option of using fire from the sea, run the required simulations, tests, and exercises, and at a later stage include the navy in the command and control systems of fire support centers at the various levels. There is no reason to postpone this discussion. [24] The solution, which is in fact already in existence in the form of loading launching vehicles onto the decks of naval vessels, should be adopted now.

Notes

1   Israel Tal, *National Security: The Few Against the Many* (Dvir, 1996), p. 223.
2   MK Yuval Steinitz, "The Sea as Israel's Strategic Depth," lecture at the Herzliya Conference, December 2001.
3   Ibid.

4 Gabriel Siboni, "High Trajectory Weapons and Guerilla Warfare: Adjusting Fundamental Security Concepts," *Strategic* Asses*sment* 10, no. 4 (2008): 12-18, http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=1650.

5 Owen R. Cote, Jr., "Precision Strike from the Sea: New Missions for a New Navy," M.I.T. Security Studies Program's Second Annual Levering Smith Conference, December 8, 1997.

6 Lieutenant Commander Clarence Todd Morgan, "Naval Surface Fire Support: How Can We Get There from Here?" http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1993/MCT.htm.

7 Moshe Imber, *Fleet 3: Missile Boats in the Israeli Navy* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Press, 2005), pp. 38-39, 67-69.

8 Author's interview with Maj. Gen. (ret.) Herzl Bodinger, formerly commander of the Israel Air Force, March 15, 2010.

9 Author's interview with Maj. Gen. Eliezer ("Cheney") Marom, Israel Navy commander, February 18, 2010.

10 Author's interview with Brig. Gen. Rani Ben-Yehuda, Chief of Naval Staff, February 14, 2010.

11 Reuven Pedatzur and David Schick, "The Naval Force and its Contribution to Israeli Deterrence," Ariel Center for Policy Studies, May 2002, pp. 28-31.

12 Author's interview with Maj. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot, GOC Northern Command, March 15, 2010.

13 Author's interview with Brig. Gen. Eli Reiter, brigade head, Doctrine and Training, March 15, 2010.

14 Author's interview with Maj. Gen. (ret.) Yedidya Yaari, former Israeli navy commander, March 17, 2010.

15 Author's interview with Col. Sasi Hodeda of the Israel Navy, March 9, 2010.

16 Cote, "Precision Strike from the Sea."

17 U.S. General Office Report, "Naval Surface Fire Support Plans and Costs," 1999.

18 Author's interview with Brig. Rani Ben-Yehuda, Chief of Naval Staff, February 14, 2010.

19 O. Kelly Blosser, "Naval Surface Fire and the Land Battle," *Field Artillery Journal* (September-October 1996): 46-50, http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/ship/weaps/docs/tart3prnt.html.

20 Cote, "Precision Strike from the Sea."

21 Author's interview with Col. Sasi Hodeda of the Israel Navy, March 9, 2010.

22 Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 19660-1783* (Boston: Little Brown, 1890), pp. 9-10. See http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13529/13529-h/13529-h.htm#Page_35.

23 Author's interview with Maj. Gen. Eliezer ("Cheney") Marom, Israel Navy commander, February 18, 2010.

24 "Naval Rockets Again," *Jane's International Defence Review*, July 1995.

In Search of the Holy Grail:
Can Military Achievements be Translated into Political Gains?

Ron Tira

Among military thinkers it is axiomatic that the purpose of utilizing military force is to realize a political end.[1] Clausewitz wrote that the goal of war is to impose one's political will on the enemy,[2] and for Liddell Hart the goal is "a better state of peace."[3] Indeed, according to American military doctrine the finish line of a military campaign is reached when the president no longer needs military tools in order to realize national goals.[4] From the national-strategic end state defined by the president, the military commander deduces the military end state required in order to realize the national end state.[5] Still, the question remains: how is the compatibility between the military action and the desired political result achieved?

The focus on military and political end states suggests that there is a near-scientific formula that enables the engineering of a military end state that will, in a cause and effect relationship of sorts, produce the political end state. Moreover, the term "state" implies a new reality, stable and static. The term "end" indicates that the reality that is achieved is a conclusion to the military and political confrontation and allows for an exit strategy. But is this really the case?

The purpose of this essay is to examine if these concepts and terms apply in Israel's case, or if perhaps, at least in some contexts, more modest formulations are warranted. Two related questions are: Why does Israel's political achievement almost always fall short of its military

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success? And, can Israel find the holy grail of military strategy, i.e., translate a military achievement into a political gain?

This essay will also examine how to better synchronize the military and political worlds. Military doctrines that were developed in recent decades attempt to extend the modus operandi of the senior command staff to the political world, and "educate" statesmen to act on the basis of these professional protocols. According to this approach, the military tries to extract clear directives from the politicians, and it is the military that synchronizes the two worlds. However, showcase examples of finer harmonization between military action and the desired political objective actually entailed the opposite phenomenon. It was not the military that built bridges to the political world; rather it was the statesmen who built bridges to the military world and employed the military on the basis of political dynamics. The initiative and orchestration of war fighting were left in the hands of the politicians who used the military according to their understanding of the political situation.

End State or Ensuing Vector?

Some examples suggest that one can indeed draw a direct link between military action and political achievements. The Falklands War, for instance, produced a clear military end state measured by unambiguous termination criteria. There was almost complete congruence between the military end state (the destruction of the Argentinean army or its ouster from the Islands) and the political end state (the preservation of British sovereignty there). While Great Britain continued to maintain a garrison in the Falklands, final and stable circumstances enabled the withdrawal of most of the British forces from the theater of war and concluded the political dispute that had given rise to the casus belli. "Exit strategy" took on a vivid visual meaning as the British navy sailed northwards for its home ports.

However, such examples are rare, and it is doubtful that they apply to the Israeli reality, where it is more precise to speak of disputes and political processes spanning decades, occasionally supported or interrupted by military outbreaks of various kinds. The Israeli-Egyptian political conflict lasted from 1948, if not earlier, at least until the late 1970s, if not later. During this protracted political confrontation there were from time to time armed outbreaks at varying levels of intensity – sometimes no more

than violent negotiations – that in various ways affected the ensuing political vector.

This effect, however, was not exclusive, and many non-military vectors also exerted their influence. The wars between Israel and Egypt did not actually create either "states" or "ends" but merely supplemented complex political processes that featured multiple actors, most of whom did not even participate in the fighting. More than once, military moves were designed to achieve a political goal vis-à-vis superpowers that were never present on the battlefield. In some of the wars, there was a clear line demarcating the end of the high intensity phase, but the intensity was only lowered or suspended until the next outbreak. For three and a half decades, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) did not depart from the theater of war or disengage from military confrontations, and the "exit strategy" applied to a specific campaign (if that) but not to the conflict as a whole.

Moreover, key processes that shaped the relations between Israel and Egypt included not only the results of military clashes but also – and primarily – key non-military trends, e.g., Egypt's forging of close relations with the USSR in the 1950s and the about-face towards the United States in the 1970s; the Cold War, followed by detente; the transition from the pan-Arab Nasser to the pragmatic Sadat; and Israel's maturation from a pioneer culture to a Western society of affluence. It is impossible to understand the dynamics without understanding the internal political, social, and values-based processes taking place in both Israel and Egypt; the complex fabric of American interests (and the differences between the Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations); Egyptian dynamics with regard to third parties such as Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the Palestinians, the USSR, France, Great Britain, and others; global economic trends (the oil crisis) and economic trends in Israel and Egypt; changes in public opinion; and the struggle over the conflict's narrative.

Therefore, the political result of the Yom Kippur War cannot be understood through a purely military prism; in fact, the political outcome to a great extent contradicted the military end state.[6] In the Yom Kippur War, the Egyptian front was breached by the IDF. Large parts of the Egyptian fielded formations were destroyed, the Third Field Army was encircled, and the IDF took up positions on the roads leading to the Egyptian capital. The naive military analyst would be astounded to

discover that the war led to a process that restored the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, forged a closer American-Egyptian relationship, and significantly enhanced Egypt's political power. The analyst would be even more surprised to learn that the Yom Kippur War spawned the Arab narrative of the conflict while Israel neglected an attempt to establish its own post-1967 narrative. Isn't history written by the winners?

Clearly, then, effective management of the Israeli-Egyptian conflict required an understanding of many variables from different disciplines and the formative influence over these variables.

Multidisciplinary Management

Orchestrating different disciplines so that they interact constructively and form a coherent grand strategy extending over several decades creates two different types of challenges. The first is organizational: what are the working methods and what staffs are required? The second is substantive: how are so many variables studied and influenced?

The organizational challenge requires strong civilian staffs. A particular war and its broader contextual conflict are first and foremost a political phenomenon, but in Israel staffs such as the National Security Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs find it difficult to play their roles in shaping wars and in managing the periods between wars in a way that is coherent with the war effort. The activities of the different government ministries are not necessarily orchestrated on the basis of a consolidated grand strategy; in fact, to a certain extent the military and political strategies are contradictory. For example, the unilateral withdrawals from southern Lebanon and the Gaza Strip contradict the strategy whereby Israel must allow the Arabs gains only as a result of political negotiations rather than from the application of force.[7]

So, for instance, despite the probability that at some point another round of violence with Hizbollah will break out, it is currently hard to point to an Israeli policy with clearly defined objectives and an action plan with regard to the Lebanese problem for the inter-war period. Israel is not involved today in a serious dialogue with its strategic partners over possible termination arrangements of the next war. It is not engaged in laying the political and public opinion groundwork for actions it is likely to take next time. It is not explaining that the scope of damage that rockets will inflict on Israel in the next round of violence will force it to

take drastic action immediately at the outset of the war, and it is not doing enough to prepare the world for the results predicated on the fact that since 2006, Hizbollah has steadily moved most of its force into the hearts of Lebanese towns and villages. Israeli foreign policy is not doing enough to create a new common denominator for international discourse based on the reality that Hizbollah has become a significant stakeholder in the Lebanese state, and that its power-sharing partners have agreed to the organization's continued military buildup such that the government qua government has no authority over the organization. Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not adopted a serious plan to delegitimize Hizbollah and present it as the proxy of foreign masters, as a main conduit for drug smuggling and money laundering, and as an organization that through violence is eradicating every sign of Lebanese democracy. And Israeli civilian agencies are not making a serious effort to adapt the laws of war to the new reality in which a terrorist organization has strategic high intensity ballistic fire capabilities greater than that of most NATO members yet hides its launchers within its own civilian population. After all, war is the continuation of policy and policy is the continuation of war, and the staffs handling all of the disciplines must support one another and act in concert, during both periods of fighting and periods of calm.

The second challenge is more difficult. The combination between the fighting effort and other military, though – to use American jargon[8] – "non-kinetic" efforts, is a well-established practice in the United States, Great Britain, and elsewhere. The Americans work with "influence operations"[9] designed to shape consciousness and conflict narrative. They have also adopted a "whole of government" approach, designed in times of crisis to bring to the fore all national capabilities, not just combatant ones.[10] Thus, the American government tries to affect political and social processes (the "hearts and minds" approach) among the civilian population in the war theater.

However, non-kinetic activities designed to shape the enemy and its consciousness have very high rates of failure. In recent decades, non-kinetic influence operations, from Iraq and Afghanistan to Cuba and Africa, have largely failed. Israel's attempt to "politically engineer" its enemies have also suffered close to a 100 percent failure rate: the Sinai Campaign strengthened Nasser rather than toppling him, the First Lebanon War did not produce a Christian government in Beirut, and the

"Villagers Associations" did not create a convenient, friendly Palestinian partner. It seems that generating effects on consciousness and political and social trends needs more than military organization, methods, resources, planning, and preparation. Moreover, it is doubtful whether the military is the proper organization for initiating and managing activity of a non-military nature.

The Modest Campaign

The recognition that at least in the Israeli context the military campaign will usually not produce a "state" or an "end" and will not enable an exit from the theater of war and the conflict as a whole; the recognition of the difficulty in engineering political results by military means; and the recognition of the disappointing track record of non-kinetic operations to the point of casting doubt on their reliability as tools for achieving defined results in a given time frame, all oblige us to reconsider which war objectives are attainable. Perhaps it is better to address two fairly modest questions: First, what is the minimal military criterion for ending a campaign (and why would achieving that criterion also persuade the enemy to end the fighting)? Second, what is the ensuing political vector that can be enhanced by the military campaign? These are critical questions, even while acknowledging the major uncertainty regarding the effect of military operations on the political world and the fact that the political achievement will probably fall short of a full resolution of the problem. At most, it would produce a limited improvement in follow-on trends.

Before proceeding with this claim, it is important to examine why the objective of Israeli wars during the first decades of the state's existence – the direct removal of the threat – is losing its usefulness. When the reference threat consisted of the invasion by a symmetric enemy, Israel's defense concept held that the threat must be removed by achieving a decision against the enemy's fielded forces. Today, however, the reference scenario is the enemy's attempt to exhaust Israel and generate diplomatic, political, legal, internal, and economic effects on Israel by means of multitudes of rockets and missiles, concealed and of low signature, and fired from within a widening area within the enemy territory. Hundreds of launchers are deployed, often intentionally, amidst enemy civilians. It is virtually impossible to gain a decision against such an elusive yet

saturated deployment, and it is impractical to speak of the direct removal of the threat in the sense of denying the enemy's capability to fire rockets and missiles.

If this is the case, only a few military objectives remain attainable. As an alternative to decision, Israel must be able to generate a concrete threat that would limit the enemy's strategic freedom of action to continue fighting and persuade it to cease the hostilities altogether. Such a threat must be formed rapidly in order to shorten the fighting. At the same time, it is necessary to exact enough of a war toll to have a tri-fold impact: persuading the enemy that embarking on a war is an error of judgment; extending the period the enemy needs for reconstruction and recovery, thereby also extending the inter-war period; and dampening third parties' appetite to fight.

However, the lessons of 2006 and 2008 are that it is essential to attain one more military objective: demonstration of tactical superiority. In order to continue to project national power and end the war from a position of dominance, the IDF must demonstrate anew, in every round of confrontation, field effectiveness and freedom of action to reach any location and strike any target. The IDF must display operational excellence in the execution of a plan, no matter what its contribution to the ensuing political vector. Moreover, tactical success produces political cards – even vis-à-vis allies – and provides the basis for a sturdy political give-and-take, whereas tactical failures or non-successes entail the payment of a political price for exiting the conflict. Thus, tactical excellence has important ripple effects and indirect consequences.

The desired political follow-on vector for ending the fighting must be even more modest. Take Lebanon as an example: in many respects this is a failed state that finds it difficult to impose its sovereignty throughout its own territory and over the armed elements at home within it. The Lebanese military is neither effective nor reliable in executing the will of its government. The government itself is deeply divided and in many senses paralyzed, having a symbolic value only. Foreign forces are free to act there as they please. The root of Lebanon's problem is the absence of a cohesive Lebanese nation, while the various ethnic groups have been engaged in violent struggles for generations. This problem cannot be solved by a military campaign.

No military campaign in Lebanon, whether it includes standoff firepower, or limited ground maneuvers in the south, or even the occupation of Beirut and half of Lebanon for a decade, is capable of changing the basic reality in the Land of the Cedars. Therefore, it is impossible to dismantle Hizbollah as an armed player in the Lebanese system, and a scientific-like plan how to weaken it as a political power through a military campaign is likewise tenuous at best. Israel is not able to resolve the confrontational status of the Shiites inside the Lebanese inter-ethnic arena and is not capable of preventing Iran and Syria from interfering with Lebanese affairs. Neither carrots nor sticks will make the central government strong, effective, and able to impose its sovereignty. It seems impossible to plan a military end state that would produce a reality-changing political end state, allowing for an exit from the political conflict as a whole. Different campaign plans, extensive or limited, will have different military results, but the political outcome will remain similar. Actors' capabilities and behavior within the given system may be affected, but the existing system cannot be dismantled and replaced with one that from Israel's perspective is more convenient. No campaign design is about to alter Lebanon's DNA, at least not at a human, political, diplomatic, and economic price that Israel is prepared to pay.

Thus, the realistic ensuing vector is likely to be either exposing Hizbollah as in service of foreign masters and demonstrating that it is acting in a manner that is detrimental to Lebanon's best interests and threatens the state order; or undermining the ability of Iran and Hizbollah to participate in Lebanon's reconstruction after the war; or dimming the Shiite appetite for further confrontations with Israel. That is it, and nothing more. This sort of campaign, "the modest campaign," would present a yardstick of military and political achievements that is not overly ambitious.

Operation Cast Lead: The Peculiar Campaign

Public opinion deemed Operation Cast Lead a success, though in many ways it repeated the errors of 2006. Once again the political echelon failed to fully play its role in war fighting, and once again there was insufficient synchronization between the military operation and the desired political achievement, which anyhow was not clearly defined at the outset. There was an extended pause following every phase of the operation, and only

then was the next stage decided on, as there was no prior clarification of the comprehensive political and military rationale.

The objective of the operation was to "deal a heavy blow to the Hamas terror organization, to strengthen Israel's deterrence, and to create a better security situation for those living around the Gaza Strip that will be maintained for the long term."[11] The parts of this sentence are vague and do not offer a clear political directive for a military campaign. It is not clear what is meant by "a heavy blow to Hamas"; some contended that this was achieved with the Israel Air Force's opening sorties, while others claimed that the operation never achieved it at all. Worse still, the directive "to create a better security situation" is amorphous and lacks direction, and could conceivably encompass a wide range of political objectives and ways for applying military force.

Indeed, "better security situation" can be translated into at least five different "end states" (or ensuing trends) and various termination mechanisms (or combinations of sorts): one, creation of deterrence vis-à-vis Hamas without an agreement; two, a ceasefire agreement with Hamas; three, an agreement with Egypt providing mechanisms for reducing arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip; four, permanent occupation by Israel of the Gaza-Egypt border zone, thereby reducing the arms smuggling; and five, occupation of the Gaza Strip with ongoing retention of Israel's military freedom of action (akin to the West Bank model after Operation Defensive Shield), possibly in conjunction with allowing the PLO to attempt to regain control of Gaza.

Each one of these political arrangements calls for a different type of force application, unique to that arrangement, as well as a different type of non-military support for the military efforts. Four of the possible alternatives are charted in table 1.

Indeed, ground maneuver would be applied very differently in order to realize the various directives. If the goal is deterrence, the maneuver would resemble a large scale raid; it would not reach any point of stabilization and would not involve a transition to static defense, but would entail a relatively quick, unilateral in-and-out. If, however, the goal is an agreement with Hamas, the ground maneuver would have to be more like a siege, gradually closing in on the governing center of gravity in Gaza City. If the goal is the occupation of the Philadelphi axis, the ground maneuver would have to be directed towards this zone.

Table 1. Alternative End States for Operation Cast Lead

	Deterrence	**An agreement with Hamas**	**A tangible change in reality**	**An agreement with Egypt**
Defining the directive	Deterring Hamas from continuing to fire rockets at Israel	A ceasefire agreement and prevention of arms smuggling	Unilateral stopping of arms smuggling	A mechanism preventing arms smuggling in Egyptian territory with international involvement
A possible campaign theme	Massive damage to Hamas' military, governmental, and economic assets	Gradually escalating pressure on Hamas, ending with a credible threat to topple its regime	Permanent occupation of the Philadelphi axis	Demonstrating the instability of the situation to the international community and Egypt
Duration of the fighting	Brief	Extended	Brief stage of high intensity, waning to low intensity security maintenance	Extended
Termination mechanism	Unilateral ending of the operation	Withdrawal in agreement with Hamas	Waning of fighting and transition to permanent occupation of the zone	Unilateral exit (with regard to Hamas) after an agreement with Egypt
Importance of the diplomatic channel	Low	High	Negative (need to neutralize international intervention)	High
Credibility and stability of arrangement	Moderate	Moderate-low	High	Moderate-low

The political-military discourse did not explore and illuminate these questions at the proper time or place. In hindsight, one may describe the campaign as having exerted "general" pressure to exhaust Hamas and make it pay a price, which ended – without any direct connection to any particular military line of operation – with an arrangement with Egypt on combating the smuggling of arms via and on Egyptian soil. In fact, a change in the Egyptian behavior and its enhanced effort to stop the smuggling was not a foreseeable or self-understood outcome of any

military line of operation, and it was not declared at the outset as an objective of the military action. It is hard to point to an engineered cause-and-effect relationship between a maneuver that encircles Gaza City and increased Egyptian enforcement on its side of the border. To a great extent, the change in Egypt's behavior was a welcome surprise rather than the outcome of any plan of action.

Operation Cast Lead did not produce a clear, reality-altering military end state: there was no decision against the military wing of Hamas and the rocket threat was not removed. On the contrary, despite the increased efforts to curtail smuggling, Hamas continues to rehabilitate its forces and the threat increases with time. The operation also did not produce a reality-altering political end state: Hamas remains in charge of Gaza, and the PLO's influence there has not grown. Hamas did not abandon its armed struggle and did not become a partner to peace. While the IDF retreated to the international border at the end of the operation, it is hard to bestow on this local retreat the honor of "exit strategy" from the conflict with Hamas or the theater of war as a whole. In fact, the IDF and Israel remain engaged in the struggle against Hamas.

In that case, why was the operation perceived as a success? Over time it became clear that exacting a price of Hamas dulled the Gazan drive for violent confrontation, but this effect is contextual and temporary. It may well be that in the near future circumstances will change, or the memory of Cast Lead will fade and violence will break out anew. Therefore, such temporary and partial pacification is not worthy of the "end state" title as it did not terminate an existing situation and create a new, stable reality.

However, perhaps the primary reason the operation was seen as successful was the tactical excellence attributed to it. While the enemy was weak and avoided any type of noteworthy resistance, even as an exercise (sans enemy) a relatively large and complex maneuver was carried out successfully in an urban setting, accurately and with a great deal of operational discipline. Intensive tactical intelligence gathering and massive, precise firepower accompanied the maneuver. The IAF operated with great success in carrying out its missions in every kind of weather and introduced new ways of integrating with the ground units. Even if Israel failed through influence operations to relay its narrative successfully (as evidenced, for example, by the Goldstone Report), the IDF managed to project a sense of military effectiveness and complete

domination of the battle space. The IDF without a doubt could have occupied the entire Gaza Strip and threatened the Hamas regime, had it chosen to so do. The maneuver within Gaza City demonstrated Israel's ability to limit Hamas' strategic freedom of action to continue fighting. History is full of tactical successes on the battlefield that failed to generate strategic gains and of mediocre tactical performances that generated impressive strategic successes. However, in this case, tactical dominance and success in the execution of missions – even if they did not directly contribute to a predefined desired political end state – affect the projection of national power and the perception of success.

If so, the military achievement of Operation Cast Lead was little more than wide ranging pressure on Hamas, a demonstration of tactical competence and the demonstration of the capacity to create a strategic threat (without realizing the strategic threat in practice and translating it into a military end state). The political achievement was a partial, temporary effect on the Gazan drive to engage in armed confrontation and the Egyptian desire to fight the arms smuggling (these do not constitute a political end state).[12] Operation Cast Lead did not generate "a better peace" (à la Liddell Hart), did not impose Israel's political will (à la Clausewitz), and did not produce an exit strategy. However, in its own non-ambitious way, the operation was something of a small success. Is this an example of "the modest campaign"?

The Statesman: Client or Conductor?

The military and political worlds are vastly different, but an effective interface is needed between them to ensure that the application of military force is optimally directed towards realizing the political goal. In Israel, the United States, and other Western states, militaries have recently attempted to extend the doctrine and methods of senior command staffs onto the political realm. Based on doctrines such as the Israeli "Operational Concept" and the American JP 3-0 ("Doctrine for Joint Operations"), the military world attempts to build bridges to the political world and "educate" it to act on the basis of an organized methodology and clear directives, to articulate end states from the outset, and so on. This approach has yet to reap a great deal of success, partly because of the political echelon's unwillingness to act on the basis of binding working methods, make unequivocal statements, operate on the basis of the

military planning cycle, and adopt other such defined rules of conduct. At times, the political directive to the military reflects a compromise between different political forces (e.g., a coalition between political parties or between states), and ambiguity of formulation is essential to the compromise itself. At other times, the formulation is purposely vague so that the political echelon can keep its options open rather than have to commit to a particular course of action. These difficulties in the military-political interface often contribute to the inability to clarify the required objective and subsequently to the failure to achieve it.

However, at times the military-political interface works well and military force, successfully orchestrated with the political effort, serves that effort. Examples include the Egyptian attack against Israel in 1973, North Vietnam's efforts against the United States, Mao Zedong's wars, Kennedy's handling of the Cuban missile crisis, and some of Israel's armed conflicts in the Ben-Gurion era. Common to those cases is the fact that the burden of synchronization between the political and military realms was not placed on the military's shoulders but remained in the hands of the statesmen. It was not the military that built bridges to the political world using military-like methods, but the political echelon that built bridges to the military world and closely steered it according to the dynamics of the political realm.

War is above all a political rather than a military phenomenon (at least in the limited war and armed dialogue, as opposed to wars of total annihlation). Military force is merely another tool in hands of statesman. The statesman, like an orchestra conductor, must use the instruments at his disposal (such as armed force, diplomacy, the media, and others) in order to create synergy, a "symphony" that is more than the sum of its parts, and achieve the desired political outcome. The military is incapable of conducting a war on its own, just as the brass instruments are incapable of playing Beethoven's Fifth without the orchestra's other instruments, a score, or a conductor.

In 2006, the Olmert government to a large extent behaved like a client of the military. It ordered a certain product and waited for the IDF to deliver. Prime Minister Olmert did not view himself as a statesman-commander-in-chief managing the war (the term "statesman-commander-in-chief" implies his sense of his role, and is not a comment on his personal record). On several occasions, Olmert noted that he

authorized every move that the military proposed. This remark describes someone who does not view his role as one that is required to be actively engaged in the design and management of the war. Indeed, it is hard to point to any main political idea for realization of the desired political objective of the Second Lebanon War (excluding the negative directives to avoid attacking the Lebanese government and its assets or starting a war with Syria). The Olmert government directed the military to create "a better reality" without clarifying what political move would produce such an outcome, without explaining how a military move could support or assist the political one, and without leading or even participating in a joint military-political strategy.

In total contrast, President Sadat, as a statesman-commander-in-chief, had a political idea in 1973 how to realize his political goal. Sadat sought to undermine the trust between the Israeli public, its government, and the IDF. He also attempted to demonstrate to the Americans the costs and risks to the United States emanating from Israel's presence in the Sinai, thereby pushing America to pressure Israel to withdraw from the peninsula. One cannot say that Sadat engineered the effect on the United States and Soviet Union according to a preplanned program or that he calculated in advance the effect the superpowers would have on the ensuing vector, but he did have a main political idea for the war. Only in the context of this political idea is it possible to understand the military steps of the Egyptians and the reasons for their success (not in the tactical-operational sense but in the sense of their contribution to Egypt's realization of its political objective).

Thus, for example, after the IDF crossed the Suez Canal, the Egyptian chief of staff Saad al-Din Shazly saw a front that had lost its contiguity and was penetrated almost to its entire depth, with the mobile reserves in its rear decimated. Shazly, as a military commander, asked to withdraw units back to the Egyptian bank of the canal and re-stabilize the front, but Anwar Sadat, as a statesman, interpreted the situation on a completely different level. He understood that the growing tension between the United States and the Soviet Union was limiting Israel's political freedom of action to militarily exploit the breaches in the Egyptian field formation. Sadat sought to raise the stakes for the United States. He also understood that to undermine Israel's confidence and create the political follow-on trend desirable to Egypt, he had to maintain a strong grip over the Israeli

bank of the canal, thereby rejecting the military-operational consideration while imposing a political-strategic one.[13] It did not occur to Sadat to use Olmert's assertion that, "I authorized every military proposal." Sadat used the military not only as an operational tool for offense and defense on the front, but also as a means of achieving a specific outcome affecting the Israeli public and the White House. The statesman, decisively and carefully, steered the military line of operation.

In contrast to its stance in the Second Lebanon War, the Olmert government was more involved in Operation Cast Lead, but this involvement was still misguided: the senior military echelon presented the government with various operational plans and demanded that it choose between them. The government served as a kind of supreme field commander, and no level bore the burden of strategic management. As in 2006, the government in 2008 again failed to clarify sufficiently the political idea for the war that would realize the political objective (which was also not defined); the government did not provide the military with a score or conductor's directions, and barely played any other instruments (as demonstrated by the government's failure with UN Security Council Resolution 1860).

Operation Cast Lead exposed the functional problems in the echelons above the field ranks. The government lacks the tools to manage wars and finds it difficult to enter into the heart of complex processes of organizational learning. Usually it exempts itself from in-depth staff processes and encounters the complex world of contents only in emergencies and crises (when it is too late and there is no time to study insights that have been formulated in years of staff work). Civilian staff institutions such as the National Security Council are weakened and have to fight for a seat at the table. In the meantime, the military is concerned with being seen as politicized or perceived by the public and media as not playing by the rules of democracy; and at times, it is hesitant to assume responsibility and take the blame for possible failure. Therefore, the military prefers to avoid responsibility for anything above the field level. It tends to ask the government for instructions in tactical language, and thus in many cases there is no clearly formulated campaign rationale, the strategy is unclear, and there is no articulated political idea of how to realize the goals of the war (if those have been defined at all). In short, there is no clear policy. This void is evident in the fact that today one

would be hard pressed to state clearly what Israel's policy is regarding Lebanon or the Gaza Strip, and we do not know exactly what the Israeli government is trying to achieve in those two conflict areas.

One can find similarities between Olmert's misguided involvement in Operation Cast Lead and the Johnson administration's involvement in the war in Vietnam. Although conventional wisdom holds that Johnson and McNamara were overly involved in overseeing war fighting, the problem was actually the type of involvement rather than its extent. On the one hand, it is usually incorrect for the senior political levels to be involved in authorizing particular targets for attack or other tactical actions. On the other hand, the Johnson administration did not function as it ought and define achievable goals of the war, formulate a political idea of how to win, or design a realistic political-military strategy corresponding to the prevailing circumstances. Like Olmert in 2006, Johnson mainly defined a negative political idea (limitations on operations in North Vietnam and neighboring countries, and on measures liable to draw in other superpowers), but avoided presenting a positive, relevant political-strategic concept.

It is hard to draw the exact line between political and military occupation, but when a statesman understands the upper (political) layer he is more likely to identify the line. Winston Churchill[14] viewed war as the sum of military and non-military pressures operating in a given time frame, and military lines of operation as having a rationale only in the broader context of the gamut of pressures. As such, a government cannot make do with directing the military to "defeat the enemy" and then sit idle and wait to see what transpires, but must orchestrate all of the pressures. So, for example, several generals failed to understand the military rationale of the series of scattered peripheral campaigns carried out by Great Britain and the United States in the Mediterranean and Italy in 1942-43. The picture became clear only once one understood Churchill's political desire to demonstrate to Stalin (who in those years bore the brunt of the fighting burden alone) that the Western allies were serious in their intention not to leave him fighting the war on his own, even though they were not yet prepared to invade France. The ultimate addressee of the peripheral operations in the Mediterranean was not the German or Italian (the enemy) military but Stalin (an ally). Churchill also intervened correctly when he dealt with the operational layer and the military staff

work, insisting that the fight against the German submarines in the Atlantic be defined as a separate campaign, handled by a specifically designated headquarters. He understood that this constituted an important political issue vis-à-vis the United States and an economic and strategic issue of the highest order, and was more than just another seaways security issue. He apparently went down one layer too many when he insisted on offensive operations against the German submarines, in contrast to the opinion of the military echelon, which wanted to concentrate efforts on defensive operations: escorting convoys.

Like the military commander, the political echelon is also liable to err or adopt incorrect policies from time to time. But while the military realm maintains a training system and individual and collective working and learning methods geared towards improving chances of success, the political system lacks virtually any organizational system of learning, instead relying highly on inborn skills of statesmen-leaders. The qualities that brought the politician to the top of the political pyramid are not necessarily the qualities required to manage a war. In other words, the political system, especially in a democracy, is not a relevant selection filter for identifying people capable of managing a war, and no training is available to the political echelon. Thus, while librarian Mao Zedong, cook Ho Chi Minh, and farmer David Ben-Gurion were endowed with natural talent, attorney Ehud Olmert and teacher Lyndon Johnson found the management of war to be overly challenging. Is the quality of a war's management dependent on luck? Can civilian staffs increase the statesman's chances in a war? Can a civilian doctrine for managing a war be maintained?

In Search of the Holy Grail

There is an inherent tension between the need to recognize the limitations of power and the boundaries of feasibility on the one hand, and on the other hand, the fact that the objective of the military action is almost always political. A military action that is not designed to produce a political gain lacks direction and may even lack purpose and justification. This tension cannot be resolved, and optimization between the poles, if it exists, depends on context.

David Ben-Gurion's security concept[15] held that the asymmetry between the Arabs and Israel in size and international support means that

Israel may perhaps be able to remove military threats, thereby preventing change by force, but is unable to impose a change by force. As such, the strategy of war is always defensive, though it may be that "preventive strategy" is a better term as it is possible that offensive approaches are necessary in order to prevent undesirable changes taking place on enemy or third party soil (e.g., closure of the Straits of Tiran to shipping, the entry of a foreign army into Jordan, or control by terrorist organizations over parts of Lebanon). Indeed, in most cases Israel avoided presenting ambitious, reality-altering political goals for its wars, and some wars even lacked sufficient definition of the political will[16] or adequate clarification of the relationship between the military and the political side.

The Ben-Gurion approach was correct when Israel was facing a coalition of conventional Arab forces, but over time it has been increasingly challenged. Israel's growing power and its struggles against sub-state enemies tempt us into trying to impose change using force. On the positive side, Operation Defensive Shield did not yield either a "better peace" on Israel's terms or an exit strategy, but it did change reality: it removed the threat of terrorism from the West Bank and created a lasting period of stability (at least militarily). However, at times the political leadership presents patently unrealistic objectives, such as the directive or expectation in 2006 that Hizbollah would stop being an armed player in the Lebanese system and that the Lebanese government would be pushed into imposing its authority in the south.

Today Israel faces reference threats not of invasions but of complex open-ended campaigns that combine terrorism, attrition by means of rockets and missiles, intentional involvement of both sides' civilians in war fighting (the enemy firing rockets from within its own civilian population onto Israeli civilian population), a struggle over legitimacy and narrative, and the gradual erosion of the lines demarcating the military, political, and public realms. In these reference scenarios, it is almost impossible to remove the threat using direct military means, and it is hard to define a pure, utterly military mission such as defending the borders of the state (which are not directly threatened) or reaching a military decision against the enemy's field formation (which never presents itself on the battlefield for battles of decision).

This is another source of tension that cannot be resolved: on the one hand, non-kinetic means, when operated by the military or at its behest

and for its purposes, have not proven themselves as credible, predictable tools that can be relied upon in a war plan. Time after time they fail to deliver the goods, and this disappointment has been shared by Israel, the United States, Great Britain, and other nations. On the other hand, the complexity and fluidity of war in our time and the blurring of the line between the military and the non-military are such that traditional means, like maneuver and firepower, are not enough to address the problem, remove the threat, and win – in the sense of promoting one's political will.

The resolution of that tension, if at all possible, depends on context, but it also often requires the setting of modest military and political goals. The minimal threshold that must be met can be summed up as follows: the military action must persuade the enemy to cease the current round of violence; we must again demonstrate tactical dominance (if for no other reason than to project national power); we must exact of the enemy so heavy a price that it and third parties lose their appetite for another round of violence; and the military campaign must contribute something to the political follow-on vector. Any more ambitious goal (such as a fundamental change of strategic reality, nation building, or complete military decision) requires a very heavy burden of proof. The holy grail of military strategy – a military campaign that ends with a final exit from the conflict and with a new, pre-designed, stable, and better reality from our perspective – remains as elusive as ever.

At the same time, the political echelon must take into consideration that it is not a client of the military, placing an order for goods and waiting for their delivery. Rather, it is the conductor of the orchestra of war. As a political phenomenon, war requires the statesman to provide the score, the conductor's cues, and the other instruments. No one can dispute the political echelon's supreme status as decision maker, but decisions must be made only at the end of an in-depth study process, a process not conducted enough by the Israeli government – any Israeli government, for that matter. The military of 2010 worries – sometimes justifiably – about being perceived as politicized, and therefore prefers to draw lines and arrows on maps and compile lists of targets, without rising to the strategic level, which interfaces with the political. The National Security Council is weak and has no entry ticket to the decision making forum. If that is the case, who in fact deals with strategy, and who designs the policy of war?

Notes

1   For more on realizing political goals as an index of military success in the Israeli context, see Ron Tira, "Does Israel Win Its Wars?" *Maarachot* 407, June 2006, pp. 4-9.

2   Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 86-87, 607.

3   B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd ed., rev. (First Meridian Publishing, 1991), p. 338.

4   Joint Publications 3-0, Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 2008.

5   However, as a result of their experience in Iraq, the Americans have begun to discuss the possibility of combining the military and non-military efforts, instead of treating the process as consisting of stages, i.e., first a military stage to be followed by a political one.

6   For more, see Ron Tira, *The Nature of War: Conflicting Paradigms and Israeli Military Effectiveness* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press and Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2010).

7   See Ron Tira, *Forming an Israeli Policy towards Syria* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot Press), 2000.

8   For sources and more reading, see, e.g., Kelly Robinson, *The Death of Information Operations: Making the Case for Non-Kinetic Operations*, USAF Air University, Alabama, 2005. American sources sometimes use the phrase "non-lethal operations." See, e.g., Joint Publications 3-13, February 2006.

9   See, e.g., *US Air Force Doctrine Document 2-5*, Information Operations, January 2005, and Eric V. Larson, Richard E. Darilek, Daniel Gibran, Brian Nichiporuk, Amy Richardson, Lowell H. Schwartz, Cathryn Quantic Thurston, *Foundations of Effective Influence Operations*, A *Framework for Enhancing Army Capabilities* (Arlington VA: Rand Corporation, 2009), http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG654.

10 See, e.g., *Quadrennial Roles and Mission Review Report*, US Department of Defense, January 2009, pp. 31-36.

11 IDF Spokesperson on Operation Cast Lead, http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/News/today/09/01/0301.htm.

12 At a deeper level, the operation demonstrated to Hamas that it is not a non-state organization, rather a de facto state that lacks the freedom of action available to Hizbollah, and therefore it cannot fight the way Hizbollah did.

13 See Saad Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez* (San Francisco: American Mideast Research, 1980). See also Tira, *The Nature of War*.

14 Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

15 David Ben-Gurion, *Uniqueness and Destiny* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot Press, 1979), p. 219.

16 Tira, "Does Israel Win Its Wars?"

The Nature of the Radical Axis

Yoel Guzansky

The Middle East has recently operated under the not implausible fear that a regional war is about to break out. Therefore, Israel is closely following any sign of growing closeness among the members of the radical axis, a relationship that peaked with the Damascus summit in February 2010 and the transfer of − or at least what seemed like the intention to transfer − "balance destabilizing" weapons to Hizbollah. It is therefore important to understand the extent to which the axis − Iran, Syria, Hizbollah, and Palestinian terrorist organizations − actually functions as a military alliance, as its leaders have declared. What is the extent of its cohesiveness, and under what circumstances would the members of the axis operate as a united alignment against Israel? This essay addresses these questions while investigating the nature of the axis, its strengths and weaknesses, and the practical ramifications for dealing with it.

In recent years, the Middle Eastern agenda has focused on the growing influence of Iran and concern over its influence in an expanse stretching from Iran through Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories.[1] The use of the term "radical axis" became a commonplace after the Second Lebanon War and joined a host of other terms − important in and of themselves − based on a religious-ethnic rationale (such as "the Shiite crescent")[2] or a general conceptual framework (such as the "resistance camp").[3] It is only natural that there is a certain overlap within the various definitions and the identity of the players. Despite the attractiveness of these approaches and their use to help understand the regional order, this essay seeks to examine the said confederation through the political-strategic prism, its effect on the regional balance of power, and its central manifestation: a concrete threat to the security of the State of Israel.

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The General Nature of Treaties

Concluding a treaty is a common phenomenon in international relations, and alongside military buildup is the preferred approach for maintaining the balance of power. States seeking to increase their power may do so by making treaties, i.e., adding the military strength of other states to their own. States bonding through a treaty do so primarily to deal with an external threat, but there may be other goals as well, such as an attempt to increase the internal legitimacy of a regime. In order to enhance their security, states will seek to establish a new treaty or strengthen an existing one, or alternately, to undermine a treaty that has come to be seen as a threat. Although the terms of treaties vary depending on the situation, the central component at the core of every significant treaty is the commitment to provide mutual support against external actors. A treaty is a promise, a future intention to cooperate under particular circumstances, with an emphasis on the military dimension of that cooperation. The military dimension is unique to treaties and sets them apart from other agreements, primarily economic and political. Moreover, the need for military cooperation against an external state is built into them, and this sets them apart from communal security organization. Nonetheless, every political structure is naturally affected by the open interactions among its members. Commerce, culture, the economy, and virtually every other interaction between states affect expectations as to other contexts as well: who will support whom, under what circumstances, and under what conditions.

In general, the conditions for the creation of a treaty are expediency, i.e., conditions that accord with the profit-loss calculation made by any state as it joins a treaty. If the treaty presumably increases a state's relative strength, the state is expected to embrace it, but only if the cost it will have to pay is lower than the profit it expects to gain. The costs of entering a treaty and the reasons states usually abandon their commitments generally concern the ratio between the limits imposed by the treaty on freedom of action and the potential boon to security. What are those costs? States can get a free ride at the expense of treaty members without being obligated by it, or conversely, become unwilling partners to a confrontation that had it not been for the treaty would not have involved them.

These observations, however, leave many lacunae unresolved. First, existing theoretical distinctions are limited to sovereign states and do not apply to relationships between states and non-state actors such as terrorist organizations. It is also difficult to study the nature of treaties because states tend not to reveal the most fundamental mutual obligations, i.e., the nature of their military cooperation. Perhaps even more important, the condition or the situation that makes the treaty operational, even if it has been explicitly defined by the sides, remains shrouded in mystery and usually becomes known only post factum. Moreover, it may be that a treaty will include what is called "silent understandings," i.e., informal agreements that are not written into the agreement.

A treaty cannot last without material interests. Only when there is a conjunction of interests is it possible to drape it in some ideological wrapping and lend the treaty a mantle of ideas. At the same time, drawing a treaty in ideological-conceptual colors broadcasts to enemies as well as allies that there is a convergence of opinion among treaty members and that they are not motivated solely by considerations of balance of power. A treaty adds a kind of precision, a legal or moral obligation, to the political structure, especially with regard to the practical steps it is necessary to take in a given situation, based on a common strategy. As long as the treaty's underlying circumstances prevail, the treaty will presumably last. On the other hand, any change to states' conditions or priorities will affect the treaty's measure of cohesion and even its very existence.

The Nature of the Radical Axis

The greater the degree of cohesiveness among the members of a political alignment, the greater the threat emanating from it − and vice versa. In order to examine the degree of cohesion of the radical axis and the measure of its members' commitments to one another, the details of the agreements among them must be examined, as well as the degree of cooperation and coordination in practice between them. States are naturally not eager to reveal such details, and they tend to remain within the purview of the intelligence services. Agreements are usually not revealed, because by doing so the treaty members are liable to generate a counter-balancing alignment. States may also prefer to enter into agreements that are as vague as possible in order to prevent situations

that could raise differences of opinion and contradictory interests to the fore. Therefore, the nature of the treaty is likely to become clear only post factum, after the outbreak of a war or another change in the balance of power. Even if a formal mutual assistance obligation was made explicit, states might try to evade such a clause in a crisis if they conclude that fulfilling their obligation could damage their own vital interests. This makes it even more difficult to predict the conduct of players in crises with any kind of precision. We tend to think that the relations between the members of the radical axis, especially Iran and Syria – and notwithstanding some fundamentally different agendas – provide them with a better mechanism for coping with their international and regional isolation and the growing internal and external pressures, an improved ability to exert influence in the region, and a way to further entrench the idea of an armed struggle against Israel. Thus, what are the conditions and trends either strengthening or weakening the cohesiveness of the axis?

Conditions Promoting Cohesion and Unity of Action

The first major condition that promotes cohesion is a lack of political options. Although the Syrians have on numerous occasions stated that they will never abandon their "strategic partnership" with Iran, even if a peace agreement with Israel is signed, the possibility of severing the destructive link between Syria on the one hand and Iran and the Palestinian terrorist organizations on the other is raised in every discussion of the potential advantages of a peace agreement. To a large extent Syria serves as the connecting link between Iran and the other members of the radical axis; severing Syria from the axis would reduce the threat to the State of Israel. Israel would find it difficult to enter into negotiations with Syria if it is not convinced that this would be one if the results of such negotiations. The more the image of a mighty Iran dominates the region, the more Syria is likely to be seen as bandwagoning.

However, the more that Syria believes that a political option is realistic, the more possible it is that conflicting interests will surface, such that "Syria is likely to change its role in the radical axis."[4] Even if Iran does not object to Israel conceding Arab land, it will find it more difficult to live with Israeli-Syrian normalization. Iran is outside of the Arab-Israeli conflict, although it does whatever it can to prevent any

compromise between the sides. On the other hand, Syria is interested in realizing its national interests – above all, restoring the Golan Heights to Syrian sovereignty – by means of an agreement. Indeed, Syria is not a natural member of the radical axis: it is a secular state and unlike Iran, Hizbollah, and Hamas, it does not rule out peace with Israel. If the political option grows more remote, Syria will strengthen its ties with Iran, though – and here is the crux – the start of political negotiations with Israel, and even signing a peace treaty does not ensure cooled relations with the radical axis members. Moreover, recently Syria has indicated that a peace treaty is not as attractive an option as it once was, and even if it should materialize Syria is not prepared for full normalization.[5] As long as Damascus understands that a treaty with Syria is not Israel's most pressing priority, it sees no need to damage its relations with Iran. On the contrary: it hopes to raise the price of any compromise by means of this connection. Should preference therefore be given to the Israeli-Syrian channel? The questions at stake are relatively clear and a solution is relatively easy to realize, but what Israel would receive in exchange – especially with regard to negatively affecting relationships between the members of the axis – is greatly in doubt.

The second condition is the blow sustained by the bloc. The blows that have been inflicted on the radical axis in recent years – designed to weaken the members – have actually generated a greater degree of cooperation, coordination, and sharing of lessons among them. The result: "cooperation [between members of the axis] has reached unprecedented levels."[6] This should come as no surprise, because cohesion among treaty members is greatly affected by the way they understand the nature of the external threat against them: the greater the perceived threat level, the more the cooperation designed to maximize security among treaty members may be expected to grow. Nonetheless, this is also dependent on the ability of the dominant player in the alignment (Iran in this case) to demand or dictate cooperative conduct to the other players. Indeed, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu claimed that Iran is trying to pressure the other partners in the axis "to provoke hostilities between them and Israel in order to provoke tensions in the region."[7]

The third condition involves accelerated military buildup. Military cooperation in and of itself contributes to positive dynamics and the sides' ability to cooperate beyond the military-operational dimension. The

members of the axis are concerned with the need to rebuild capabilities and amass more power before the next round of fighting. Since the Second Lebanon War, they have been reconstructing their forces and massively rearming themselves, acquiring improved armaments, especially in the field of long range high trajectory weapons with larger and more accurate warheads than in the past, on the clear understanding of Israel's great sensitivity to an extended campaign against the civilian rear and in order to bypass IDF unequivocal advantages on the traditional battlefield.

However, even in this process roles are changing. For example, Syria in recent years has advanced from its role as a conduit for arms transfers from Iran to Hizbollah to its role as Hizbollah's direct weapons supplier. Syria is even providing training for Hizbollah operatives within its own borders.[8] In the past, Israel drew red lines regarding the transfer of "balance destabilizing" weapons to Hizbollah and even used various channels of communication to issue warnings to Syria. Israel estimates that the Iranians and Syrians rescinded virtually every limitation on transferring weapons to Hizbollah and Hamas. The working assumption is that every weapon system available to Iran and Syria, no matter how advanced, will sooner or later end up in Lebanon and other locations the radical axis is trying to strengthen. In addition, Iran and Syria have together deployed intelligence gathering and early warning networks on Syrian soil designed to monitor IDF activity and improve their understanding of events on Israeli territory, in its skies, and at sea. There have even been reports of the integration of certain capabilities between Syria and Iran on the one hand, and Hizbollah on the other.[9] The head of IDF Military Intelligence said: "There are well known locations in Iran and Syria where during tests of weapon systems it is possible to identify Iranian and Syrian officers, Hizbollah operatives, and even Hamas personnel who have all been invited to participate in the event... The financing, technology, and training come from Iran; they prefer manufacturing to take place in Syria; and the product is divided among all the axis members for use on land, in the air, and at sea."[10]

Conditions Undermining Cohesion and Unity of Action

The first condition that challenges cohesion among treaty members is their fundamentally different interests. The fact that the axis connects states with different strengths and state and non-state (or semi-state)

actors may weaken the connections between members. Moreover, the axis members represent different religious and political identities. So, for example, the Syrian regime is secular and depends on an Alawi minority in a state with a Sunni majority. By contrast, the religious and fundamentalist regime in Tehran rules a state with a Shiite majority. Hizbollah recruits its supporters among Lebanese Shiites and its supreme religious authority is the spiritual leader of Iran, while Hamas is an extremist religious organization with a clear Sunni orientation, with roots in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and opposed to the Syrian regime. Iran and Syria also view the future of Iraq, Lebanon, and the Arab-Israeli peace process differently.

Aside from Hizbollah, axis members have reservations about the growing closeness with Iran, particularly because of different long term objectives and cost-benefit considerations. In addition, the fact that both Hamas and Hizbollah have greatly scaled back their activities – in part because they understand the toll their actions exact of them – may in the future spark a clash with Iranian policy (Iran being less sensitive to those considerations) and bring differences of opinion to the surface. The relationship between Iran and Hizbollah is linked not only to their convergent interests (especially regarding the armed struggle against Israel) but also to their shared ideology (the establishment of an Islamic republic in Lebanon modeled on Iran) and loyalty (though not absolute because of Hizbollah's domestic constraints) based on clear dispatcher-agent relations. On the other hand, Syria does not subscribe to the same ideology or interests. In its conduct, it attempts to maintain a balance between the various ethnic groups in Lebanon in a way that will help it preserve its status there and therefore, in the long run, strengthen Hizbollah's standing at the expense of the other power elements in Lebanon that have long been thorns in Syria's side, even if the organization responds to the demand to struggle against Israel indirectly.

The second element is the potential for limited assistance. The asymmetry of power and resources and the fact that the axis members operate in different geographical arenas impede their ability to assist one another directly in mutual buildup efforts and acquire clear collective geopolitical significance (in general, Iran's main reference arena remains the Persian Gulf while Syria's is Lebanon and the conflict with Israel). The result: even when Hamas and Hizbollah suffered severe blows rendered

by Israel, Iranian (and Syrian) support came in the form of verbal expressions of solidarity, in more extreme anti-Israeli rhetoric, and in an attempt to increase weapons shipments by sea, air, and land. The axis, as a cohesive bloc, did not mobilize to help either Hamas in Operation Cast Lead or Hizbollah in the Second Lebanon War. Axis members also chose not to respond after the attack on the Syrian nuclear facility and the assassinations of Mahmoud Suleiman and Imad Mughniyeh on Syrian soil, all attributed to Israel. This points both to the axis members' limited ability to help one another in a crisis and to differing considerations underlying their decision making processes. The boastful declarations of "unity of purpose" and "shared fate," although somewhat reflective of the axis members' ideology, are of lesser weight than narrow national interests and the limited ability to help. Even if in the next campaign members seek to coordinate moves more than they have in the past, the help will mostly consist of weapons transfers, financial aid, training, and instruction. The probability that in a future confrontation we will see expeditionary forces is low, particularly because of the geographical constraint; it is likely – and then, only as a symbolic step – only under the most extreme of circumstances.[11]

The third element is internal weakness. The rift between the regime and the public in Iran and within the Iranian regime itself, evident after the presidential elections in June 2009, has so far been successfully contained by the revolutionary regime, but it damaged Iran's image of power and revealed its weaknesses – perhaps its primary weakness. The internal crisis has necessitated the channeling of energy and resources inwards, and has the potential to damage Iran's attractiveness in its allies' eyes. In addition, it may be that the Iranian regime, also in need of a significant amount of internal legitimacy for its actions, will find it hard to enlist support for continued funneling of national resources to Hizbollah to the same degree as in the past (assistance estimated to be $100-200 million a year),[12] and will be much more vulnerable to criticism than before. Over time, the Iranian regime as well as the Syrian, also suffering from significant economic weakness, will continue to experience basic problems at home, and these are expected to worsen with time. These will require significant attention at the expense of promoting certain external goals. In the long term, this may generate even more weakness – if only at the cognitive level – of the axis.

The fourth element is entrenchment within the power structure. The fact that Hamas is the only governing force in a political locale and that Hizbollah is the factor that tips the scales in the Lebanese government has so far not generated any change in their principles or basic goals. However, it forces them to consider aspects of accountability that are likely at least to limit their freedom of action and increase their need to show some caution in the use of military force. In the long term, these actors may be synonymous with the political entity (that is already the situation in the Gaza Strip), which may make it easier to gain legitimacy to use force against them. In addition, these terrorist organizations, especially Hizbollah, have more and more been adopting the patterns of regular armies, and this too, from a purely military perspective, makes it easier to attack them in a war. The military actions against Lebanon and Gaza made Hizbollah and Hamas – always poised between maintaining rule and continuing the armed struggle – decide to maintain the peace for now. The assessment is that another round of fighting is contrary to their interests and is liable to erode the gains they made on the local arena in recent years. Their interests include maintaining the weapon of resistance; taking over government institutions; for Hizbollah, changing the local world order in favor of the Shiites; continuing the struggle against Israel as a means of justifying their own existence; and only finally extending assistance to axis partners. The organizations find themselves in a dilemma that will only worsen (this is especially true of Hizbollah), pitting loyalty to the homeland against loyalty to Iran and Syria, and this may bring to the surface disagreements over political and operational issues and further damage the axis' unity of action.

Confrontation Scenarios

Axis members presumably have no interest in an extensive confrontation in the near future, given the toll it would take of them and their desire to reconstruct their forces before the next campaign. In addition, some are undergoing internal processes of entrenchment in the power structure and suffer from inherent weakness, while others lack legitimacy. What then could still go wrong? A possible trigger for a confrontation is linked to the ongoing systematic transfer of high quality arms to Hizbollah. So far these shipments have not been viewed as a casus belli, but it may be that transporting other weapons would lead to a different response on Israel's

part. In other words, there could be processes of buildup so significant that any event, even a tactical one, might touch off a regional firestorm. Another scenario concerns Hizbollah's revenge for the assassinations of senior organization official Imad Mughniyeh. Were such an operation, which has so far not occurred, to be considered successful by the organization, an IDF response could take place in Lebanon.

The concern about a confrontation between Israel and axis members has thus not disappeared, especially in a scenario in which Iranian nuclear facilities are attacked. It is highly probable that such an event would generate, if not automatically, a response against Israel by Hizbollah and perhaps also other axis elements. Among all the members of the axis, the connection between Iran and Hizbollah is the strongest. Iran established the organization in order to entrench an Islamic model in the form of a revolutionary regime in Lebanon. Iran is a source of inspiration for Hizbollah, the source of most of its arms, training for its personnel, and ongoing funding for its activities. Moreover, Hizbollah views the supreme leader of Iran as its supreme spiritual authority, maintains frequent direct contact with leaders of the regime in Tehran, consults with them over both fundamental and routine issues, and coordinates its activity with them.[13] At the same time, a response by Hizbollah in the event of an attack on an Iranian nuclear facility, even if its likelihood is high, is also increasingly dependent on the organization's other considerations. These are linked to sustaining possible blows to its status in Lebanon and Iran's ability to impose its will on Hizbollah, to the organization's expectations of the backing it can count on from Iran in a crisis, and to the circumstances that would prevail at that time: the severity of the attack on Iran and its effect on the regime's stability, the identity of the attacker, and above all, Iran's interest in preserving the power of the radical Shiite stronghold it has constructed on the shores of the Mediterranean.

A further scenario is also linked to Iran. US National Security Advisor Jim Jones warned of the possibility that because of the stricter sanctions against it Iran might try to distract the international community by making a preemptive strike against Israel using Hizbollah or Hamas as its proxy.[14] Such a scenario is of course not out of the question, but from Iran's perspective there is great importance in maintaining Hizbollah's weapons, especially its line of surface-to-surface missiles and the roles these weapons play as a deterrent to Israel. One cannot rule out the

possibility of a scenario involving the Palestinian arena, including a flare-up between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip with Hizbollah attempting to open a second front by firing rockets at Israel. A reverse scenario is also possible: Hamas joining in the fighting and opening a southern front alongside Hizbollah and possibly even Syria.

What would be Syria's response to an attack on Iran? From Syria's perspective, the Alawi regime remaining in place after the dust settles would constitute success. Therefore, it is likely that Syria would seek to avoid any involvement that is liable to hurt it, and therefore it would probably try to stay below the threshold of war for as long as possible. It is unclear what kind of leverage Iran has with regard to Syria, but Iran too would be served by Syria remaining a future radical stronghold, so it would likewise attempt to minimize harm to Syria.

Why then, despite its basic weaknesses, is the radical axis perceived as a threat? The first reason is Iran's determination to advance its nuclear program. Iranian nuclear capabilities would generate a fundamental geo-strategic change in the Middle East and would significantly strengthen the axis and the growing confidence of its constituent members. The second reason is the buildup of axis forces, resulting inter alia in Hizbollah's being many times stronger than it was on the eve of the Second Lebanon War and the recognition in Israel that as time passes, the cost to the civilian rear in any future confrontation with axis members, whether singly but especially as a united front, would rise exponentially compared to what it was in previous encounters. Third is the sense of threat in the region that stems from the religious-ethnic hostility and the constant fear within the Sunni Arab world of Shiite Iran, which increased when Saddam Hussein was toppled and Iraqi leadership was assumed by a Shiite majority (many identify the Alawi sect, upon which the Syrian minority rule is based, with the Shiites). The threat emanating from the axis rises in direct proportion to the manner in which its members present their achievements (and the effect that this has on the so-called Arab street) even if these do not fully correlate with reality. The fear of the axis is enhanced also because of the leadership vacuum in the Arab world, the weakness of the Arab regimes – first and foremost Egypt, and the fact that the members of the pragmatic camp suffer from dissent within their ranks and lack a clear, unified strategy to block the radical axis.

The Syrian Role

An improvement in Syria's international and regional standing is linked in part to the Obama administration in the United States and the Sarkozy government in France, the international stamp of approval Israel gave Asad by conducting "proximity talks" with him in 2008 via the Turks, and the desire of all parties to drive a wedge between Syria and Iran. It is not impossible that the measured detente between Syria and the West is cause for concern in Iran: it raises Syria's value within the axis and positions Syria in a preferred spot over Iran. Syria's influence with Hizbollah has also increased because of its greater military cooperation with the organization and its growing influence on Lebanon's internal arena.

The United States and France, and in their wake also Saudi Arabia and other nations, have to a great extent retracted their former policy of ostracizing and isolating Damascus and started to relate to Syria as a key state with the capability of affecting the stability of Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories, even as Syria made the improvement in relations conditional on various terms. In general, the connection between Tehran and Damascus is supposed to serve as a counterweight to pro-Western Arab nations and Israel and lift them out of their relative regional isolation and grant the regimes more legitimacy from abroad and at home. Therefore, the attempts to forge closer relations with Syria, even if they cannot sever the link with Iran, introduce additional variables into the equation that the Syrian leadership must deal with, to the extreme displeasure of Iran. Even more than starting negotiations with Israel, they have the potential to sow suspicion and distrust between Syria and Iran and dissipate mutual obligations that may exist between them.

Despite all of this, the growing closeness between Syria and the West and the jumpstarting of the political process will not – at least initially – sever the close bond between Iran and Syria. The fact is that even as Syria has moved from being an isolated, ostracized state (all the while reaping significant dividends) to becoming a sought-after partner, it has to date not altered its negative activities.[15] The US administration thus renewed the sanctions on Syria and intensified the rhetoric against it regarding the arms transfers, even alongside the intelligence dialogue about Iraq and an attempt to revive the negotiations with Israel.

Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005, its difficult economic situation, the lack of clarity surrounding America's Syria policy, the blows it sustained from Israel, and its sense of the reduced chances of the political option have all to a great extent pushed Syria into Iran's waiting arms and generated stronger cohesion between Syria and the other axis elements. Though the growing closeness to the West and the pragmatic Arab states has the potential to sow suspicion between axis members, Asad's behavior implies that he is not interested in doing so, especially not at the expense of his relations with Iran and Hizbollah. It is only natural that the Syrians would find it hard to exchange time-tested ties for promises of some settlement or form of assistance. Changing Syria's role in the axis, with an emphasis on increased military-operative support for Hizbollah, heightens its ability to influence the terrorist organization and enhances its relative weight within the axis.

The Iranian Role

The central phenomenon in regional politics of recent years is the growing strength of Iran. This has made many players try to curb its influence on various arenas. Their success will determine to a large extent whether Iran's ascent will have been more than a fleeting phenomenon. The attempt to construct a moderate Arab front (that embodies fewer symptoms of a security dilemma and more of an outlook of competing interests) has the potential for changing the regional balance of force to Iran's detriment. It has already brought together players who never cooperated in the past to coordinate their moves and even work jointly. Thus, it has been hinted more than once that Israel is cooperating quietly with various Arab states because of the shared sense of threat and the desire to weaken Iran and its allies.

At present, the axis serves as a component in Iran's security doctrine, which itself is the material "strategic hinterland" for the other components. Iran is interested in presenting itself as leading radical forces in order to invest its image with greater gravitas. It views the other members of the axis first and foremost as a means to advance its regional ambitions. If Iran weakens, Syria's tendency to behave negatively will also weaken, and Hizbollah is likely to lose its primary supporter, something that would certainly affect its considerations. Even the Palestinian problem is likely to become easier to resolve if Hamas' support base is swept

out from under its feet. In all likelihood, there would not be a change in the ideology or conceptual foundations of the axis members, but the axis would no longer constitute the same threat. Even if the ideological justification does not disappear, the material support and the ability to maintain the axis in its present format over time would weaken.

Iran is the pivot upon which this political alignment is based and from which it draws its strength. Weakening it would make it easier to resolve most of the conflicts in the arena, from Lebanon to Iraq − conflicts Iran is stoking and from which it draws its strength. Were Iran to weaken (whether as the result of internal processes of change or because of the use of military force), the axis would not be long for this world, certainly not in its current format. Moreover, Iran's weakening would reduce its attractiveness to axis members and weaken the axis so that it no longer represents a threat of the magnitude it is today.

Conclusion

The policy of any state depends on many considerations, among them, though not necessarily the decisive, is the making of treaties with other nations. Therefore, the practical circumstances and the understanding of risks and benefits accruing to each nation when it is time to fulfill the treaty obligations are major factors that must be considered. Moreover, each state is exposed to certain restraining factors, both internal and external, and each state is expected to assess them rather than operate reflexively. Therefore, if there will be mutual assistance within any political alignment, it also depends on the following:

a. Timing and circumstances. The members of the axis will, as a matter of course, be more disposed to act as a united alignment if the essential security interests of all are simultaneously at risk. The axis members reported on military coordination between the United States and Israel and the intentions of both to attack them, but these reports seems to be nothing more than an attempt to close ranks by means of propaganda.

b. The identity of the attacker and the target of the attack. The more the asset under attack is important to treaty members, the more the pressure to act rises. An attack on Iran carries more weight than an attack on Hamas. The identity of the attacker also matters: the United States is judged differently than Israel. It is likely that the organizations

would feel freer, militarily and in other ways, to act against Israel than against the United States.

c. The severity of the attack. The nature of the response would also depend on the implications of the attack: the difference between a substantial attack against Iran and the interception of a weapons shipment on the Syrian-Lebanese border is obvious. Nonetheless, an attack that would significantly weaken a player may render that player less attractive to its allies; it could make it imprudent for them to come to its assistance and they may therefore decide to distance themselves.

d. The initiative versus response. Because of the nature of the axis, it is more likely that its members would tend to act, certainly together, only after an attack on one or all of them at once and less as a result of a joint military initiative.

From the analysis thus far it appears that what we have here is not a case of a treaty, certainly not a defense treaty in the classical sense of the term. There is no evidence of a formal defense agreement between Syria and Iran, the two major players, and even if a formal agreement were signed (such as the December 2009 agreement) it is likely that it does not define clear conditions for them to embark on a military operation. Nonetheless, there is cooperation in practice in order to establish facts on the ground and generate an even closer partnership between them in the future.[17] It is not inconceivable that as time passes cooperation will expand, cohesion will grow, and the negative role played by axis members will be enhanced.

In addition to the psychological effect, the threat inherent in the radical axis stems in part from the fact that now, more than in the past, its members are setting aside traditional ideological and political divides in favor of strengthening the military component of their interrelations. The uniqueness of the axis and the measure of the threat emanating from it are paradoxically linked to the fact that it has managed to bind together players with different centers of gravity, different ideological backgrounds, and different geographical arenas. Moreover, as time passes without any significant weakening of the moving force (Iran) or the removal of a central member (e.g., Syria), the members see no reason − especially not in a strategically volatile environment − to abandon the military bonds between them.

On the basis of statements made over the last year by axis members, one may sense that the level of coordination and cooperation between them has risen and that there is even a measure of mutual guarantee between them. For example, senior Syrian officials have declared that should Israel again attack Hizbollah in Lebanon, "Damascus will not sit on the sidelines,"[18] while Iranian officials have announced that Iran would "respond with all measures and its entire force" should Israel attack Syria.[19] Likewise, statements made by leaders of the Palestinian terrorist organizations have made it clear that axis members are more committed now than they have been in the past to preserving their mutual interests,[20] and even to go to one another's defense under certain circumstances.[21] It is difficult to assess which consideration will emerge as decisive for axis members should one or more be attacked. In such a scenario, it is conceivable that they would act differently than they have in the past; therefore, one cannot rule out their coming to one another's aid. Like any political alignment, the radical axis too is by nature dynamic and given to change. The measure of cohesion depends on the extent that a convergence of interests prevails at any given moment in time. Even if coming to one another's aid is possible only in particular circumstances and members of the radical axis have not defended one another in the past, it does not mean they will not do so in the future. The possibility of coordinated joint offensive initiatives or axis members taking advantage of fighting between Israel and another member to open a second or third front cannot be excluded.

At present, the axis meets the needs of its members, which understand their limitations and therefore have reduced expectations with regard to mutual assistance. Moreover, the axis is predicated on a vague alignment of partners who do not share the same ideology or set of long term objectives. While it has increased its military capabilities, it suffers from a limited ability to furnish assistance, fundamental problems, and internal constraints that make it difficult to act as a united alignment. It is only natural that the measure of its cohesion depends greatly on the conduct of external players that have the ability to affect the preferences of the primary players. Thus, the advantage of the axis amounts to its ability to coordinate policies and maintain an armed struggle by means of proxies.

The threat inherent in the axis is liable to grow if Iran has nuclear capabilities. This could contribute to the growth of membership in the

axis; also, disagreements that now seem essential are liable to be more easily jettisoned in favor of adopting a more assertive and extreme stance than in the past. Should Iran cross the nuclear threshold, the conduct of the other axis members may seem more like bandwagoning with power based on a desire to share the spoils. At such a time, Iran will also find it easier to dictate a more assertive policy to its allies, one that is more in line with its interests; there might be less room for competing considerations and the ability of external players to drive a wedge between axis members and extricate one member or another. This would have far reaching ramifications on the manner in which wars are conducted and peace is made in the Middle East.

Notes

1   As a result of Shiite dominance in Iraq and attempts to forge closer relations with Iran and Syria on the part of nations such as Qatar and Turkey, these players can also be seen as radical or semi-radical.

2   See., e.g., Uzi Rabi, "The 'Shiite Crescent': An Iranian Vision and Arab Worry" in Uzi Rabi, ed., *Iranian Time* (Tel Aviv: United Kibbutz Movement Press, 2008).

3   Michael Milstein, *Muqawama: The Challenge of Resistance to Israel's National Security Concept* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2009, Memorandum No. 102), http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1262848400. pdf.

4   The head of the research division of Israel's Military Intelligence made a similar assessment in the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, *Haaretz*, May 5, 2010.

5   Asad to senior American officials: "Even if there is a peace agreement with Israel, Syria will only be prepared for a ceasefire and having an embassy in Damascus," *Haaretz*, March 3, 2010. Elsewhere Asad stated: "The price of resistance is not higher than the price of peace," *Reuters*, March 28, 2010.

6   The head of Military Intelligence at the Institute for National Security Studies annual conference "Security Challenges of the 21st Century," December 15, 2009.

7   *Haaretz*, May 11, 2010.

8   *The Times* recently reported that it has satellite pictures proving that Hizbollah is freely moving many weapons, including surface-to-surface missiles, from a base in Adara, Syria to Lebanon. According to the report, the source of the weapons at the facility is either Syria or Iran and "Hizbollah forces are authorized to operate the facility freely," *Times Online*, May 28, 2010.

9   *Jane's Defence Weekly*, March 31, 2010; Charles Levinson, "Iran Arms Syria with Radar," *Wall Street Journal*, June 30, 2010.

10 See note 6.

11 A similar assessment was made by the Deputy Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. Benny Gantz, at the Institute for National Security Studies "State of the Nation" conference, May 17, 2010.

12 During the Second Lebanon War and because of the economic situation in Iran, internal criticism, albeit limited, was leveled against the regime over the question of why these funds were not used to benefit the citizens of Iran. Regarding the scope of Iranian assistance to Hizbollah, see the Defense Intelligence Agency, Unclassified Report on Military Power in Iran, April 2010, http://media.washingtontimes.com/media/docs/2010/Apr/20/Iran_Military_Report.pdf .

13 Ephraim Kam, "The Ayatollah, Hizbollah, and Hassan Nasrallah," *Strategic Assessment* 9, no. 2 (2006), http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=100.

14 *Haaretz*, February 25, 2010.

15 In May 2010, President Obama decided to extend the sanctions against Syria by another year, and the administration has so far suspended its appointment of a new ambassador to Syria; the last ambassador was recalled five years ago in the wake of the murder of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

17 The GOC Northern Command stressed the significant growth in Iranian involvement in Lebanon as a lesson from the Second Lebanon War and after the death of Imad Mughniyeh, and the expansion of the negative role played by Syria as well as the assistance it extends to Hizbollah, which has also grown greatly in scope since the Second Lebanon War. See "Security Responses to a Changing Threat," conference at the Institute for National Security Studies, January 24, 2010.

18 On May 30, 2010, *al-Seyassah* (Kuwait) reported that at the three-way summit in Damascus (on February 25, 2010) Syrian president Bashar Asad told Iranian president Ahmadinejad and Hizbollah director general Hassan Nasrallah that he views Hizbollah as an integral part of the Syrian army and will supply it with any equipment it requires while maintaining the independence of the organization. According to this report, Asad has dedicated two military bases to Hizbollah, one in the town of Adara, near Damascus, and the other near the resort town of Ludan, on the Syrian-Lebanese border, and even promised that in case of an attack against Lebanon, Syria would send Hizbollah 5,000 of its special forces, including missile and aerial defense experts who would act under Hizbollah command. MEMRI, June 2, 2010.

19 *Haaretz*, April 30, 2010.

20 Deputy Director General Naim Qasim of Hizbollah: "We are proud to belong to the Iranian-Syrian axis." He noted that his organization reacts with pride to the accusation of belonging to the Iranian-Syrian axis, but also said that there is no axis, rather a coordination of positions among Iran, Syria, and

the resistance organizations in Lebanon and Palestine. See *al-Wattan* (Saudi Arabia), March 31, 2010.

21   Islamic Jihad director general Ramadan Sallah, regarding an attack on Iran, said that Ahmadinejad's meetings with Bashar Asad, Hassan Nasrallah, and the leaders of the Palestinian factions show that an attack on any element among them is tantamount to an attack on all, *al-Hayat* (London), March 25, 2010. Hizbollah deputy director general Naim Qasim claimed that Israel would pay a steep price for an attack against Iran: "Israel and the United States cannot simply bomb Iran and expect things to be business as usual. Any attack against Iran is liable to ignite the entire region," *Reuters*, March 18, 2010.

Suicide Terror:

Al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Israel

The articles that follow are based on lectures given at a conference at INSS, "Al-Qaeda, Israel, and the Campaign against Terror," on March 22, 2010.

Abdullah Azzam, al-Qaeda, and Hamas:
Concepts of Jihad and Istishhad

Asaf Maliach

While al-Qaeda and Hamas have become household terms, far less familiar is the man behind the idea of al-Qaeda, the Palestinian sheikh Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, who also did much to support the establishment and entrenchment of Hamas. This essay traces the links between Azzam and these two radical Islamic organizations and outlines his major influence on central components of their agendas – jihad (holy war)[1] and *istishhad* (martyrdom).

Abdullah Azzam and al-Qaeda

The Palestinian connection to global jihad began in the 1980s during the war in Afghanistan. It assumed a concrete form long before the establishment of al-Qaeda, as thousands of Muslim volunteers – Arab and non-Arab, including scores of Palestinians – came to Afghanistan to help the Afghani *mujahideen* (holy warriors) fight the Soviet invader and the pro-Soviet Afghani regime. The Palestinian volunteers stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Muslim volunteers of many nationalities and bonded with their comrades-in-arms. At that time, it was Palestinian Sheikh Abdullah Azzam who organized their arrival, training, and dispatch to the battlefield; his aide-de-camp was his reverent pupil and close friend, Osama Bin Laden.

Abdullah Azzam was born in 1941 in the village of Silat al-Harithiyah, northwest of Jenin. Following the Six Day War, he and his family moved to Jordan where in 1969 he joined the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1973,

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he earned his doctorate with distinction in "The Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence" at the religious al-Azhar University in Cairo. In 1981, he moved to Saudi Arabia, and was then released by the King Abd al-Aziz University in Jedda to teach at the Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan, a move that allowed him to forge closer relations with the Afghani jihad, which greatly interested him at that time. In 1984, Azzam resigned from the Islamic University and together with his family took up residence in the Pakistani border town of Peshawar. There, together with Osama Bin Laden, he established the Office of Services for the *Mujahideen* (*Maktab Khadamat al-Mujahideen*, MAK), providing services for the *mujahideen* and serving as a center for recruiting Muslim volunteers and donations from all over the world on behalf of the Afghani *mujahideen*, as well as providing services in education, health, information, military assistance, finance, and establishment of training camps.[2]

Abdullah Azzam laid the foundations of al-Qaeda, and from the war in Afghanistan to this day has been Osama Bin Laden's spiritual mentor. In late November and early December 1989, on the basis of the idea of *al-Qaidah al-Sulbah* ("the solid base") devised by Azzam and mentioned by name for the first time in an article he wrote that was published in the monthly *al-Jihad* (April 1988), Osama Bin Laden announced in Peshawar the establishment of the organization. The article began with the following paragraph:

> Every principle must have its vanguard that will carry it forth. [The vanguard] will pay a steep price and suffer many losses while paving the road for the [Islamic] society. There is no belief, either earthly or heavenly, that does not need such a vanguard, one that will give all it has for its belief to be victorious. This vanguard is the solid base ("*al-Qaidah al-Sulbah*") of the society we are awaiting.[3]

Azzam declared that an individual who "sold himself to God" would arise and call out loud to cleave to Allah. An elect group would gather around this leader and provide a solid base for an Islamic society and confront the surrounding *jahiliyyah* (ignorance). The man who would lead the first elect group would start by gathering people and teaching them the bases of belief, namely the unity of God and the unity of God's names and descriptions.[4]

In the same essay of April 1988, Azzam laid out eight guidelines for cultivating the vanguard of the solid base:

a. The vanguard would emerge from a furnace of troubles and disasters.
b. The leadership would have to participate in the journey of blood, sweat, and tears. The leadership would be the hothouse where the saplings would mature in a long period of cultivation and training.
c. The vanguard would renounce the cheap thrills of this world and be of a different order, marked by asceticism and austerity.
d. The vanguard must be imbued with strong faith and endowed with great hope in achieving victory.
e. Tenacity and assertive decision to continue the journey are essential, however long it would take.
f. Sustenance for the road, one of the critical needs of the journey, consisted of upright character traits, patience, and prayer.
g. The vanguard had to cleave to "the belief in friendship and abdication of responsibility," meaning demonstrating loyalty and friendship (*walla'*) towards believers and hatred for "infidels," and abdicating responsibility (*bara'*) for the latter (by "infidels" Azzam and other theologians mean not only pagans, as stated in the Quran, but also "the peoples of the book" – Christians and Jews).
h. The vanguard would necessarily uncover the global plans devised against Islam.[5]

In order to instill the vanguard with the desire for *istishhad* (martyrdom), Azzam wrote:

> The *shahids* (martyrs) are those who write the history of nations, because the history of nations is written only in sweat and blood. They are the ones who build the palace of glory, because palaces of glory are built only by skulls and limbs severed from the body. They are the ones who keep the tree of this religion from wilting and drying up, because the tree of this religion is watered only with blood. They are the wise ones, because they found their way to Allah, while the others either mourn them or mock their thinking. They are the ones who love death so that they will earn life (after death).[6]

Abdullah Azzam designated the vanguard as the force to implement the global Islamic jihad doctrine that he preached in Afghanistan. The roots of the doctrine stem from two sources. The first is verse 97 in Sura 4 ("Women") of the Quran: "Lo! as for those whom the angels take (in death) while they wrong themselves, (the angels) will ask: In what were ye engaged? They will say: We were oppressed in the land. (The angels)

will say: Was not Allah's earth spacious that ye could have migrated therein? As for such, their habitation will be hell, an evil journey's end." The second source is the personal obligation Islam has imposed on its believers since the dawn of the religion – to repel an enemy attacking Islamic territory.[7]

The doctrine of global Islamic jihad is divided into primary and secondary tracks. The bulk of the global Islamic force must be concentrated on one Islamic land where jihad is underway and which provides the best opportunity for vanquishing the attacking infidels and establishing the dwelling of Islam (in Azzam's day it was Afghanistan), liberating it, and afterwards moving to another Islamic territory offering the same conditions (in Azzam's day, Palestine was the preferred location), and so on, culminating in the liberation of all Islamic territory and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate stretching from Indonesia in the east to Morocco and Spain in the west. Until the liberation of all Islamic lands, it is also necessary to conduct jihad on other Islamic territories that will be liberated only in the future (e.g., Egypt and Algeria) and on lands experiencing confrontations between "oppressed" Muslims and their Muslim or non-Muslim oppressors (e.g., the Philippines).[8] Indeed, Azzam stressed that jihad to liberate Afghanistan actually started against the "infidel" Muslim rulers ("the near enemy") and not against the Soviets ("the far enemy").[9] This signals to other regimes in the Arab and Muslim world, which do not rule according to *shariah* (Muslim religious law) and as such damage the idea of *hakimiyyah* (God's sovereignty on earth), that being Muslim does not grant immunity to militant jihad and there is legitimacy for toppling tainted Muslim regimes at any time.

Azzam not only renewed the idea of global Islamic jihad but also developed it and instilled it in Muslim consciousness around the world, theoretically as well as practically. He was the first to rule that global Islamic jihad to liberate Afghanistan and other conquered Islamic territory is an individual obligation incumbent on every Muslim. By recruiting thousands of Arab and non-Arab Muslim volunteers under one roof and generating cohesion among them, he and Bin Laden were pioneers in their successful efforts to fashion and implement the notion of global Islamic jihad.

Al-Qaeda was established sometime around the time Azzam was assassinated, i.e., approximately November 1989. The name of the

organization, however, was used officially in Peshawar only after Azzam's death, in late November or early December 1989. Following Azzam's death, Osama Bin Laden continued to adhere to the idea of global Islamic jihad as devised by his spiritual mentor and close friend. It is no coincidence that Bin Laden chose to call his organization "al-Qaeda," a term with symbolic significance that links the two figures.

Jihad in Palestine

Abdullah Azzam was widely criticized for abandoning Palestine in favor of Afghanistan. He was even accused of weakening the jihad in Palestine by drawing Palestinian and Arab youths to Afghanistan. But Azzam, adopting the strategy of "the best defense is an offense," rebuffed the attacks. In early 1989, in a speech given at a summit organized by the National Union of Kuwaiti Students, he attacked his critics scathingly:

> Let whoever wants to rebuke me do so. Let whoever wants to look me in the eye with anger…My sovereign said to me, "Those believers who sit there and do nothing do not measure up to the *mujahideen* (the holy warriors) in their wealth and soul. The reward of the latter will be greater than that of the former"…You may say, "Here is a wayward Palestinian who abandoned his problem and went outside his land to be a submissive servant of foreign masters." Say what you will. Regarding jihad, I am the submissive servant of the Afghani jihad because I found the true Islam here… The obligation to fight is an obligation incumbent on every Muslim who can carry a weapon…If we cannot serve God in this land, we must immigrate to another land where we can serve Him, because unless we do so we will merit the death of the weak and be destined for hell…God aroused in my heart the great hope to taste the sweetness of jihad in Palestine in 1969-1970. Afterwards, the activity of sacrifice was eradicated in Jordan, the borders were closed, jihad waned, and jihadist thinking was forbidden. I thought, "Where is the jihad?" I found a parcel of land called Afghanistan, and I tried getting there. God showed me the way there.[10]

In his introduction to the book *Dhikrayat Falastin* (*Palestine Memories*), Abdullah Azzam explains why he "abandoned" the jihad in Palestine in favor of the jihad in Afghanistan. Azzam describes his fierce desire to liberate Palestine and the al-Aqsa mosque, and links the war in Afghanistan to the Palestinian struggle:

> I am a Palestinian, and if only I could find a way into Pales-
> tine and the al-Aqsa plaza, I would prefer to fight there ...
> Whoever thinks that jihad in Afghanistan means the aban-
> donment of the Islamic problem in Palestine is delusional...
> The bloody story of Kabul is the story of the war of a wound-
> ed Palestine...We hereby declare to the Jews and their satel-
> lites and the Americans and the Communists: We will not
> rest until we return to the jihad in Palestine. Indeed, there
> is a barrier between us and the jihad in Palestine because
> of the circumstances and because of the guarded borders,
> but this does not mean we have stopped dreaming about
> Palestine...Palestine precedes Afghanistan, but now that
> our hands are in manacles and the borders are closed, we
> refused to live like that and instead traveled to the land of
> the struggle − Afghanistan.[11]

Regarding claims that he was drawing Palestinian youths to
Afghanistan and thereby weakening the jihad in Palestine, Azzam
countered that Palestinians had to immigrate to Afghanistan because
there they would grow stronger religiously and acquire the military and
mental experience that would help them liberate Palestine. Speaking
at a conference held by the Islamic Association of Palestine (IAP) in
December 1988 in Oklahoma City, marking one year since the outbreak
of the Palestinian intifada, Azzam said:

> Sons of Palestine, the time has come for you to swear alle-
> giance to death. It is good to die with honor...Sons of Pales-
> tine, there is no turning back after today. Follow death, the
> path has been opened for you, the time has come to step up
> to the stage of preparation and death for the sake of God
> (*istishhad*)...Sons of Palestine, you have an opportunity to
> train on every type of weapon [in Afghanistan], this is a
> golden opportunity, do not miss it.[12]

Like Azzam, Bin Laden was also criticized for abandoning the jihad
in Palestine and focusing on Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places. His
answer has been identical to Azzam's: the priorities are determined not
by which land is more important, rather by which is more urgent and
closer to the lives of people. As an example, he has used Afghanistan of
the 1980s.[13]

Abdullah Azzam and Hamas

Abdullah Azzam was linked to Hamas from its inception in December 1987. He viewed Hamas as the spearhead in the religious confrontation against the Jews in Palestine and as followers of the Islamic Movement (a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood), in which he himself had been active in the 1960s. In an interview with *al-Jazeera* (December 1998), Osama Bin Laden declared that after the outbreak of the intifada, Azzam maintained close contact with Hamas, and his books were widely circulated in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The fact that Azzam and Hamas were allied with the same parent movement – the Muslim Brotherhood – linked them closely. Even more important, however, was the ideological similarity between them. An examination of Hamas' charter, published on August 18, 1988, alongside Azzam's philosophical teachings illustrates their shared ideological affinities. Paragraph 6 of Hamas' charter states that the movement's loyalty is to God, that Islam is a way of life, and that the movement is working to fly the standard of God over every inch of Palestine.[14] Paragraph 7 of the charter defines Hamas as "a global Islamic movement whose members are scattered around the world, acting to strengthen its influence." In addition, paragraphs 14 and 15 link the problem of liberating Palestine to three circles: the Palestinian, the Arab, and the Islamic, and as such, the liberation of Palestine is an individual obligation incumbent upon all Muslims everywhere. Together, paragraphs 7, 14, and 15 create a direct link between the Hamas charter and Azzam's theory of global Islamic jihad.

Paragraph 11 of the charter defines Palestinian land as holy (*waqf*), which no one has the right to concede or negotiate, not even one square meter. This paragraph further defines all land that ever was – or still is – *dar al-Islam* (the dwelling of Islam) as land belonging to Muslims until the end of time.[15] Paragraph 12 of the charter determines that if an enemy invades Muslim land, jihad becomes an individual obligation incumbent upon all Muslims; furthermore, Muslims are under no obligation to seek permission from any external authority in order to embark on jihad against the invader.[16] Paragraph 13 of the charter defines the confrontation against the Jews for control of Palestine as a religious struggle, while conceding any part of the land is tantamount to conceding a part of the religion. Therefore, this paragraph also rejects out of hand

any peace initiative or international conference designed to settle the Palestinian problem and calls for solving the problem only by means of militant jihad.[17]

Paragraph 16 of the charter stresses Islamic education as the first step in liberating Palestine alongside the recognition that it is necessary to study the enemy in depth.[18] Paragraph 22 of the charter casts the Jews ("the enemy") as those who took over the global media, thanks to their financial clout. The paragraph further points to the Jews as responsible for most revolutions and wars in the world, such as the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the First and Second World Wars. They were responsible for the Balfour Declaration, which they attained because of their wealth.[19] Paragraph 32 of the charter points to Zionism's imperialist tendencies, and refers readers to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* for details of the Zionist conspiracy. It declares Hamas to be the spearhead in the confrontation with global Zionism and stresses that the Arab and Muslim nations will fulfill their role in the next confrontation against the Jewish "merchants of war."[20]

Even though Hamas' charter did not always square with Azzam's philosophy − e.g., in the context of adopting territorial nationalism (*wataniyyah*) on Hamas' part and including it as part of the religious credo, which opposes Azzam's rejection of territorial nationalism and adoption instead of Islamic globalism − this was not enough to prevent Azzam from supporting the movement, both financially and ideologically.[21] Perhaps the understanding that ignoring the national aspect of the Palestinian problem would leave Hamas outside the Palestinian arena is what allowed Azzam to reach a compromise with the movement on the matter.

An issue that clearly would have divided Azzam and Hamas is Hamas' willingness to agree to a hudna (a temporary long term truce) with Israel, which occurred after the victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections on January 25, 2006.[22] Azzam, relying on religious rulings by clerics who preceded him and on verse 36 in Sura 9 ("The Repentance") of the Quran, which states "However, you may declare all-out war against the idol worshipers (*even during the Sacred Months*), when they declare all-out war against you, and know that God is on the side of the righteous,"[23] determined that it was permitted to maintain a temporary peace agreement with the Jewish "infidels." This is the case, however, only on condition that it serves and does not threaten Muslim interests

and on condition that it not include certain elements, such as recognition of their right to any part of Muslim land, because Islamic land belongs to no one except God and no one has the right to concede any of it. Because signing a temporary peace agreement with Israel recognizes the Jewish "infidels'" right to Palestine, Azzam strictly prohibited signing any such truce as long as the State of Israel was in existence.[24] This explains the call on March 6, 2006 to the Hamas government by Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden's deputy, not to honor any agreements signed with Israel (which he called "agreements of submission") and to continue jihad against it until the liberation of Palestine.[25]

Abdullah Azzam had a great deal of respect for Hamas' spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, and called him "the symbol of the firm position of the Islamic movement." At Islamic rallies in the United States to which he was invited as the guest of honor and that were attended by Hamas' representatives, he would shower Yassin with praise from every podium. At the Oklahoma City rally held in December 1988 by the Islamic Association of Palestine (IAP), Azzam declared: "Now I would like to turn to the paralyzed man who educated an entire generation that stood against the Jews with these stones: Ahmad Yassin – greetings from this podium. The man moves an entire generation, although he himself cannot move."[26]

Azzam also honored Sheik Yassin in his writings, presenting him at the head of the list of Islamic movement members "who since 1948 worked to liberate Palestine and thanks to whom many young people have repented." Azzam accorded Yassin a central role in rallying the younger members of the Islamic Movement at the beginning of the first Palestinian intifada. He emphasized that although the intifada started with military action carried out by Islamic Jihad and Fatah activists, and although at the start Hamas operated as part of the alignment of the Palestinian jihad against Israel rather than its leader, thanks to Yassin's organizational skills and the unique Islamic character of the movement, it very soon stood out on the Palestinian arena and earned widespread Palestinian public support.[27]

The closeness Azzam felt towards Hamas and his familiarity with it were expressed in his book *Hamas: The Historical Roots and the Charter*. In it, Azzam seeks to lead the reader to the final conclusion that he endorses,

i.e., that only Hamas is capable of restoring Palestine into Muslim hands in this era.

Azzam raised funds for Hamas, both in his travels through Arab nations and through the branches of the Office of Services for the *Mujahideen* in the United States. One of the pipelines for funneling money to Hamas ran through various institutions operating in the name of the PLO in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, such as the Palestinian Youth Association and the Palestine Student association.[28]

Hamas warmly embraced Abdullah Azzam and his call to cleave to jihad and seek death for the sake of Allah (*istishhad*). A letter sent in the movement's name, published in February 1990 in a memorial tribute to Abdullah Azzam, said that Hamas had been greatly influenced by his will, especially concerning jihad and self-sacrifice:

> The words you wrote in your will have been seared deeply into our souls...Therefore, it will be our joy to respond so that these words serve as a lamp to light the way to jihad for our youths...When we read in your will, "The love of jihad took over my being, my life, my soul, my feelings, my heart"...When we read your will to your children, "As God lives, I could not live in my henhouse with you the way a hen lives with her chicks as long as the fire of suffering burns the Muslim hearts"...And when you repeat the saying of the chosen few who lived before you, "Crave for death and you will reward with life," your sincere words enter our souls. For our young people, they become the fire that shoots at the soldiers of the oppressing enemy, and you would have been pleased with the existence of Hamas and the way that [Hamas] has become a symbol around the world.[29]

Additional statements expressing the great esteem that Hamas had for Abdullah Azzam and for seeing him as an integral part of the movement are evident in Hamas' declaration of a general strike in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on December 27, 1989, to protest his assassination;[30] in the condolence letter published by Hamas after the assassination in the monthly *al-Jihad*, which ranked him at the top of its list of martyrs;[31] in a letter written by Hamas in his memory in issue no. 90 of the monthly *Lahib al-Maraqah* (February 10, 1990), in which it promise to avenge his blood;[32] and in an essay devoted to him in its monthly *Falastin al-Muslimah* (January 1990) under the title "The Distinguished Cleric, Graduate of al-Azhar University, Dr. Abdullah Azzam, in the Caravan of Martyrs."[33] In

the early 1990s Hamas bestowed its greatest honor on Azzam by naming its military wing in the West Bank for him – the Abdullah Azzam Martyrs Brigades. Some years later, the names of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip military wings were combined and the united outfit became known as the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Martyrs Brigades.[34] In late 2006, Hamas made another gesture of respect towards Azzam when it named its military academy located in al-Nusseirat in the center of the Gaza Strip in his honor. At the entrance to the academy, there is a plaque reading: "Welcome to the *Shahid* Dr. Abdullah Azzam Academy." The bottom of the sign cites his words: "A Muslim has the greatest glory when he fulfills jihad for the sake of Allah."[35]

Kathim Ayish, formerly a student of Azzam at the Jordanian University and currently in charge of Palestinian affairs in the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, has said that many Hamas leaders, past and present, including more than one hundred Hamas operatives deported to Lebanon in late 1992 and many Izz al-Din al-Qassam Martyrs Brigades activists such as Yusuf al-Surqaji, the Brigades' former commander killed in the first Palestinian intifada, were all followers of Azzam.[36] Muhammad Kathim Sawalhah, chairman of the Islamic League in Great Britain, co-founder of Hamas, and follower of Azzam, noted that Azzam's influence is greatly felt both in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: "There is an entire generation of young propagandists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on whom the Palestinian intifada relied, an entire generation influenced by Sheikh Abdullah Azzam and his ideas. His influence on the generation as a whole, not just on individuals, was indelible."[37]

A good example of Azzam's influence on the understanding of jihad and *istishhad* by Izz al-Din al-Qassam Martyrs Brigades activists is evident in the case of Said Hassan al-Hutari, the Hamas terrorist who carried out the suicide attack at the Dolphinarium in Tel Aviv on June 1, 2001, killing 21 Israelis. Al-Hutari wrote his will before embarking on the attack and quoted Abdullah Azzam:

> "I say to the world, which supports the Zionists with money and weapons, what the *Shahid* Abdullah Azzam said before me: 'If the preparation (*Idad*) is considered terrorism – we are terrorists. If defending our dignity is considered extreme – we are extremists. And if fighting the holy war (jihad) against our enemies is fundamentalism – we are fundamentalists.'"[38]

Operation Defensive Shield, launched in late March 2002, provided a further example of Azzam's ideological impact on Hamas. During the operation, large numbers of books, essays, videotapes, and audiocassettes, statements by Azzam, and slogans praising him were found in Hamas mosques and institutions and in the homes of Hamas members. During the operation, the IDF entered the Muslim Youth Association, one of Hamas' education and welfare institutions, and found an academic paper written by a student from Hebron about Abdullah Azzam. The paper was dedicated to "the *mujahideen* who are fighting for the sake of Allah, to the *shahids* who have been killed sanctifying the name of Allah, to the children of Abdullah Azzam, and all those who studied his teachings and followed his path in Palestine." This paper in a Hamas educational institution is evidence not only of the great interest Azzam still holds for the movement but also of the importance the movement ascribes to instilling his ideology in the younger generation.

Conclusion

The paths of Abdullah Azzam and Osama Bin Laden crossed in 1984 at a critical juncture in the lives of both men. Azzam, a brilliant, authoritative, charismatic demagogue and world-renowned Muslim theologian well connected to the Afghani *mujahideen* leadership, captivated the young, ambitious Bin Laden, who grew stronger in his religious practice and beliefs and sought to learn more and enter into the heart of the Afghani jihad. Bin Laden extended tremendous financial support to Azzam when the latter moved to Peshawar and started recruiting both Arab and non-Arab Muslims volunteers to the Afghani jihad. Azzam, known as the "patriarch of Arab and non-Arab Muslim volunteers," represented for Bin Laden not only a father figure to replace his own dead father but also a constant fount of religious wisdom and radical Islamic ideology hitherto unknown to him. Azzam was the one who gave Bin Laden his understanding of jihad and *istishhad*, which has continued to guide him and al-Qaeda for over the decades.

The connection between Azzam and Palestine was never severed. He viewed Hamas as the spearhead in the religious confrontation between Muslims and Jews in Palestine and his link to the place he sought to return to. Therefore, he maintained close relations with the movement

and made sure to support it financially and ideologically. Hamas viewed him as its guide and placed him at the top of its list of martyrs.

Although Azzam was the guiding light of both Hamas and al-Qaeda, the two organizations are now estranged from one another for a number of reasons. First, Hamas' willingness to sign a hudna with Israel represented the crossing of a red line for Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri. Second, Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri are both opposed to the way Hamas applies *shariah* (Muslim religious law) in the Gaza Strip. Third, according to al-Zawahiri, Hamas and Fatah signing the Mecca Agreement (February 8, 2007) paved the way for abdicating Palestine and ceding it to the Jews. Fourth, the restraint shown by Hamas towards Israel since the end of Operation Cast Lead (January 2009), evident in the drastic reduction of rocket launches, is seen by Bin Laden and his deputy as a show of weakness. Finally, Hamas is worried about the growing strength of al-Qaeda and affiliated global jihad organizations in the Gaza Strip, for two primary reasons – the threat to Hamas' hegemony in leading the Islamic stream in the Gaza Strip and the possible damage to Hamas interests as a result of unrestrained activity of those groups against Israel at a time when Hamas is interested in calm. On one occasion only has al-Qaeda given kudos to Hamas: when Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in June 2007. Then, al-Zawahiri congratulated Hamas and expressed his hope that it would rule on the basis of *shariah*.

Notes

1   Throughout this essay the word jihad is used in its narrow, militant sense, rather than in its broader sense.
2   Asaf Maliach and Shaul Shay, *From Kabul to Jerusalem: Al-Qaeda, Global Islamic Jihad and the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation* (Tel Aviv: Matar Publication, 2009), chapters 1 and 2.
3   Abdullah Azzam, "The Solid Base," *Al-Jihad* 41 (April 1988), p. 4.
4   Abdullah Azzam, *Words from the Front Line* (no publication information available). See: http://www.angelfire.com/id/azzam/images/30.zip, July 11, 2000.
5   Azzam, "The Solid Base," pp. 4-5.
6   Abdullah Azzam, "Who Are the *Shahids*?" *Lahib al-Maraqah* (Peshawar), 86 (January 13, 1990): 29. The monthly *Lahib al-Maraqah* is published by the Office of Services for the *Mujahideen*. Azzam served as its editor in chief until his death.
7   Abdullah Azzam, *A Muslim Nation's Jihad*, no publication information available, p. 54; Abdullah Azzam, *In Jihad: Jurisprudence and Intellectual Effort*

to Infer Law, (Peshawar: the Office of Services for the *Mujahideen*, no date), p. 135; Translation of verse 97 in Sura 4 – Women (al-Nisaa) – of the Quran is taken from: http://islamawakened.org/quran/4/97/default.htm.

8   For more on this point, see Asaf Maliach, "Bin Ladin, Palestine and al-Qaeda's Operational Strategy," *Middle Eastern Studies* (May 2008): 362-64.

9   Abdullah Azzam, *In the Sea of Battle* (Peshawar: the Office of Services for the *Mujahideen*, 1989). See: http://www.angelfire.com/id/azzam/images/32.zip, July 11, 2000.

10 Abdullah Azzam, *Fulfilling Submission* (Kuwait: Homemade videotape, 1989).

11 Abdullah Azzam, *Palestine Memories* (Peshawar: al-Shahid Azzam information center, no date). See: http://www.angelfire.com/id/azzam/images/41.zip, July 11, 2000.

12 Abdullah Azzam, *Abdullah Azzam* (Oklahoma City: Islamic Association of Palestine, 1988), videotape.

13 Osama Bin Laden, "The two explosions in al-Riyadh and al-Khubar are a letter for the Americans who did not get the message. Sudan has sold the Afghanis and Arabs very cheaply. I will never go back there." *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 2350 (November 27, 1996), p. 5.

14 Abdullah Azzam, *The Defense of Muslim Lands – the Most Important of Individual Obligations* (Amman: al-Risalah al-Hadithah Library, 1987), p. 70 (long version).

15 Azzam, *The Defense of Muslim Lands*, pp. 70, 73; see also Abdullah Azzam, *Join the Caravan* (Sana: al-Jil al-Jadid Library, 1990), p. 17.

16 Azzam, *The Defense of Muslim Lands,* p. 42.

17 Azzam, *The Defense of Muslim Lands*, p. 73; see also Abdullah Azzam, *A Month among the Giants* (Peshawar, The Shahid Azzam Information Center, 1989). See: http://www.angelfire.com/id/azzam/images/41.zip, July 11, 2000.

18 Abdullah Azzam, *The Safety Valve* (Peshawar: the Office of Services for the *Mujahideen*, 1989), videotape. As for educational contents, Azzam stressed the need to provide religious instruction first, and only afterwards teach other subjects such as the fundamentals of social and economic regimes. According to Azzam, flipping the order was the same as "sowing seeds in the wind and expecting the seeds to grow into trees in the air." See Abdullah Azzam, *Educating for Jihad and Constructing It* (Peshawar: the Office of Services for the *Mujahideen*, no date), p. 20.

19 Azzam, "It is enough for us that the Creator helps us and makes our lives pleasant," *Al-Jihad*, 61 (November 1989), p. 7.

20 Ibid. See also Abdullah Azzam, *The Axis of the Historical Turning Point* (Peshawar: The Shahid Azzam Information Center, no date), p. 8. The use of the expression "Jewish merchants of war" is common in Azzam's writings and speeches; he even published a book entitled *The Merchants of War*, referring to the Jews in the title.

21 Abdullah Azzam, *Questions and Answers about Jihad* (Peshawar: the Office of Services for the *Mujahideen*, no date). See: http://www.angelfire.com/id/azzam/images/41.zip, July 11, 2000. See also Abdullah Azzam, *Hamas: The Historical Roots and the Charter* (Peshawar: the Office of Services for the *Mujahideen*, 1990), p. 128.

22 "Mashal Offers Israel Conditional Temporary Truce," *BBC Arabic* (January 31, 2006). See: http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/middle_east_news/newsid_4665000/4665576.stm.

23 http://www.submission.org/suras/sura9.htm.

24 Abdullah Azzam, *Hamas: The Historical Roots and the Charter*, pp. 90-93.

25 "The Version of Ayman al-Zawahiri's Statement," *Al-Jazeera*, March 6, 2006. See: http://www.aljazeera.net/news/archive/archive?ArchiveId=313733.

26 Abdullah Azzam, *Abdullah Azzam*, videotape.

27 Azzam, *Hamas: The Historical Roots and the Charter*, pp. 79, 82.

28 Abdullah Azzam, *Questions and Answers about Jihad*, p. 31.

29 Hussni Adham Garar, *The Martyr Abdullah Azzam: Propagandist and School of Jihad* (Amman: Dar al-Diyaa, 1990), p. 267.

30 Poster 51 of Hamas entitled, "On the Third Year of the *Intifada*: Our Nation Cleaves to Its Eternal Slogan – Jihad: Victory or Martyr's Death" (December 17, 1989); on December 22, 1989, a correction to the poster was issued in which the date of the strike was changed from December 25 to December 27, ostensibly as a gesture to Palestinian Christians celebrating Christmas.

31 Condolence announcement issued by Hamas published in Vol. 63 of the monthly *al-Jihad*, January 1990, p. 54.

32 Garar, *The Martyr Abdullah Azzam*, p. 268.

33 "The Distinguished Cleric, Graduate of Al-Azhar University, Dr. Abdullah Azzam, in the Caravan of Martyrs," *Falastin al-Muslimah*, 5-6 (January 1990), p. 8.

34 Aviva Shabi and Ronny Shaked, *Hamas: From Belief in God to Terrorism* (Jerusalem: Keter Publication, 1994), p. 299.

35 http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/Hebrew/heb_n/html/hamas_073.htm, website of the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (MALAM), June 26, 2009.

36 Kathim Ayish, "Under the Microscope: Abdullah Azzam – Part One," *al-Jazeera* (February 20, 2003).

37 Muhammad Kathim Sawalhah, "Under the Microscope: Abdullah Azzam – Part One," *al-Jazeera* (February 20, 2003).

38 Said Hassan al-Hutari, "The will of the Martyr Said Hassan al-Hutari, who Carried out the Sacrifice Operation in Tel Aviv," *Palestinian Information Center* (a Hamas website), April 13, 2010. See: http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/Hamas/shuhda/alhotri/alhotri.htm; the citation used by al-Hutari is taken from Abdullah Azzam, "So that the Islamic nation does not die an eternal death," *al-Jihad*, 63 (January 1990), p. 29.

An al-Qaeda Balance Sheet

Assaf Moghadam

Nine years after the 9/11 attacks, there is a growing sense among academic, government, and think tank counterterrorism analysts that al-Qaeda is losing the battle against its enemies, led by the West in general and the United States in particular.[1] Indeed, there are ample signs that al-Qaeda is in trouble, including its loss of important operational leaders; defeat or near defeat of various al-Qaeda franchises outside the Afghan-Pakistani headquarters; and a slew of ideological challenges leveled against the group by some of its former allies. Despite these and other setbacks, however, a number of recent successful and unsuccessful plots serve as a stark reminder of the ingenuity, adaptability, and resilience of the al-Qaeda-led global jihad movement.[2] On August 27, 2009, for example, Abdullah Hassan Talea Asiri, a Saudi national, attempted to blow up Saudi Arabia's assistant interior minister, Prince Muhammad bin Nayef, using a highly sophisticated device he had hidden either in his body or in his underwear.[3] The terrorist was a former member of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) who deceived the Saudi government into believing that he had sworn off terrorism. On Christmas Day 2009, Nigerian citizen Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab attempted to detonate explosives hidden in his underwear on Northwest Airlines flight 253, but was restrained by alert passengers. Also in December 2009, Humam

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Khalil al-Balawi, a Saudi national, blew himself up at a CIA base in Khost, Afghanistan, killing seven CIA officers. Balawi had been an informer for the Jordanian GID and played a highly sophisticated double game, leading his Jordanian handlers into believing that he had rightfully earned their trust.

Despite years of efforts by Western governments to counter al-Qaeda's jihadist narrative, in the year 2010 al-Qaeda's guiding ideology, the Salafi jihad, continues to attract followers, while the internet continues to serve as the group's main platform for disseminating its ideology and promoting violent extremism. This paper will offer a balance sheet of al-Qaeda's current strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, the conflict between al-Qaeda and the West has become a war of perceptions centering on the question of which of the two sides is more harmful to the Islamic *umma*.

An al-Qaeda Scorecard

Despite much talk in recent years of al-Qaeda's imminent demise, al-Qaeda capitalizes on a number of core strengths that guarantee its relevance at least in the foreseeable future. The first and most obvious strength is the fact that after regrouping along the Afghan-Pakistan border region, al-Qaeda has been able to reestablish a safe haven for itself, which not only provides a training ground but also affords it an opportunity to link up to other like-minded groups. The fact that al-Qaeda's current safe haven is less ideal than its former safe haven in Afghanistan is less important.

The second strength is that al-Qaeda's core ideological arguments remain appealing, foremost among them the charge that the United States is waging a war on Islam. All else being equal, as long as US troops remain in Arab and Muslim countries, al-Qaeda's ability to rally individuals to its side will persist. Accusing the United States of a conspiracy against Islam is easier for al-Qaeda when it can point to the presence of US forces in the Middle East.

A third core advantage of al-Qaeda is the ongoing appeal of its guiding Salafi-jihadist ideology, which prides itself on its inclusiveness. It is easy to adopt Salafi-jihadist tenets, and hence it is easy to become a follower (if not a formal member) of al-Qaeda. Unlike some groups or cults that require rigid entrance exams and other practices that limit the pool of potential candidates, al-Qaeda welcomes recruits with open arms.

Deep knowledge of Islamic theology is not required to be identified with the movement, and from an organizational point of view may even be counterproductive, since ignorance facilitates radicalization. What is required is merely identification with the basic world view presented by this religious ideology: that Islam is in decline as a result of an anti-Islamic conspiracy, and that only jihad (understood solely in militant terms) can redeem the Islamic religion and return it to its former grandeur. In other words, it is the strength of weak ties that makes the Salafi jihad so appealing to some, and so frustrating an ideology to challenge for the West. It is the inclusivity of Salafi-jihadist ideology, and also the lack of alternative ideologies that can compete with Salafi jihadism that attracts a growing number of converts into the movement.

A fourth core advantage of al-Qaeda is that despite sporadic successes by the West in shutting down jihadist websites, the internet continues to work in al-Qaeda's favor. The United States and its allies have been hard pressed to find a suitable counterweight to global jihad's incitement and propaganda efforts. In the Afghan-Pakistan tribal region and al-Qaeda's regional nodes, al-Qaeda and its affiliates have built up a dedicated media campaign. In the tribal belt, for example, DVDs, movies, and other media produced by local branches of companies such as As-Sahab, Ummat Studios, and Jundullah CD Center feature jihadist propaganda in Urdu, Pashto, Arabic, and other languages. Al-Fajr media center provides copies of such videos in German, Italian, French, Turkish, and a host of other languages.

Offsetting many of al-Qaeda's advantages, however, are several signs that the group has been significantly weakened in recent years. These signs include the capture of important al-Qaeda members such as Abu Faraj al-Libi in May 2005 and the killing of others, such as Hamza Rabia (November 2005); Abu Laith al-Libi (January 2008); Abu Sulayman al-Jazairi (May 2008); Abu Khabab al-Masri (July 2008); Saleh al-Somali (December 2009); and Saeed al-Masri (May 2010). Accompanying the loss of al-Qaeda senior leaders has been the defeat or near defeat of a number of al-Qaeda's local affiliates. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, prior to its current reincarnation in Yemen, had virtually ceased to exist, while al-Qaeda in Iraq is a shadow of its former self.

Al-Qaeda has been further plagued by a series of recantations and defections by such formerly venerated jihadists as Abdul Qadir bin Abdul

Aziz, also known as Dr. Fadl, or the Saudi cleric Salman al-Awdah. These more recent recantations follow previous condemnations of isolated acts of extreme jihadist violence by theologians highly respected in the jihadist community, including Abu Basir al-Tartusi, who rejected the usefulness of the London bombings, and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who condemned AQI's systematic targeting of Shia civilians. Figures that are more marginal within the jihadist movement have also distanced themselves from al-Qaeda's violent tactics. Top Deobandi institutions such as the Dar ul-Ulum Deoband have issued *fatwas* condemning terrorism, while former members of the radical Hizb ut-Tehreer have formed Quilliam, an institution designed to voice opposition to terrorist violence. Finally, in places like Algeria and other countries across the Muslim world, individuals have begun protesting suicide attacks and other forms of extremist violence.

Exacerbating al-Qaeda's problems in recent years are a number of underlying weaknesses and long term challenges. The first is on the structural level, where al-Qaeda has to witness bad behavior of local affiliates. The clearest example of an al-Qaeda affiliate spiraling out of control and giving al-Qaeda a bad name was that of al-Qaeda in Iraq during the Zarqawi years, when the slaughter of Shia Muslims alienated many members of the *umma*. This and similar problems are challenges to al-Qaeda inherent in its structure as a globalized organization. Al-Qaeda's networked organization is not only an advantage but can be an impediment as well.

Competition from state and non-state entities presents another challenge. Iran poses one of these problems for al-Qaeda due to its ongoing defiance of the West, and especially the United States, which runs in the face of al-Qaeda's credibility in claiming the status as the Muslim world's leading anti-American force. Iranian foreign policy successes such as its determined pursuit of nuclear weapons, the growing regional role it attempts to play, and its hostile attitude to Israel are problems for al-Qaeda because they remind al-Qaeda's current and potential supporters of the discrepancy between what the group preaches and what it does. It underscores al-Qaeda's failure to attack Israel and act against Iran despite the jihadist movement's extremist rhetoric vis-à-vis these states. Al-Qaeda also perceives popular Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizbollah as a threat. Indeed, Hizbollah's ability to

stand up to Israel in the 2006 war cast the militant Shia organization as the Muslim world's only group able to fight the Jewish state. Similar to the case of Iran, the political and military success of Hizbollah undermines al-Qaeda's ability to claim a leadership role for the Islamic community at large.

The recantations and condemnations by individuals who were part of al-Qaeda's foundational history, meanwhile, have presented al-Qaeda with what are perhaps the most significant challenges, namely those on the ideological level. Al-Qaeda has been put in the extremely uncomfortable position of having to defend itself against charges that its actions cause the death of countless innocent Muslims. Whether al-Qaeda actively calls for and/or sponsors these killings using ideological justifications of fighting apostate Muslims; whether it turns a blind eye to Muslim deaths, arguing that the ends justify the means; or whether al-Qaeda genuinely tries to minimize Muslim fatalities is beside the point. The fact that its attacks have so far not only failed to bring about redemption to the Islamic people but have increased Muslim deaths is al-Qaeda's major weakness, and one that the West should continue to expose.

Ultimately, one of the most important battles in the overall war against al-Qaeda will be the battle of perceptions. Al-Qaeda and the United States are engaged in a battle where each side contends that the other side is harming the Muslim *umma*. Al-Qaeda argues that the United States is harmful to Muslims in that it is leading a war against Islam, humiliating the *umma* through its ongoing occupation of Islamic lands, and supporting Israel and authoritarian Arab and Muslim governments. The United States, on the other hand, is pointing its fingers at the real life consequences of al-Qaeda's actions – the killing of countless of innocent Muslims and al-Qaeda's failure to provide measurable improvements for the lives of ordinary Muslims.

The battle will be decided based on which of the two sides proves more skillful in this battle of perceptions. The more skillful party will successfully highlight the perceived weaknesses of the enemy, but also prove that its intentions and the consequences of its actions are helpful to the *umma*. It will also better deflect attention away from the charges and accusations hurled from the other side. To defeat al-Qaeda in the battle of perceptions, the United States must do more on each of these three

fronts of the battle of perceptions. Only if the United States is able to demonstrate credibly the horrific results of al-Qaeda's actions, assure the *umma* of America's benevolent intentions vis-à-vis the Islamic world, and defend itself more skillfully against baseless accusations will it prevail in the war against al-Qaeda.

Notes

1   See, for example, Kristen Chick, "CIA Director says Al Qaeda on the Run as a Leader Killed in US Drone Strike," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 18, 2010.

2   The global jihad movement is defined here as a transnational movement of like-minded jihadists led by al-Qaeda. It includes affiliated and associated individuals, networks, and groups. The term "affiliated" denotes groups that have formal ties to al-Qaeda, and have often adopted the al-Qaeda name for themselves, e.g., al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The term "associated" refers to entities with more informal ties to al-Qaeda, i.e., those that are influenced by al-Qaeda's guiding ideology but that have not sworn loyalty to Bin Laden. This categorization is not perfect – some groups associated with al-Qaeda have not fully adopted al-Qaeda's ideology, and other groups fall into a gray area between associates and affiliates. However, for descriptive purposes in this article, that division shall suffice. For a discussion of the origins and evolution of al-Qaeda and its guiding ideology, and for a description of the transition from al-Qaeda to a global jihad movement, see Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 62-151.

3   Earlier reports that the bomber had hidden the device in his rectal cavity have yet to be confirmed.

Al-Qaeda and Suicide Terrorism:
Vision and Reality

Yoram Schweitzer

Introduction

Suicide bombings are not a new phenomenon in the annals of contemporary terrorism. Hizbollah in Lebanon was the first to make modern use of this weapon; it was later adopted by other organizations around the world. What characterizes modern suicide terrorism and sets it apart from suicide attacks carried out from the first century until the middle of the 20th is that it is perpetrated by means of explosives carried on the suicide attacker's body or on some type of mobile platform driven by the suicide attacker into his target, which he detonates along with himself.

About fifteen years after suicide terrorism became part of the global terrorism repertoire, al-Qaeda adopted the weapon and made it into its trademark. The organization has refined the technique and given it dramatic significance, such that at times it has proven far more lethal than previous forms of terrorism. The way al-Qaeda operates terrorism, with an emphasis on cultivating and disseminating suicide terrorism, derives from its ideological code and its corresponding administrative operational approach. They are the leitmotif of al-Qaeda's ideological and propaganda rhetoric that propounds its Salafist-jihadist worldview; the rhetoric is then put into practice through terrorism of a particularly dramatic and lethal kind by suicide bombers. Because al-Qaeda sees itself at the forefront of global jihad and a paragon for its affiliates, it seeks to instill among Muslims around the world its militant worldview in general and the proper way to conduct the armed struggle via suicide

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terrorism in particular. At the same time, al-Qaeda does not demand that the entire global jihad community surrender to its authority and heed its commands. On the contrary: al-Qaeda encourages independent action in order to realize together the destiny of the global jihad it preaches.

Al-Qaeda's Concept of Istishhad

Bin Laden's interpretation of Islam's commandments makes the obligation to jihad, including *istishhad* (self-sacrifice), into a fundamental credo. It joins the five traditional precepts incumbent on every Muslim, thereby turning Islamic martyrdom into a supreme al-Qaeda value. In addition to being a particularly effective tactical tool, this weapon has become an organization ideal and trademark, expressing the willingness of Muslim fighters to make the supreme self-sacrifice that – in their minds – God has commanded them to do. The unqualified willingness to sacrifice life represents the moral advantage the Muslim fighter has over his enemies and equals or even exceeds its tactical value. Al-Qaeda, having constructed its organizational ethos on voluntary self-sacrifice and translating this ethos into practice through suicide attacks, has worked hard to instill the principle of *istishhad* among new recruits. As such, it has turned the willingness to sacrifice oneself into the most important trait the organization looks for in its new recruits,[1] and the sacrifice of life on the road to God is described in terms of supreme joy: "We ask of you the joy of beholding your face and we long to meet you under happy circumstances…Take us to you."[2] Bin Laden himself, offering words of encouragement to organization members to adhere to this path – because of its moral importance and its effectiveness in instilling fear in the enemy – has called on those flocking to him "to be diligent in performing suicide missions: these missions, thank God, have become a great source of enemy terror and fear…These are the most important actions."[3] Referring to himself, he said: "I do not fear death. On the contrary, I desire the death of a martyr. My martyrdom would lead to the birth of thousands of Osamas."[4]

The underlying message in the glorification of self-sacrifice is embodied in what has become the motto of would-be *ishtishhadists*: "We love death more than our enemies love life." This message seeks to broadcast the fearlessness of the jihadists in the face of the prospect of losing physical life on this earth, which is in any case temporary, in favor

of the pure everlasting afterlife. The motto implies the depth of belief of the pure Muslim fighters compared to the spiritual weakness, flaccidity, hedonism, and immorality of their enemies. The organization's success in instilling the *ishtishhad* ethos in many of its members and convincing them to volunteer for action was reflected in the testimony of a senior commander who was responsible for dispatching many suicides bombers: "We have never lacked for potential suicides. We have a division called the Suicide Department." When asked if it was still active, he answered yes, and noted: "It will always be active as long as we are in a jihad against the heretics and the Zionists."[5]

According to al-Qaeda, sacrifice on God's behalf will ensure the ultimate victory of Islam against heresy, the victory of spirit over matter, the soul over the body, life beyond this world over everyday reality, and especially good over evil. In its philosophy, sacrifice represents emotional acceptance and moral justification of the act on the part of the suicide terrorists themselves and the organization.

From Vision to Practice

In order to realize its vision in practice and conduct an active war of jihad through a campaign of suicide attacks, al-Qaeda established a special apparatus called the Unit for Attacks Abroad, responsible for carrying out attacks outside of Afghanistan. This unit is also in charge of cultivating contacts and assisting terrorists who adopted al-Qaeda's operational doctrine but were acting outside the organization, as well as for recruiting new members and training them for operational and logistical missions abroad. The unit is run from Afghanistan and Pakistan and is in touch with its representatives in various locations around the world. The unit, an integral part of the organization's hierarchy, reports directly to the commander of the military unit. It has always been headed by senior members with operational experience and organizational seniority, including Khaled Sheikh Muhammad, the planner and executor of the 9/11 attacks (in custody since March 2003), Mahmad Rabia (killed in 2005), Abu Ubaidah al-Masri (died in 2008, probably of hepatitis), and Abu Sallah al-Somali (killed in 2009).[6]

Though al-Qaeda assisted terrorists already in the early 1990s, it started launching its own independent attacks only in August 1998 – notwithstanding the reputation that attributed to it dozens of terrorist

attacks worldwide. In practice, from 1998 until 2010, the organization carried out a total of about ten attacks, most of which have been suicide attacks. Al-Qaeda has attempted to carry several other attacks in various countries around the world but these were foiled. In addition, the organization was involved in attacks in battle zones in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. Al-Qaeda assisted indirectly in some of these attacks, while others were perpetrated by al-Qaeda's Taliban associates or al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Several factors account for the relatively low number of al-Qaeda attacks abroad. The first is a policy decision by organization commanders, who prefer to focus on a relatively small number of "boutique attacks," i.e., attacks of particularly high quality, planned with great thoroughness over a significant period of time, in order to ensure their success and to serve as models for emulation by fellow jihadists.

Second, despite al-Qaeda's image thanks to the showcase attacks it carried out and especially because of the sophisticated propaganda machine it developed, in reality the organization is relatively small in terms of its manpower; at its peak, it numbered only a few hundred active members. In addition, the financial resources at its disposal are limited and cannot compare to the means and capabilities available to a state, however small. This means a significant limitation on al-Qaeda's ability to carry out widespread terrorist activity against its enemies.

Third, the organization's involvement in two major war arenas in the last decade, Afghanistan (from late 2001 until 2003) and Iraq (2003-2010), and recently in an intensive, frontal confrontation with reinforced United States and NATO troops in the Af-Pak arena, has forced al-Qaeda's commanders to focus their attention primarily on the organization's survival and has decreased the resources available to terrorist activity outside these arenas of conflict. This is one of the reasons the organization both assists and is increasingly dependent on its close confederates.

Fourth, the senior operational commanders and activists in the Unit for Attacks Abroad, currently responsible for terrorism beyond the Af-Pak arena, are central and repeated targets of attempts to arrest or eliminate them on the part of the armies and security services of many countries around the world. These efforts have often succeeded and several of the organization's commanders and senior operatives are no longer in active positions.

Nonetheless, since 1998 al-Qaeda has carried out a string of deadly showcase attacks, including three suicide attacks before 9/11 and some seven afterwards. However, the several unsuccessful attempts highlight the difficulty the organization finds itself in, and in particular the specifically-designated unit.

The attacks prior to 9/11 include the suicide attacks on the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (August 1998), in which 224 people were killed and some 5,000 injured; the suicide attack on the *USS Cole* (October 2000), which killed 17 sailors and injured about 40; and the "proxy" attack – a suicide attack carried out on September 9, 2001 by two people impersonating journalists who blew themselves up, killing Massoud Shah, the leader of the Northern Front, the main opposition to the Afghani Taliban, in order to promote the interests of their Taliban hosts. The assassination of Massoud Shah took place two days before the showcase attack in the United States, and seems to have been designed to prevent an effective response against the Taliban and al-Qaeda by the Northern Front under his command. The 9/11 attacks, carried out as multiple suicide attacks, were innovative in many ways: the strategic aspects of the targets; the number of people killed; the massive economic damage and ramifications, which far exceeded the immediate locales of the actual attacks; and the tactical-operative aspect of combining a number of different lethal patterns, from hijacking planes and sequestering hostages to using fully fueled airplanes as explosives.

After 9/11, the jewel in al-Qaeda's crown, the organization carried out a number of other suicide attacks. Two were carried out by solo suicides bombers: the first was Nizar Nawar, who detonated explosives near the synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia (2002);[7] the second was Richard Colvin Reid – the "shoe bomber" – whose handlers instructed him to blow himself up while aboard an American Airlines plane before its scheduled landing in the United States by means of explosives hidden in his shoes (December 2001). The other attacks abroad were carried out by terrorist cells recruited, trained, directed, and supervised by senior operators of the Unit for Attacks Abroad. The first was the attack in Kenya in November 2002, which aimed directly at Israeli targets in Mombasa by means of a terrorist network operated by Faizul Harous, a senior operational agent in the Unit for Attacks Abroad, who had previous experience in the area and who commanded the action locally. The attacks in Mombasa were

carried out simultaneously and included the attempted downing of an Arkia passenger plane by missile fire and the explosion of a car bomb driven by two suicide operatives into a hotel frequented by Israeli tourists. In November 2003, a local terrorist cell controlled by the al-Qaeda command carried out two double suicide attacks in Turkey within five days of one another. In Istanbul, two synagogues – Neve Shalom and Beit Israel – were attacked by a truck bomb on November 15. The two synagogues were destroyed; 27 people, including six Jews and the rest Turkish Muslims, were killed and some 300 people were injured. On November 20, two attacks were carried out simultaneously against British targets: two truck bombs exploded near a branch of HSBC and the British Consulate in Istanbul, killing 30, including the British consul general, and injuring 400. Again, most of the victims were Turkish Muslims.[8] In July 2005, a terrorist cell controlled by the Unit for Attacks Abroad and supervised by a senior operator carried out a suicide attack on London's public transportation, targeting three trains and one bus. Fifty-two people were killed in these attacks and dozens were injured. The attack was carried out by three British subjects of Pakistani extraction and another terrorist from Jamaica, who banded together in their hometown of Leeds; after they were trained at an al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan, they were sent on their suicide mission.

Additional suicide attacks in Great Britain under al-Qaeda direction were attempted and foiled in 2004-2009. The most prominent among them was the attempt by a local terrorist cell to carry out suicide attacks on at least seven airborne aircraft, but this was foiled in August 2006 in late planning stages.[9] In addition, in recent years al-Qaeda has tried – unsuccessfully – to carry out suicide attacks in the United States several times using recruits who are American citizens of Muslim heritage, and it seems that transportation as a target, such as the operational idea behind the suicide terrorists in London, is preferred, both in the air and in the subway systems.[10]

Al-Qaeda Associates Adopt and Emulate the Ishtishhad Model

The use of suicide attacks has spread and multiplied among the terrorist organizations that have adopted al-Qaeda's Salafist-jihadist philosophy. This was especially apparent in regard to terrorist organizations and networks that cooperated very closely with al-Qaeda, such as Jama'a

Islamiyaa, active in Southeast Asia, which carried out a string of suicide attacks in Indonesia, including the October 12, 2002 attack in Bali, killing 202, and the attack on the Marriott Hotel on August 5, 2003, killing 12 and injuring 150.[11] In addition, terrorist organizations in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the Maghreb that swore allegiance to Bin Laden and thereafter announced their merger with al-Qaeda and received authorization from the organization's leadership also began launching suicide attacks.

In 2003, a string of suicide attacks began in Saudi Arabia, first against the residences of foreigners working in the kingdom and later directed against the kingdom's security establishment and governmental apparatus. The most recent attack to have been carried out by the united al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and Yemen after the January 2009 official announcement of the merger with al-Qaeda, also called al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,[12] was directed against the deputy minister of the interior and carried out by a Saudi suicide bomber who arrived for a meeting and then blew himself up using an explosive device hidden in his underwear; the attack failed to kill the intended victim. The organization was likewise responsible for dispatching Abd al-Mutaleb with an explosive device hidden in his underwear who tried blowing himself up while on board an American Airlines plane over Detroit (December 2009). This was the first time the organization operated outside of Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and the attack may have been coordinated with al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda in the Muslim Maghreb, whose unification with al-Qaeda was announced in September 2006,[13] carried out a number of suicide attacks after the merger, some of which were directed at senior government personnel in Algeria and UN facilities operating there; attempts were made to carry out suicide attacks in Morocco as well. Another organization that has sworn allegiance to Bin Laden and al-Qaeda and has been brought into its fold is the Somali al-Shabab. Having received al-Qaeda's blessing, it improved the level and quality of its targets and started carrying out suicide missions, particularly against senior government officials and foreign forces operating in Somalia. This organization took its first steps outside of its home base when it carried out two parallel suicide attacks in Kampala, capital of Uganda, at the end of the final soccer match of the World Cup in South Africa (July 2010).

The two organizations – al-Qaeda in Hajaz and the Somali al-Shabab – which until now did not act against or even threaten Israeli targets

have recently changed their policy, at least at the rhetorical level. Thus the deputy commander of al-Qaeda in Hajaz called for attacking Israel's interests and supporters all over the world, and in particular to block Israel's access to the Red Sea.[14] The leader of al-Shabab announced in November 2009 that his organization has established a special unit – al-Quds Brigades – that will focus on attacking Israeli interests in Africa and send operators to Israel and the Gaza Strip in order to help "oust Israelis from the holy places."[15]

As a result of their recent conduct, especially with regard to suicide attacks, one should take these organizations' threats seriously. The primary influence of al-Qaeda on the spread of suicide attacks has been felt in the main battlegrounds of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. To date, there have been more than 800 suicide attacks in Iraq (figure 1), most of them carried out by global jihadists and al-Qaeda operatives in Iraq. While the precise number of attacks carried out by these elements is unknown, it appears that at least some of them were carried out by Shiite organizations as part of the ethnic struggle against the Sunni enemy. In addition, the influence of al-Qaeda on the spread of suicide terrorism has been evident in Taliban activity in Afghanistan and Pakistan (figures 2 and 3). In recent years, hundreds of suicide attacks have been carried out in those two countries, where self-sacrifice has become a routine and effective lethal tactic of the organization.

Conclusion

Since 1998, when al-Qaeda invested in the suicide bombing enterprise, glorifying the attackers as paragons of self-sacrifice on the path to God and making this mode of attack a unifying organizational symbol and value, it turned the use of this method of action into its own leading weapon and the leading weapon of its global jihad affiliates. Al-Qaeda was the organization that turned suicide terrorism from a local problem into an international, border-crossing epidemic. Therefore, from being passive spectators of the "theater of suicide terrorism"[16] occurring in distant locations, many innocent citizens all over the world became unwilling participants and victims.

As an organization that carried out relatively few suicide attacks, it is clear that al-Qaeda's influence on the proliferation of this method far outweighs its nominal contribution to its actual use. One could certainly

Figure 1. Suicide attacks in Iraq: 2003–August 2010
Total: 899
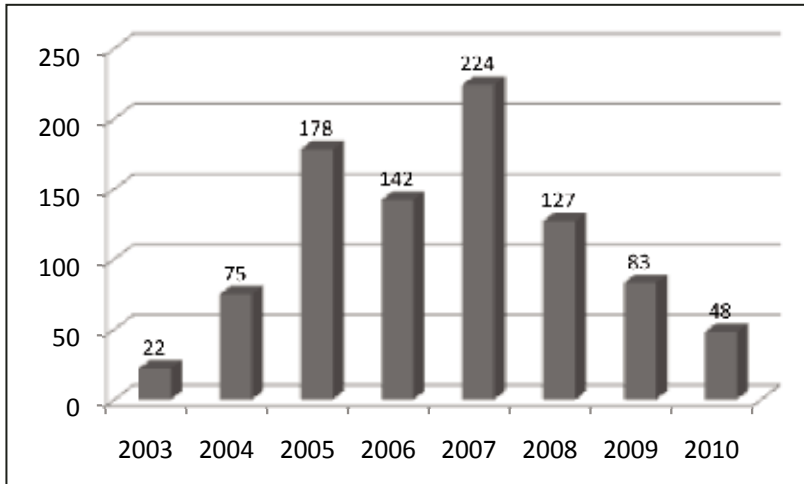
attribute this to the organization's responsibility for the dramatic terrorist attacks on American soil, but it should also be chalked up to the production capabilities of the sophisticated propaganda system it operates professionally and skillfully after its own attacks or the attacks of organizations identified with it, even if these were carried out without prior coordination.

The all-consuming, lethal, non-selective mindset that goes along with *istishhad* as per the Salafist-jihadist interpretation of those working according to the al-Qaeda model seemingly indicates that suicide attacks are likely to continue to be part of the terrorist arenas, locally and internationally, as long as al-Qaeda continues to operate, disseminate its teachings, and support their fulfillment. According to al-Qaeda's well-known doctrine and method of action, it is clear that the organization aspires to ever-higher standards, both in terms of showiness of the operations and in the scope of the ensuing damages, injuries, and deaths. Until this organization and the extremist ideology disseminated by it encounter an appropriate ideological and practical response, the suicide phenomenon is liable to escalate and even spread to other countries that have yet to experience the wrath of al-Qaeda and its associates.

From the Israeli perspective, the resolve of al-Qaeda and its affiliates, especially those that have merged or maintain operational cooperation

Figure 2. Suicide attacks in Pakistan: 2002-2010 (August 2010)
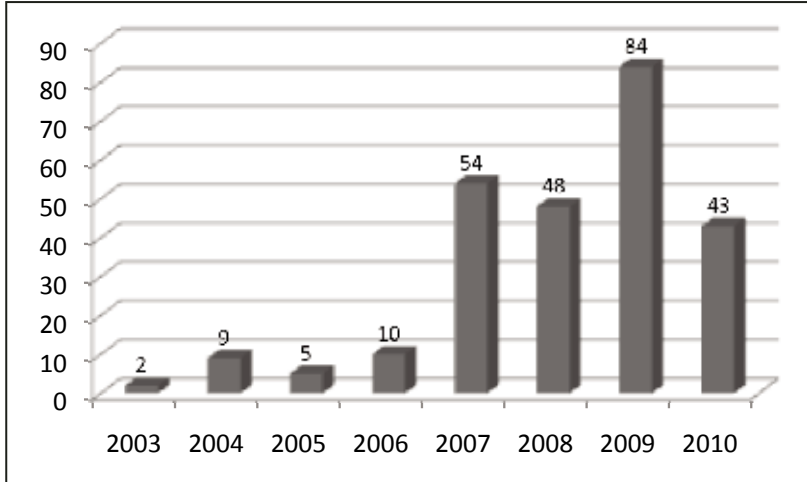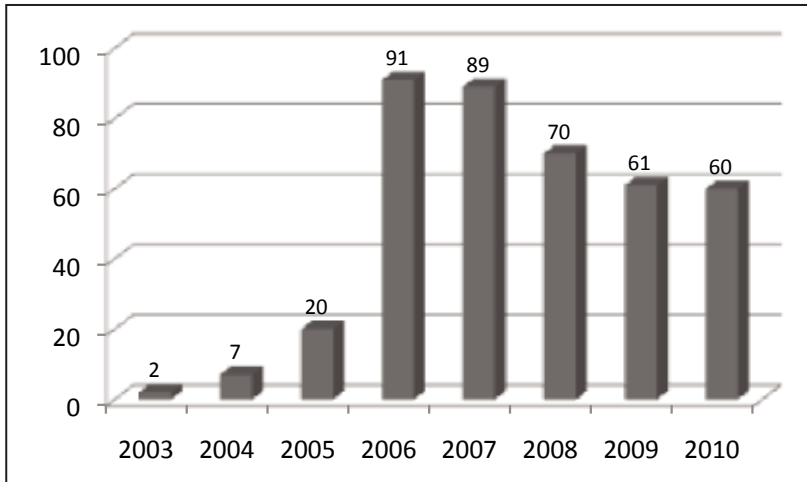Total: 255

Figure 3. Suicide attacks in Afghanistan: 2001-2010 (August 2010)
Total: 398

with it, to spread the use of suicide attacks to many targets abroad carries a strategic warning. As a result of the suicide attacks already perpetrated by al-Qaeda against Israeli and Jewish targets and the declared desire of the organization and its affiliates to pursue this course, it behooves us to relate to al-Qaeda's intentions with growing seriousness and to prepare for such eventualities, identifying the terrorist organizations and networks that share this intention. In this sense, one may view the showcase attack carried out in November 2009 in Mumbai by the so-called Army of the Pure, associated with al-Qaeda (and carried out not as a classical suicide attack in which the attackers explode along with their targets but rather as an attack of self-sacrifice that ended with the deaths of nine of the ten attackers), as a warning sign and a reminder of the concreteness of this danger.

Notes

1   National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States 9/11 Commission Report, Washington, United States, 2004, p. 234.
2   Abd al Aziz Mukrin, *South al-Jihad*, Vol. 18, June 3, 2004.
3   Quoted in Christopher M. Blanchard, "Al-Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology," CRS Report for Congress RL32759 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2005), p. 10.
4   "Osama says Taliban Rejected US Billions for Arrest," *Ausaf*, December 28, 1998, pp. 1, 7.
5   Fouda Yosri and Nick Fielding, *Masterminds of Terror* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003), p. 114.
6   Aviv Oreg, "Terror Analysis: Al-Qaeda's Special Operations Unit," *CeifiT*, April 10, 2008, http://www.ceifit.com/?categoryId=27211&itemId=40843.
7   Chris Hedges, "Tunisian Killed in Synagogue Blast Was Unlikely Convert to Militancy," June 9, 2002, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/09/world/tunisian-killed-in-synagogue-blast-was-unlikely-convert-to-militancy.html?sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all.
8   "Istanbul Rocked by Double Bombing," *BBC*, November 20, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3222608.stm.
9   Michael Holden and Matthew Jones, "Briton Guilty of Trans-Atlantic Airline Bomb Conspiracy," *Reuters*, December 9, 2009, http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE5B83VL20091209.
10 "Najibullah Zazi," *New York Times*, February 22, 2010, http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/z/najibullah_zazi/index.html?s=oldest; and Claire Suddath, "Bryant Neal Vinas: An American in Al Qaeda," Jul. 24, 2009 http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1912512,00.html#ixzz0wfLGPkoO.

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12 Abdul Hameed Bakier, "Al-Qaeda Leaders in the Arabian Peninsula Speak Out," *Terrorism Focus* 6, No. 3, January 28, 2009, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34420.

13 "Profile: Al-Qaeda in North Africa," *BBC*, June 3, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6545855.stm.

14 Sheila MacVicar, "Al Qaeda Bombers Learn from Drug Smugglers: New Technique of Storing Bomb Materials Inside Body Cavity Nearly Kills a Saudi Prince," *CBS Evening News*. September 28, 2009, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/09/28/eveningnews/main5347847.shtml.

15 Nick Wadhams, "Suicide Bombing Marks a Grim New Turn for Somalia," *Time*, Thursday, December 3, 2009, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1945398,00.html.

16 A paraphrase of the expression coined in the 1970s by Brian Jenkins of the Rand Corporation, describing terrorism as theater.

Defeating Suicide Terrorism in Judea and Samaria, 2002–2005

Gabi Siboni

Introduction

From mid 2005 suicide terrorism from Judea and Samaria stopped being a significant component of the IDF's war on Palestinian terrorism, thus marking the end of a long, demanding process that began with the Israeli government's decision to launch Operation Defensive Shield and have the IDF operate in Palestinian cities. It is difficult to determine precisely when the process concluded, but around the middle of 2005 the number of suicide attacks from Judea and Samaria dropped to a very low level, and since then this general trend has been maintained (figure 1).

Figure 1. Suicide Attacks, 2001–mid 2005
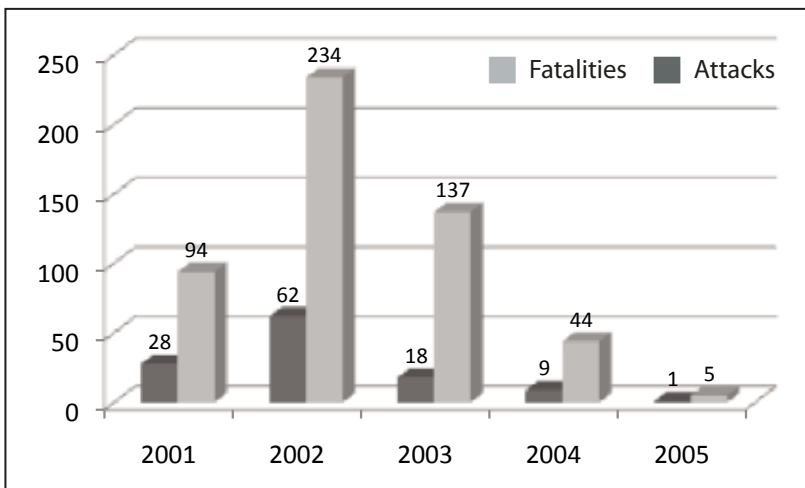
Source: IDF History Department

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Suicide attacks are a subject that has been studied and researched extensively,[1] with the primary emphasis on the phenomenon of suicide as a terrorist weapon. Yet although it has been nearly a decade since the outbreak of the violent Palestinian uprising,[2] the combat features used by the IDF and the security services against terrorism in general and suicide terrorism in particular, the most lethal form of terrorism, have not been studied in depth.[3] The purpose of this essay is to attempt to understand the major components of activity that resulted in the near eradication of the phenomenon. The focus of this paper is the war on terrorism in Judea and Samaria without dealing with terrorism from the Gaza Strip, which has developed and assumed different forms over the years and is beyond the scope of this essay.

This paper seeks to provide an historical picture of the processes employed by Israel in an attempt to foil suicide terrorism. The first part of the essay examines the political directives issued by the Israeli government to the IDF from 2000, when the fighting erupted, until the government decision that led to Operation Defensive Shield. These political directives framed the IDF's operational activities in Judea and Samaria. The second part examines the implementation of the directives and the development of the military and security response to suicide terrorism. This part of the essay also analyzes the process of formulating the military strategy for fighting terrorism in Judea and Samaria. It analyzes the concept of "military decision" in the context of this type of warfare, and examines the principles involved in fighting terrorism that developed and were applied in practice in Judea and Samaria in those years. The last part of the essay analyzes the ethical components of fighting a war on suicide terrorism that had the potential of being highly detrimental to the values of the IDF. In practice, the IDF and the General Security Service (GSS) succeeded in defeating suicide terrorism, and the IDF managed to preserve its fundamental values.

The Political Directive Issued to the IDF

The first related political directive was issued to the IDF in October 2000 and was updated in March 2001. The government decision to embark on Operation Defensive Shield in March 2002 can also be understood as a type of focused political directive. The original directive of October 2000 was composed of the following points:

a. Providing security and a sense of security to the Israeli population
b. Reducing the scope and intensity of the violence[4]
c. Preventing the other side from scoring successes through violence
d. Preventing internationalization of the conflict
e. Implementing security separation gradually and proportionally
f. Preventing regional deterioration
g. Renewing negotiations and reaching an agreement

When the fighting erupted, the IDF began to act according to operational plans that were formulated with the understanding that the year 2000 was liable to mark the outbreak of hostilities with the Palestinians. However, in those years the Israeli government was hard pressed to identify the enemy with any clarity. Was the confrontation against a collection of terrorist organizations, or was the State of Israel facing an organized Palestinian campaign? Furthermore, the government found it difficult to define the role of Palestinian Authority chairman Yasir Arafat in the fighting. It seemed that Arafat was enjoying the benefit of the doubt: he was seen by the international community as a moderating element, and by his constituents he was seen as a leader of the confrontation. Due to these difficulties, the IDF limited its activities in the Palestinian areas; it even refrained from realizing its full potential in Area A, which was under its control as stipulated by the security appendix to the Oslo Agreement.

This was the situation regarding the terrorist attacks before the government decided to act. Immediately following the suicide bombing at the Park Hotel in Netanya, the Israeli government decided to order an extensive military action against Palestinian terrorism. The government decision also cut through the Gordian knot of limitations on IDF activity in the entire sector and defined Arafat as an enemy. Below are the details of the political directive for Operation Defensive Shield recorded in the government decision of the night of March 28-29, 2002:

a. The government of Israel met tonight for a special meeting in light of the escalating severity of Palestinian terrorism.
b. The government approved guidelines for an extensive operational plan of action against Palestinian terrorism.
c. Israel will act to suppress the infrastructure of Palestinian terrorism in all its components, and will therefore undertake extensive action until the goal is met.

d. Arafat, who founded the coalition of terrorism against Israel, is an enemy and will be isolated at this stage.

e. In light of operational needs, the government approved the mobilization of reservists in order to allow the IDF continuous activity over time in the locations where terrorism is concentrated.

In practice, the decision signaled the start of effective combat and the construction of appropriate operational capabilities for this type of fighting. The processes related primarily to beginning operations in Palestinian cities and refugee camps, constructing operational and intelligence capabilities, and developing a command pattern that concentrated the core of the defense establishment's resources in a focused manner to achieve the goal.

In June 2003, about 15 months after Operation Defensive Shield, a ceasefire (hudna) between the Palestinians and Israel came into effect. It collapsed less than two months later when major attacks recurred. Once the ceasefire ended, the fighting continued and the terrorist organizations attempted to carry out attacks with the assistance of Hizbollah, which had deepened its hold on terrorist infrastructures in Judea and Samaria. Hizbollah became the most important driving force behind the attacks by funneling money, providing the technical knowledge, and connecting organizations with suicide terrorist cells.

The Development of the Operational Response

From mid 2002, when the IDF entered Palestinian cities and refugee camps, a pattern of action developed that allowed the Central Command forces and IDF headquarters in Judea and Samaria to maintain a high capacity of intelligence and preventive missions in the entire sector, while receiving intelligence directions from the GSS. These actions started to bear fruit and the scope of suicide attacks decreased. At the same time and on the basis of understanding that it was necessary to provide a broad context for the extensive operational activity underway, a parallel thought process began in late 2003. This process, set in motion in the Judea and Samaria Regional Division and supported by the Central Command, touched on several components, including the comprehensive strategic dimension. The goal was to formulate an overall military strategy for operational activity while examining the significance of "decision" in a confrontation with the Palestinians. Finally, there was an attempt to

formulate a total operational philosophy from which it would be possible to derive combat principles.[5] This process, which evolved in 2004, resulted in focused operational activity and made it possible to build on its successes.

The Military Strategy

The thought process taking place in the IDF analyzed several military strategies and a preliminary process examined some possible strategy alternatives:

a. *The strategy of attrition*.[6] This strategy seeks to wear down the other side and wrest a decision against terrorist elements by eroding both the ability and the desire to act. The use of terminology such as "demonstrating the price of defeat" in order to "win on points" or in order to "sting the Palestinian consciousness and ethos," and actions designed to effect these ends are derived from this strategy.

b. *The strategy of decision*.[7] This strategy seeks to wrest a decision from the Palestinians by forceful aggression, make it accept Israel's position, and paralyze its ability to act. The term "decision" was found to be problematic and was therefore recast in order to create the appropriate context for the fighting.

c. *The strategy of a reasonable security situation*. This strategy seeks to manage the conflict (in contrast to the drive to erode or gain a decision) and create "a reasonable situation"[8] in order to provide a convenient basis for statesmanship to achieve its goals.

In context of the alternatives, the term "decision" in warfare against terrorism in Judea and Samaria was analyzed in order to try to understand if actions by the IDF and the security forces could exact a decision against Palestinian terrorism according to the classical military definition. This process generated several insights. Regarding the operational forces' action on the ground (at the tactical level), the classical term "military decision" has a great deal of validity. Here we were dealing with a physical clash between IDF forces and terrorists. The missions were delimited in time and place and allowed immediate performance results. The comprehensive level of activity by the IDF headquarters in Judea and Samaria was seen as the system nexus connecting the tactical level with the IDF's comprehensive military strategic level.

However, using the phrase "tactical decision" in this context was problematic. Thus, the following insight emerged: the systemic goal was not always to seek a decision, and attaining the systemic goal was not always dependent on gaining a tactical decision over the enemy. As such, it was decided to focus on attaining a reasonable security situation given the circumstances as a central objective of the fighting. Finally, the strategic-military context of the fighting was analyzed. This generated the understanding that using the term "decision" was erroneous in the context of strategy. Support for this approach may be found in Israel Tal's book, *National Security*, which states:

> A state adopting an absolute strategy, striving to attain ambitious goals without addressing the reality of the limits of force, in the end suffers defeat and pays a steep price. The strategy of compromise derives from moderate national goals and does not define a rigid final objective.[9]

On the basis of this analysis, the following conclusions were drawn: (a) the term "strategic decision" and "systemic decision" should not be part of the terminology used in the confrontation; (b) the term "tactical decision" should stay in use and IDF forces must strive to attain a tactical decision in every encounter with the enemy; (c) finally, on the basis of the understanding that the optimal strategic and systemic goal was not decision but creation of a reasonable, lasting security situation, it was decided to adopt a strategy that sought to provide the State of Israel with a reasonable security situation.

Because of the need for focused action, three operational goals that had to suit the operational activity environment were identified: (a) neutralizing terrorists' ability to carry out effective terrorist activity[10] aimed at Israel's civilian front; (b) severing the connection between the PA and terrorist activity in Judea and Samaria and Israel's home front, and improving Israel's ability to create a more convenient strategic reality for a future dialogue with the Palestinian Authority; (c) creating maximal differentiation between the Palestinian public and terrorism. These three goals were the basis for the operational concept and for the formulation and assimilation of the principles of the fighting.

The Formulation of the Comprehensive Operational Concept

In the process of formulating the comprehensive operational concept, two main action approaches were examined. The first was the standoff approach, based primarily on technological means that allow for attacking terrorist elements from afar on the basis of accurate intelligence. This approach relies primarily on the ability to apply accurate fire from the air. In the process of studying the operational concept, it was decided to examine the extent to which this approach would serve the comprehensive strategy and if this combat approach would be more effective than others. The second approach considered was the direct contact approach, which depends on the IDF's ability to act on the ground in the entire sector and undertake preventive missions face-to-face with terrorists.[11]

At the end of the process, the decision was made to focus IDF operational activity in Judea and Samaria on efforts to engage terrorists directly and as such, radically minimize the use of standoff fire in preventive missions. This was deemed the approach having the highest deterrence potential against terrorists who suddenly found themselves IDF targets fighting for their survival. In addition, the approach entailed fewer casualties and less collateral damage, so that differentiation between the population and terrorists was attained also in the context of operational preventive missions, thereby boosting the comprehensive operational effectiveness.

Moreover, the need to enhance the overall synergy between IDF capabilities was recognized. This was learned from the IDF's experience in southern Lebanon before the 2000 withdrawal, where it was clear that the IDF was not maximizing its potential and therefore the fighting in practice was left in the hands of the operational forces only.[12] As a result, IDF commanders made sure that the entire basket of capabilities, integrating ground superiority with aerial superiority, intelligence gathering, and information, was realized. Therefore many capacities of SIGINT Unit 8200 (the Central Collection Unit of the Intelligence Corps) and other Intelligence Corps units were deployed. Furthermore, great emphasis was placed on creating a common language and joint operating patterns with the GSS.

The Development of the Principles of Fighting

As an integral part of the thought processes that took place in late 2003 and early 2004, principles of fighting were formulated for IDF soldiers in the Central Command and in the Judea and Samaria region. These principles were created for adoption by IDF commanders to help focus planning operational activity. They include:

The necessity of the objective: ensuring security and a normal routine for the Israeli public, deepening the understanding of the significance of the mission in Judea and Samaria for Israel's overall security – from safety and the sense of personal security to stabilization of national security.

Systemic and tactical continuity: ongoing examination of missions in order to serve the strategic and systemic objectives of the State of Israel. First, the strategic objective is served by means of operational continuity, that is, realizing defensive and offensive efforts continuously in the entire sector at all times. In doing so, emphasis is put on maintaining offensive operational continuity, with the understanding that this pattern of activity severely challenges reconstruction efforts of terrorist infrastructures. This requires high quality intelligence, significant and flexible offensive ORBAT, a decentralized command and operations-approving command system, and initiated activity when intelligence is lacking. Second, systemic objectives serve to maintain a stable, ongoing civilian policy in order to allow for a normal way of life for the civilian public in the sector.

Mission effectiveness: effective execution of missions at minimal cost (loss of life, fatigue) with minimal economic resources, at high speed, and with minimal damage to innocent civilians, civilian infrastructures, and the surrounding landscape.

Realization of operational and intelligence effectiveness at all levels: sparing use of forces and ongoing effective use of all operational resources and intelligence resources (combat intelligence) in order to realize superiority in contact fighting while minimizing erosion of technological advantages in the fighting. In this context and with a broad strategic understanding, the IDF acted to reduce as much as possible the ORBAT in the Judea and Samaria region allocated to fighting terrorism.

Creating deterrence with force and means: creating and maintaining deterrence with creative, unexpected operational patterns of action while striving for flexible thinking and operational creativity, and

making ongoing efforts to throw the terrorists off balance. This entails a combination of features such as mobile activity, secrecy, and overt and covert (undercover) actions of the lowest signature possible while engaging in direct close combat rather than standoff fighting.

Maximal differentiation between terrorism and the public: identifying ways and operational methods to reduce harm to innocent civilians, both out of moral reasons and the need to reduce motivation to join the cycle of terrorism.

Credible, proactive, accessible public relations: maintaining an ongoing effort at all levels for credible, proactive, and accessible PR in order to improve and preserve legitimacy within the IDF and in local and international public opinion.

Organizational and inter-organizational learning: maintaining extensive learning processes with rigid debriefings, sharing information and lessons among forces and organizations, and maintaining ongoing, cross-hierarchic learning.

Responding to future challenges: continuous thinking, planning, and responding to challenges in order to enable the construction of operational readiness for various operational scenarios, such as resolution-related processes or escalating terrorism.

Alongside the above principles, an extensive process of force buildup and training was implemented. New capabilities were introduced into field units, the combat intelligence structure was improved, and infantry brigade units were organized into reconnaissance battalions that were more effective for fighting terrorism. These processes and the assimilation by operational forces of the combat principles produced operational synergy that extended to the GSS and other elements of the security establishment. The operational elements were complemented by the construction of the separation fence, which created a physical barrier in sensitive sectors that made it more difficult for terrorists to dispatch attacks into Israel. As a result, in 2004 and until mid-2005, suicide terrorism was defeated and was in practice taken off the public agenda of the State of Israel.

The Ethical Dimension

The fighting in 2000-2005 presented the IDF with complex moral challenges. On the one hand, there was tremendous public pressure to

give the IDF free rein to eradicate terrorism, and the motto "let the IDF win" was a frequent popular refrain. On the other hand, Israel's legal system was challenged, and the political echelon and IDF commanders understood that there were moral red lines in the confrontation. The intensity of the suicide terrorism presented the IDF with a challenge that had the potential to upset commanders' and soldiers' fundamental ethical norms. These difficulties touched not only on combat operations and injury to innocent bystanders in the fighting, but also on the ongoing exhausting work of soldiers stationed at checkpoints, making arrests, and engaged in routine activity as a result of the increased security measures.

IDF commanders worked hard to find the appropriate balance. For example, one such struggle was the dilemma over the ethics of destroying terrorists' homes. This tool, used in the first years of fighting, was discontinued in light of the recommendations of an IDF committee established in early 2005 charged with examining the policy of destroying homes as a deterrent to terrorism. The complexity of this tool can be deduced from the Supreme Court decision of early 2009 that allowed exceptions to this policy, e.g., sealing the homes of some of the terrorists responsible for the terrorist attack at the Mercaz Harav yeshiva in Jerusalem. Another example concerned the development of the "neighbor procedure,"[13] which presented significant ethical dilemmas. The method was presented to the Supreme Court, which forbade its use. At the same time that the system was dealing with these questions, IDF commanders had to tackle ethical problems at the level of the individual solider and commander.

In this context, Israeli Supreme Court Justice Elyakim Rubinstein wrote the following:

> This reality has presented Israeli law with a challenge. This is a trying time for us, the jurists of the civil service, as trustees of the values of the State of Israel and its public law. There are people who ask whether the existing legal rules are relevant when a state is forced to fight an inhuman phenomenon such as suicide terrorists. But is there really any truth to the claim made by many that because reality has changed the law has to change as well?...I believe that in our society the principles are everlasting and represent an eternal idea of justice, but in our application of these principles we must not ignore changes occurring in reality.[14]

The war on terrorism includes many volatile and ethical pitfalls. However, at the end of the day the IDF prevailed operationally and strategically while able to preserve its basic ethical values.

Conclusion

The IDF's success in defeating suicide terrorism managed to contain its effect and reduce it to tolerable levels. On this point, Meir Elran has written the following:

> If the intifada was supposed to have undermined the foundations of Israeli society, sent it into a tailspin, and unhinged it, it failed…Even during the most difficult times, the Israeli public, generally speaking, believed that it had the ability to withstand the dreadful onslaught of terrorism. In most cases the public expressed optimism and belief that the future would be better, both for the individual and the public as a whole.[15]

In this challenging fighting, with IDF and GSS forces quickly adjusting to the required changes, suicide terrorism was defeated. This process of change, accompanied by a deep thought processes, is an example of Israel's security establishment's ability to cope with the many complex changes the state will undoubtedly have to face in the future.

The recent years of calm, the construction of a Palestinian security apparatus with the support of the United States, and international involvement in improving the economic situation of the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria have all created a comfortable situation that did not exist even in the Oslo era. The political echelon can now make decisions from a position of strength and on the basis of the security interests of the State of Israel.

Notes

1   Yoram Schweitzer and Sari Goldstein Farber, *Al-Qaeda and the Internationalization of Suicide Terrorism*, , (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2005, Memorandum No. 78); see also Nachman Tal, "Suicide Attacks: Israel and Islamic Terrorism," *Strategic Assessment* 5, no. 1 (2002), http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=593; and Shaul Kimhi and Shmuel Even, "Who Are the Palestinian Suicide Terrorists?" *Strategic Assessment* 6, no. 2 (2006), http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=672.

2   These events were labeled the "second intifada." This is often a misleading name because in practice the IDF fought a military campaign against the terrorist organizations and the Palestinian Authority security forces.

3   To the best of my knowledge, the fighting against the Palestinians in those years has not been investigated in an in-depth manner even within the IDF.

4   In March 2001 the above directive was changed, and the words "reducing the scope and intensity of the violence" were substituted with "ending the violence."

5   This chapter was written while relying on a non-classified version of the document, "Changes and Challenges in the War on Terrorism: Report Issued on the Completion of IDF Commander in Judea and Samaria Brig. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot's Term in Office," May 2005.

6   Yehoshafat Harkabi, *War and Strategy* (Maarachot, 1992), p. 126.

7   Ibid.

8   Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Critical Decisions* (Am Oved, 1987), p. 51. Harkabi lays out his understanding of terrorism as the permanent tax paid by modern society and explains the notion of managing the war of terrorism so as to keep it to a tolerable level.

9   Israel Tal, *National Security: The Few against the Many* (Dvir, 1996), Chapter 7: "The Objectives of War."

10 Effective terrorism has been defined as "terrorism of a scope or quality that limits the political echelon's ability to make decisions."

11 A comprehensive analysis of these two approaches to fighting may be found in Gabriel Siboni, "The Military Battle against Terrorism: Direct Contact vs. Standoff Warfare," *Strategic Assessment* 9, no. 1 (2006), http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=129.

12 In this context, see also statements made by Brig. Gen. Shmuel Zakkai and Gen. Shmuel Malka during the seminar held on May 28, 2010 at the Institute for National Security Studies to mark ten years since the withdrawal from Lebanon.

13 Using a local resident in order to enter terrorists' homes and calling on them to leave. This procedure is known as the "early warning procedure."

14 Elyakim Rubinstein, "Security and Human Rights in the War on Terrorism," *The Law and the Army* no. 16, 2003.

15 Meir Elran, *Israel's National Resilience: The Influence of the Second Intifada on Israeli Society* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2006, Memorandum No. 81).