

The Lessons of Operation Protective Edge

Anat Kurz and Shlomo Brom, Editors

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Institute for National Security Studies

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'צוק איתן' – השלכות ולקחים

ענת קורץ ושלמה ברום, עורכים

*This volume was published
with the generous assistance of
Ms. Marcia Riklis.*

Graphic design: Michal Semo-Kovetz, Yael Bieber

Cover design: Yael Kfir

Printing: Elinir

Photo: Iron Dome fires at a rocket over Ashdod, July 16, 2014

Image Bank/Getty Images

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November 2014

ISBN: 978-965-7425-73-2

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Preface

The process of compiling *The Lessons of Operation Protective Edge* began at the Institute for National Security Studies in the early days of fighting. Several weeks before an end to the campaign was in sight and the conditions for a full official ceasefire came into being, it was clear that what was underway was a multifaceted event that portended much for Israel, the Palestinians, the greater region, and the international community. This understanding dictated the list of subjects covered in the 27 essays below, which together present a complex picture of the campaign and its ramifications. The starting point of the essays is analytical; they do not deal with the detailed development of the confrontation between Israel and Hamas, but rather focus on different aspects – military, civilian, political, and strategic – as manifested during the fighting, in the immediate aftermath, and in the foreseeable future, while attempting to elicit the lessons that could be of relevance in future similar situations.

The conclusions drawn by the various essays indicate that the campaign in the Gaza arena in the summer of 2014 reflected changes in the Middle East and elsewhere related to military confrontations, their management, and the possibilities of ending them. A particularly important development is the fact that current confrontations in the region, as well as in the international arena, are for the most part asymmetrical conflicts between regular state armies and forces of non-state organizations having both military capabilities and some territorial control. Hamas has established a military infrastructure in the Gaza Strip representing a security threat to Israel. In addition, its control of the area has added another layer of complexity to the already difficult road toward a comprehensive political settlement between Israel and the Palestinians.

Operation Protective Edge was the third round of fighting between Israel and Hamas since 2008. Manifesting the prominent characteristics of asymmetrical confrontations, the 2014 campaign demonstrated the difficulty

inherent in the effort to foil the attempts of a non-state organization to translate its relative military weakness and the vulnerability of the civilian population in its sphere of control into political gain. Similarly, the need for recasting notions such as deterrence and victory and adapting them to asymmetrical confrontations was made amply clear. Thus one key lesson to emerge from the essays is the importance of the need to reexamine and revise security concepts and basic assumptions that inform situation assessments and political recommendations. In addition to an improved ability to foil security threats in general and asymmetrical security threats in particular, reexaminations should allow the identification of political opportunities that can help reduce the chances that these threats will be realized and improve the ability to contain them should they nonetheless materialize. In this context, it is necessary to examine the assumption that guided Israel's decision makers and media, namely that the confrontation in the Gaza arena was inevitable. In other words, it is important to question if there was a way to have avoided it or at least defer it to a more convenient time for Israel in terms of the country's political and strategic environment.

The first section of the volume, "The Strategic-Military Perspective," is devoted to subjects relating directly to the military campaign as reflected during the combat, and the lessons one can elicit from the campaign with relevance for future engagements. Assessed here are the challenge of confronting non-state entities; the blurring of the identity of the winner in asymmetrical confrontations; the differences – mainly military – in the three rounds of fighting between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip between 2008 and 2014; the implications of Israel's Iron Dome anti-rocket/missile defense system; the dilemma posed by the tunnels along the Gaza-Israel border; cyberwar during the confrontation; the legal aspect of Israel's military action; and the question of Gaza's demilitarization. The section concludes with articles questioning the balance of deterrence between Israel and Hamas and the need to re-conceptualize the notion of deterrence.

The second section, "Israel and the Palestinian Arena," includes essays dealing with the campaign as background to the changed relations between Israel and the Palestinians and the balance of power in the Palestinian arena itself; Hamas' likely development following the campaign; and public opinion in the Gaza Strip and Arab world in light of the campaign and as reflected in the social media.

The third section, “The Israeli Arena,” includes discussions of the civilian front in wartime; Israeli public opinion; the implications for Jewish-Arab relations in Israel; economic ramifications; and the performance and social resilience of civilian settlements in the region adjacent to the Gaza Strip.

The fourth section, “The Regional and International Arenas,” explores a regional outlook as the key to an Israeli-Palestinian settlement; the involvement of Arab nations in the campaign; the campaign as background for the further deterioration in Israeli-Turkish relations; the confrontation as a successful test of Israeli-Egyptian relations; the role of the United States in the effort to end the fighting; and the enhanced efforts to delegitimize Israel in light of the fighting.

The collection concludes with an essay by Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin, Director of the Institute for National Security Studies, analyzing the strategic balance of the campaign and proposing policy recommendations designed to provide a better response to the security challenges Israel can be expected to face in the short and long terms, with their accompanying political and diplomatic dilemmas.

The range of topics in the volume demonstrates the complexity of the issues that Operation Protective Edge placed on Israel’s political and security agenda, and the discussion of these issues underway in Israel’s public sphere and among its decision makers is far from over. In addition, new relevant developments have arisen since many of the articles were written, which was soon after the end of the fighting. These developments, in addition to further occurrences, will continue to influence the decision making process and the decisions taken. The military, political, and strategic insights of this volume should enrich the discussion and contribute to the process of extracting relevant lessons for the future.

We wish to thank the authors for their contributions to this collection. Heartfelt thanks to Moshe Grundman, the Director of Publications at INSS, and to Judith Rosen, editor of INSS English publications, for their significant contribution to the completion of the project. Special gratitude goes to Ms. Marcia Riklis for her generous assistance in the publication of this volume.

Anat Kurz and Shlomo Brom
October 2014

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Operation Protective Edge: Strategic and Tactical Asymmetry

Udi Dekel

The war in numbers: 50 days of fighting; 4,258 rockets fired at Israel; 735 Iron Dome interceptions; 5,226 air strikes; 32 tunnels destroyed; 74 dead on the Israeli side; and some 2,200 dead on the Palestinian side.

Asymmetry in the Strategic Purpose

Operation Protective Edge is yet another example of an asymmetrical confrontation, not only in terms of the use of power but also in terms of the respective strategic purposes of both sides in the campaign. For Israel, it was another round of fighting in a series of rounds of fighting with terrorist organizations, and the main goal was to ensure a long period of calm and defer the next round for as long as possible, primarily by deterring Hamas through demonstration of the steep price it would have to pay for attacking Israel and also by weakening it militarily. Israel's overall strategy vis-à-vis Hamas has not changed since Hamas took over Gaza, which focused on weakening Hamas to the point where the Palestinian Authority would be able to regain control of the Gaza Strip. In the short term, Israel's policy was to avoid collapsing the Hamas government, while concurrently continuing to hold Hamas responsible for events in the Gaza Strip without recognizing the legitimacy of its government. The Israeli government, which preferred in its strategic objective to preserve the status quo of "calm for calm," lacked a political goal or an attempt to create new political options or horizons.

Unlike Israel, Hamas was fighting for its very survival. Before the operation, it was substantially weakened, besieged on every side, on its way to total isolation and bankruptcy, and rightly fearing the potential loss of its ability to govern the Gaza Strip. With nothing to lose, Hamas chose escalation and

rocket launches at Israel, as the only option left to it was to upset the situation in the effort to restore its relevance and ensure its future hold on the Gaza Strip, as well as create a platform for a future takeover of the West Bank.

One feature of asymmetrical confrontations is the need to change the strategic objective in light of the change in the conditions that brought about the fighting in the first place and in light of information emerging before and during the fighting. In this case, Israel was called on to change its operational rationale during Protective Edge, namely, a campaign to deter Hamas. The second stage was marked by focused action to remove the threat posed by the tunnels penetrating Israel (resulting from the surprise that was caused by not appreciating the tunnels' significance as a strategic threat). The third phase, which focused on strengthening long term protection, prompted Israel to exhibit the willingness to transition to a campaign of attrition in order to enforce the conditions for the end state. At the beginning of the operation it seems that Israel went into the conflict using the rationale of Operation Pillar of Defense – that of a time-limited operation to restore deterrence – and failed to understand the rationale of Hamas, an organization fighting for its survival, prepared for an extended confrontation until attainment of an achievement that it could present as justification for its continued rule, and betting it could impose its conditions for a ceasefire on Israel and Egypt. It was only after it became clear to Hamas that Israel, with Egypt's backing, was determined to engage in an extended war of attrition – without making any concession on the policy of first-ceasefire-then-discussion-of-terms principle – and while demonstrating power, improved defensive capabilities, stamina, and both domestic and international legitimacy, that Hamas understood that continuing the fighting was contrary to its own vital interests.

The long period of fighting was also the result of the Israeli government's message that it was not interested in toppling Hamas' rule of the Gaza Strip, as it was concerned about the ramifications of being mired in long term control of the Gaza Strip, the chaos that would ensue, and the possibility that even more extremist jihadists would fill the vacuum left by Hamas. Israel accepted the ceasefire proposal while communicating that it was looking for a rapid end to the fighting. This led Hamas to conclude that Israel was not prepared to fight over the long haul or make a drastic change in the strategic reality, and therefore it had the tools to manage the campaign on its own terms.

Did Israel Win?

In asymmetrical conflicts against non-state entities it is virtually impossible to attain a decisive outcome that denies the enemy the desire and ability to continue fighting. In confrontations of this type, the strategic objective is a victory determined by three parameters:

- a. *Meeting the objectives defined by the political echelon*: The IDF did in fact achieve the objectives determined by the political echelon. It inflicted severe damage on Hamas, weakened it, deterred it, reined it in, and used it to contain other terrorist organizations active in the Gaza Strip. However, these are limited objectives that do nothing to change the strategic situation. Furthermore, it is still not clear if deterrence for the long term has been achieved.
- b. *Forcing a ceasefire and a negotiated settlement on one's own terms*: This objective was also attained. The ceasefire conditions do not allow Hamas to attain any strategic goal for which it fought; Hamas failed to force Israel to agree to widespread opening of the border crossings before the start of the ceasefire and the construction of a naval port and airport later on. In addition, it was made clear that any future arrangement would be contingent on returning the PA to the Gaza Strip.
- c. *A decision in tactical-operational encounters*: The IDF met this objective as well.

On the other hand, Hamas also claims to have won the campaign. Its greatest achievement is having proven that there is no military resolution to the Palestinian problem. It fought the strongest army in the Middle East, which failed to destroy it; it fired rockets continuously deep into Israel's populated center; it inflicted heavy losses on the IDF; it prompted the evacuation of the civilians of the Gaza vicinity communities; and finally, in practice, it established mutual deterrence. For now, that is the dominant narrative among the Palestinians, both in Gaza and the West Bank.

Aspects of Asymmetry

In an era of rapid, significant changes in asymmetrical confrontations, it is doubtful there are fixed principles of warfare. Success in asymmetrical confrontations is to a large extent a contest of the ability to learn and adapt rapidly and creatively to developing circumstances. It seems that Hamas did a better job than Israel in learning the lessons of the previous rounds of

fighting and also proved capable in the course of the fighting of adaptation in the following areas:

- a. Seizing the initiative and being proactive, thereby snatching the surprise factor away from Israel (in contrast to the Israeli surprise during Operation Cast Lead, which caused heavy damage to Hamas forces and long range rockets, and during Operation Pillar of Defense, which opened with the targeted assassination of Hamas' Chief of Staff Ahmad Jabari and the neutralization of the threat of long range rockets). In Operation Protective Edge, Hamas found itself in the midst of a campaign after a series of escalating events, whereupon the military wing decided to surprise Israel and preemptively use its strategic abilities and fire long range rockets into Israel's center and stage attacks within Israel via the tunnels and from the sea. At the same time, the military wing prepared itself for extended fighting with Israel on the basis of redundant capabilities and defensive and logistical systems in fortified underground bunkers and tunnels. Hamas' political and military leaders went underground but managed to maintain continuity of command and control of their forces.
- b. Thanks to smuggling and local manufacturing, Hamas constructed a large ORBAT of well hidden rockets with various ranges, with emphasis on extended operative ranges to inflict damage on Israel's large population centers, albeit at the expense of accuracy and power of impact. This allowed Hamas to fire rockets continuously throughout the fighting with very few bottlenecks. Launch sites were set up in the heart of urban areas, usually next to sites that Hamas presumed Israel would view as off limits, with launchers hidden and camouflaged. The rocket salvos on different Israeli targets – though met with noted lack of success – were meant to penetrate the air defense protective layer provided by the Iron Dome system and disrupt the routine of the Israeli population throughout the fighting.
- c. Hamas prepared the infrastructure of attack tunnels reaching into Israeli territory for the sake of carrying out acts of mass murder and abductions of civilians and soldiers, and setting up ambushes for Israel's security forces. In addition, tunnels were used to protect and transport fighters and arms within the Gaza Strip in a way that left them impervious to identification and attack from the air. Tunnels were also a way to surprise the IDF's ground forces should they enter the Gaza Strip by setting off

explosives, ambushing tanks with anti-tank missiles, and abducting soldiers within Gaza.

- d. Hamas constructed hidden command and control capabilities, allowing it continuous function throughout the fighting and adherence to its original operational plans.
- e. In addition to its rocket capabilities, Hamas also constructed short range mortar shell capabilities. Once it understood that the long range rockets were being successfully intercepted, it concentrated efforts on its well calibrated mortar shells fired at the settlements adjacent to the Gaza Strip and the IDF deployment areas. Hamas used the fact that families evacuated these settlements to shape an image of victory and claim it had caused mass flight from the region.
- f. With the understanding that it was not able to cause significant damage at long ranges, Hamas tried to focus its efforts on strategic targets, such as Ben Gurion International Airport and, to a lesser extent, the Nuclear Research Reactor in Dimona, but with limited achievements.

Unlike Hamas, the IDF focused on constructing improved active defenses – early warning and interceptions – and performed well with the Iron Dome system, incorporating enhanced defenses for civilians and forces operating in the Gaza Strip. In terms of intelligence gathering, a multilayered intelligence infrastructure was in place, allowing ongoing efforts to attack Hamas targets and those of other terrorist organizations while reducing collateral damage and improving warnings to non-combatants and removing them from the areas under fire. In terms of tactics, the IDF lagged behind Hamas in learning and creativity. Although the IDF is a technological army, it did not create operational surprises and, careful to avoid harming non-combatants, took too much time to implement its targeted killing operations against the Hamas supreme commanders to attain a crushing effect. It seems that Israeli intelligence sources had not focused on building an accurate “genetic” profile of Hamas in fighting and understanding its essential makeup – social, ethical, anthropological, and traditional – in order to identify and destabilize Hamas’ centers of gravity, for the sake of both waging a successful campaign and subsequently conducting negotiations. An example of confronting centers of gravity was the damage inflicted on the high rise buildings in Gaza City during the last week of the confrontation, an action that had a significant effect because of the damage to the Gazan elites supporting Hamas.

When entering violent asymmetrical conflicts it is very important to gain legitimacy for the use of force in three circles: domestic, regional, and international. This legitimacy is based on the understanding that there is no choice but to employ military force by virtue of the right to self-defense against repeated terrorist attacks. Israel succeeded in persuading all three circles that the confrontation was forced on it by Hamas. Still, the longer the campaign lasted, the more pictures of wounded and dead civilians in the Gaza Strip accumulated, thus eroding international legitimacy – even though no international resolutions to stop the fighting were forced on Israel.

In terms of public consciousness, Hamas acted with duality. On the one hand, it invested much in the ability to fire rockets continuously and in propaganda designed to create the image of victory and battlefield successes. On the other hand, Hamas also stressed the heavy damage Israel was inflicting on Palestinian civilians in order to strengthen their image as victims, undermine Israel's international legitimacy, and prompt escalation in other arenas, such as the West Bank and among Israel's Arab citizens. Hamas failed in triggering escalation in other arenas and creating international pressure on Israel. In an asymmetrical war, the weaker side – i.e., Hamas – must also convince its public of the justness of its objectives and be able to present successes. Therefore Hamas conditioned its consent to a ceasefire on determining the principles of post-war arrangements, in order to present concrete gains to Gaza's residents. In these senses, Hamas' success is debatable.

One of the goals of a state fighting a non-state player is to drive a wedge between the organization and the population among which it hides and from which it operates. Gazan public opinion toward Hamas before the fighting was negative. The public was impatient with the dire straits created by Hamas in its more than eight years at the helm, a rule that was characterized by brutality, failures, and corruption. Even so, Israel could not create the necessary rupture because of the inevitable widespread harm to non-combatants and civilian and private infrastructures; in fact, it increased the Palestinian public's support for Hamas' path of resistance. This familiar pattern, which was bolstered by the notion that Israel only understands the language of force, should be reexamined. Israel used public opinion operations against Hamas to a limited extent and tried to maximize Hamas' status as a semi-state player responsible for any hostile activity from Gaza with which it is possible to conduct a dialogue of messages and firepower, unlike other

radical jihadist organizations looking only for means of self-sacrifice in order to kill as many heretics as possible.

To a certain extent, one can classify a confrontation of this type as a war by proxies. Despite the political divide between Iran and Hamas, the conduct of Hamas and global jihad in the confrontation in Gaza still bore the recognizable fingerprints of Iran in the supply of weapons, the transfer of know-how in rocket manufacturing capabilities and the underground sphere of warfare, and the training of operatives. Furthermore, Turkey and Qatar supported Hamas with money and political backing.

Conclusion and Future Implications

After almost four years in which Israel adopted a “sit and wait” policy without taking part in the battle to shape the future Middle East, and contrary to its desire to move away from the negative regional trends, events have spilled over into Israel. The events in Gaza and the Golan Heights are proof that center stage has been grabbed by elements with one shared characteristic: they are not states but rather intentionally undefined entities that have found terrorism and asymmetrical fighting to be readily available and immensely effective tools of warfare capable of – if not toppling states in the region – at least shattering the regional order and spreading instability through the regional and international systems.

Hamas constructed its force over the course of many years. It learned from the experience accrued in previous rounds of fighting and thoroughly prepared itself for this campaign, succeeding in surprising Israel with its ORBAT and the range of its rockets, the scope of the threat of the attack tunnels, and the penetrating moves of forces. It is clear that Hamas as well as other rogue elements, especially Hizbollah, will study Israel’s capabilities and the IDF’s strengths and weaknesses, and will try to prepare operational surprises for the next campaign.

The conventional wars Israel waged against the Arab armies earned Israel two major achievements: first, acceptance of the existence of the State of Israel in the heart of the Arab Muslim world of the Middle East, and second, peace accords with Egypt and Jordan and a political process with the Palestinians. In asymmetrical confrontations, in which a regular army – in this case, the IDF – fights terrorist cells using guerrilla tactics, is it even possible to achieve a military victory that in turn will effect a strategic paradigm shift with long term ramifications? Given that the Israeli

government did not define any strategic political objective for the campaign in Gaza, it also failed to reap the most from the conditions that came into being for formulating a better strategic reality for Israel's regional future. For years, Israel has tried to decouple the link between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the greater issues in the Middle East. The confrontation in the Gaza Strip made manifest a new situation in which the leading Arab nations – Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan – did not embrace Hamas' side, and even expected Israel to strike a serious blow against it, further weakening Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, its parent body. Because of the narrowness of its strategic vision, the Israeli government failed to take full advantage of a golden opportunity to establish broad regional cooperation against terrorists and non-state jihadist players, simply out of both fear that this would lead it back to the negotiating table with PA President Abbas and unwillingness to provide the Arab world with some recompense in the form of a declaration that Israel views the Arab Peace Initiative as a basis for talks and cooperation between Israel and the Arab world.

Defining the Victor in the Fight against an Army of “Terrorilla”

Yoram Schweitzer

At the conclusion of the 50-day military campaign that Israel fought against Hamas and other organizations in Gaza in July-August 2014, the Israeli public was left with a sour taste. This was reflected in criticism of the conduct of the war by some members of the government and politicians from both the right and left of the political spectrum, as well as commentaries by leading Israeli pundits. In the public discourse in Israel, there were differences of opinion about the desirable objectives of the war. Some argued that Israel should have acted with greater determination to overpower Hamas and topple its rule over Gaza. Others believed that Israel should be satisfied with striking a severe military blow against Hamas and its allies that would postpone the next round of hostilities and ensure quiet and security for communities on Israel's southern border for as long as possible. Either way, the dominant theme during and at the close of the operation was that a clear and decisive victory against a terrorist organization that is smaller and has fewer resources than Israel was not achieved. From here, it was a short path to the conclusion that Israel had failed in achieving its objectives.

In general, the attempt to examine the results of a campaign at the end of the “first half,” even before the military strike has been completed with a de facto or de jure security/political agreement, is not possible. Therefore, it is also impossible to determine whether the goal of the entire campaign was achieved. In addition, perspective can be provided only by the distance of time, and a lack of perspective almost necessarily leads to unfounded and sometimes even mistaken conclusions as to the results.

Nonetheless, today it is already possible – as it was even before the outbreak of Operation Protective Edge – to define and describe the characteristics of

the adversary and the campaign that are responsible for the lack of clarity and lead to blurring in the effort to identify the “victor.”¹ Given these characteristics, the results must be described in terms of achievement and failure rather than victory and defeat. More specifically, victory and defeat in the situations under discussion are not attainable for Western democracies, which fight in battles that are not zero-sum wars according to norms and restraints derived from the nature of their regimes.

It appears that some of the ongoing frustration with Israel’s military campaigns against Hizbollah and against Hamas and its affiliates in Gaza is a result of the imprecise and shallow definition of Israel’s adversaries as “merely” terrorist organizations, along with the failure to internalize the type of battle conducted against them. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hizbollah are not “merely” terrorist organizations, but rather armies of “terrorilla,” which combine terrorist and guerrilla modes of warfare, operate within a civilian population, and shield themselves by means of this population.

Armies of terrorilla and their combat strategy are marked by several characteristics:²

- a. From an organizational point of view, armies of terrorilla are built as a regular army in every respect. They have a hierarchical command structure and are divided into brigades, battalions, and companies; they are instructed and trained according to an orderly program, sometimes by state armies that support them (in this case, Iran and Syria); and they even develop autonomous training and instruction systems.
- b. They have advanced weaponry and equipment supplied by the supporting states, and some even have the ability to manufacture weapons independently.
- c. They generally fight using “hit and run” and “sting” guerrilla attacks,³ and prepare combat positions and a network of tunnels for fighting within the homes of civilians, in burrows, or in “nature reserves.”
- d. They operate according to the logic of terror, launching deliberate, indiscriminate attacks on the adversary’s civilian population in specifically civilian areas. As such, they launch thousands of rockets, missiles, and mortars at civilian towns and cities in order to kill as many civilians as possible.
- e. They make the party fighting them responsible for any harm to their own civilians, whom they use as human shields. To this end, they display photographs showing harm to their civilians, particularly women and

children, to arouse world public opinion. This method is a cornerstone in the combat strategy of armies of terrorilla. It is derived from an accurate reading of the sensitivity of world public opinion and in this case, also Israeli public opinion, to large scale harm to those who are not involved in the fighting. It is intended to make the fighting difficult for the adversary, disrupt its momentum, and give their own fighters a respite so that they can evade the strong arm of the adversary.

- f. They use uninvolved civilians, who under threat or in exchange for financial compensation that is paid in advance protect them with their lives and their property. Either way, voluntarily or by force, the homes of civilians become military posts, with rockets, missiles, and mortars fired from inside the home or from its immediate vicinity. Alternatively, they are used as weapons repositories, and many of them are booby-trapped.⁴

When embarking on Operation Protective Edge, Israel decided on limited objectives. From the outset Prime Minister Netanyahu defined the main goal of the operation as ensuring quiet and security for residents of the south.⁵ Following attempted attacks by a number of relatively large and well-armed Hamas cells, which crossed the fence and emerged on the outskirts of kibbutzim – and were stopped before they were able to carry out a massacre – and once the extent of the danger became clear, the objective of destroying the offensive tunnels was added.

Hamas, which began the war in an inferior position and with severe problems in Gaza and in the Palestinian arena in general,⁶ can boast of several achievements: waging a prolonged and intensive military campaign, mainly by firing rockets and mortars at numerous cities around Israel and harassing Israeli citizens, especially in communities in southern Israel; killing 74 Israelis, 67 of them soldiers, including officers; and disrupting civil air traffic to and from Israel for two days. Israel, for its part, struck a blow against the Hamas infrastructure and Hamas fighters, and near the end of the war, killed four high ranking Hamas commanders and forced the organization and its partners to accept the ceasefire on the same terms it had refused to accept several weeks prior.

It was clear from the outset that boastful declarations by Hamas leaders about their victory had no connection to the true results of the military campaign or the massive destruction caused to Gaza and its population. The true reckoning regarding the campaign's consequences and the actual damage inflicted was relegated to deliberations behind closed doors, and at least

according to Israeli officials and Israeli intelligence, there is a considerable gap between the authentic insights of Hamas leaders about the true results of the operation and their public statements.⁷ In Israel, the Prime Minister and Defense Minister played down victory declarations, and made do with a clear and decisive statement that the military objectives of the operation had been fully achieved. Given that, they asserted, preparations should be made for the political battle in the talks to be held in Cairo to complement the military activity through an effective security arrangement, so as to ensure quiet and stability for Israel's southern population.

Accordingly, it is incumbent on the government of Israel to strive to formulate an arrangement that will focus on ensuring that Hamas and its affiliates in the Gaza Strip have less ability to rearm. It must insist that Hamas not be the party responsible for Gaza's reconstruction and that it not control the enormous amounts of money expected to be sent to Gaza or the allocation of the aid. It must ensure that control over the entry of goods, equipment, and people to the Gaza Strip, as well as monitoring at the Rafah border crossing, be under Egyptian control. It must also ensure that on the Palestinian side, there is a presence by Palestinian Authority (PA) officials and an international monitoring mechanism to inspect the goods, building materials, iron, and other metals entering Gaza; verify that these materials reach their destinations; and establish that they be used for civilian use only.

If Israel indeed succeeds in preventing massive rearmament by Hamas and its partners in Gaza; achieves quiet on the security front; prevents rocket fire at southern Israel and other hostile actions on its territory for an extended period; and succeeds in preventing a deterioration that leads to another military campaign in Gaza, then the Gaza campaign can be said to have led to achievements that are the equivalent of the concept of strategic victory.

As of the writing of this article, there is an intermediate state of a temporary ceasefire between the parties involved in Operation Protective Edge, achieved with Egyptian mediation and the participation of PA officials. This was intended to allow time, without pressure, to conduct negotiations between the sides for a long term arrangement. There is a huge gap between the starting positions of Hamas, which wants a seaport, an airport, and free opening of the border crossings, and the position of Israel, which demands the complete demilitarization of the Gaza Strip, the disarming of the armed groups, and prevention of terrorist operations from Gaza. Therefore, it is likely that the parties will need to compromise and be flexible in their positions to

allow an agreement to be reached or at least an arrangement and de facto understandings. If this happens, quiet on the security front between Israel and Gaza for a period of unknown duration could follow.

Aside from the southern front, Israel cannot rule out the possibility that it will face another battle against an army of terrorilla that protects itself using civilians, this time on its northern border, i.e., Hizbollah. At the present time, Hizbollah is enmeshed in the conflict in Syria and paying the price in Lebanon as well. However, its extremist positions toward Israel and its subordination of Lebanese interests to the interests of its patron Iran could ultimately drag it into fighting with Israel. Hizbollah's army of terrorilla greatly exceeds that of its counterparts in the south. It is better trained and armed, equipped with tens of thousands of rockets that are more accurate and have a longer range and carry stronger weapons. Consequently, a Hizbollah clash with Israel would be much more lethal than the most recent round with Hamas. In such a situation, Israel would again find itself coping with a military campaign that has similar characteristics but of different scope and anticipated destruction.

In case Israel becomes involved in another conflict with the armies of terrorilla of Hamas and Islamic Jihad on its southern front or Hizbollah on its northern front, it must learn the military and operational lessons from the current campaign and strengthen both its defensive and offensive capabilities. However, at the same time, it must also undertake an initiative in the political realm with the Palestinians as soon as possible. Israel's image has suffered in world public opinion because of the large number of civilian casualties caused by the type of military campaign that Hamas and its partners forced on it. To restore its dwindling reserves of legitimacy, Israel can strive to restart the political process with the Palestinians. The turmoil in the region, the increasing hostility to the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Arab countries, particularly most of the Persian Gulf states, and the wild growth of radical Salafist jihad create a favorable environment for Israel to form strategic partnerships with pragmatic Arab states. These are likely to support the PA or even a Palestinian unity government if it survives, and to provide it with a safety net to make critical decisions that will allow progress toward achieving gradual or permanent political settlements with Israel. It is possible that in spite of the aggressive and militant stance demonstrated by Hamas, the results of Operation Protective Edge will underscore to the organization that another military adventure in Gaza will push the government of Israel into a

policy different from the restraint it adopted during the summer of 2014, and that next time this could lead to the loss of Hamas' rule in the Gaza Strip.

Along with the lessons that Israel must learn from the type of combat conducted in Operation Protective Edge, there is also a lesson for Western countries. The prevailing assessment around the world that the challenge of fighting armies of terrorilla that shield themselves using civilians is the private problem of Israel, which was harshly criticized for collateral damage to numerous civilians, could prove mistaken, or at least uninformed. In the not-too-distant future, Western leaders could also be faced with conflicts of this type. Their armies could be called upon to fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which operates as an army of terrorilla in Iraq and Syria. In light of the brutal nature of ISIS (and potential affiliates) and the need for Western forces to attack it from the air and from the ground, its expected self-defense using a civilian population in places where it operates will greatly limit the ability of the attackers to avoid massive harm to civilians. In such a situation, they will also face the military/moral test that resulted in Israel's being accused of disproportionate fighting and of being trigger happy, while exactly a high humanitarian price.

Notes

- 1 See Yoram Schweitzer, "'Divine Victory' and Earthly Failures: Was the War Really a Victory for Hizbollah?" in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, eds. Shlomo Brom and Meir Elran (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2007).
- 2 Yoram Schweitzer, "The Limitations on Fighting a Terrorilla Army: Lebanon and Gaza as Test Cases," *Military and Strategic Affairs* 1, no. 1 (2009): 35-42, <http://d26e8pvoto2x3r.cloudfront.net/uploadimages/Import/%28FILE%291272778689.pdf>.
- 3 Amir Buhbut, "I Have a Brigade of Heroes: The Brigade Commander Speaks," *Walla News*, August 8, 2014, <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/2689/2773639>.
- 4 "In Operation Protective Edge, Hamas again Used Civilians as Human Shields to Prevent the Israel Air Force from Attacking the Home of a Terrorist Operative," Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, July 10, 2014, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/he/article20669/>.
- 5 "Netanyahu: 'Operation Protective Edge Continuing; IDF Continues to Operate with Full Force'; Destruction of Tunnels to be Completed within a Day," *Globes*, August 2, 2014, <http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000959813>.
- 6 Yoram Schweitzer, "How Hamas Sees Its Achievements in Operation Protective Edge, and How Israel Should Respond," *INSS Insight* No. 586, August 7, 2014, <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=7466>.
- 7 "Netanyahu: 'Hamas Hit Hard; Hasn't Achieved Any of Its Demands,'" *Israel Hayom*, August 27, 2014, <http://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/213857>.

Operations Cast Lead, Pillar of Defense, and Protective Edge: A Comparative Review

Gabi Siboni

In 2001, armed groups operating within the Gaza Strip began firing high trajectory weapons at the settlements of the western Negev. At first, they used improvised low power and relatively inaccurate Qassam rockets and mortars. However, as time passed they were able to increase the types of weapons at their disposal, a result of more sophisticated independent production efforts and the smuggling of weapons into the Gaza Strip. Today the Gaza Strip boasts a wide variety of high trajectory firing capabilities, including mortar shells and powerful long range rockets. In addition, efforts by terrorist groups to breach the Gaza Strip's isolation have produced a widespread tunnel industry, which was initially concentrated in the Rafah region and fueled by both economic motivations and the need to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip. After recognizing the potential of these tunnels, terrorist elements began digging offensive tunnels toward Israel with the aim of facilitating abductions and terrorist attacks in the settlements near the border fence.

The terrorist organizations' pace of armament with rocket launching weaponry increased substantially in the Gaza Strip after Israel's unilateral disengagement in 2005 and Hamas' seizure of power two years later. This was the background for the three broad scale operations launched by Israel in the Gaza sector: Operation Cast Lead (December 2008-January 2009), Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012), and Operation Protective Edge (July-August 2014). This article undertakes a comparison of the three operations, focusing on their strategic background and an analysis of the operational military campaign, in which Hamas increased its use of the "victim doctrine," which aims to damage Israel's status in the international

arena by maximizing Israel's injury to the non-combatant civilian population of the Gaza Strip. The article concludes by presenting a number of insights regarding the measures necessary to contend with the security threat emanating from the Gaza Strip.

The Strategic Context

Hamas rose to power in the Gaza Strip in the wake of democratic elections. After losing all hope in the corrupt leadership of Fatah, the Palestinian public, at least in the days leading up to the elections, regarded Hamas as a force that could govern in a more honest manner. Hamas' violent seizure of power in the Gaza Strip left the movement, led by radical fundamentalist Islamic ideology, to contend with the combined challenge of asserting political control over a political-territorial entity on the one hand, and preserving regional relevance as a resistance movement in the Palestinian arena on the other.

The escalation of rocket fire originating from the Gaza Strip in late 2008 led Israel to launch Operation Cast Lead. During this conflict, Hamas, which had started to consolidate its hold in the area, was provided with a strategic rear by Egypt and Syria,¹ which were then on the eve of the wave of unrest that would subsequently sweep through the Arab world. Hamas received more substantial support from Iran, which sought in this manner to influence developments in the Arab world, especially the Israeli-Palestinian arena. Iran assisted Hamas by smuggling weapons (Grad rockets, anti-tank missiles, and explosives) into the Gaza Strip, providing it with technological knowledge that facilitated the production of explosive devices and rockets, assisting in training on Iranian soil, transferring funds totaling hundreds of millions of dollars each year, and providing political backing against Israel and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority.² This provision of aid was facilitated by taking advantage of the failed Egyptian administration of the Sinai Peninsula during the rule of President Hosni Mubarak.

Operation Cast Lead was the first of a series of confrontations between Israel and Hamas and the other armed groups operating in the Gaza Strip. Hamas regarded both the recommendations of the Goldstone Commission, which was established by the UN Human Rights Council to investigate Israel's actions during the operation, and the harsh international criticism of Israel's policies toward the Gaza Strip as a significant achievement. The continuing erosion in international public opinion of Israel's legitimacy to respond to rocket fire from the Gaza Strip has deepened the Hamas

leadership's understanding of the potential of utilizing civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip as a powerful means in the balance of power between the resistance movement and Israel.³

Operation Pillar of Defense was launched while Hamas was riding on a high wave of popular support throughout the Arab world. The revolution in Egypt and the rise to power of the Muslim Brotherhood that followed imbued Hamas with greater confidence. Egypt, under the rule of Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi, Turkey, and Qatar competed with one another in their support for Hamas in an effort to increase their influence in the Sunni sphere. Hamas' relations with Iran entered a period of crisis, and the Islamic organization's relations with the Egyptian government intensified to the point of dependence on Egypt. In these circumstances, Egypt was able to bring about a quick end to the fighting and facilitate the formulation of understandings that allowed both Israel and Hamas to claim significant achievements. In the wake of the conflict, Israel enjoyed quiet and Hamas was provided with an opportunity not only to stabilize its rule but also to tighten its relations with Qatar and benefit from Doha's generous military aid. This period, however, did not last long, and ended when the Muslim Brotherhood was forced out of power in Egypt by a military coup and General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was elected president. On the eve of Operation Protective Edge, Hamas found itself isolated in the Arab world. The economic system it had developed through the tunnels in the Rafah region was almost completely paralyzed by the countermeasures implemented by the Egyptian military. This sense of isolation and the desire to change the problematic position in which it now found itself is what led Hamas to the most recent round of fighting.

The 2014 campaign in Gaza was also influenced by another change in the array of powers in the Middle East: the growing threat posed by the Islamic State organization in Syria and Iraq, which set the backdrop for the emergence of a new American-led coalition aimed at destroying the group. In this context, the United States and the countries of the West suddenly found themselves on the side not only of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, but also of Iran, Hizbollah, and even the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. This phenomenon, which may not guarantee the restoration of Washington's relevance to the events in the Middle East, has pushed Hamas and the problem of the Gaza Strip onto the sidelines of the international agenda, thus exacerbating its isolation even further.

The Operative Campaign

It is difficult to determine whether the fighting by Hamas and other Palestinian groups during Operation Protective Edge was the product of advance planning, particularly as neither side appeared interested in the conflict. However, as has happened many times before, Israel and Hamas once again found themselves in the midst of a protracted round of fighting. Observation of Hamas' modes of warfare since Operation Cast Lead reveals a systematic process of learning. During the period between Operation Pillar of Defense and Operation Protective Edge, Hamas acted with restraint. At the same time, however, it increased construction of the military infrastructure within the Gaza Strip and systematically attempted to carry out attacks in the West Bank.⁴ This process was marked by a combined approach to warfare consisting of two primary elements.

The first element was an offensive effort, which aimed at striking at Israel through two means: rocket fire and cross-border attacks by way of the offensive tunnels. Maintaining rocket firing capability was facilitated by a defensive effort including the concealment of underground launchers in densely populated civilian environments. These two offensive elements were not intended to achieve decision of any kind but rather to damage the fabric of life of Israeli citizens and exert pressure on the Israeli government to ease the restrictions on the passage of goods and people into the Gaza Strip. Hamas and the other groups operating in Gaza also made use of their short range mortar firing capabilities to undermine the sense of security of the residents of communities located close to the border fence.

This offensive effort rested on two developments. The first was recognition of the fact that the firing of rockets at Ben Gurion airport had the potential to disrupt international air travel to Israel. This speculation was confirmed by a rocket that was aimed at the airport and was not intercepted by the Iron Dome system. This episode prompted a number of airlines to cancel their flights to and from Israel for a few days. The second was the understanding that mortar fire on the settlements along the Gaza perimeter exerts pressure on Israel, as unlike rocket fire, mortar fire from such a short range does not allow residents sufficient warning and cannot be intercepted by the Iron Dome system.

In the process of building a systematic fighting force, Hamas increased the power of its rocket fire effort over its previous capabilities. This was reflected on a number of levels. In terms of weaponry, Hamas expanded

both its long range rocket launching capabilities and the quantity and variety of the rockets themselves. In defense of its rocket capability, Hamas and the other organizations operating in the Gaza Strip developed a concept of warfare and defense based on the use of underground spaces to protect its forces and its rocket launching equipment, as well as increased use of the civilian population as human shields for its mortar and rocket launching sites. This enabled them to maintain substantial firepower even in the final days of the campaign and, at the same time, identify the weak spots of the Iron Dome system at close range and fire mortar shells at the communities located in close proximity to the fence.

The undermining of the legitimacy of Israel's right to use force in the wake of Operation Cast Lead led to Hamas' development of the "victim doctrine," the second of its primary warfare elements. This doctrine seeks to provoke Israeli action that results in injury to civilians and damage to civilian and international installations. It is facilitated by positioning rocket and mortar launching weaponry in installations of this sort and in civilian areas, and aims to deepen Israel's isolation in the international arena. The greater the civilian injury caused by Israel, the more effective the effort to legitimize Hamas and delegitimize Israel. During Operation Protective Edge, Hamas greatly intensified its use of the "victim doctrine," as manifested in the extensive exposure of uninvolved civilians to IDF air strikes. Rockets were also fired from humanitarian sites in which civilians had taken refuge. Employment of the "victim doctrine" is effectively illustrated in photos showing rockets being fired from inside schools and international organization facilities.

There is nothing new about Hamas and other armed groups launching rockets from civilian areas. However, this mode of operation was upgraded during Operation Protective Edge. Hamas learned the lessons of Operation Cast Lead and Operation Pillar of Defense and increased its use of civilian areas. The installation of rocket launching weaponry on the grounds of sites of international organizations operating in the Gaza Strip requires advance preparation, including digging and weaponry transport and installation. It is difficult to imagine these preparations being carried out without the personnel at these sites taking notice. Pressure may have been exerted on such individuals to prevent opposition to preparations made by Hamas at their sites.⁵ Indeed, until the final week of fighting, the IDF had difficulty striking at Hamas' senior command echelon, as its members remained protected underground, where they operated in isolation from their surroundings.

Thus it is difficult to assess the extent to which senior Hamas officials and commanders were aware of the scope of the destruction and loss of life underway in the Gaza Strip – or in other words, of the cost exacted by the “victim doctrine.”⁶



Rocket launching site within an UNRWA school



Rocket launching sites within schools



Rocket launching site within a diplomatic facility and a Red Cross medical facility [sic]

In contrast, the IDF’s operational concept underwent no fundamental change since Operation Cast Lead. It was based on firing, including precise standoff firepower against previously selected targets and the intensification of damage to incidental targets. In addition to weapons fire, the IDF maintained the readiness of ground forces to undertake a limited ground incursion into the Gaza Strip, with the aim of destroying the military infrastructure of Hamas and the other armed groups operating in the Strip and of reaching a ceasefire. During Operation Cast Lead, these forces were sent into action after the Israeli airpower campaign had been fully exhausted and failed to bring about a significant reduction in Hamas’ rocket fire. During Operation Pillar of Defense, on the other hand, the Israeli ground force was never utilized due to the relatively quick achievement of understandings and a ceasefire, stemming from Cairo’s influence on Hamas.

In recent years IDF force buildup has been characterized by an increased emphasis on air fire capabilities and target intelligence. These areas have received the majority of resources – quite naturally, at the expense of ground maneuvering, which was left behind with limited independent precision fire lethality and capability. At the same time, development of armament with heavy platforms (such as the Merkava and the Namer) and advanced defenses proceeded sluggishly due to budgetary difficulties. The IDF's operational plans constituted a direct continuation of these processes, as demonstrated during Operation Protective Edge. The campaign opened with air strikes that were significantly larger in scope than previous operations, as a result of the improvement of IDF intelligence capabilities pertaining to planned targets and targets identified during battle. Hamas and the other groups, however, maintained long range rocket fire and short range mortar fire capabilities throughout the entire course of the hostilities. They were able to do this by making extensive use of the “victim doctrine,” which made it difficult for the IDF to strike at launching sites located in densely populated civilian areas. After a number of attempts by Hamas to enter into Israel using attack tunnels, the IDF (belatedly, in the eyes of some) initiated ground maneuvers aimed at destroying the attack tunnels.

During the final week of fighting, when the Israeli ground forces were withdrawn from the Strip, the air campaign resumed its major role in the campaign, which intensified as the IDF lifted some of its self-imposed restrictions. This facilitated more extensive destruction of Hamas' military infrastructure and rocket launching sites. It can be assumed that this action was one factor that compelled Hamas to agree to a ceasefire according to the original Egyptian outline, which the Hamas leadership had previously rejected.

The Operative and Strategic Balance of the Campaign

At the time of this writing, it is difficult to assess the results of Operation Protective Edge. Past experience teaches that such assessments require long term perspective and must be measured based on the improvement in Israel's strategic position over time, and not on declarations and populist discourses of victory and defeat on both sides. Nonetheless, the results of the campaign invite comparisons with the Second Lebanon War and previous rounds of fighting in the Gaza region.

When the Second Lebanon War ended, the Israeli public perceived it as a defeat and a missed opportunity.⁷ Nonetheless, it was followed by a relatively long period of quiet in northern Israel – one of the longest since the establishment of the state. Operation Cast Lead, in contrast, concluded with a unilateral ceasefire and was seen at the time as a military victory in the struggle against Hamas, although Hamas and the other groups operating in the Gaza Strip continued their buildup and their rocket fire from the Gaza Strip almost without a break until Operation Pillar of Defense. And, as became clear, the understandings that facilitated the ceasefire that marked the conclusion of Operation Pillar of Defense also did little to provide Israel with an extended period of calm.

With the requisite caution, a number of insights gained in the wake of Operation Protective Edge that are indicative of an improvement in Israel's position vis-à-vis the challenges posed by the Gaza Strip can be suggested. The first is the fact that the international community has come to understand the seriousness of the threat posed by radical fundamentalist Islam. Internalization of the danger posed by the Islamic State organization's current offensive in Iraq and Syria has had an impact on general attitudes toward Hamas and the other terrorist groups operating in the Strip, although the groups are by no means identical. In this way, the unprecedented call by EU foreign ministers for the disarmament of all terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip may have been influenced by developments in Iraq and Syria.⁸

Second, during and following Operation Protective Edge, Hamas found itself isolated in the Sunni arena with the exception of its relationship with Qatar and Turkey, whose influence is limited in any event. The hostility of Egypt has also deepened Hamas' isolation and serves as a lever for pressuring it to allow the Palestinian Authority to play a role in managing the security and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. All this has created a possible framework for initiating a significant reduction in the military buildup capabilities of Hamas and the other groups operating in the Strip, which is a process that in the long term will reduce the threat they pose to Israel.

Finally, despite the harsh, arrogant words voiced by Hamas officials after the campaign and the criticism within Israel regarding the fact that Hamas finished the war with its military capabilities and the potential to continue its military buildup still intact, the operation caused immense damage to terrorist elements, weaponry, and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. Past experience teaches that the massive scale of the damage is likely to have an effect on

the desire of the groups in the Gaza Strip to renew hostilities, at least in the near future. In this way, Operation Protective Edge may well be a milestone on the road to the development of a long term strategy against the security threat emanating from the Gaza Strip. The conditions that resulted from the operation may be utilized as part of a process toward the demilitarization of the Gaza Strip, even if it is only partial and gradual, and as another phase in the evolution of a security reality that is more comfortable for Israel, especially if the Palestinian Authority enjoys some influence on security and administration in the Strip.

The importance of resisting the “victim doctrine,” however, must not be underestimated. This doctrine constitutes an operative tool in the full strategic sense of the term. Hamas’ mask of “victimhood” was cracked when its operatives carried out a series of executions of “collaborators” toward the end of the hostilities. Still, despite the appeal of international human rights groups to Hamas to ensure that individuals accused of crimes are not executed without a proper legal process, the implications of Hamas’ treatment as an organization with which it is possible to conduct normative, legal, and democratic discussion does not bode well for Israel.

Contending with threats such as the one posed by Hamas requires the IDF to formulate an updated concept of the use of force based on the mixture of weapons fire and maneuvers and on an understanding of the effectiveness and power of direct contact and the operational accomplishment that ground maneuvers can achieve. IDF force buildup must be guided by this understanding and must not erroneously rely on the use of standoff firepower, no matter how precise it may be. At the same time, the campaign cannot be military only. In order to contend with the threat developing in other arenas, Israel must devise an integrated doctrine that, alongside the military effort, incorporates political, public relations, and legal components. Only an integrated effort can provide Israel with the ability to contend on an ongoing basis with the threat posed by armed non-state groups, especially those that have adopted the victim doctrine as a central component of their struggle.

Notes

The author wishes to thank Ran Levy, an intern in the Military and Strategic Affairs Program at INSS, for his assistance in the research undertaken for this article.

- 1 “The Behavior of Hamas and the Nature of the Terrorist Threat from the Gaza Strip,” The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Israeli Intelligence

Heritage and Commemoration Center, March 2010, www.terrorism-info.org.il/data/pdf/PDF_19064_1.pdf.

- 2 On the visit of Khaled Mashal, head of Hamas' Political Bureau, to the Gaza Strip, see: The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Israeli Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, December 23, 2009, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/he/article/18170>.
- 3 See the comments by the Iranian Foreign Minister during Khaled Mashal's visit to Iran in mid-December, 2009, *ibid*.
- 4 General Security Services, "Hamas's Buildup Efforts after Operation Pillar of Defense," Terrorism Portal, 2014, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/study/Pages/NewItem090714.aspx>.
- 5 On this subject, see "The Military Use of Medical Installations and Ambulances by Hamas and the Other Terrorist Groups in the Gaza Strip," The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Israeli Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, August 23, 2009.
- 6 Photos from an unclassified IDF document showing rocket fire originating from civilian and international sites during Operation Protective Edge, August 2014; source on file with the author.
- 7 This view was espoused by many public figures and members of the Israeli media and supported by the Winograd Commission Report, which found that "after 34 days of fighting, there was no decision in the IDF's favor, even in 'points.' Hizbollah shelling of the Israeli home front was halted only by the ceasefire. Israel did not clearly win the war." See Winograd Commission Report, p. 396, article 19.
- 8 Barak Ravid, "Foreign Ministers of the European Union Call for the Disarmament of All Terrorist Groups in the Gaza Strip," *Haaretz*, July 22, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.2384744>.

Iron Dome Protection: Missile Defense in Israel's Security Concept

Emily B. Landau and Azriel Bermant

The limited number of Israeli civilian casualties in the latest round of warfare between Israel and Hamas was attributed in the main to the remarkable performance of the Iron Dome anti-missile shield. According to figures released by Israeli defense officials, Iron Dome achieved a success rate of approximately 90 percent in intercepting rockets fired at Israel's residential areas. This was an improvement in its performance over Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012, when figures showed that the Iron Dome system had an interception rate of 84 percent.¹ However, Iron Dome is unable to provide an effective response to the short range rockets and mortar rounds fired at Israeli communities bordering Gaza. Israel is now working on a new rocket and mortar defense system, known as Iron Beam, which is designed to address this threat. The system utilizes lasers to shoot down short range threats such as mortar rounds.²

Iron Dome Performance: Critique and Response

Despite Israel's data regarding the performance of the Iron Dome system, some specialists in the field have doubted the high rate of interceptions. Theodore Postol of MIT, a controversial critic of missile defense systems, claims that a detailed analysis of photographs of interceptor contrails during Operation Pillar of Defense demonstrates that the interceptor rate was as low as 5 percent, with little improvement during Operation Protective Edge. He claims that successful interception would require the rocket to be approached head-on, whereas photographs of Iron Dome contrails appear to show that this has not occurred. Furthermore, he attributes low casualties from Hamas rockets to Israeli civil defense preparations such as early warnings

and shelters. According to Postol, there is no public evidence to show that Iron Dome is performing at an interception rate of 90 percent.³ Postol's dismissal of the IDF findings on Iron Dome's rate of interception is somewhat puzzling, especially since in the past he has shown a readiness to rely on the conclusions of Israeli defense officials when they correspond with his own thinking. In the wake of the 1991 Gulf War, for example, Postol endorsed the findings of the Israeli military that showed that the Patriot anti-missile system did not offer additional security for Israel after Iraq began firing Scud missiles.⁴ Other skeptics such as Richard M. Lloyd suggest that Iron Dome has been able to destroy no more than 40 percent of incoming warheads.⁵ While lower than the interception rate reported by the IDF, this number is still considerably higher than the figure suggested by Postol.

Subrata Ghoshroy, also from MIT, presents a more nuanced perspective on Iron Dome's performance. Unlike Postol, Ghoshroy suggests that once detailed information on the performance of Iron Dome becomes more accessible, the missile defense system may in time be viewed as "a step forward in defense systems of its type." At present, the lack of comprehensive data on Iron Dome interceptions means that outside observers have difficulty in evaluating the performance of the Israeli system. Moreover, even if Iron Dome succeeded in intercepting around 90 percent of the Hamas rockets, this does not necessarily mean that Israel's other missile defense systems such as David's Sling and Arrow will perform as effectively.⁶ The point is instructive given that during Operation Protective Edge, many of the interceptors were not utilized since Iron Dome was able to detect that a large proportion of the rockets would not reach urban centers. In the event that Israel were to face a war on several fronts, with enemies firing many hundreds of ballistic missiles a day, including missiles such as the Iranian Shehab and Sejil models, Israel's Arrow system would be required to utilize a larger number of interceptors with the attendant risk that the system is saturated and therefore unable to perform as effectively.⁷

Precise data on Iron Dome performance from the IDF is still lacking,⁸ but Israelis certainly do not doubt the success of the defensive system. Indeed, it quickly became the overwhelming success story of the operation, and many people witnessed and documented interceptions first hand. The mid-atmosphere explosions during many rocket barrages became familiar sights, and whether Iron Dome hit the incoming rockets head-on (detonating the warhead) or from the side, the rockets did not reach their civilian targets.

Ironically, the success of the system was affirmed by the bizarre accusation hurled at Israel by the outgoing UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, whereby Israel was guilty of not sharing Iron Dome with Hamas in order to protect Palestinian civilians.⁹ As to Postol's idea that low civilian casualties were due to other defensive measures, he provides no explanation for the very minimal damage to property as well.

Indeed, a comparison of data from the Second Lebanon War of 2006 (when the Iron Dome system was not in place) and Operation Protective Edge shows that in 2006, some 4000 Hizbollah rockets hit Israel, resulting in the deaths of 53 Israelis,¹⁰ whereas during Operation Protective Edge, at least 3360 rockets were fired from Gaza,¹¹ with two Israelis killed from the rocket fire. Moreover, in 2006 there were 30,000 insurance claims for damage (each rocket generated around seven damage claims), while during the Gaza war of 2014 (as of September 3, 2014), approximately 2400 claims were filed (less than one claim per rocket).¹² Critics of the Iron Dome system will need to account for the significantly higher rate of civilian casualties and insurance claims during the 2006 war when Iron Dome was not in operation. The claim that the low civilian casualties during Operation Protective Edge were a result of civil defense measures is not persuasive, since these measures also applied in 2006 when many more were killed from similar types of rockets.¹³

Defensive Measures in Israel's Security Thinking

What does all of this mean for the defensive pillar in Israel's security doctrine, specifically with regard to the best means to confront rocket, missile, and nonconventional threats? Traditionally, Israeli military planners have favored developing flexible offensive capabilities to deal with long term strategic threats. Moreover, technological uncertainties surrounding the development and deployment of the Arrow ballistic missile defense system and its high cost were commonly cited objections to its development. Nevertheless, during the 1980s, in the face of fierce opposition by the IDF, then-Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin approved the development of the Arrow, and today the balance is moving increasingly toward defensive capabilities.¹⁴

Missile and rocket defense has become a crucial element of Israel's approach in defending the country, alongside offensive capabilities and passive defense. Israel is developing multiple layers of missile defense to face the rising threats of ballistic missiles and rockets from Lebanon, Syria, and Iran.

In the coming years, it is likely that Israel will develop an integrated system that will cover the entire country to address multiple threats, activating the different systems in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.¹⁵

The late Reuven Pedatzur, an Israeli defense specialist, argued against defense systems due to their inability to provide adequate protection in the face of nuclear threats. If but one nuclear missile were to penetrate the system and hit Tel Aviv, the consequences, he argued, would be unbearable for Israel – therefore, to be effective, the Arrow missile defense system would have to provide hermetic protection, which it cannot. Moreover, Pedatzur viewed development of defensive measures as an Israeli message to its enemies that it was preparing to defend itself against a nuclear attack, rather than relying on its deterrence to ward off the prospect of such an attack. By sending the wrong signal to Iran, Israel would in effect be damaging its own deterrent image, projecting that its deterrence is less than robust.¹⁶

However, this has not been the predominant line of thinking; rather, the model whereby deterrence is actually reinforced by defense has been adopted by Israel's military planners, as it has been by the United States and NATO. Uzi Rubin, a leading Israeli defense expert and a former director of Israel's missile defense organization, has a take on deterrence that diverges from Pedatzur's Cold War thinking. Deterrence against nuclear threats relies on a survivable retaliatory force, and survivability requires that a sufficient number of retaliatory forces are still operational after an initial attack. This is where missile defense comes into the picture. Rubin concludes that while missile defenses cannot provide a hermetic shield against ballistic missiles, even a partially successful missile shield can significantly complicate the planning of an adversary.¹⁷

Public Mood and Flexibility for Decision Makers

Additional benefits of missile defense systems relate to the public mood. Critics of Iron Dome have overlooked the positive impact that successful missile defense has had on Israeli national morale, and its contribution to strengthening public resolve in a war situation. This is borne out by the very positive response of the Israeli public to the Iron Dome system's success in intercepting missiles from Gaza, both in 2012¹⁸ and 2014.

Public mood can translate into concrete strategic benefits. In Operation Protective Edge, the public's sense of protection by Iron Dome gave time and space for the government to make calculated decisions on how to proceed in

response to the rocket fire, while reducing the pressure to move quickly to a ground offensive in Gaza. When the decision was finally taken to conduct a ground operation, it was not directly linked to the rocket attacks, but rather to the efforts by Hamas to infiltrate into Israel through the numerous attack tunnels. On the more negative side, Israel's success in limiting civilian casualties has been cynically turned against it in the international debate by those who have accused Israel of a disproportionate response.

Lessons from Operation Protective Edge are instructive as Israeli military planners place increasing emphasis on the development of defensive capabilities in facing missile and strategic threats from Israel's enemies. No serious military expert would claim that missile defense systems are able to provide hermetic protection, but missile defenses do create conditions for enhanced freedom of action for decision makers – defense systems ensure that they have time, and are not compelled to resort automatically to pre-emption and retaliation.¹⁹ Missile defense systems give political leaders various options, and provide time for diplomacy to work. This may help to explain why the United States has invested vast sums of money in Israel's various defense systems. It is not just about protecting the Israeli public, but also about enhancing stability and deescalation efforts.

Notes

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Rocket Warfare in Operation Protective Edge

Yiftah S. Shapir

Rocket warfare was Hamas' principal weapon in Operation Protective Edge. Throughout the 50 days of fighting, Hamas and the other organizations maintained their rocket launching capability. For Israel, the operation began as the Iron Dome war. Iron Dome was already recognized as a successful system in Operation Pillar of Defense, but Israel's aerial defense system entered Operation Protective Edge with more experience, more readiness, and more Iron Dome batteries. This article will analyze the rocket warfare and the defenses against it during Operation Protective Edge, and will assess the achievements of the respective parties.

The Hamas Capability

Hamas and the other organizations in the Gaza Strip have used rocket warfare since 2001, when Israel still controlled the Gaza Strip. Rockets launched against Israel at that time consisted mostly of locally developed Qassams and similar rockets using improvised fuel. Following Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005, the various organizations succeeded in procuring imported standard rockets, and also upgraded their ability to manufacture, or at least to assemble, rockets by themselves. When Operation Protective Edge began, the organizations' order of battle included standard 107-mm rockets (manufactured in China and Iran); 122-mm Grad rockets for short ranges, and upgraded Grad rockets for ranges up to 40 km; Iranian-made Fajr-5 rockets with a 75-km range; and recent additions of Syrian-made 302-mm rockets with a range of up to 160 km. Hamas also used its own self-produced rockets, which it said included the Sejil-55, M-75, and J-80 models. Production of the R-160 rocket was announced during Operation Protective Edge.¹ The Israel Military Intelligence Directorate estimated the

number of “short range” (up to 40 km) rockets possessed by Hamas as “in the thousands,” the number of 75-km range rockets as “in the hundreds,” and the number of longer range rockets (302-mm) as “in the dozens.”

Rockets Operations: An Outline

The rocket fire, which had stopped almost completely following Operation Pillar of Defense, increased in June 2014 (during Operation Brother’s Keeper). When the IDF announced the start of Operation Protective Edge, the number of launchings increased exponentially, reaching 150 daily, and Hamas began using its long range rockets. Rockets were fired at Tel Aviv and other cities in the Dan region, and at Jerusalem, Hadera, and the Carmel coast. Hamas managed to maintain a firing rate of about 100 rockets a day until July 23, 2014. The rate then declined, remaining at 50-60 rockets a day. After the second ceasefire was broken on August 19, the launching rate increased again, reaching a peak of 170 rockets on August 20 and 165 rockets on August 26, 2014, the last day of the operation – despite the IDF’s efforts to disrupt this activity.

In all, Hamas and the other organizations launched a total of about 4,500 rockets during Operation Protective Edge (from July 8 until August 26).² Approximately 3,600 of them fell in “open spaces,” and about another 200 were defined as unsuccessful launchings (meaning that they exploded upon launching or fell in the Gaza Strip). Iron Dome intercepted 735 rockets, and only 225 rockets fell in built-up areas and caused damage.³

For Hamas, the long range fire was a major symbolic victory, even though the actual damage caused was negligible. Yet despite the strategic importance of the long range fire, the vast majority of the rockets fired against Israel were short range rockets (up to 20 km), and the areas close to the Gaza Strip therefore absorbed most of the barrages. Furthermore, large portions of these areas are too close for protection by Iron Dome capability, and this greatly increased their share of the damage. These areas also suffered most of the damage from mortar fire.

It appears that following the massive rocket barrages and the damage caused by IDF attacks, Hamas and the other organizations were left with a stockpile of rockets – perhaps a few thousand – likely to suffice for a similar period of fighting. Hamas’ capability was severely affected, however, and there is little likelihood of its being able to restore it to what it was. The Gaza Strip is more tightly blockaded than ever, Egypt has strengthened

its control of Sinai and demolished most of the smuggling tunnels, and Hamas' international connections with supporting parties like Iran, Syria, and Hizbollah have become weaker.

Damage from Rocket Fire

The direct damage to the Israeli civilian population from the rocket fire was limited. There were two fatalities, and several dozen cases of damage to buildings and property were reported (and only a few in areas not adjacent to the Gaza Strip). However, the number of wounded indicates a larger degree of damage. Magen David Adom reported that it treated 836 injured people during the operation, though only 36 were wounded by rocket fragments and another 33 by glass fragments. The rest were injured indirectly: traffic accidents that occurred during alerts (18), injuries suffered while running to a sheltered area (159), and most of all, victims of anxiety (581).⁴ This figure highlights more than anything else the fact that the heaviest damage caused by the rocket warfare lay in the disruption of ordinary daily life – the need to halt activity and run to the sheltered area during each alert. It is also reflected in economic damage: other than the direct damage suffered by businesses (about \$20 million) and damage caused by the absence of workers from their place of employment (about another \$20 million), the indirect damage was much greater – estimated at \$1.2 billion.⁵

A particularly noteworthy incident was the rocket fired at Yehud on July 22, 2014. This attack, which struck a residential building approximately one kilometer away from Ben Gurion Airport, caused the civil aviation authorities in Europe and the US to issue a warning, following which many airlines canceled their flights to Israel. Although most flights were renewed a day later, the event implied great potential damage amounting to a blockade of Israel, a threat that any future enemy will strive to achieve.

Iron Dome Activity

The IDF entered Operation Protective Edge with six Iron Dome batteries. During the operation, the absorption of batteries in earlier stages of deployment was expedited, and nine Iron Dome batteries were deployed by July 16, 2014.⁶

For Israelis, the proof of Iron Dome's success was in the results. Seven civilians were killed during the entire operation, and only two were killed by rocket fire.⁷ Very few hits were recorded in areas beyond the vicinity of the Gaza Strip. For the sake of comparison, during the Second Lebanon

War, the 4,000 rockets fired caused 44 fatalities. The small number of hits contributed to the public's general mood of complete trust in Iron Dome's capabilities and a feeling of great personal safety, which was also reflected in the media and probably also affected policymakers. This feeling was not shared by residents in areas close to Gaza, who bore the brunt of the attacks.

How effective was Iron Dome as a system? Early in the operation, it was reported that Iron Dome had achieved a 90 percent success rate.⁸ According to figures published at the end of the operation, Iron Dome intercepted 735 rockets, and failed to intercept only 70 rockets.⁹ This figure matches the number reported at the beginning of the operation, and indicates the system's technical capability.

In assessing the capability of Israel's aerial defense system to protect its territory, however, other factors should also be taken into account: first of all, the system's inability to protect certain areas, in particular, as shown during the operation, its inability to provide protection against short range rockets; second, the existing extent of coverage (the current number of operational batteries, from which its defense capability is derived; and the need to decide what to protect and what not to protect; this factor is a function of how the defense establishment invests these resources). To these should be added everything that distinguishes between a system's purely technological capability and the actual capability of an operational system: the temporary unavailability of batteries, whether because of logistical difficulties or as the result of technical malfunctions, and, of course, human error.¹⁰

The available figures are still superficial. In order to evaluate the system's effectiveness correctly, it is necessary to know precisely how many rockets were fired and at which targets, which of the targets hit were actually protected at the time the rocket was fired, when each battery was usable and when it was not, how many rockets were engaged, how many interceptors were used against each engaged rocket and how many interceptors failed, how many of the rockets were aimed at protected areas, where each rocket hit, and how much damage it caused (including in open spaces).¹¹

The available figures do, however, make it possible to give a rough estimate of the system's capability. Of the 960¹² rockets fired at built-up areas, 225 scored hits and caused damage. This yields a much lower success rate than the purely technical capability, but it is still an impressive and praiseworthy figure. This is the important figure for assessing the system's capability, since it includes all the above-mentioned limitations. At the same time, only an

in-depth analysis, which should be conducted by an independent agency within the defense establishment, can provide solid information about the system's effectiveness for the purpose of making the right decisions about further procurement and about the necessary improvements.

Future Threat and Iron Dome's Capability

The future rocket threat has four aspects that will present difficulties for Iron Dome, or any other defense system, in future conflicts:

- a. Long range rocket fire (up to 200 km)
- b. The enemy's procurement of accurate guided missiles (mainly applicable to Hizbollah)
- c. A large inventory of rockets (mainly applicable to Hizbollah), and the growing ability to fire heavy barrages
- d. Short range fire – both short range rockets and mortar fire.

Hamas has managed to procure rockets with ranges of up to 160 km, but not heavy rockets (500-600-mm caliber) and not guided missiles, such as the Iranian Fateh-110 and similar missiles. Syria and Hizbollah already have such missiles, which endanger mainly strategic sites that only a precise weapon can hit. The defense systems will have to focus on protection of such targets, since these missiles are not a "statistical weapon," and defense against them cannot rely on "ignoring rockets headed for open spaces."

Heavy barrages: One of the great advantages of a rocket weapon system is its ability to fire large scale barrages in an extremely short time span. During Operation Protective Edge, there were a number of attempts at such barrages, but it does not appear that Hamas is capable of firing very heavy barrages.¹³ In a future conflict, Israel is liable to face much heavier rocket barrages, which Iron Dome will have difficulty intercepting. In such a situation, there may be a strategic need to focus Israel's defense capability, and the question of what to defend and what not to defend will arise in full force – in other words, whether to bypass the civilian population in order to protect important military or civilian facilities.

Short range fire: Warfare in Operation Protective Edge highlighted the active defense system's inability to deal with short range fire. This disadvantage has been known for a long time and was exploited this time by Hamas, which concentrated most of its attacks against communities near the Gaza Strip.

This vulnerability has strengthened the demand to develop a defense system capable of intercepting short range rockets and mortar shells. The demands

by the supporters of the THEL chemical laser system (Nautilus/Skyguard) to procure such systems, whose development in Israel was halted in 2006, were raised again in this context. The demand to procure the Centurion system (also known as Phalanx) was also raised. The defense establishment previously considered these systems, and it was decided not to purchase them. It has also been reported that a new laser system, called Iron Beam, based on a solid state laser, is being developed in Israel.¹⁴ This technology is still in the early stages globally, and the chances that Israel will have an operational solid state laser system in the near future are slim (the same is true of a fiber optic laser – another technology currently in development).

The Argument about Missile Defense Systems

Iron Dome aroused controversy from its inception. Objections included technological arguments (“which system is preferable”), economic and operations research arguments (“any defensive system can be defeated,” “unnecessary investment,” “the cost of defense is greater than the cost of the potential damage”), and strategic arguments (“defensive systems run counter to the principle of deterrence”).

The debate continued during Operation Protective Edge from two opposite perspectives. On the one hand, it was argued that the protection provided by the Iron Dome system gave the decision making echelon maneuvering room that enabled decision makers to avoid haste and premature escalation of the operation. On the other hand, it was asserted that without the protection of the Iron Dome system, there would have been damage to the home front that would have forced the political echelon to launch an offensive to defeat Hamas at the very beginning.

However, these issues ignore the political aspect. Decision making in weapons procurement is a political act no less than a military one. The extent of rocket damage is important not only in the way it is measured, but also in how the public perceives it and in its political effect. The Israeli public has suffered prolonged rocket fire since 1968. The public’s ability to withstand it depended to a large extent on how it assessed the state’s efforts to protect it. Assertions of the uselessness and pointlessness of spending money on defense will be even more trenchant in the argument about defense against short range rockets and missiles, but they do not take into account the fact that deciding on such an investment will by nature be a political act designed

to prove to residents of southern Israel that the country has not abandoned them, no less than it will be a purely military decision.

In the future, the political consideration will also affect the degree to which protection will concentrate on military and strategic facilities. This is a measure that in the above-mentioned circumstances is militarily logical, but likely to prove problematic. Politically, it is actually already being raised in discussion of whether instructions to the system's operators indicates priorities as to what is to be better protected (e.g., to assign more interceptors per incoming rocket while defending certain assets) and what is to be less protected.

Conclusion

To a large extent, Operation Protective Edge was a war of rockets versus defense systems against rockets. Hamas can bask in its success in launching thousands of rockets without losing its capability over 50 days of fighting. On the other hand, Israel can take pride in its system, which gave a feeling of security to most of its residents, thereby enabling its decision makers to exercise patience and judgment.

Israel's defense system against missiles and rockets includes a large number of layers. Of these, only the warning system (Color Red), civil protection, and Iron Dome systems were put to the test. Israel has other defense layers, however, which were not tested at all – some existing and some slated for the future – and it is possible that these will constitute the principal defense in future conflicts. Meantime, as in any military conflict, Operation Protective Edge revealed both capabilities and limitations and defects. The defensive system is imperfect, and it clearly will not withstand all types of future threats.

Notes

- 1 The model numbers apparently represent the declared rocket range. There are few other details about these models, and in some cases, it is reasonable to assume that they are imported, not locally produced.
- 2 Even though all the sources that reported the extent of the firing were probably using the same official sources, they are not consistent with each other. Various sources have cited the numbers 4,519, 4,532, 4,594, and 4,564. Launchings: the number of rockets that fell in "open spaces" was listed by various sources as 3,362, 3,641, about 3,852, and 3,417. In addition, some of the sources stressed that their information includes both rockets and mortar shells, while at least one source stressed that its figure does not include mortar shells.

- 3 One report stated that Iron Dome had also intercepted 10 mortar shells – a weapon that is usually not within the range of Iron Dome’s capabilities. See Gili Cohen, “Iron Dome Intercepted About 10 Mortar Shells during the Fighting in Gaza,” *Haaretz*, August 13, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.2405294>.
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- 8 Dan Williams, “Israel Says Iron Dome Scores 90% Rocket Interception Rate,” Reuters, July 10, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/10/us-palestinians-israel-irondome-idUSKBN0FF0XA20140710>.
- 9 Alon Ben David, “Iron Dome Blunts 90% of Enemy Rockets,” *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, September 1, 2014, <http://aviationweek.com/defense/iron-dome-blunts-90-enemy-rockets>.
- 10 The most prominent example is the rocket that struck Yehud, resulting in the halt in aerial traffic. The failure to intercept the rocket was the result of an operator’s decision – a decision that in retrospect appears mistaken.
- 11 The definition of “built-up spaces” is in effect arbitrary. The two fatalities hit by rockets were actually in “open spaces.”
- 12 $735 + 225 = 960$.
- 13 In regular armies, a standard BM-21 rocket battery has six launchers capable of launching 240 rockets within 40 seconds. It is doubtful whether the Iron Dome system is capable of dealing effectively with such a heavy barrage against a single target.
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Subterranean Warfare: A New-Old Challenge

Yiftah S. Shapir and Gal Perel

Subterranean warfare is not new in human history. Tunnels, which have been dug in all periods for various purposes, have usually been the weapon of the weak against the strong and used for concealment. The time required to dig tunnels means that they can be an important tool for local residents against an enemy army unfamiliar with the terrain. Tunnels used for concealment purposes (defensive tunnels) can be distinguished from tunnels used as a route for moving from one place to another. The latter include smuggling tunnels used to smuggle goods past borders (as in the Gaza Strip), escape routes from prisons or detention camps, offensive tunnels to move forces behind enemy lines, and booby-trapped tunnels planted with explosives under enemy facilities (a tactic used by Hamas).

Operation Protective Edge sharpened awareness of the strategic threat posed by subterranean warfare. The IDF encountered the tunnel threat long ago, and took action to attempt to cope with this threat, but the scope of the phenomenon, as became apparent in July-August 2014, was portrayed as a strategic shock, if not a complete surprise, requiring comprehensive reorganization to handle the problem. Some critics argued that an investigative commission was necessary to search for the roots of the failure and punish those to blame for it.

This article will review subterranean warfare before and during Operation Protective Edge, and will assess the strategic effects of this mode of warfare.

The IDF vs. Subterranean Warfare

Subterranean warfare has appeared many times in the Arab-Israeli context, and the IDF and the Ministry of Defense have dealt with various aspects of the phenomenon of subterranean warfare for many years. On rare occasions

Hizbollah chose to operate underground during the years the IDF controlled the security zone in Lebanon. Already in September 1996, a force from the Egoz Unit under the command of Erez Zuckerman fought in a labyrinth system of tunnels used by Hizbollah terrorists in Jabal Sujud.¹ In the Second Lebanon War, a force from the Maglan special forces unit conquered a fortified Hizbollah dugout adjacent to the Shaked post; two IDF soldiers and five Hizbollah operatives were killed in the battle.² After the war, Hizbollah built an extensive system of concealment and military tunnels within the villages,³ and possibly tunnels for cross-border penetration as well.⁴

During the second intifada, the Palestinian terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip made extensive use of tunnels for smuggling weapons from Egypt to the Gaza Strip and for attacking IDF forces in Gush Katif. The IDF launched many raids against the tunnels, and by June 2004 had destroyed over 100 of them. A special heavy piece of equipment, called a trencher, was acquired and used to dig a trench along the Philadelphi axis. Shafts were dug at random places into which explosives were inserted in the hope of making the tunnels collapse, and rows of houses close to the Rafah road were demolished. The problem, however, was not solved.

Digging a tunnel is estimated to take about three months and costs about \$100,000. Such tunnels can be concealed so that their openings are inside houses or greenhouses, and can be dug in advance without being used until the crucial time.⁵ Past significant attacks included the booby-trapped tunnels in the IDF's Termit outpost, in which three soldiers were wounded in September 2001;⁶ the booby-trapped tunnel in the IDF's Orhan outpost, in which one soldier was killed and five wounded in June 2004;⁷ and the attack on the Joint Verification Team (JVT) outpost in Rafah in December 2004 in a powerful booby-trapped and cross-border tunnel attack, which left five soldiers killed and six wounded and was considered the most deadly tunnel attack during those years.⁸ Hamas' best-known offensive tunnel, whose exit was 100 meters inside Israeli territory near the Kerem Shalom border crossing, was used on June 25, 2006 in an attack by a terrorist squad that killed two IDF soldiers and kidnapped Gilad Shalit.⁹

In October 2006, IDF forces demolished 13 smuggling tunnels on the Philadelphi Route.¹⁰ In November 2007, the IDF demolished tunnels infrastructure hidden within a tomato hothouse and designed for attacking targets in Netiv HaAsara and Kibbutz Erez.¹¹ The following year, in November 2008, a paratroopers battalion commanded by Yaron Finkelman operating

in Operation Double Challenge killed six terrorists and demolished the opening of a tunnel concealed within a building 300 meters from the fence on the Gaza Strip border.¹²

During the entire period that included Operations Cast Lead and Pillar of Defense, not much tunnel warfare activity was recorded, but in November 2013, IDF forces destroyed two cross-border tunnels.¹³ In March 2014, the IDF demolished another cross-border tunnel.¹⁴ Tunnel warfare began even before Operation Protective Edge was declared, during the escalation that took place following Operation Brother's Keeper. On July 6, 2014, in response to rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, the IDF took preventive action against a cross-border tunnel in the Rafah area that led to the death of six Hamas operatives.¹⁵ As a result, Hamas intensified its rocket fire, further escalating the conflict and leading the IDF to launch Operation Protective Edge on July 8, 2014. An attempted attack on July 17 by 13 terrorists emerging from a cross-border tunnel near Kibbutz Sufa was foiled,¹⁶ and led to the beginning of the land-based operation.¹⁷ During the land campaign, brigade combat teams, including infantry, armored forces, and combat engineers engaged in the detection and demolition of both combat tunnels within the Gaza Strip and cross-border tunnels.¹⁸

During Operation Protective Edge, Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives carried out a number of attacks in Israeli territory using cross-border tunnels. Terrorists attacked an IDF pillbox tower near Nahal Oz, killing five soldiers.¹⁹ On August 1, 2014, a Hamas force violated the ceasefire, killing three Givati Brigade soldiers, and escaped through an offensive tunnel to Rafah, taking with them the body of First Lieutenant Hadar Goldin. A total of 34 cross-border tunnels used by Hamas were destroyed.²⁰ The tunnels detected by the IDF during Operation Protective Edge were complex tunnels, with a number of entry and exit shafts. The main tunnel route was often split, and sometimes there were parallel routes. For this reason, dealing with the tunnels was no simple task.

Anti-Tunnel Warfare

Anti-tunnel activity can be divided into activity to detect the tunnels and activity after a tunnel is detected. Due to the concealed character of the tunnel, detecting it constitutes a major part of the operation.

The tunnel can be detected when it is being dug (mainly through noise created during the digging), or afterwards when the tunnel is dormant and waiting to be used – a much more difficult process.

The methods used to detect tunnels while they are being built usually rely on attempts to detect the noises accompanying the digging through sensitive underground microphone systems (geophones). Once a tunnel is already dug, construction noises cannot be relied on; the empty spaces underground must be detected through other methods. Land penetrating radar has been tried, as well as various methods (also based on geophone systems) that try to identify the structure of the terrain by analyzing initiated sound waves, both through controlled explosions and through mechanical hammers that generate vibrations. Methods using sensors based on optical fibers, mapping changes in ground-generated infrared radiation, and microgravity measurements have also been tried (i.e., sensors that attempt to detect minute changes in the earth's gravity).

All these methods for detecting targets are still in the early stages of development. As of now, earth-penetrating radar is only capable of detecting objects at a depth of a few meters, while the tunnels are likely to be dozens of meters underground.

Geophone systems have a similar problem. Geophysicists have used these systems for many years in their efforts to map geological strata and detect mineral deposits. However all the methods are based on measurements affected by an infinite number of factors that must be isolated. Geophones are sensitive to background noises – any movement above ground creates sound waves that the geophones absorb. In addition, the results are very dependent on the contours of the terrain, changes in the land strata, the weather, and land humidity.

All the proposed systems are based on large arrays of sensors, with computer software to analyze the results. However, the algorithms used to detect geological strata at depths of hundreds of meters have proven unsuitable for detecting empty spaces at a depth of a few dozen meters. Here the major challenge to systems developers is to develop the algorithms needed to detect small empty spaces at a depth of a few dozen meters in any type of land, while neutralizing all the other interfering factors. This is a difficult problem, to which a solution is yet to be found – not in Israel, nor elsewhere in the world (the US Department of Homeland Security, for example, which is confronted with smuggling tunnels on the US-Mexico

border, has been working on this). Note that despite the large scale US investments in this problem, tunnels do not pose a threat of the same scope that they do for Israel.

It appears that the tunnel detection challenge is not an easy one. Already in his report for 2006, the State Comptroller warned that, “For over 20 years, the Palestinians have used tunnels for smuggling purposes, mainly between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. This problem has greatly intensified in recent years, and has become a strategic threat.” The report states that engineering efforts to counter the tunnel problem began as early as 1990, and mentions three different systems under development. By 2007, when the Comptroller wrote his report, none of these efforts had succeeded.

Additional systems were later developed. In early 2012, it was announced that a system called Mispar Hazak (“strong number”) would soon be deployed on the border with the Gaza Strip. Today, however, two and a half years later, there is still no effective system in operation. Another system is in development, and a great deal of money has been invested in it over the past two years.

Already in the early years of the twenty-first century, the IDF organized the Samoor (“weasel”) company for combating hidden weapons caches and tunnels, as part of the Yahalom Special Operations Engineering Unit of the IDF Engineering Corps. The unit is trained and equipped with means to operate within tunnels, including communications and breathing systems. Actually, the IDF prefers to avoid entering tunnels it has detected, if possible, because the attacking side has no advantage in a tunnel. This capability is designed for a scenario in which a soldier has been kidnapped, or in order to attack the enemy’s underground command and control positions.²¹ As soon as a tunnel was detected, IDF forces took action to isolate the operating area and detect its additional shafts and branches. The Special Operations Engineering Unit planted explosives in order to demolish the tunnel. A number of methods were used to demolish tunnels during Operation Protective Edge, including aerial bombardment using JDAM bombs (called “kinetic drilling”), using water to make the tunnel collapse, and using liquid explosives by a special system dubbed “Emulsa.” In addition, elite IDF units were trained to fight within tunnels as “tunnel rat” units. In retrospect, the IDF learned that aerial bombardment of the tunnel shafts made it harder to detect the tunnels themselves.²²

Conclusion

The tunnels have been classified as a strategic threat, with the impression given that this is the gravest threat facing Israel. Arguments have since been made that the defense establishment is responsible for a strategic failure, and there have even been demands for an investigative commission on the matter.

There is no doubt that the tunnels are a serious problem. Those who say that the defense establishment should have directed more focused efforts to find a solution to the problem are correct, specifically putting in place a special agency to coordinate the efforts to solve the problem and provision of this agency with the proper authority and budget. On the other hand, it cannot be claimed that nothing was done. Efforts were made to solve the problem of locating the tunnels, and even though these efforts were unsuccessful, they should not be ignored. At least four different systems were developed at a large financial investment, though they failed to identify the tunnels. This indicates just how difficult solving the problem is.

At the same time, despite the great public attention paid to the problem of subterranean warfare, this does not mean that subterranean warfare is the major strategic threat to Israel. It is merely one of many kinds of warfare. A major investment in developing means for tunnel detection will necessarily be at the expense of other investments. In other words, the issue is currently in the headlines, but long term thinking should not be distracted by momentary criticism. A wise investment policy should maintain a balance between investment in defense and investment in offense (activity against the tunnels is necessarily defensive), and even in defense, a balance should be maintained in allotment of resources among all the threats that are still current.

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Operation Protective Edge: The Cyber Defense Perspective

Daniel Cohen and Danielle Levin

Cyber warfare has become an important source of power for nations, and at the same time is a strategic threat to a nation's critical infrastructure, given that communications, media, finance, and many other sectors now rely on the cyberspace domain. Militaries in particular have become heavily reliant on advanced cyberspace technology. On a national level, Israel is in the process of establishing an integrated national cyber defense system, which demands cooperation between the civilian sector (civil service and private) and security and military establishments.

The Israeli defense system against cyber attacks during Operation Protective Edge tested Israel's utilization of government policy in the cyber sphere, and marked a significant improvement in coordination between Israel's cyber defense organizations, including the functioning of Israel's IT security systems and the increasing cooperation between the civilian and defense sectors. This article examines the cyber attacks during Operation Protective Edge, analyzing three major factors: the volume of attacks, the actors behind the attacks, and Israel's advances in cyber security.

Volume of Cyber Attacks against Israel

A serious increase in the number of cyber attacks accompanied the entry of IDF ground forces into the Gaza Strip during Operation Protective Edge. Some of these attacks can be attributed to organized cyber rallies of amateur hacking groups, while other cyber attacks verged on a more sophisticated level that focused on Israeli communication networks. Once the ground operation concluded, the number of cyber attacks declined significantly.¹

One of the major cyber attacks during the operation focused on communication and internet suppliers aiming to overload the system and cause Israeli networks to collapse.² More generally, the attacks included distributed denial of service (DDoS) and Domain Name Service (DNS), the collapse of over 1,000 non-crucial Israeli websites, website defacement, exposure of databases, and leaked personal information of Israelis such as login credentials.³ Each exploit generated additional opportunities for Hamas to gather more data, as new potential targets were identified. In addition, tailored methods and means of approaching these targets were developed, such as when Hamas sent mass text messages to Israelis claiming to be either from the Israeli Security Agency (ISA), *Haaretz*, or Hamas.

Additional attacks included interference with a private television satellite, which allowed a pro-Hamas propaganda message to appear momentarily on Channels 2 and 10 (Hamas launched a similar attack against commercial channels during Operation Pillar of Defense).⁴ The IDF Spokesperson's blog and Twitter account faced a major cyber attack conducted by the Syrian Electronic Army (SEA), with messages posted in English and Arabic.⁵ In addition, large hacking groups coordinated multiple cyber protests against Israel, referred to as "OpIsrael." These operations brought major cyber groups to work together throughout the operation for the Palestinian plight.⁶

The Actors behind the Attacks

Throughout the operation, the IDF cooperated with ISA to foil planned attacks by Iran on al-Quds Day, an annual event organized by Iranian leaders against Israel. The attack involved hackers from all over the world who attempted to disable Israeli websites.⁷ Over the last few years, major terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hizbollah, with assistance from Iran, have demonstrated an increasing interest in the field of cyber terror. State sponsored cyber terrorism groups like the Iranian Cyber Army and SEA executed cyber attacks during Operation Protective Edge, and overall, the IDF maintained Iran had a major role in the increase of cyber attacks targeting civilian facilities during the operation.⁸

Another group targeting Israel, but not openly identifiable from the Muslim and Arab world, was the hacking collective Anonymous, which in regard to attacks against Israel is divided into three units: Arab, Muslim, and the remaining collective. Anonymous, which previously organized cyber operations against Israel, can consist of elite hackers, yet Operation

Protective Edge was distinctive in that this caliber of hackers decided not to participate.⁹ This potentially provides an explanation for the distinction between Operations Pillar of Defense and Protective Edge regarding the identity of attackers. In Operation Pillar of Defense, the Israeli government faced over 100 million cyber attacks in eight days, with IP addresses tracing back to sites all around the world, predominately from Europe and the United States.¹⁰ In comparison, during Operation Protective Edge, a cyber security company report estimated that 70 percent of cyber attacks could be traced back to Arab and Muslim countries.¹¹

Israel's Advances in Cyber Security

Israel took a proactive cyber approach with a pre-planned defense strategy of advanced operational capabilities that provided a high proficiency of security defense.¹² Both the IDF and the ISA were able to foil any attempts to damage Israeli government networks and critical infrastructure. The ISA confirmed it was able to secure all Israeli government networks and systems against cyber attacks. One of the defense methods was to block foreign IPs for two hours at the start of Operation Protective Edge. ISA, through its cyber division, acted in coordination with private contractors, the Israeli Ministry of Communications, and the media in taking preemptive measures against the attacks.¹³

The IDF worked with an integrated communications network of Military Intelligence and cyber companies related to the Ministry of Defense, which assisted in recognizing and removing all cyber threats from attackers. The head of the IDF cyber defense unit claimed that infiltration of IDF networks had also been attempted, and asserted that Israel's high technological capabilities were elevated in order to ensure breaches did not occur.¹⁴

Conclusion

Cyber cells of terrorist organizations have so far been unable to execute strategic cyber attacks against Israel, which requires high levels of intelligence and technological capabilities. Terrorist organizations are presumably improving and developing advanced cyber capabilities that could pose a future threat to the cyber sphere. This threat is interconnected between terror organizations and state sponsored terrorism, which includes deception via hacktivist groups. Israel cyber security defense perspective should recognize this link as a national security threat.

The implementation of cyber regulations and preventive action aims to make cyber protection a built-in necessity to protect the Israeli state, including the civilian sector (private and public). It is imperative to acknowledge these sectors as part of the national security infrastructure.¹⁵ There was a significant improvement in coordination of Israel's cyber defense organizations during Operation Protective Edge, including the functioning of Israel's security IT systems and the increasing cooperation between the civilian and the defense sector. This experience underscores the immediate need to formulate a protocol for defense of civilian cyberspace.¹⁶

Notes

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Operation Protective Edge: The Legal Angle

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At the start of Operation Protective Edge, Israel enjoyed relatively broad international support and understanding about the need to take action to stop Hamas' rocket fire. Israel's proposed "quiet in exchange for quiet" reinforced the legitimacy of the operation. However, as the operation continued, the number of Palestinian casualties rose and the scope of destruction in Gaza expanded, leading to voices in the international community and international organizations accusing Israel of violating international law and carrying out war crimes. On July 23, 2014, while the operation was still underway, the United Nations Human Rights Council established an international commission of inquiry headed by Professor William Schabas to investigate violations of the laws of armed conflict and human rights law during the campaign.¹ This was the same council that appointed the Goldstone commission after Operation Cast Lead in 2009. The UN Secretary General also announced his intention to establish a commission of inquiry to examine the damage to UN facilities during the operation.² Thus, while at this stage the military campaign has ended, the legal battle over Operation Protective Edge is just beginning.

As in every case in which Israel has used military force, certain allegations have arisen concerning its very use of force in the summer of 2014. These allegations have no convincing legal basis because Operation Protective Edge was part of an ongoing military campaign against Hamas, which has been underway for many years and has included numerous rounds of fighting. Therefore, the laws regulating the very use of force (*jus ad bellum*), which apply only at the start of an armed conflict, are irrelevant. Furthermore, in the case in question, it appears that Israel has a well-grounded claim of self-defense, given the ongoing rocket fire from the Gaza Strip.

Rather, the more significant claims concern the manner in which the IDF used force in the operation and the application of the laws of warfare (that is, the area of *jus in bello*). In this context it should be noted that while there is no doubt that Hamas' indiscriminate rocket fire at the civilian population in Israel and its use of Palestinian civilians as human shields meets the level of clear war crimes, this does not lessen Israel's obligation to act in accordance with the binding international rules. Therefore, Israel cannot take refuge in the claim that the other side has grossly violated the rules.

The laws of warfare are based on a number of fundamental principles; the main ones relating to the issue at hand are distinction and proportionality. According to the principle of distinction, military attacks should be aimed only at military targets and enemy combatants (including civilians taking direct part in hostilities), and thus targeting civilians or civilian objects is prohibited.³ According to the laws of warfare, civilian objects lose their immunity and become legitimate military targets for attack if "by their nature, location, purpose or use" they make an effective contribution to military action and their destruction offers a definite military advantage.⁴

Some allegations regarding the implementation of the principle of distinction by IDF forces during Operation Protective Edge focus on certain kinds of targets attacked – including the homes of Hamas operatives, multi-story buildings, and UN institutions – and their characterization as legitimate military targets. In order for attacks on these objects to be legal, they must have served a military-related function and be used, for example, as command and control posts, weapons storehouses, firing posts, or hiding places for Hamas operatives. However, more generally, the main challenge in dealing with allegations regarding the application of the principle of distinction is the difficulty to prove after the fact that civilian buildings in the Gaza Strip were used for military purposes. Therefore, it is very important to document the events, including by attaining soldiers' testimony when the events are still fresh in their memory, compiling photographic documentation, and collecting all other relevant evidence to document the "incriminating" findings about the military activity Hamas carried out in these buildings. In this context, it is difficult to overstate the severity of the damage caused by irresponsible remarks made at times by Israeli political and military officials about "exact[ing] a price" from the population or by calls to "flatten Gaza." These statements are used as *prima facie* proof of Israel's intention to harm civilians. This is so, notwithstanding the fact that the officials have

no connection to IDF orders or influence over them, and despite the fact that these statements do not reflect the actual contents of the military directives.

In order for an attack to be considered legal, it is not sufficient that it comply with the principle of distinction. It must also comply with the principle of proportionality, which prohibits an attack expected to cause collateral damage to civilians and civilian objects that will be excessive compared to the direct and concrete military advantage anticipated.⁵ In light of the extensive harm to civilians and damage to civilian property in the Gaza Strip, presumably most of the claims that will be made against Israel will be that it used disproportionate force.

To fulfill the principle of proportionality, the expected military advantage from an attack must be assessed and then balanced against the anticipated harm to civilians and civilian objects. This is naturally a subjective test, and there are no precise formulae for determining what is proportional. The laws of warfare state that the standard is that of a “reasonable military commander.”⁶ It is also acknowledged that the examination should be conducted on the basis of the information in the commander’s possession at the time the decision is made, while taking into account the uncertainty that exists in combat, and not based on the actual result.

An examination of how the principle of proportionality was applied during the operation calls for a number of clarifications: First, one must understand how expected harm to civilians is assessed. The laws of warfare require that precautions be taken to evaluate the extent of the damage anticipated, but they recognize that these must be measures that are feasible in the particular circumstances.⁷ Therefore, before executing a pre-planned attack against a known target, a more thorough evaluation of anticipated collateral damage is required than prior to carrying out an urgent, immediate action. It is also understood that forces operating on the ground cannot be expected to conduct an inquiry on the same level as aerial forces, and it is accepted that the information they possess is more uncertain and more limited. It should be noted that all civilians who might be harmed must be taken into account. Therefore, if civilians were given a warning but did not evacuate the area even though they had the opportunity to do so, they still must be taken into consideration in examining the proportionality of the action.

Second, the laws of warfare recognize that even an action that results in harm to civilians could be considered legal, as long as the harm is proportional compared to the military advantage or if the actual harm was unexpected.

In other words, there is no demand to completely avoid harm to civilians. Nevertheless, in recent decades, there has been a spillover of values originating in human rights law to the analysis of combat situations (in particular, when the examination is conducted by human rights institutions). In the world of human rights law, which is intended to apply to law enforcement situations and not combat, when a civilian is killed, the starting assumption is that a prohibited action has taken place that requires a criminal investigation.⁸ Moreover, human rights institutions tend to judge according to the results and to reject claims that the damage was unanticipated or the result of an error.⁹ The advanced technological precision capabilities of the IDF (and other Western militaries) create the illusion that Israel is free of errors and that any difficult result is therefore intentional.

Third, in an assessment of the expected military advantage of an attack, the starting assumption is that the higher value the target, the greater the advantage. Nevertheless, the anticipated military advantage is examined in relation to the attack as a whole.¹⁰ This has great relevance in the context of Operation Protective Edge. One of the problems in the fighting against Hamas is the lack of high value targets. Hamas has no large military bases or significant strategic weapon systems, and all its senior commanders hid deep underground. Therefore, the targets, when they are examined by themselves, do not appear especially valuable. However, the test is not necessarily the value of each individual target, but the cumulative value of the targets and the contribution of their destruction to the objective of the military attack as a whole.

Fourth, the claim that the ratio of casualties between the sides indicates *prima facie* that there was a lack of proportionality in Israel's use of force must be examined. According to the argument, the small number of casualties on the Israeli side indicates that the military advantage of the campaign was limited. On the other hand, Israel caused extensive harm to civilians and civilian objects, and therefore, in the balance between them, the damage is excessive and thus disproportionate. From a legal perspective, proportionality is not assessed on the basis of the number of casualties or level of destruction on either side. There are quite a few precedents in which most of the damage was caused by one side. However, it is still necessary to address the claim on its merits. A total disruption of life in certain areas of Israel and a significant disruption in the rest of the country is intolerable, and Israel's investment in defensive capabilities such as Iron Dome and other protective measures,

which were entirely responsible for the very small number of civilian casualties on the Israeli side despite the thousands of rockets fired by the Hamas, should not be held against it. Moreover, there is significance to the fact that Hamas, for its part, not only did not worry about protective measures for the Gaza population but purposefully placed it in the line of fire because it was deliberately operating from among civilians and under their cover. While this conduct does not remove Israel's obligation to comply with the provisions of the law, there would appear to be a basis for arguing that this fact must be taken into account in evaluating proportionality.

Fifth, there have been claims that excessive weight was given to protecting the lives of soldiers and avoiding abduction of soldiers. According to the laws of warfare, the approach that the lives of one's soldiers are more important than the lives of enemy civilians is not acceptable. However, in situations where the soldiers were in mortal danger and acted to protect themselves or their comrades, it appears that the accepted practice is to permit the use of force necessary to confront this danger. The assessment of proportionality takes into account the basic right to self-defense, which is given even in situations involving law enforcement, and all the more so in combat. Of course, even in these situations, an attempt must be made to minimize the harm to civilians. However, it does not appear that there is a basis for determining that harm caused as a result of an unavoidable act of self-defense by troops will be considered disproportionate. It is important for Israel to demonstrate the complexity of fighting in a built-up area in Gaza, the challenges of mines and booby traps, and Hamas' reliance on underground fighting. An understanding of the complex battlefield is important for understanding the limitations that existed on the soldiers' ability to minimize harm to civilians beyond what was done. It is also important to investigate and present events in which soldiers took risks to prevent harm to civilians, and there is no doubt that such incidents occurred. Presenting a comprehensive picture of the campaign will help cope with the allegations of unrestrained and disproportionate use of force.

Another question that is expected to arise concerns the use of artillery fire in a populated area. Arguments against the use of this weapon derive from its being a "statistical weapon" with a certain deviation from the precise target at which it is aimed. The use of artillery fire in a built-up area during combat is not banned by the laws of warfare, and all regular armies have artillery weapons and rules permitting their use in certain circumstances

even in populated areas. However, there are initiatives today to set limits on the use of such weapons.¹¹ It can be assumed that this debate will arise again in the discussion of Israel's actions in the operation.

The criticism of the State of Israel in Operation Protective Edge could lead to criminal proceedings in state courts throughout the world on the basis of universal jurisdiction. It could perhaps even lead to investigations and proceedings in the International Criminal Court (ICC) if the court acquires jurisdiction in the wake of a Palestinian appeal.¹² In addition, critical reports against Israel regarding the operation will be used as another tool in the political campaign to delegitimize the state.

The main way to confront the anticipated allegations in the international arena, and especially in potential criminal proceedings, is to carry out independent investigations that are thorough, effective, fast, and transparent, and are conducted in such a way that the investigative mechanism will also receive international legitimacy.¹³ In specific cases – if for example, it becomes clear that IDF forces acted contrary to military orders and the laws of warfare – a hard line should be taken against those responsible, including prosecution in suitable cases. This is necessary in order to preserve and protect the rule of law and the values of the IDF. But in addition, this will enable reliance on the principle of complementarity, whereby international proceedings and foreign judicial intervention are not appropriate when the state concerned carries out a genuine and effective investigation on its own.¹⁴

Israel must arrive at the legal campaign it is facing armed with factual and legal material that will enable it to present its point of view and to demonstrate the complexity and challenges of the campaign. It should carry out field investigations of a variety of incidents, including those in which no civilians were harmed and no allegations were made against Israel, in a manner illustrating the caution with which Israel acted, and not focus only on incidents where there are claims of wrongdoing (while these must of course be thoroughly investigated). It is important to allow maximum transparency, including making an effort to reveal relevant intelligence if possible. It is also necessary to gather testimony on the challenges of combat from as many soldiers as possible. This will provide a fuller and more complete picture of the campaign.

Finally, a rational decision should be made on the issue of cooperating with the UN commission. Israel is justifiably resentful about the commission's mandate and makeup and rightfully assesses that the report the commission

writes will be biased. However, if cooperation might help make the report more balanced, which would lead to fewer negative consequences and dangers, then Israel should not hurry to reject this idea, but rather carry out a dispassionate objective analysis of the cons and pros of cooperation.

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Demilitarization of the Gaza Strip: Realistic Goal or Pipe Dream?

Kobi Michael

Operation Protective Edge has made the concept of low intensity conflict irrelevant. It dramatized the weight of Hamas' military capabilities and infrastructures in the Gaza Strip and their potential for striking the Israeli home front, along with the organization's steadfastness in a prolonged campaign, which was longer than both previous Gaza campaigns and even the Second Lebanon War. In addition, Hamas' military capabilities and infrastructures reflect both a process of institutionalization of the group as a governmental and military power in Gaza, and the link between military and political power.

Hamas' military capabilities since Operation Protective Edge have remained significant, certainly in comparison to those of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Hamas will seek to maintain or even develop them, despite the difficulty involved in light of the results of the operation. It is clear to Hamas that its military capabilities are the basis for realizing its political demands in the Gaza Strip, and in general, in securing its standing as an influential political force in the Palestinian arena and beyond. Therefore, Hamas will refuse any voluntary demilitarization and will use its military capabilities to challenge the PA or any entity that in the context of the operation to reconstruct Gaza attempts to undermine it or threatens its power or influence.

The reconstruction of Gaza, led by the international community and implemented through the PA, has a greater chance of success if Hamas' influence on the project is limited. The same is true of prospects for turning the project into leverage to restart the political process with the Palestinians and build a Palestinian state in a controlled and responsible process, with the Gaza Strip as the first significant layer. In order to neutralize Hamas'

negative influence on the process, it must be allowed to be a political partner only, in the framework of the Palestinian reconciliation government led by Abu Mazen, and not be allowed to exercise veto power or exploit the process for another seizure of Gaza and from there, a takeover of the PA. To this end, Hamas' military capabilities must be weakened, which means demilitarization. In other words, without demilitarization, a constructive reconstruction operation in Gaza will not be possible.

To Israel, the successful reconstruction of the Gaza Strip is a necessary condition for reshaping the Palestinian, Israeli-Palestinian, and regional systems. Therefore, it is important to make every effort to ensure the necessary conditions for successful reconstruction, and demilitarizing Gaza is one of, if not the most important of these conditions. The failure of the immediate attempts at reconstruction would reduce the chances for any further reconstruction efforts, particularly insofar as complex projects of this sort must balance between the required investment of extensive resources, coordination between the respective actors, and the political prestige of the party leading the effort.

The more that Gaza is demilitarized, the less the likelihood that Hamas will continue to rule, and the greater the likelihood of a gradual PA return to political and security control. Similarly, the more substantive the demilitarization, the greater the chances of economic and infrastructure development and reconstruction in Gaza. The greater the improvement in the quality of life for Gazans, and the more that Gaza is rebuilt, the stronger the restraints on escalation. In strategic language, the greater the assets possessed by the governmental authority in Gaza, the greater will be the ability to deter violence and escalation.

Thus, the strategic benefit to be gained from the demilitarization of Gaza and the ensuing benefits to the Gaza civilian population are indisputable. In this context, however, three fundamental questions arise:

- a. What is demilitarization? Is this an all-or-nothing situation of demilitarization or no demilitarization, or is this a continuum, with no demilitarization at one end and complete demilitarization at the other, with countless values of demilitarization along the continuum?
- b. Is it even possible to achieve demilitarization of Gaza (total or partial), and how?
- c. Could even partial demilitarization of Gaza become leverage for changing and reshaping the system in Gaza?

Answers to these questions can help shape an informed approach to definition and implementation of Israel's strategic interests in Gaza.

Demilitarization in the Context of the Gaza Strip

Demilitarization denotes clearing or evacuating fighting forces and weapons from a defined area and a ban or restriction on any military activity. It is a security regime of sorts and a means of managing or settling violent conflicts, which reduces the potential for escalation and allows for an early warning zone and early deployment to thwart possible escalation, whether peacefully (through diplomacy) or through military means.

Demilitarized zones do not require reciprocity or symmetry between the parties to the conflict. There may be situations in which a demilitarized zone is created only in the sovereign territory of one party. Alternatively, there may be cases in which there are demilitarized zones in the sovereign territory of two (or more) parties involved in the conflict, but the size of the zones is not identical. An example is the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. There is also partial demilitarization, which permits retention of a limited and defined number of weapons and military forces, such as in the Israel-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement. There are also cases in which the presence of military forces of any of the parties to the conflict is banned, but the presence – and operation – of military forces of a third party is permitted, be they peacekeeping forces or a party agreed upon by the sides that is engaged in supervision of the disputed area.

Full demilitarization of the Gaza Strip means depriving Hamas and other terrorist organizations of the ability to operate militarily against Israel or another player that seeks to operate in Gaza, including for purposes of reconstruction. In this context, therefore, it is important to distinguish between capabilities and intentions. While the intention to continue to attack Israel or other actors cannot be suppressed in the foreseeable future, the ability to do so can be suppressed or very significantly contained by: eliminating the existing tunnel infrastructure and preventing its renovation; eliminating the rocket and weapons production infrastructures and preventing their renovation by means of self-production or smuggling; and neutralizing senior operatives and others in the organizational military apparatuses, whether through persuasion, arrest, or targeted killing.

Although a goal sought by Israel, total demilitarization of the Gaza Strip will presumably not be possible in the short term. Until then, Israel, with aid

from Egypt, the moderate axis in the Arab world (including the PA under Abu Mazen), and the international community will need to benchmark points on the continuum between no demilitarization and full demilitarization, and will need patience, determination, and strategic insight to ensure progress across the continuum. Full achievement of the goal will require ongoing international resolve and backing, close cooperation between Israel and Egypt and the PA, determination and a capacity for action from the PA, and an ongoing military effort against the terrorist infrastructures. In addition, there is a need for efforts, led by the international community via the PA, to rebuild and develop Gaza while at the same time strengthening and entrenching PA rule there. As such, this involves an intelligent, cautious, patient, and ongoing combination of militarism and diplomacy.

The actors operating in the Gaza Strip are a state actor (Israel), a semi-state actor (Hamas), and non-state actors (Islamic Jihad and other terrorist organizations). The formative logic of the system in Gaza is different from that of an interstate conflict, and the actors' respective motivations regarding demilitarization do not converge. In this case, it is likely that voluntary demilitarization cannot be implemented, nor apparently can complete demilitarization. Hamas, and certainly the other terrorist organizations, will seek to maintain military capabilities, because without them they have no political viability.

While it is clearly impossible to achieve total demilitarization of Gaza in the immediate wake of Operation Protective Edge, Israel's strategic interest following the campaign makes it necessary to demand that any ceasefire and settlement agreement be conditional on Gaza's full demilitarization, even if the process is gradual. The settlement agreement must determine the appropriate mechanisms for implementing the demilitarization and give Israel the legitimacy to thwart any attempt to renovate the military infrastructure. For this purpose, it is important to start the process by formulating an agreement on the minimum threshold definition of demilitarization necessary to allow the arrangements for Gaza's reconstruction through the PA to begin. At the same time, the PA's status and influence must be strengthened, while Hamas' political standing is continuously and regularly weakened.

On the other hand, Israel must prepare for a situation in which there is no agreement. In such a case, it must work to consolidate legitimacy for ongoing operations against the terrorist infrastructures and establish new rules of the game about a response if the terrorist infrastructure is used

against the Israeli population. In light of the lessons of Operation Protective Edge, Israel cannot allow Hamas and the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip to rehabilitate themselves militarily and return to the situation that existed prior to the campaign.

Partial Demilitarization of the Gaza Strip: Likewise a Lever for Change?

Complete demilitarization promises the most favorable outlook for creating the strategic leverage to change the situation in Gaza and restart the political process in its broader contexts. But given a situation in which the chances of total demilitarization in the near term are not great, could limited demilitarization, i.e., partially dismantling Hamas' military infrastructures and capabilities and preventing another buildup, be sufficient to create change there? The answer would appear to be "yes," but it is contingent on the simultaneous fulfillment of several conditions.

First, the minimum required demilitarization of Gaza must allow a functional PA government, or alternatively, allow the PA security apparatus to deal with attempted challenges by Hamas. At the same time, it must preserve and maintain deterrence against Hamas and the other terrorist organizations and reduce their ability to challenge the PA and disrupt its activities.

Second, security and strategic cooperation between Israel and Egypt must be improved or at least maintained on the current level to ensure that the smuggling of weapons and other military capabilities from the Sinai Peninsula and by sea from the border with Egypt is thwarted. For this purpose, US-Egyptian relations should be tightened. The United States should resume its support for the Egyptian regime and relax the pressure it has placed on Egypt since the Muslim Brotherhood government was ousted. It should also restore its economic, military, and political support for the benefit of the regime of President el-Sisi.

Third, Qatar's drive to support Hamas and radical elements must be contained, whether by direct pressures on the country's rulers or by other means that will clarify to Qatar the price for supporting Hamas and the risk inherent in its dangerous and subversive policy. In addition, there must be an effort by the Arab world and the international community to strengthen the axis of moderate Arab states – with an eye to other conflict zones in the Middle East and as a counterweight to the dangerous radical and subversive axes.

Fourth, the possibility of rebuilding and developing Gaza should be cast as a significant stage in the process of Palestinian state building. This means building functioning and responsible Palestinian institutions as well as providing training, support, and supervision. In particular, it means constructing mechanisms that will ensure that the resources allocated to developing Gaza will be used in the most effective manner. After twenty-one years of economic support for the PA, crucial lessons must be learned. UNRWA's mandate and operating procedures must be changed, and there must be tighter control over the resources at its disposal in order to ensure it will be part of the solution instead of part of the problem. The financial aid must not support the infrastructure of corruption and inefficiency. It must ensure the development and prosperity of Gaza, the development of Palestinian governmental institutions, law and order, and above all, the monopoly on the use of force.

Fifth, Israel must comprehensively reformulate its strategic interests vis-à-vis the Palestinian arena, turning the crisis in Gaza into an opportunity for strategic change. Even if the chances of a peace treaty with the Palestinians are not great, at this time the PA, headed by Abu Mazen, can be a strategic partner for Israel in weakening Hamas and terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip and reorganizing the area. Such a strategic partnership requires a change in Israel's approach to rebuilding Gaza, generosity and cooperation in easing the security closure of Gaza, and a willingness to undertake more significant actions to implement the model of two states for two peoples. In addition, Israel needs military resolve for ongoing prevention of attempts to rebuild the terror infrastructures and for maintaining deterrence against Hamas and the terrorist organizations.

Conclusion

Gaza must be demilitarized in order to reshape the system there and impose restraints against further escalation, or in strategic language, achieve and maintain deterrence. At the same time, demilitarization is presumed to be a necessary condition for the success of the operation to rebuild Gaza and resume the political process with the Palestinian Authority under Abu Mazen.

It is clear that at the current time and in the conditions created after Operation Protective Edge – when Hamas retains sufficiently large military capabilities to challenge any actor that attempts to step into its shoes – it is not possible to achieve full demilitarization, either voluntary (by Hamas) or

by force. On the other hand, the situation is ripe for international recognition of the need for demilitarization. Therefore, Israel must ensure that there are mechanisms for implementing demilitarization and international legitimacy for a response on its part should there be any attempt to violate it. The demilitarization of Gaza is a process that requires time, determination, persistence, and much collaboration between many actors. A relevant strategy could help Israel establish and promote the demilitarization process. Even if at this time complete demilitarization appears to be a pipe dream, by the very act of progress toward it, Israel can improve its strategic position.

Israeli Deterrence in the Aftermath of Protective Edge

Mark A. Heller

Like all of Israel's wars and military campaigns, Operation Protective Edge was fought because the deterrence Israel had hoped to establish by prior threats or actions broke down – a reality that only became clear *ex post facto*. And like the impact of other such operations, the contribution of Protective Edge to the rehabilitation of Israeli deterrence will also be known, if at all, only after it too has been exposed in retrospect to have been limited in time or scope. That does not mean that efforts to establish deterrence are futile and should not be pursued, only that it is difficult to determine with any certainty how effective they will be. The chances that deterrence strategies will succeed are maximized when they combine credible threats to inflict unacceptable costs if the adversary undertakes undesired actions with promises – either to it or others important to it – of benefits if it refrains from taking those actions.

Military deterrence has been at the center of Israel's security doctrine since its rudiments were elaborated by David Ben Gurion. Although the conceptualization of deterrence has flourished in the nuclear age, its essential principle has always been a feature of conflict management, and its most familiar and concise formulation comes from the fourth century Roman author Publius Flavius Vegetius: *Si vis pacem, para bellum* (If you wish peace, prepare for war). At its heart, military deterrence means dissuading an adversary from taking action unacceptable to the deterring side by credibly threatening unacceptable consequences if that action is nevertheless taken. The simplicity of the adage, however, belies its almost infinite complexity. In the late 1950s, Thomas Schelling, in many respects the “father” of modern deterrence theory, wrote that the concept remained vague and inelegant.

Continuous refinement and improvement since then have provided little more in the way of actionable guidance for decision makers.

That is because the variables that determine whether or not deterrence exists and will continue to exist in the future are difficult if not impossible to assess. These include the adversary's calculus of the costs and benefits of action and inaction (especially the definition of "unacceptable consequences" according to its own logic, not that of the deterrer), the extent to which it is a unitary, authoritative actor immune to misperception and miscalculation, and its understanding of the credibility of the threat, along with one's own willingness and ability to inflict the threatened consequences.

At first glance, Hamas' ideological commitment to the complete eradication of Israel implies that inaction against Israel contradicts its very *raison d'être* and that the only consequence that may outweigh the cost of inaction is a credible threat to its own existence. According to this logic, only such a threat can deter it from sustaining or renewing combat with Israel. Israel did not directly pose such a threat during Operation Protective Edge, because it was self-deterred (fear of casualties), deterred by others (fear of international criticism of the violence necessary to encompass that objective), or persuaded by its own analysis that the complete destruction of Hamas did not serve its broader interests. Consequently, Hamas should logically have continued the fighting until it exhausted any capacity to attack Israel. In fact, however, Hamas ultimately acceded to an unconditional ceasefire in late August without having achieved any of its stated objectives, that is, on virtually the same terms it had been offered seven weeks earlier.

One likely explanation for this is that, notwithstanding its subsequent declarations of victory, Hamas came to see continued fighting as a potential threat to its political primacy in Gaza, if not to its very existence. In other words, while Hamas may be implacable in its ideological hostility to Israel – and there is virtually nothing that Israel can do to induce Hamas to renounce that hostility – its ultimate objective may not be accorded the highest priority or immediacy at any given point in time. Faced with an inability to inflict significant damage on Israel, an indifferent if not hostile strategic hinterland (there were more anti-Israel demonstrations in London and Paris than in Arab capitals), and growing death and destruction among its Gaza constituency, the Hamas leadership apparently came to the conclusion that prolongation of the fighting would work to its disadvantage and that it was better to

wait (and hope) for a favorable change in the constellation of forces before resuming violent conflict.

It is, however, an open question whether or for how long Israel can prevent such a change. For one thing, Palestinian support for Hamas' worldview and narrative does not appear to have ebbed significantly in the short term. On the contrary, public opinion surveys immediately after the ceasefire show little inclination to blame Hamas for the damage inflicted on Gaza, growing endorsement of its approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, widespread acceptance of its claims that Israel deterrence had been undermined, and (by almost 80 percent of respondents) that the fighting had produced a Palestinian victory – a not altogether implausible interpretation of survival despite clear inferiority in the metrics of military power. All this suggests that Hamas did not pay an unacceptably high price for Operation Protective Edge – certainly not one high enough to threaten its control of Gaza and its competitiveness in the West Bank or one that would deter it from initiating another round. On the other hand, certain inconsistencies imply that its political calculus in this regard might be less reassuring. After all, even before the fighting ended, Hamas felt the need to carry out the public extrajudicial execution of dozens of those it charged were “collaborators” but were widely known to belong to Fatah and other opposition elements, *pour encourager les autres*. Nor can Hamas ignore the fact that its overall approval ratings are higher in the West Bank, where the consequences of its policy produced only pride and anger, than in Gaza, where it brought about death and destruction (and where it is riskier to express positions unsupportive of Hamas). Moreover, while 77.6 percent of Gaza respondents believed that Israel had been “painfully beaten by Palestinian militants,” 72.5 percent were also worried about another military confrontation with Israel, suggesting that a new Hamas-initiated confrontation might be received with some lack of enthusiasm, particularly if some diplomatic movement or other change in conditions on the West Bank meanwhile enhances the relative standing of the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority.

In addition, Hamas' political capital will be influenced by a number of factors beyond Israel's exclusive control. That will be the case inside Gaza, particularly with respect to the arrangements concerning control of funds, jobs, and contracts for the economic reconstruction, as well as for any security (and other) presence of Fatah or third parties. The same will be true of the regional political-strategic environment. As long as Egypt continues

to be ruled by a regime unequivocally hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood, it will be difficult for Hamas to secure any significant political backing for an aggressive policy or to persuade Egypt to relax its determination to prevent Hamas from replenishing its depleted war stocks. And if radical Islamist movements continue to gain momentum, Hamas might feel more hesitant to act aggressively lest it further alienate those regional and international forces galvanized to resist that tide, for which Turkey and Qatar are no real substitute, though it could also be emboldened by the apparent tide of history. In any case, these are all matters over which Israel will have little influence.

Even issues that ostensibly are under Israel's control, particularly the threat and use of military force in order to influence the adversary's cost-benefit calculus, are nevertheless subject to serious constraints. Thus, international political considerations undermine the credibility of an Israeli threat to bring the full weight of its military power to bear on Gaza or to act as though it were in a full state of war with Gaza – meaning, *inter alia*, denial of food, fuel, water, energy, and other essentials. Lacking the overall ability to pursue decisive strategic victory over Hamas or the availability of mechanisms to lower Hamas' political motivation, hence, its "unacceptable consequences" threshold, Israel may be able to constrain the buildup of Hamas capabilities, but it will be hard put to deter Hamas directly for an indefinite period of time.

However, that reality does not necessarily preclude the possibility of "indirect deterrence," that is, the threat or use of force in a manner that erodes support for Hamas among the Palestinian public and other forces in the Palestinian political arena, whose "unacceptable consequences" threshold may well be crossed at some point short of Hamas' destruction. After all, not all Palestinians share Hamas' zeal for war against Israel, and even among those who do identify with Hamas' ultimate vision, not all share the intensity of its commitment or are willing to incur the same costs in pursuit of this vision. So if Hamas is persuaded that a renewal of violence will provoke objections and resistance among in its own constituency to the point where its standing is threatened, that may be a more effective deterrent than any direct – and intrinsically limited – Israeli threat or action aimed at it.

Promoting the constellation of forces needed for indirect deterrence may be pursued by military means alone, including threats and acts to constrain Hamas capabilities, and it almost certainly necessitates zero tolerance of any Hamas use, import, or manufacture of weapons and construction of tunnels. But a comprehensive approach that combines the threat and use of

force with political efforts to lower the motivation, hence, the “unacceptable consequences” threshold of non-Hamas Palestinians, promises to be more effective. That clearly implies the pledge of some benefit for withholding or withdrawing support from Hamas, both in terms of economic wellbeing for Gazans and of a political horizon for all Palestinians, in addition to the threat of incurring costs for failing to do so.

Yet the most sophisticated strategy may in fact not ensure deterrence, and even if Hamas refrains from taking actions unacceptable to Israel, it will be difficult to know at any given point in time whether that is because Hamas has been deterred or because of some other reason (e.g., distractions, different priorities, capability constraints). The same intrinsic ambiguity, by the way, characterizes Hizbollah’s inactivity vis-à-vis Israel, including its rejection of urgent calls for assistance from Hamas during Operation Protective Edge: despite the assumption that the punishment inflicted by Israel in 2006 continues to deter Hizbollah directly or indirectly, there is no certainty that the explanation does not lie elsewhere or that Hizbollah will continue to refrain from acting against Israel in the future, especially in different circumstances, e.g., in the context of a clash between Israel and Iran.

Successful deterrence may possibly be inferred; only deterrence failures can clearly be demonstrated (though not necessarily understood correctly), and then, only in retrospect. That is not a reason to abandon deterrence as a core element of security policy. But it is a reason to search for a multi-faceted approach that addresses both motivations and capabilities and consciously tries to shape both components of the cost-benefit calculus and communicates them, not just to the adversary itself – in this case, Hamas – but also to all the other components of a political system that are important to it, namely, the entirety of the Palestinian body politic.

Rethinking the Deterrence of Hamas

Avner Golov

Throughout Operation Protective Edge, Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that Israel's objectives included attacking Hamas and maintaining the organization's difficult economic and political situation; thwarting attempts by Hamas to rebuild its military capabilities damaged in the fighting; and restoring Israeli deterrence. The latter objective is the most problematic.

The purpose of a deterrent strategy is to prevent the enemy from attacking by convincing it that its action will lead to punishment more serious than the expected benefit. Deterrence in its widest form (*broad deterrence*) is intended to prevent a military conflict. In its more limited form (*narrow deterrence*), it is a tool for preventing the enemy from carrying out specific actions, even after a conflict has erupted, in order to reduce the chances of escalation and protect strategic assets. The inherent weakness of any deterrent strategy is that its achievements are measured in retrospect. It is very difficult to evaluate, let alone determine with certainty, when and under what conditions the enemy will assess that the benefit of an attack will exceed the damage it can be expected to cause. When the enemy fails to attack, it is difficult to assess in real time whether it fears a devastating response or it is weighing other considerations unconnected to deterrence.

In retrospect, the reason for the failure of Israeli deterrence to prevent a conflict with Hamas at the start of the recent campaign was an assessment that Hamas, which rules Gaza, would behave responsibly toward its citizens and prefer to preserve its political and military assets rather than risk an Israeli response that would lead to destruction and increased domestic pressure on the organization's leadership. In previous incidents over the past year, when the IDF attacked Hamas infrastructures, the organization chose to avoid a response that would lead to escalation with Israel. The assessment in

Jerusalem was that Hamas was demonstrating “political responsibility” and did not wish to risk a confrontation. In June 2014, Hamas chose differently and began to escalate the conflict with Israel, initially by loosening the reins on the other Palestinian factions, and later, by direct involvement in attacks on communities in the south.

What caused this change in the organization’s behavior? The conventional wisdom is that Hamas saw itself in distress politically and economically and that therefore it had almost nothing to lose from escalation with Israel. It was prepared to pay the price of an Israeli response so it could attempt to present an achievement that would stop it from growing weaker. Hamas, which shrugged off responsibility toward the citizens of Gaza, initiated the conflict with Israel and used its citizens as human shields.

This is an important lesson for deterrence in general and deterrence against a terrorist organization in particular: when the enemy feels that it does not have much to lose, this reduces the effectiveness of deterrence. If the government of Israel intends to preserve Hamas’ sorry situation, it must take into account that its ability to maintain deterrence against the organization over time will be damaged. In a reality where Hamas is weakened, its “state” elements are also weakened, and the forces that characterize a terrorist organization responsible solely for its own interests are strengthened. The challenge of deterrence against such an organization is very complicated because there are no means of leverage other than striking at the organization and its capabilities.

Hamas’ resolve during the conflict indicates that when the organization is in distress, Israel’s ability to ensure a long period of quiet will be even more limited than in the past. Therefore, if deterrence is restored to its state prior to the latest round of fighting, it will be part of a fluid situation in which any slight change could lead to the failure of Israeli deterrence.

The incorrect assessments by IDF officials at various stages of the campaign that Hamas would accept a ceasefire without an agreement providing it with some achievement suggest a lack of understanding of the dynamic that characterized Hamas and the change it underwent over the course of the fighting. Thus, there is a critical need to examine the underlying intelligence assumptions on which these assessments were based, in order to reduce the likelihood of similar errors in the future. This conclusion is not meant to imply that Israel should give up its deterrent goal, rather, that it should be cognizant of the limitations of this goal and formulate an improved

deterrence strategy on the basis of lessons from Operation Protective Edge. An additional lesson from the latest operation could help Israel improve its deterrence policy, even if in a limited way, and thus reduce the threat that deterrence will fail in the future against a Palestinian terrorist organization.

At the start of the Operation Protective Edge, Israeli deterrence not only failed, but simply collapsed, reflected in the failure of Israeli narrow deterrence to restrain Hamas at the start of the fighting. The Palestinian terrorist organization began to fire rockets and missiles at cities in the south and in Gush Dan early in the conflict. In previous conflicts, it gave careful consideration to such moves. In Operation Cast Lead, it avoided attacks aimed at central Israel, and in Operation Pillar of Defense, the number of attacks was more limited than in Protective Edge. In the latest campaign, Hamas also fired to the north of Gush Dan – a range it had not dared in the past – and carried out terrorist attacks on the ground, in the air, and from the sea. It appears that in fact, almost all of Hamas' barriers connected to Israeli deterrence fell and that it did not believe its behavior would lead to a devastating response that would threaten the stability of its regime. While Hamas indeed improved some of its capabilities in the last two years, in past operations its escalatory strategy was much more gradual and restraint.

The effectiveness of the Iron Dome active defense system, which prevented loss of life and damage to critical assets and reduced public pressure on decision makers for a devastating Israeli response, may have contributed to Hamas' preference for risking an Israeli response in an attempt to produce a strategic achievement in the fighting. Israel's attempt to avoid a ground attack and its failure to respond to rocket fire at Gush Dan in Operation Pillar of Defense, along with public opposition by some Israeli leaders to a ground campaign at the start of the current operation, were another incentive for Hamas to risk a confrontation with Israel.

Israel must learn from this failure and correct it. Israel proved in the latest round of fighting that it is prepared to endanger its soldiers in a ground attack. In the second half of the operation, Israel's leaders changed their messages slightly and began to make it clear that they would not rule out the possibility of a broad operation aimed at toppling the Hamas government. In order to strengthen narrow deterrence against Hamas, this message must continue to be reinforced, especially given the leak about the high price that can be expected for such an action. It is important to maintain the threat that Hamas will be toppled in response to well-defined offensive actions,

and not to use this threat against a wide range of operations, which would damage its credibility and blur Israel's red lines.

Israel has proven that it has the ability to obtain and take advantage of international legitimacy for activity in Gaza to launch pinpoint strikes against Hamas assets, even after the group has neutralized the effect of surprise and succeeded in entrenching itself. Israel must maximize this opportunity. It should create new rules of the game including a number of red lines that, if crossed, will lead to heavy punishment and damage to the organization's most important assets, and later, even a threat to its rule. Possible Israeli red lines could address the scope of the rocket fire, the range, the targets of attack, or terrorist activity not connected to rocket fire. This policy could fail in extreme cases, for example, if Hamas decided to conduct an all-out war against Israel. Nonetheless, to the extent possible, the group should be encouraged to avoid this. The failure of broad deterrence and a renewed outbreak of military conflict should not be allowed to lead immediately to a situation in which Hamas enjoys *carte blanche*.

The limitations of Israeli deterrence, as revealed in Operation Protective Edge, indicate that Prime Minister Netanyahu's objectives – to continue to weaken Hamas and restore deterrence against it – contradict each other. Israel's strategic choice on the southern front in this context is actually between two main scenarios: a weakened Hamas that is difficult to deter, and a stabilized Hamas with more effective levers of deterrence against it.

The ceasefire agreement does not indicate a clear Israeli choice between these alternatives. If Israel wishes to maintain stable deterrence against Hamas, it must allow the organization to rehabilitate itself. However, if it wishes to prevent Hamas from doing so, it must contend with a situation of unstable deterrence. Israel should undertake an assessment of the two options and promote the strategy that is correct for it. It must not leave the decision to other actors in the region, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the Palestinian Authority, whose interests differ from Israel's.

In the overall balance, deterrence is of secondary importance compared to the goal of weakening Hamas. Maintaining the trend toward a weakened Hamas with economic and political tools, and even military tools if necessary, is an active goal intended to produce a better situation for Israel. In contrast, the goal of deterrence is more passive by nature and is intended mainly to buy time between the rounds of fighting. Israeli deterrence, no matter how successful, will only gain time for Israel until the next round. Israel must hold

an in-depth discussion about the implications of various alternatives to Hamas rule in Gaza and assess whether conditions are ripe for a genuine strategic change there. The return of Fatah, the development of a local leadership, the seizure of power by another terrorist group, and the strengthening of the connection with Egypt are examples of this. Only once the State of Israel has a clear strategy toward Gaza can it incorporate its deterrence policy into the framework of this strategy while reckoning with its limitations.

Part II

Israel and the Palestinian Arena

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Operation Protective Edge: Leverage for Returning the PA to the Gaza Strip

Shlomo Brom

Since Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 following the collapse of the Palestinian unity government, the concept of “distinction,” or separation, between Gaza and the West Bank has taken hold in Israel. This idea has its roots in security, but there is also an overlying political layer that justifies the concept.

The security argument is simple. The military wings of Palestinian terrorist organizations have their main forces and headquarters in the Gaza Strip. As these organizations, particularly Hamas, are still actively fighting Israel, Israel has an interest in severing the connection between Gaza and the West Bank and thereby blocking the establishment of a terrorist infrastructure in the West Bank and preventing arms smuggling, infiltration of terrorists and operational instructions, and other terrorist activity in the West Bank. For its part, the political consideration is based on the assumption that Israel should embrace a policy of conflict management with the Palestinians rather than conflict resolution, whether because the two-state solution is contrary to Israel’s interest or because there is no possibility of a settlement, given the lack of a credible Palestinian partner. According to this approach, separation between the two areas and the ability to maintain independent, respective policies ostensibly facilitates conflict management.

To a large extent, the events that culminated in Operation Protective Edge refute the assumption that separation facilitates conflict management, and demonstrate the strong linkage between the two geographical areas. The crisis that began with the abduction and murder of the three teenagers in the West Bank eventually led to a large scale confrontation in the Gaza Strip. In order to end the crisis, ceasefire talks were held with a united Palestinian

delegation, headed by Abbas' representatives. It became clear that a ceasefire could not be reached in total isolation from the wider Palestinian context, as long as the people living in both areas see themselves as belonging to the same people, and as long as the same political movements and the same terrorist organizations operate among them. What happens in one area affects the other.

One manifestation of the separation approach in Israeli policy is opposition to reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah and to a national unity government. When the most recent reconciliation agreement was signed and a national unity government established in April 2014, Israel maintained its tradition of staunchly opposing Palestinian reconciliation and a national unity government. It refused to work with the new government, made every effort to torpedo key clauses in the agreement, such as the transfer of funds for the purpose of payment of salaries to government employees in Gaza, and threatened punitive measures against the Palestinian Authority (PA). Israel appears to have ignored the fact that this time, the background to the reconciliation agreement and its ensuing arrangements were different from those of previous agreements.

Indeed, the background to the reconciliation was the serious crisis for Hamas following the loss of its main allies and principal sources of funding in the Arab world in particular and the Middle East in general. Its relations with Syria, Iran, and Hizbollah deteriorated when Hamas refused to support the Assad regime in the civil war, and the organization subsequently lost the support of Egypt when the Muslim Brotherhood government was ousted. This loss caused it the most serious damage because Egypt decided to take action against the smuggling tunnels, which completed the blockade of Gaza and caused a serious financial crisis for Hamas. The organization saw the financial and political components of the reconciliation agreement as a way out of the crisis, and therefore it was prepared to accept many of Fatah's demands. Thus, for example, Hamas agreed to transfer control of civil affairs in Gaza to the government in Ramallah. In fact, it agreed to cede a significant part of its control in the Gaza Strip, even agreeing to Egyptian terms on the presence of PA security forces at the border crossings. However, failure of the reconciliation agreement – from Hamas' perspective, to a large extent because of Israel's opposition – paved the way for the outbreak of violence in Gaza.

When an organization like Hamas has its back to the wall, the attempt to move forward by means of violent conflict gains greater momentum, and random events that otherwise might have been stopped at an early stage quickly escalate into widespread conflict. Perhaps Israel could have adopted another approach, which sees the reconciliation agreement as an opportunity to start a process toward restoration of PA rule in Gaza, even if at the beginning of the process Hamas continues to maintain its fully independent military capabilities. It is possible that such a change in Israeli policy could have prevented the deterioration that led to Operation Protective Edge.

Israel and Hamas reached agreement on an “unlimited” ceasefire in two stages. In the first stage, the border crossings will be opened for humanitarian purposes and the fishing zone will be extended to six miles. In the second stage, discussions will be held for a month on more comprehensive arrangements for opening the Gaza border crossings and Israel’s security demands. Consequently the question is whether new opportunities have been created for returning the PA to the Gaza Strip and whether this would serve Israel’s interests. In the public debate in Israel, this issue is part of a broader question: is Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas part of the problem or part of the solution? This formulation is relevant because the current policy of Israel’s government – especially after the failure of the talks brokered by US Secretary of State John Kerry – holds that Israel has no Palestinian partner. In other words, Abbas is part of the problem and not the solution. A change in approach to Abbas and the PA could have broader political consequences.

In talks brokered by Egypt and other international players to resolve the crisis in Gaza, the return of PA administration to the Gaza Strip was broached as part of the solution. The first element proposed was a return to the idea raised by the Egyptians in the months prior to the crisis, which was reflected in the reconciliation agreement: placing PA guards on the Palestinian side of the crossings and even along the border as a condition for regular opening of the crossings. The second component is PA involvement, up to the level of control over the aid given for different reconstruction projects in Gaza by various states. Inclusion of the PA is intended to achieve three objectives. The first is to deprive Hamas of the potential to derive political and practical benefit from control of the reconstruction and present it as a victory for the organization. The second objective is to bolster the legitimacy of Abbas and the PA government by making them key players in the reconstruction project. The third goal is to help establish monitoring mechanisms, primarily

international, and specifically European, for the aid, to ensure that dual-use goods that reach the Gaza Strip are not channeled toward Hamas' military purposes. Thus, for example, there is a need to monitor cement and iron transferred to Gaza so that they will not be used to build tunnels and other fortifications.

If Israel makes do with security separation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip and gives up on political separation, beginning the process of returning PA administration to Gaza could serve Israeli interests. From Israel's perspective, it is better to have a national unity government in Ramallah, composed mainly of technocrats affiliated with Abbas, that controls civil ministries in Gaza without a Hamas presence, and through them, manages the reconstruction project with the aid of the international community and contributing Arab countries. To be sure, the PA's security presence would be limited, and Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza will not agree to disarm. However, since Hamas has been weakened and lost a large part of its arsenal during the fighting, and since it is under heavy Egyptian pressure, it may be possible to expand the PA's security presence in Gaza gradually over time. This is especially true if the original Egyptian proposal is implemented, namely, to station PA forces (the Presidential Guard) at the Rafah border crossing as a condition for its regular opening, and perhaps also more ambitious elements of the plan, which would include placing PA forces along the border between Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula and putting the civilian police under PA control.

The second stage of negotiations for a long term ceasefire will examine the expanded opening of the crossings from Israel to Gaza. This would involve opening more crossings (up to five) and placing fewer restrictions on what goes through them. Israel could also make agreement on such subjects conditional on placement of PA security forces on the Palestinian side of the crossings. These developments could serve as a good basis for gradually expanding the presence of PA security forces in Gaza, beyond activity by the PA government ministries responsible for civil matters.

Such a policy brings with it several political implications, beginning with Israel's acceptance of the reconciliation agreement and a willingness to work with the national unity government. The second political implication is Israel's willingness to accept Abbas' increased stature as a partner for new arrangements in the Gaza Strip. It will be difficult to resolve the contradiction between this willingness and continued adherence to the approach that Abbas

is not a partner in the negotiations for a permanent settlement, i.e., that he is part of the problem and not the solution. Therefore, it can be assumed that the international community will labor to help Abbas by restarting the negotiations on a permanent settlement on terms that are acceptable to the Palestinians. The fighting in Gaza has damaged Abbas' standing among the Palestinian public, and he is perceived as having collaborated with Israel by containing the protest in the West Bank while Hamas was heroically fighting the Israeli enemy. If measures are not taken to strengthen Abbas's legitimacy among the Palestinian public, he will find it difficult to meet expectations that he can contribute to reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and the stability of the ceasefire. In addition, if the political process is not restarted, Abbas will likely implement his plan involving unilateral measures, which include joining the International Court of Justice (ICJ). These, in turn, will lead to a high level of friction between the PA and Israel. It is difficult to believe that in such a situation, it would be possible to cooperate with the PA regarding its return to Gaza and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

The question remains whether Abbas and the Palestinian Authority are up to the tasks now envisioned for them. Israel's policy in recent years, particularly in the past year, has greatly weakened Abbas and the PA, and their legitimacy is at a very low level. Indeed, a recent public opinion poll by Khalil Shikaki's Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah shows a steep decline among the Palestinian public in support for Abbas and Fatah and a significant rise in backing for Hamas and its leaders.¹ It will be difficult for the Palestinian security forces to function if they lack legitimacy in the eyes of the public, and a weak government in Ramallah will have a hard time conducting an ambitious plan to rebuild Gaza. The PA will need a great deal of assistance from regional and international actors and from Israel. This does not mean only the necessary financial aid, which many have pledged to donate toward Gaza's recovery. There will also be a need for direct assistance from states and government agencies (such as USAID) and international organizations (such as UNRWA) in managing the effort. Israel will need to create a situation whereby the PA can operate in Gaza, whether by making it easier for PA officials to enter and leave Gaza and easing the passage of goods at the border crossings, or by measures to strengthen PA legitimacy. This involves building a "coalition of the willing" that will be prepared to mobilize for joint action in order to assist in stabilizing the ceasefire and rebuilding Gaza.

Hamas will certainly not wish to accept its weakened military and political position in Gaza, and it will take steps to contain the strengthening of the PA there. However, the special circumstances at the end of Operation Protective Edge – specifically, the military and financial weakness of Hamas, which lost a large part of its weapon systems during the fighting; the dependence on Egypt, which is interested in containing and weakening Hamas; and the eagerness inside and outside the Middle East to give the PA a key role in the Gaza Strip – will make it very difficult for Hamas to stop the PA from increasing its presence in Gaza without paying a very heavy price. The Palestinian public will accuse it of damaging national unity and the unity government; measures will be taken against it by Israel and Egypt, which control all entrances to Gaza; and the plan to rebuild Gaza will be at risk if Hamas refuses to play by the rules of the coalition of the willing.

The government of Israel will need to consider whether it is prepared to change basic elements of its policy toward the PA and the Gaza Strip in order to take full advantage of the chance to start a process of change. Perhaps in the longer run, such a process would eliminate the political split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and produce a calmer situation between Gaza and Israel, which could open up new political possibilities.

Note

- 1 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, “Special Gaza War Poll,” Ramallah, September 2, 2014, <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/special-gaza-war-poll>.

Changing Course and Discourse: The Intra-Palestinian Balance of Power and the Political Process

Anat Kurz

During Operation Protective Edge, many in Israel stressed the advantages likely to stem from allowing Hamas to retain control of the Gaza Strip for the purpose of enforcing calm in the area. This confirmation of Hamas' hold on the Strip actually validated the split in the Palestinian arena. At the same time, the longer the campaign continued, the more Israel softened its opposition to coordination between Fatah and Hamas, increasingly aware of the benefits of involving the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority in the formulation of principles for a ceasefire and the administration of the Gaza Strip as part of a new arrangement in this arena. Indeed, the renewed presence of PA forces in the Gaza Strip may serve as a counterbalance to the Palestinian division, which currently limits PA influence in the Palestinian arena to the West Bank, and may possibly constitute a basis for comprehensive institutional coordination between the rival movements.

For its part, Israel may view the establishment of a unified Palestinian Authority as an opportunity to restart the political process, if the PA, in the spirit of Fatah policy, adheres to its commitment to a negotiated settlement. In order to increase the chances of this happening, Israel, in coordination with regional and international parties, must articulate a concrete political plan with relevance to both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The presentation of such a tangible political horizon could strengthen the status of the PA and at the same time reduce the attraction of the strategy of direct military confrontation with Israel as a means of breaking the deadlock in the sphere of conflict.

The Balance of Forces in the Palestinian Arena

Toward the end of the nine-month period designated by the US administration for talks between Israel and the PLO (July 2013-April 2014), when it was clear that the parties were mired in yet another futile attempt to agree on principles for a negotiated settlement, the PA reached understandings with Hamas regarding the establishment of a cabinet of technocrats as a step toward general elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. By appointing this cabinet, Fatah and Hamas intended to expand the base of their domestic support, albeit necessarily at the expense of one another. The PA sought a way to cover for its failure to promote a political process toward Palestinian independence. This was meant to bolster its status at home, against the background of an intensifying economic crisis and concern within the Palestinian arena, Israel, and the international community regarding the possible dismantling of the PA, if not as an intentional act of defiance then as an uncontrolled ongoing process. Hamas, for its part, wished to edge closer to the center of the Palestinian political arena, even at the price of the appearance of reconciliation with Fatah, in order to breach the walls of isolation imposed on the movement due to the inter-party rivalry and its refusal to meet the international demands that are a prerequisite for political dialogue.¹ (Indeed, Israel sees Hamas' rebuff of these international conditions as justification for its policy of separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.) One immediate motivation for the inter-party rapprochement was the economic hardship suffered by Hamas and the Gaza Strip population due to the deterioration in relations with Cairo following the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood from power in Egypt, and particularly the firm Egyptian actions against the network of tunnels in the Rafah area.

It was considered unlikely that the two rival movements would succeed in reaching an understanding regarding division of power and full cooperation within the PA and, in accordance with Hamas' demand, within the ranks of the PLO. Another obstacle to the reconciliation process was Hamas' refusal to accept the PA's monopoly on the weapons in the Gaza Strip. However, the mere announcement of closer relations between the two movements provided Hamas with a tactical achievement, especially when in response Israel suspended the political process (as it did in response to the renewal of the PA's international diplomatic efforts, in the form of requests to join the conventions of different UN organizations).

The joint cabinet lost all practical significance in the wake of a series of events that culminated in rapid escalation and the outbreak of violence between Israel and Hamas. The hostilities were preceded by the murder of three Israeli teenagers by Hamas activists in the West Bank, the retaliatory murder of a Palestinian youth, and a wide scale campaign against the Hamas infrastructure in the West Bank by the IDF in coordination with the PA security forces. All this occurred against the background of difficulties imposed by Israel on the transfer of funds to the Gaza Strip following the announcement of the joint cabinet and the disagreement between Fatah and Hamas regarding responsibility for the salaries of Hamas administration and security personnel. However, the issue of coordination between the two movements returned to the agenda as part of the talks regarding a security arrangement for the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of the war and the reconstruction required in the wake of the massive damage to the Strip during the confrontation.

The reconstruction process is intended to be undertaken with the cooperation of the Palestinian Authority. Egypt has insisted that the PA take part in the implementation of the new arrangements in the Strip as a step toward reestablishing its presence in the region, cognizant that all measures to this end require coordination between Fatah and Hamas. Beginning in the first days of the fighting, and more intensively as the war dragged on, PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and his associates took part in Cairo's efforts to dictate the contours of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, as well as the principles of relations between Hamas, Egypt, Israel, and the PA. For its part Israel encouraged this policy, in an effort to rehabilitate the PA's status in the Gaza Strip.² Still, the viability of this effort was threatened by two developments that emerged clearly in the context of the fighting: international reaffirmation of Hamas' hold on the Gaza Strip and a rise in the Palestinian popular support enjoyed by the movement.

The understandings reached to bring the fighting to an end testified (once again) to the fact that from the perspective of Israel, the United States, Egypt, and other parties in the region, Hamas enjoys the status of a state actor. In the course of the fighting, official elements in Israel articulated the desire to strike Hamas. At the same time, in contrast to past statements regarding the need and intention to topple the Hamas regime, Israel also made a conscious effort to enable Hamas to retain the ability to enforce calm.³ This change in Israeli policy reflected concern that the collapse of the Hamas regime could

be followed by anarchy that would both saddle Israel with an economic-humanitarian, security, and political burden and would allow radical Islamic forces in the region to gain strength. This, in turn, would reduce the effect of deterrence that Israel achieved as a result of the campaign, as well as make it more difficult for Egypt to contend with the armed groups in the Sinai Peninsula and along the border of the Gaza Strip.

The international recognition of Hamas' hold on the Gaza Strip would compensate the movement for the lack of support, and in some cases, the sheer loathing it elicited from the leadership of Arab states; most prominent among the Arab disdain was the Egyptian leadership.⁴ Aid pledged to the Gaza Strip by Qatar and Turkey and by the European Union will help rebuild the civilian infrastructure in the region. Arab and Western elements that lend their support to the reconstruction project will not be able to avoid coordination with Hamas, marking another phase in easing the political-economic boycott of the movement. In turn, the Hamas leadership can be expected to use the civilian reconstruction effort to reestablish its civilian control of the region and rebuild its military infrastructure there.

The rise in popular support for Hamas as a result of its proven ability to withstand the military might of the IDF for a period of many weeks will help the movement achieve this goal. According to a public opinion poll conducted in the Palestinian arena near the time of the ceasefire (which qualifies the long term validity of its findings), most respondents expressed support for the transfer of responsibility for the security forces in the Gaza Strip to the joint cabinet, albeit following elections for the PA and based on their results. Another finding indicated that Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh would beat Abbas in elections for the PA presidency, were they held at that time.⁵ This trend should compensate Hamas for the public criticism that it has sustained for its provocation of Israel in the name of organizational survival and maintained control of the Gaza Strip, which resulted in an aggressive Israeli response that turned the Strip into a disaster area.

For this reason, the PA's ability to rehabilitate its status in the region will be dictated not by the official role it will be assigned in the realm of security, administration, and reconstruction but rather the scope and quality of the coordination it manages to establish with Hamas, in the Gaza Strip in particular and in the Palestinian arena as a whole. The official framework already exists. All that remains to be done is to renew, or actually to begin

the routine activity of the cabinet that has already been agreed to by the two rival parties.

Political Ramifications

The fighting between Israel and Hamas has accentuated the components of the security-political dilemma currently facing Israel, which is rooted in the rivalry between the two camps in the Palestinian arena and the balance of power between them. For years, in addition to the difficulty of bridging the gaps between their fundamental positions, relations between Israel and the Palestinians have been tainted by the division in the Palestinian arena in general, and Hamas' strategy of violent struggle in particular. The most recent military confrontation, which erupted shortly after yet another round of talks between Israel and the PLO ended in failure, inevitably heightened the doubts already existing in Israel regarding the practicality of negotiations with the Palestinians and the feasibility of implementing an agreement, as well as the concern over the inevitable accompanying security risks. Bitterness against Israel and perception of the recent confrontation as an achievement of Hamas' strategy of violent resistance can be expected to harden the PA's negotiating positions. In this context, both Israel and the PA will find it difficult to remove familiar stumbling blocks from the path to renewed political dialogue.

Against this background, the PA can be expected to renew its dialogue with Hamas. The disagreements between Fatah and Hamas on division of power are far from resolved. Abbas has charged Hamas with bringing disaster upon the Gaza Strip and seizing the humanitarian aid that arrived in the region after the ceasefire came into effect. However, he may also seek to add substance to the joint cabinet if the political deadlock continues, with the aim of expanding the PA's base of popular support. For precisely the same reason, the PA may well attempt to engage in dialogue with Hamas if talks with Israel are resumed, in an effort to strengthen the PA's image as a national representative enjoying broad support. The dialogue with Hamas is also likely to help the PA quell criticism at home for focusing on diplomatic measures and refraining from taking up arms against Israel while the residents of Gaza were collapsing under the pressure of the Israeli attack. For its part, the Hamas leadership is likely, from the relatively strong position it now occupies, to strive for coordination with the PA in an attempt to make the

most effective use possible of its increased popular support at home and the renewed recognition of its hold on the Gaza Strip.⁶

The political process will not be on the agenda of the coordination effort between the two movements, at least not at the beginning. Chances that coordination will be translated into a willingness to adopt positions that will make it difficult for the Israeli government to avoid a return to the negotiating table also remain slim. The PA itself will find it hard to dictate conditions and restrictions to Hamas, and its weakness will once again be demonstrated if the military wing of Hamas or other armed factions operating in the Gaza Strip insist on instigating renewed rounds of fighting. Still, closer relations between Fatah and Hamas have the potential to bring about a positive change in atmosphere in the sphere of the conflict. If cultivated, such relations could also pave the way to effective renewal of the Israeli-Palestinian political dialogue.

Israel should undertake an in-depth reassessment of the potential advantages of coordination between Hamas and Fatah, based on the assumption that a unified PA, which constitutes a designated, recognized authority with a broad base of legitimacy and overall responsibility for the happenings in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, is a distinct Israeli interest, especially if driven by a political platform that espouses Fatah's commitment to negotiations and a negotiated settlement. Israel, therefore, should support institutional coordination in the Palestinian arena and at the same time assure Fatah of a political breakthrough and the imperative of security calm, which will help improve the movement's standing and justify its opposition to violent struggle.

To this end, the Israeli government requires a concrete political initiative. It must therefore dedicate thought and resources to formulating an initiative, in preparation for the return of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to the international agenda as part of a plan of action to be drawn up by actors in the Middle East and beyond, with the aim of calming the tensions surrounding the conflict. This possibility fits in well with Mahmoud Abbas' declared intention to present an initiative under the auspices of the PLO, in an effort to translate the criticism of Israel for the scale of its campaign against Hamas and the scope of destruction and killing in the Gaza Strip into pressure on the Israeli leadership to return to the negotiating table from a position of relative weakness.⁷ To this end, Jerusalem will need to take advantage of the convergence of interests between Israel and pragmatic states in the Middle

East, led by Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which for their own reasons seek to reduce Hamas' influence and stabilize the Israeli-Palestinian arena. It will also need to effectively utilize its convergence of interests with international actors, particularly the United States and European states. A binding Israeli initiative will better enable Israel to mobilize understanding and support for its demands, particularly in the realm of security. An Israeli initiative formulated with the cooperation of leading international parties could also possibly force the PLO/PA to soften its positions on issues regarding a final settlement.

At the same time, Israel will also need to take part in international efforts to rebuild the Gaza Strip. Especially if combined with a comprehensive political initiative, a reconstruction and development drive will not only reduce the motivation within the Palestinian public to join the ranks of Hamas and other radical factions but also help reduce the danger of local flare-ups in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank igniting the Israeli-Palestinian arena as a whole.

Notes

- 1 The Quartet conditions include the cessation of armed struggle, the recognition of Israel, and the honoring of past agreements signed between the PLO and Israel.
- 2 Barak Ravid, Jacky Khoury, Zvi Barel, "Yaalon: We are interested in having Abbas' forces stationed at border crossings in Gaza as part of the ceasefire," *Haaretz*, July 22, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/.premium-1.2383812>; and Daoud Kuttab, "Israel Warms to Abbas as Gaza Mediator," *al-Monitor*, Palestine Pulse, July 22, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/gaza-war-israel-mahmoud-abbas-qatar-kerry-hamas-egypt.html>. Still, doubts remained as to the PA's ability to guarantee quiet. See Amos Harel, "Yaalon: The PA is Not a Neighbor that Can be Relied On," *Haaretz*, July 28, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/2.444/1.2228666>.
- 3 At the conclusion of Operation Cast Lead (December 2008-January 2009), Hamas was charged with guaranteeing security calm in the Gaza region, although on the eve the operation, some official spokespeople in Israel presented the toppling of Hamas as the goal of the fighting. During Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012), official elements in Israel came to recognize the movement as an entity with which it was possible to conduct dialogue, albeit indirectly, with the goal of achieving security quiet.
- 4 Kareem Fahim, "Palestinians Find Show of Support Lacking From Arab Leaders Amid Offensive," *New York Times*, July 19, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/20/world/middleeast/palestinians-find-show-of-support-lacking-from-arab-nations-amid-offensive.html?_r=0; Khaled Abu Toameh, "Palestinians: The Arabs Betrayed

- Us – Again,” July 21, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4463/palestinians-arabs-betrayed-us>.
- 5 “Special Gaza War Poll,” *Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research* (PSR), September 2, 2014, <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/special-gaza-poll>.
 - 6 Elie Hanna, “Meshaal: Full Partnership in the Palestinian Authority and a Palestinian State within Pre-1967 Borders,” *al-Akhbar*, September 6, 2014, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/21414>.
 - 7 Jodi Rudoren, “Abbas is Seen as Ready to Seek Pact on His Own,” *New York Times*, August 25, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/26/world/middleeast/abbas-seen-as-ready-to-seek-mideast-pact-on-his-own.html?_r=0; Kifah Ziboun, “Abbas Devises Plan for Independent Palestinian State: Official,” *a-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 30, 2014, <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/08/article55336029>.

Organizational Change within Hamas: What Lies Ahead?

Benedetta Berti

Since its creation as the armed wing of the Gaza-branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1987, the Palestinian Islamic Resistance, better known by its acronym Hamas, has been an organization characterized by high internal dynamism and fast-paced change. Indeed, over the nearly three decades of its existence, Hamas has experienced a series of substantive, qualitative changes. At the military level, the organization evolved from a relatively unsophisticated violent faction that relied on stabbings of individual Israelis to a well-trained and orderly armed group capable of deadly suicide bombings and rocket fire deep into Israel. Furthermore, during Operation Cast Lead and even more recently in the course of Operation Protective Edge, Hamas demonstrated its transformation into a hybrid actor with high combat skills capable of engaging its enemy through both classic guerrilla tactics such as ambushes, IEDs, and suicide missions, as well as conventional standoff tactics to target and kill Israeli soldiers. Hamas' military evolution and reliance on hybrid warfare has also been mirrored by an even more profound social and political transformation, as it moved from the margins to the center of the Palestinian political stage while administering a sophisticated social welfare network.

Not surprisingly, over the years Hamas has evolved significantly as an organization. In its early years the group was centralized, cohesive, and overseen by one of its historic founders, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. It operated through district-based units centered in local mosques primarily in Gaza, and it lacked any type of strict internal institutions. Then, following Yassin's arrest in 1989 and increased external pressure from Israel, Hamas opted for a more decentralized, specialized, and dispersed structure and geographical expansion. Since then, the group's activities and its leadership have been

both geographically dispersed and compartmentalized, with Hamas' centers of power divided between the group's diaspora-based Political Bureau, the political leadership in Gaza, and the military commanders of the Qassam Brigades (with the West Bank leadership traditionally playing a secondary role). Over the years – and especially since 2007– the group's center of organizational power has vacillated between Gaza and the diaspora.

Moreover, since 2007 the group has weathered especially rapid and potentially disruptive internal changes. First, Hamas' status and organizational strategy underwent a major transformation following the group's victory in the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections. In 2007, after a failed attempt at a unity government with its historical political foe Fatah, and witnessing both growing international pressure and deteriorating relations with Fatah and the PA, Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, quickly becoming its sole and uncontested ruler. This move created a political split between Gaza and the PA-ruled West Bank.

Between 2007 and 2013, Hamas invested in consolidating its control over the Strip, for example by taking over and reforming the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government in Gaza and by creating an extensive security sector completely independent of the PA. Meanwhile the group managed to keep the economy afloat, despite international isolation and biting Israeli and international economic restrictions. Upon becoming the *de facto* government in Gaza, the organization experienced increasing tensions between the needs of Hamas as the representative of the “resistance” – calling for sustained confrontation against Israel – and the requirements of Hamas as a “ruler,” which pressured the group to take a more risk-averse position and focus on internal power consolidation rather than external war. Between 2007 and 2013, the interaction between these two competing needs resulted in a series of violent interactions between Israel and Hamas, followed by times of relative quiet. Within Hamas, the at times diverging strategies of government and armed struggle led to increased organizational tensions between the group's political, military, and external leaders who often disagreed not only on the question of how and when to conduct armed attacks but also on the thorny question of reconciliation with Fatah.

Hamas' political landscape shifted again in the summer of 2013. Following the ousting of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood government of Mohamed Morsi, Hamas found itself in an increasingly complex position, as the loss of the group's main regional political patron, combined with the new

Egyptian authorities' efforts to further isolate Gaza and Hamas economically, resulted in a deep political and financial crisis. This predicament affected Hamas' capability to keep Gaza and its economy afloat, continue to rule as the effective authority, and meet its financial obligations as the de facto government, including salary payments for the roughly 40,000 employees on its payroll. This loss of control sheds light on why, in early summer of 2014, Hamas finally decided to overcome the post-2007 rift with the PA and Fatah and agree to the creation a Palestinian unity government of technocrats.

Since the creation of the unity government, Hamas' prospective loss of control in Gaza, together with the urgency of the financial crisis (with the much expected PA economic relief and payment of Hamas salaries failing to materialize) heightened internal tensions within the organization. In addition, the group was propelled to attempt to project and reestablish its role as a Palestinian national group, focusing its attention both on Gaza as well as on the West Bank. In this context, the situation following the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank – which was immediately attributed to Hamas' military wing – further complicated the organization's predicament, as Israel moved in the weeks following the abduction to target both Hamas operatives and infrastructure in the West Bank. The Israeli operations in the West Bank, combined with Hamas' internal debate over resuming attacks against Israel, led to a new barrage of rockets launched against Israel, prompting yet another round of hostilities.

Hamas' goals in the 2014 war, which became apparent immediately, included restoring the organization's reputation and strength with respect to Israel as well as in the Palestinian political arena, and – just as importantly – keeping internal conflict at bay. Militarily, Hamas wanted to restore its image as the Islamic resistance and project strength. This attitude explains why the group invested in attempts to infiltrate Israel, capture soldiers, and employ higher risk standoff tactics to kill Israeli soldiers. Hamas likely calculated that a short military escalation would allow the group to increase popularity domestically while gaining international visibility and, more significantly, intensify its bargaining power and force Israel as well as Egypt to relax economic restrictions on the Strip and implement the terms of the 2012 ceasefire, which included not just “quiet-for-quiet” but also progressive normalization of the flows of goods and people to and from Gaza. Any meaningful political concession from Israel would represent for Hamas both a material improvement of the status quo – relieving some of

the pressure on the group – as well as a tool to reassert internal cohesion and obtain a political victory and improve its somewhat shaky political standing.

An understanding of the Hamas calculus and desired political objectives helps clarify why the organization was divided over the issue of a ceasefire, despite the steep price paid in the last round of confrontation. Hamas' goals and strategy told the story of a group under extreme internal and external pressure. Internally, the continuation of the conflict revealed sharpened differences of opinion between the Gaza-based political leaderships, the Qassam Brigades, and the Hamas leaders abroad, led by Khaled Mashal. Even within the Qassam Brigades, the unit-based, localized model of combat adopted to maximize the autonomy of each unit allows Hamas to increase its flexibility and resilience, but at the expense of clear command and control, coordination, and communication. As to its external environment and with the noteworthy exception of Qatar and Turkey, Hamas also faced increased regional and international isolation.

The conclusion of the war with an open-ended ceasefire, to be followed by indirect talks, only partially eased Hamas' predicament. In the short term, the group was able to preserve internal cohesion and position itself at the center of the political stage, resulting in a boost to its popularity in both Gaza and the West Bank. Hamas also denied Israel a clear cut victory, was de facto able to dictate the duration of the war by rejecting successive ceasefire offers, and displayed improved military skills over those seen in Operation Cast Lead. Yet the group paid a heavy price, with significant losses to its arsenal, infrastructure, and military leadership. In addition, Hamas' political and financial position continues to be precarious, with the group facing growing regional isolation and seemingly forced to allow PA security forces to be deployed at Gaza's borders in order to obtain any significant relaxation of the economic restrictions it has sought so vigorously.

Looking ahead, Hamas will likely continue to find itself in a complex position. On the one hand, to capitalize on the short term popularity boost in view of future Palestinian elections, Hamas needs to maintain the unity government (a condition for the transfer of funds that will pay the salaries of employees on its payroll and allow entry of international aid and reconstruction funds into Gaza). On the other hand, to preserve internal cohesion and retain control of its military wing, the group must keep its independence and freedom of action in Gaza. These two interests are to some extent competing, and thus likely to generate more internal friction as well as an external crisis.

The Final Countdown for Hamas? Palestinian and Arab Discourse on the Social Networks

Orit Perlov

A look at the heated Palestinian and Arab discourse on the social networks about the July-August 2014 campaign between Israel and Hamas indicates erosion in the organization's local influence and public standing. The criticism of Hamas at home, as reflected online; the relative apathy of the "Arab street" toward the damage to life and property in Gaza caused by Operation Protective Edge; and the overt ambition of Sunni Arab regimes to defeat political Islam in the region, including the Muslim Brotherhood and its Palestinian offshoot, illustrate the depth of the crisis for Hamas. An integrated analysis probing Hamas' weakened legitimacy within these three circles will facilitate an understanding of the chain of events that led the organization, at the end of 50 days of fighting, to declare a ceasefire and accept the Cairo agreement, which it had rejected at previous stages of the campaign.

The First Circle: The Luxury Tower Effect

The destruction of the luxury towers in the heart of Gaza City – al-Zafer Tower 4 in Tel al-Hawa, the Italian Compound in the Nasser neighborhood, and al-Basha Tower in western Rimal – was a campaign turning point. On August 23 and 25, 2014, residents received warnings from the IDF to leave the buildings. First they received warning messages on their cellphones; later, pamphlets were dropped from the air calling on people to evacuate their apartments; and thereafter the "knock on the roof" procedure was carried out, with the IAF launching a number of small missiles that struck near the buildings in question or the roofs. Subsequently, bombs leveled the

luxury residential towers. From the conversations on the social networks in Gaza, a clear picture emerged. While there were relatively few casualties from the collapse of the towers, this “surgical strike” on “Gaza’s elite” was a turning point, and from then on, public pressure on Hamas to stop the fighting increased.

The collapse of the towers cannot be separated from previous events. The IDF attacked the towers after many days that wrought massive destruction throughout Gaza. Particularly in the neighborhoods of Shejaiya and Rafah, the number of fatalities, including many children, rose every day, and hundreds of thousands of Gazans became refugees. These scenes were broadcast on local, regional, and international media, but none of this was sufficient to break the spirit of the people of Gaza, at least not to a point that forced the Hamas leadership to stop firing at Israel. As became clear in retrospect, it was the direct strike against the middle and upper classes – the economic backbone of Gaza City and the Gaza Strip in general – that, added to the cumulative (and inevitable) weakened resilience among the Gaza population, significantly changed the public atmosphere. YouTube videos and Tweets showed “people running crazily into the streets, before the building cracked, like a biscuit,” as described by one tower resident. Families who lived in the towers were unable to endure the sights and the actual damage and took to the streets helpless and screaming frantically. Against this background, there was public pressure on Hamas to agree to a ceasefire on terms previously rejected by the leadership. The battle would not have continued indefinitely and the breaking point would have been reached in any case, but from the point of view of Gaza public opinion, it seems that the elite turned out to be Hamas’ Achilles’ heel.

The Second Circle: The “Arab Street” Did Not Take to the Streets

The Palestinian street: The uprising of the Arab Spring that swept through the Middle East did not spill over into the Palestinian arena or translate into in a wave of violent social protest against Israel. The Palestinian population in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which has bitter experience of direct conflict with Israel over the course of two popular uprisings, preferred to avoid another round of conflict. The latest round of fighting between Israel and Hamas was not the result of a popular protest that spiraled out of control, but of policy from above, namely, the Hamas leadership. The Gazans even

failed to respond to the leadership's many attempts to bring the masses to the streets in order to exert pressure on Israel to end the operation in a manner that would paint Hamas a clear victory picture.

Apart from viral campaigns, Tweets on social media and Hashtags such as #GazaUndrAttack, #FreePalestine, #PrayForGaza, #BDS, the Arabic hashtag for Gaza Resists, and #ICC4Israel, which expressed support for the population of Gaza and protested Israel's "massacre," there was no noteworthy or significant support for Hamas itself. The most concerted attempt by Hamas to bring the masses to the streets was the "March of the 48,000" (#48kMarch),¹ which was not successful. Hamas' intention was to hold a mass march in the West Bank on July 24 from the Amari refugee camp through the Qalandia refugee camp toward East Jerusalem, which would develop into a third intifada. The march garnered the support of the Fatah leadership in Ramallah, which saw it as a means of dissipating anger and perhaps also as a measure to diminish the protests against it for standing aside while the people of Gaza were under massive Israeli attack. In any case, the Fatah leadership called upon young people to take part in the "non-violent" march as a mean to express their anger. But in continuance of the Palestinian street's reservations about sweeping demonstrations, as observed in recent years, people did not take to the streets en masse despite the calls on Facebook and in mosques to join the march. Only about 10,000 protesters participated; they clashed in Qalandia with Israeli security forces and were repulsed. This does not suggest that the West Bank public did not identify with the Gaza population, rather, that Hamas failed to recruit young people for a massive public protest. In practice, the public prefers to continue to wage the struggle against Israel through means that will not force it to pay a price, including the anti-Israel boycott movement and anti-Israel protests around the world.

The Jordanian and Egyptian streets: In Egypt and Jordan there is public hostility and anger at the Muslim Brotherhood, and thus, at Hamas as well. The Muslim Brotherhood's influence on the Egyptian street was greatly weakened when the government it headed and President Morsi were toppled in July 2013. In Jordan, the Islamist wave was stopped after it paralyzed the parliament and led to the replacement of six prime ministers. As a result, despite Egyptian and Jordanian popular support for the people of Gaza during Operation Cast Lead in 2008-9 and Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012, this time the Egyptians did not take to the streets and the demonstrations in

Jordan were relatively poorly attended. Aside from expressions of support for the people of Gaza on social networks, no active Arab solidarity was visible. It was argued that “Gaza is not a strategic threat [to Egypt]” and that “if we must choose between our national security and Gaza, we choose our national security.”

This was the reason for the repeated failure of efforts by Hamas Political Bureau chief Khaled Mashal to instigate demonstrations of support for the organization outside the Palestinian arena. In a video appeal to residents of Irbid, the Muslim Brotherhood’s stronghold in Jordan, Mashal called for a mass protest, but there was no response. He also called upon Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah to aid Hamas. Nasrallah responded by giving a speech that expressed weak support but concentrated on other burning topics, including the civil war in Syria, the domestic turmoil in Lebanon, and the struggle against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

The Third Circle: The Sunni Arab Axis against Political Islam

On May 6, 2014, one month before he was elected president of Egypt, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi granted an interview to Egyptian television and outlined his position on the Muslim Brotherhood. His message was unambiguous: “I sat with Khairat al-Shater [number two in the Muslim Brotherhood leadership in Egypt]...and he threatened that they would burn down Egypt, that jihadists from Syria, Libya, and Afghanistan would attack the Egyptian army. I told him that I will make anyone who raises arms against Egypt disappear from the face of the earth. There will be no reconciliation talks...and there will be no such thing as the Muslim Brotherhood when I am president and that’s final!” Actions by the el-Sisi regime against the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas were consistent with these comments, and this sentiment was echoed clearly on the social networks. For example, I was told: “You [Israel] must understand, first of all, that el-Sisi sees political Islam as an existential threat to Egypt²...and therefore, he does not intend to contain the movement, conduct a dialogue with it, allow it to rebuild its legitimacy, or weaken it. El-Sisi is interested in defeating political Islam: the Muslim Brotherhood and its proxies in Gaza [Hamas] and in Libya.”

In response to a question I raised to Egyptian leaders of public opinion on social media about the Egyptian interest regarding Gaza and Hamas, as reflected during Operation Protective Edge, I was told that “el-Sisi does not intend for Israel to allow Hamas to emerge from this round with a

victory picture” and that “if it depends on el-Sisi, he will crush Hamas [even if takes] to the last Israeli soldier.” And in fact, it appeared that for the Egyptian government, the hostility toward Hamas overcame any feelings that might have arisen from the devastating images that came from Gaza. Thus, the continuation of Israel’s struggle against Hamas was convenient for the Egyptian government, since it promoted a desirable goal but did not risk Egyptian involvement in a direct struggle with Hamas or force the government to pay a price with the Egyptian street.

Egypt is not alone in the battle against Hamas – either the organization itself or the organization as one of the spearheads of radical political Islam in the Middle East. In order to defeat political Islam, to “degrade and ultimately destroy”³ it, el-Sisi has worked to form a strategic axis that includes Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority. The convergence of interests between the Arab members of this axis and Israel is clear when it comes to the fight against political Islam in general and the struggle against Hamas in particular.

Consequently, Egypt formulated principles for a new arrangement in the Gaza Strip in which Egypt and Israel would work together to ensure that weapons and money do not enter Gaza and to prevent Hamas from rearming and rebuilding its military capabilities and infrastructure. Egypt even expressed willingness to train the PA’s Presidential Guard so as to allow PA President Mahmoud Abbas’ men to take part in guarding Gaza’s border crossings. Egypt also prefers that the UAE take responsibility for the transfer of salaries to Gaza with the PA participating in distributing the money, and that Saudi Arabia be responsible for the reconstruction project in order to undermine the power of the Qatar-Turkey-Hamas axis. El-Sisi’s success in imposing the terms for a ceasefire on Hamas and the ability of this success to influence the reconstruction process in Gaza were therefore seen as an important stage in promoting the objective.

Conclusion

During Operation Protective Edge, the increasing erosion of Hamas’ legitimacy was an evident trend that intensified within three circles that have traditionally supported the organization: Gaza domestic public, the Palestinian public in general, and the public in the Arab world. In addition, an anti-Hamas Sunni Arab axis was established, headed by the Egyptian

President and with Israeli cooperation, whose purpose was to weaken and degrade Hamas as much as possible.

Thus, the question arises whether it is Hamas' final countdown and whether its days are numbered. It is difficult to give a definitive answer. In the past, Hamas has proven its ability to change tactics and strategy in order to survive and maintain its status and political relevance in hostile, constraining circumstances. Still, there is no doubt that at the current time, the organization faces a significant challenge – perhaps the most serious since its founding.

Notes

- 1 For the Facebook announcement of the March of the 48,000, meant to demonstrate solidarity with the people of Gaza and protest against IDF attacks, see <https://www.facebook.com/pages/%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A948%D8%A3%D9%84%D9%81/1532860920275973?sk=timeline>.
- 2 Hamas was accused of breaking into a prison in January 2011 and releasing Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi, who was ousted in July 2013 from the presidency in a coup that brought el-Sisi to power. It was also accused of training members of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, a radical Salafist organization that operates in the Sinai Peninsula and is connected to the Muslim Brotherhood.
- 3 An expression borrowed from President Obama's description of his policy toward the Islamic state of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL): "President Obama: 'We Will Degrade and Ultimately Destroy ISIL,'" White House Blog, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/09/10/president-obama-we-will-degrade-and-ultimately-destroy-isil>.

Part III

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The Civilian Front in Operation Protective Edge

Meir Elran and Alex Altshuler

The response to the complex challenges facing the civilian front during Operation Protective Edge was, generally speaking, more successful than in previous similar military confrontations (the Second Lebanon War in 2006, Operation Cast Lead in 2008-9, and Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012). The damage caused by the 4,382 rockets and mortar bombs¹ fired by the Palestinian factions from the Gaza Strip at civilian targets in Israel during the 50 days of fighting was relatively small, certainly in terms of human casualties (with seven civilian deaths, two of them due to rockets and the rest from mortar fire).

The relatively limited daily average of some 86 rockets and mortar bombs,² significantly lower than in previous clashes, created somewhat moderate interference with the civilian routine, with the exception of the populated areas in the south. The damage to the economy was quite reasonable, relative to the length of the campaign.³ The total damage was lower than had been predicted by the scenarios that were published by the defense establishment, evidenced by a relatively small number of acute emergency cases in most parts of the country. However, the communities located within the 20 km range of the Gaza Strip were exposed to some 60 percent of the rocket and mortar bomb launches, while those located within the 40 km range of the Gaza Strip were exposed to 32 percent of the launches.⁴ The most extreme damage occurred in the localities in the so-called “Gaza envelope,” which bore the brunt of the mortar bomb launches and were most immediately and severely threatened by the relatively surprising challenge of the offensive tunnels. The combination of the two-pronged offenses – from above and below – was indeed a significant threat that represented a major blow to the

sense of personal security and morale and led to the self-initiated evacuation of most of the area's residents (who returned home shortly after the ceasefire).

The duration of the operation was much longer than expected by the reference threat scenarios, based mostly on the experience of the previous rounds of fighting in the last decade. Although overall the Israeli public met the protracted challenge well, the extended nature of the operation, its complexity, and the fluctuations on the military front created new challenges for the public. Although there were several ceasefires during the operation, they did little to contain the psychological impact of the lengthy campaign. One might have expected that the several lulls would ease the pressure on the civilians and allow individuals, communities, and organizations to re-muster their energy. In fact, however, they only created a sense of uncertainty, frustration, and helplessness for many, as expressed by criticism of what was deemed as Israel's pursuit of too restrained an approach to the Hamas attacks. Another noted expression was found in the blatantly growing extremism among segments of the population toward the "other," especially the Arab minority in Israel.

Against this complex background, several systemic lessons in the context of the civilian front can be learned.

Societal Resilience

The most important lesson has to do with the Israeli public's societal resilience as manifested during the fighting. Unlike the common connotation when used by politicians and the media, societal resilience does not refer to robustness or to public cohesiveness in the face of broad trauma or an external severe threat. Social resilience, in its pure form, represents the capacity of a society – local or national – to respond flexibly to a serious disruption (e.g., security threat) in proportion to its severity; in other words, to allow a temporary lessening of normal functioning and bounce back quickly to society's previous identity and conduct level, while giving room for modifications and adaptations.⁵ In terms of the Israeli public's functioning and based on public opinion surveys conducted during the operation, one may conclude that Israelis generally demonstrated a high level of functional stability in the face of the measured Hamas challenge. More importantly, Hamas' strategic objective – chaos and demoralization within the Israeli public, so as to exert pressure on the government to ease the economic and security restrictions imposed on the Gaza Strip – was completely foiled.

The functional resilience of the public may be measured both tactically and strategically. Tactically, the public behaved well during the rocket attacks. It reduced its routine conduct to a reasonable degree and generally returned to normal behavior immediately thereafter. An important exception to this generalization was the Gaza envelope population, whose challenge was significantly more substantial. Most residents in those localities left their homes, generally even before the offensive tunnels dug from the Gaza Strip became a primary concern to the public and the military. At the same time, not all residents of the area behaved in the same manner. Some communities chose not to evacuate or to evacuate only in smaller numbers, testifying to different attitudes among different communities, presumably with different characteristics.⁶ Alternatively, one could argue that the proactive evacuation of the residents manifests a valuable functional flexibility – a primary component of social resilience.

Strategically, the Israeli public demonstrated its societal resilience by quickly returning to normal levels of function following the campaign. This includes the residents of the Gaza envelope and the south as a whole, who returned to their routines, albeit after publicly expressing hesitations and complaints regarding the political situation and what they viewed as the government's misjudgment. A few days after the fighting stopped, the school year, including in kindergartens, began on time, including in the areas that were the hardest hit in the Gaza envelope and in towns where prominent local leaders had publicly called for keeping the children out of school even after the ceasefire went into effect. Communities that hesitated in sending the children back to school also returned to their routines a few days later. All of this indicates high social resilience, even higher than that demonstrated following the Second Lebanon War.

Social resilience is not a predetermined and fixed trait that must be continuously cultivated over time through deliberate action and professionally guided programs, long before the outbreak of a crisis. Furthermore, following a crisis, it is important to create growth engines of social and economic resilience in areas prone to serious danger, in accordance with the relevant threats. Such actions can create higher public fortitude in preparation for possible future disruptions of serious proportions and allow for rapid recovery after a future crisis. In this context, the full implementation of the government's decision to strengthen differentially the economy of the southern regions is most important. On August 10 and 31, 2014, the government decided on

a broad program, including the allocation of 1.3 billion shekels over the next five years to the Gaza area communities to promote social, economic, and security programs. Decisions designed to strengthen the more distant southern communities were taken later, at an overall budget of an additional 2 billion shekels. Still, the residents of the south need an attentive ear and a warm shoulder to lean on; this is no less important than the necessary material support. Executing those plans with sensitivity and understanding on an ongoing, unwavering basis will raise the chances for significant empowerment and enhance social resilience among these residents.⁷

Another lesson relates to the conduct of national leaders and, even more importantly, that of local leaders. Inclusive leadership and public trust are key components of social resilience.⁸ Generally speaking, the nation's leaders conducted the campaign in a measured, calculated manner, and together with the military created an appropriate level of trust, even if it wavered and then declined to some degree during the second half of the campaign.⁹ Toward the end of the operation, the residents of the south and the government differed over the question of prioritizing the special needs of the areas threatened by Hamas. The possible renewal of hostilities in the near future might broaden these gaps and the consequent mistrust, accentuated by local leaders, many of whom have openly challenged the government's policy. At the same time, political leaders in the south have shown a particularly high level of leadership, thereby enhancing the resilience of their constituencies and serving as a source of inspiration for the Israeli public at large.

Active Defense

There is no doubt that the success – operationally and in terms of morale – of the Iron Dome system made a major contribution to the outcome of Operation Protective Edge. The 735 interceptions it scored represented a serious countermeasure to Hamas' rocket offensive; the system saved lives directly in Israel and indirectly in the Palestinian Gaza strip, and positioned itself as a central element of Israel's security doctrine.¹⁰ The system also proved itself as a generator of a high sense of personal safety in the public at large, and likewise gave the political echelon wide space to maneuver and make difficult decisions without the pressure of mass casualty events. The public's trust in the system grew stronger through the campaign, to the point at which there was some risk that people might disregard the directives on seeking shelter. The military success of mitigating the threat was largely

assisted by the air force's offensive moves designed to reduce the potential of Hamas' rockets on the one hand, and by the public's conduct in seeking shelters as instructed by the IDF Home Front Command, on the other.

At the same time, it is important to realize that in terms of the rocket threat, this round of hostilities was relatively minor. Israel should be prepared for much more severe scenarios, especially with regard to increased accuracy, range, quantities, and warhead payload of high trajectory weapons. This is already the case, to a large extent, with the Hizbollah arsenal,¹¹ but improvements are also expected with Hamas' capabilities, which will turn at least part of their rockets into missiles, allowing a much greater hit percentage of civilian, military, and infrastructure targets in Israel. An upgraded threat will require much more robust and effective protection systems by the active defense forces. Moreover, as significant as the last achievement was, any resistance system has its limitations and will never be hermetic. An appropriate response to future threats requires many more Iron Dome batteries¹² as well as continued upgrading of its technical and operational capacities.

Civil Defense

The overall functioning of the public during the so-called "state of routine emergency," considering the long duration of the conflict, was quite high. The safety procedures were well observed, allowing most Israelis to maintain an essentially normal way of life between rocket barrages and alerts. The professional directives and emergency information provided by the IDF Home Front Command were critical, clear, and instructive. An additional important contribution was manifested by the dramatic increase in the number of the warning zones (now approximately 210),¹³ which reduce the frequency of interruptions to civilian life per person and region, and consequently help minimize the damage to the economy. The future full scale introduction of the cellular-based warning system (via personal text messages¹⁴), which was operated initially during Operation Protective Edge, will further improve the public's risk awareness and conduct during emergencies.

All these factors considered, it seems that the current state of the shelter system is reasonable, though it requires local improvements, especially in zones that at present have virtually no protection, such as the unregistered Bedouin communities and localities with mobile/temporary housing. The widespread use of mobile concrete shelters (*miguniyot*) seems like an effective and inexpensive solution, if they are readily available for the population at

large. Looking to the future and anticipating a more severe threat, an orderly, multi-year national program must be designed and enacted soon. Given its high costs, it must selectively prioritize specific defensive needs. Special emphasis must be placed on protecting critical national infrastructures, including the electric grid, the gas and water supply systems, and the transportation nodes. The sensitivity of this challenge was made clear with the short halt of international flights to Israel, which should be viewed as a wake-up call for the possibility of real, widespread interruption of necessary services supplied by the critical infrastructure installations. This is a risk that Israelis are not familiar with and so far is not at the center of attention of the decision makers. This must change drastically, and soon.

In the legal/normative sense: on July 8, 2014, the government declared a “special situation” for the civilian sector in the south. Later, the government decided to begin implementing the country’s “Emergency Economy System” (*melah*). These decisions allowed the country to call on the human and material resources required by emergency needs. At the declarative level, the decision sent a message that the population was being taken care of. Still, the demands from local politicians to expand the enactment of the Emergency Economy to other locales were not met, primarily due to economic considerations.

Conclusion

Israel’s civilian front met the challenges posed by Operation Protective Edge well, given the measured scope of the interruptions on the one hand and its extended duration on the other. Expressions of social resilience were generally high, and the disruption to routine life was relatively low, except in the greater Gaza area.

Nonetheless, the civilian front’s successful coping with the challenges of the last round should be measured against the limited posture of the opponent. Given much more extreme threat scenarios, especially on the part of Hizbollah in the north, much more thorough preparations must be taken. This requires a qualitative leap in the overall deployment of the civilian front, both in the realm of social resilience, as well as in reference to the active and passive defenses. Israel cannot rest on the laurels of Operation Protective Edge, and must prepare for more threatening scenarios. This will require conceptual, operational, technological, and organizational improvements for the entire system.

Notes

- 1 Non-classified sources provide diverse data, though fairly close in number. As of now, no sources distinguish between rockets and mortar bombs.
- 2 Some suggest that the daily average was around 100, since there were no more than ca. 50 days of fighting in this round.
- 3 See Haim Bior, "Survey": Two-thirds of Businesses Suffered a Drop in Activity since Operation Protective Edge," *The Marker*, August 21, 2014, <http://www.themarker.com/career/1.2412406>.
- 4 Data from *Haaretz*, August 28, 2014.
- 5 F. H. Norris, S. P. Stevens, B. Pfefferbaum, K. F. Wyche, R. L. Pfefferbaum, "Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 41 (2008): 127-50.
- 6 There are different social forms of residence, which impact on the social structure of the communities. Even among the kibbutzim there are differences between the secular and religious groups, and those that have relatively large segments of newcomers who joined the communities' expansion projects.
- 7 Meir Elran and Eran Yashiv, "The True Victory is the Social and National Resilience," *The Marker*, August 17, 2014.
- 8 G. Ben-Dor, "The Social Component of Social Resilience: A Working Paper," Herzliya Conference, 2003, http://www.herzliyaconference.org/_Uploads/1152socialstrength.pdf.
- 9 For survey results showing Israel as victor, see Sofia Ron-Moriah, "New Survey Shows: Netanyahu is the Big Winner of Protective Edge," *NRG*, September 5, 2014, <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/617/977.html>.
- 10 For data source, See Yuval Azoulay, "Iron Dome: 8 Facts about the True Queen of Protective Edge," *Globes*, July 10, 2014, <http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000953639>.
- 11 Quantitatively and qualitatively the Hizbollah threat is roughly 10 times that of the Hamas threat before the last round. The threat scenario from the Lebanese front shows a daily average of more than 700 rockets and missiles per day, to include large scale barrages of dozens of launches at a specifies given target.
- 12 In prior studies we have suggested a necessary order of battle of 16 Iron Dome batteries.
- 13 See Gili Cohen, "This is How the Alarm System in Israel Works," *Haaretz*, August 24, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/premium-1.2413887>.
- 14 Homefront Command Website, <http://www.oref.org.il/907-he/Pakar.aspx>.

Operation Protective Edge: A Public Opinion Roller Coaster

Yehuda Ben Meir

A well known platitude holds that public opinion on current events, especially security issues, is subject to great fluctuations in the wake of unfolding developments. While true in ordinary times, the observation is especially apt in times of war. In 2006, for example, during the early days of the Second Lebanon War, following the resolute speech by Prime Minister Olmert in the Knesset in which he presented the aims of the war, public support among the Jewish public reached 82 percent. By the end of the war one month later, public opinion completely reversed itself, and under pressure from hostile public opinion and public protest, the Prime Minister was compelled to appoint an investigative commission to look into the war (in other words, its failures). In a survey conducted in March 2007 by the National Security and Public Opinion Project at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), only 23 percent of the Jewish population said that Israel had won the war, while 26 percent said that Hizbollah had won and 51 percent believed that no one had won. Only 34 percent of the public answered that they could trust the government to make the right decisions on questions of national security.¹

Operation Protective Edge followed a similar pattern. Public opinion exhibited much volatility and fluctuation corresponding to developments in the fighting and Israel's various decisions over the 50 days of the operation. This article describes three principal dimensions to public opinion during the operation: the degree of satisfaction with the Prime Minister's performance (which functions as an indirect measure of the public's satisfaction at the course of the fighting and its results); the public's direct evaluation of the results of the fighting (who won); and the public's attitude toward the various

alternatives facing Israel and the decisions taken by the cabinet and the Prime Minister at various junctions during the fighting. Note that the surveys were conducted by different entities and the questions were worded differently, so it is no wonder that at times varying, even radically divergent results were obtained. Consequently, the general picture should be approached with a large degree of caution.

Evaluation of the Prime Minister's performance mirrored the pattern of the Second Lebanon War, exhibiting ups and downs throughout the fighting. A survey conducted by Channel 2 on July 17, 2014, nine days after the beginning of the operation and just before the entry of IDF ground forces into the Gaza Strip, reported that 57 percent of the Jewish public assessed the Prime Minister's performance as good, compared with 35 percent who assessed it as not good. A survey published by Channel 2 one week later, on July 24, nearly one week after the entry of IDF ground forces into the Gaza Strip, showed a dramatic improvement in the rating of the Prime Minister's performance, with 82 percent assessing it as good, compared with only 10 percent as not good.² In a survey conducted on July 20, two weeks after the operation began and three days after the entry of IDF ground forces in the Gaza Strip, 73 percent of the adult Hebrew-speaking Jewish population said they were satisfied with the Prime Minister's performance, compared with 16 percent who were not satisfied.³

Channel 2 surveys charted a continual linear decline as the fighting continued and ceasefires were declared and then violated by Hamas. In a survey published on July 31, 2014, when the IDF was still in the Gaza Strip, 74 percent of the Jewish public assessed the Prime Minister's performance as good, compared with 18 percent who assessed it as not good.⁴ On August 3, two days after the kidnapping in Rafah and one day after the decision to withdraw Israel's forces from the Gaza Strip, another decline was recorded: 62 percent were satisfied and 29 percent were dissatisfied.⁵ A Channel 2 survey on August 5, two days later, showed almost the same results, with 63 percent rating the Prime Minister's performance as good.⁶ A survey conducted the next day on behalf of *Israel Hayom* showed the identical result: 63 percent of the adult Hebrew-speaking Jewish population was satisfied with the Prime Minister's performance in the operation.⁷ In a survey commissioned by *Haaretz* on August 5, one day after a ceasefire that lasted for a few days was declared, 33 percent of the public assessed the Prime Minister's performance as excellent, and an additional 44 percent as good (a total of 77 percent),

compared with 20 percent who assessed it as not good or poor.⁸ In a study conducted on August 11-12 in the framework of the Peace Index project, 61 percent of the Jewish public assessed the performance of Israel's political leaders as very good or fairly good (97 percent of the Jewish public gave these answers in the same survey as their evaluation of the IDF).⁹

At the end of the operation, a further decline took place in the assessment of the Prime Minister's performance, although its extent varied between different surveys. In a survey published by Channel 2 on August 25, 2014, one day before the end of the operation, when the rocket fire from the Gaza Strip increased, a dramatic fall occurred in the assessment of the Prime Minister's performance, with only 38 percent giving him a good rating, compared with 50 percent who rated his performance as not good.¹⁰ Two days later, one day after the ceasefire was announced, a Channel 2 survey showed a further slide: 32 percent assessed his performance as good, compared with 59 percent who assessed it as not good.¹¹ This reflects the public's clear dissatisfaction with the results of the operation. At the same time, a survey by the Dialog group also conducted on August 27 and published the following day in *Haaretz* showed better results for the Prime Minister, with 50 percent of the public satisfied with the Prime Minister's performance, compared with 41 percent who were dissatisfied.¹² It is very possible that the difference in results occurred because the Channel 2 survey was conducted on the night of August 26, the day the ceasefire was announced and after two members of Kibbutz Nirim were killed, while the *Haaretz* survey was conducted on the night of August 27, one day after a ceasefire was declared, when it became apparent that the operation had indeed come to an end. This explanation, combined with the 18 percent gap between surveys conducted within one day of each other, bolsters the assertion that the public opinion roller coaster in the assessment of the Prime Minister's performance in the operation has not reached its final stop.

An examination of the direct evaluation by the public of Israel's achievements in the operation shows quite a similar picture to its assessment of the Prime Minister's performance, with wide swings throughout the operation. In the framework of the INSS National Security and Public Opinion Project, a survey was commissioned from Rafi Smith at two different points in time in order to probe this question. In a survey of a representative sample of the adult Jewish population, the respondents were asked, "According to your impression, as of now, who is winning in Operation Protective

Edge?” In the first survey, conducted on July 27-28, 2014 at the height of the land-based campaign, 65 percent said Israel was winning, 6 percent that Hamas was winning, 21 percent answered “neither is winning; it is a draw,” and 8 percent had no opinion. Of those expressing an opinion, 71 percent answered Israel, 6 percent Hamas, and 23 percent “neither is winning; it is a draw.” Note that in a survey published one week earlier, on July 22, in *Israel Hayom*, very similar results were obtained: 73 percent of the adult Hebrew-speaking said that Israel could point to achievements in the operation, compared with 4 percent that said that Hamas could point to achievements, 19 percent who said that neither side had achieved anything, and 4 percent who had no opinion.¹³

In the second survey, conducted on August 6 after IDF forces withdrew from the Gaza Strip, 51 percent of those with an opinion answered that Israel had won, 4 percent that Hamas had won, and 45 percent answered “neither is winning; it is a draw.” The proportion of those said that Israel had won declined by 20 percent since the first survey. Note that the increase was not in the proportion of those saying the Hamas won, but in the proportion of those calling the campaign a draw. Almost identical figures were obtained in a survey published on Channel 2 a day earlier, when IDF forces were withdrawing from the Gaza Strip. Asked whether Israel had won, 42 percent answered yes and 44 percent answered no. Among those expressing an opinion, 49 percent said that Israel had won, compared with 51 percent who said that Israel had not won.¹⁴ In a survey published in *Israel Hayom* at the same time (August 8), very similar results were obtained: 45 percent said Israel had won, 5 percent that Hamas had won, and 49 percent that neither side had won.¹⁵ To sum up, at this stage of the operation, when the land-based campaign was over and the ceasefire collapsed, public opinion was divided on the question of whether Israel had won.

Toward the end of the operation, the public’s assessment of Israel’s achievements in the operation became more negative. In a survey conducted on August 11-12, 2014 in the framework of the Peace Index project, 32 percent of the Jewish public expressed satisfaction with the operation, 27 percent expressed disappointment, and 41 percent were in the middle, being neither satisfied nor disappointed. In answer to the question of whether or not the government’s goals for the operation had been achieved, 44 percent said they were all or mostly achieved, 48 percent said that only a small portion had been achieved, and 5 percent said that not a single goal had

been achieved.¹⁶ When the operation was over, the public's dissatisfaction with the results became still more prominent. In a survey published by Channel 2 on August 27, one day after the operation ended, when asked whether Israel had won, only 29 percent said yes, and 59 percent said no.¹⁷ Almost identical figures were obtained in a survey published the next day in *Haaretz*. In answer to the question, "How would you define the results of the fighting," only 26 percent answered that Israel had won, 16 percent that Hamas had won, and a majority of the public (54 percent) answered that neither side had won.¹⁸ Few Israelis believe that Hamas won, but the feeling that the results had been a draw, what the media called "the sour taste," was shared by a majority of the public. At the same time, here too it is unclear whether this is indeed the public opinion roller coaster's last stop – only time will tell.

Where the third aspect is concerned, i.e., the public's view of the various alternatives facing Israel and decisions taken by the cabinet and the Prime Minister during the fighting, the public wanted and expected that Hamas would be hit much harder, which explains its dissatisfaction with the final result. At the same time, the public greatly objected to occupation of the entire Gaza Strip. In the first survey by Rafi Smith commissioned by INSS and conducted on July 27-28, while IDF soldiers were engaged in destroying the tunnels in the Gaza Strip, the public was asked how Israel should continue Operation Protective Edge. Among those expressing an opinion (93 percent of the sample), 3 percent answered, "Halt the operation immediately," 26 percent said, "Finish dealing with the tunnels and halt the operation," 43 percent said, "Expand the operation and severely damage the military wing of Hamas, but do not occupy the Gaza Strip," and only 28 percent answered, "Occupy the Gaza Strip and overthrow the Hamas regime." A survey published by Channel 2 on July 31, when destruction of the tunnels was nearing completion, showed that the Jewish public was divided over the continuation of the operation – 46 percent supported ending the operation, and 46 percent said, "Continue the operation until Hamas rule is overthrown."¹⁹

In the second Rafi Smith survey, conducted on August 6 after IDF forces withdrew from the Gaza Strip, a somewhat similar picture emerged. In answer to the question of their views of the government's decision to accept the Egyptian ceasefire proposal and remove IDF forces from the Gaza Strip, one third (34 percent) supported the government decision, while half (50 percent) of the Jewish public believed it should have "expanded the operation

and severely damaged the military wing of Hamas, but without occupying the Gaza Strip,” and only 16 percent believed it should have “occupied the Gaza Strip and overthrown the Hamas regime” (only half of those who supported this alternative in the first survey).

There is no doubt that the Israeli public is clearly opposed to sending IDF soldiers to occupy the Gaza Strip. The public has accepted the assessment that such an operation involves heavy losses on both sides, while its purpose and advantages for Israel are unclear. At the same time, most of the public expected far more impressive and clearly visible damage to Hamas, especially its military wing. There is a feeling that the government did not allow the IDF to exercise its full capabilities, particularly in the land-based campaign. At the same time, even on this issue it is not clear whether the last word has been spoken. It can be assumed that the public opinion roller coaster’s final stop will be determined by the length of time there is quiet in the south.

Notes

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- 4 Published on Channel 2, “A Look at the News,” July 31, 2014.
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- 6 Published on Channel 2, “A Look at the News,” August 5, 2014.
- 7 Aharon Lapidot, “Resilient Home Front in Operation Protective Edge,” *Israel Hayom*, August 8, 2014.
- 8 Yossi Verter, “Haaretz Survey: The Public is Satisfied with Netanyahu...,” *Haaretz*, August 6, 2014.
- 9 “Peace Index,” Tel Aviv University and the Israel Democracy Institute, August 25, 2014, <http://www.peaceindex.org/indexmonth.aspx?num=283>.
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- 11 Published on Channel 2, “A Look at the News,” August 27, 2014.
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- 13 Schein, “73%: Israel Achieved More.”
- 14 Channel 2, “A Look at the News,” August 5, 2014.
- 15 Aharon Lapidot, “Resilient Home Front in Operation Protective Edge,” *Israel Hayom*, August 8, 2014.
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- 17 Channel 2, “A Look at the News,” August 27, 2014.
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Operation Protective Edge: Implications for Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel

Nadia Hilou, Itamar Radai, and Manal Hreib

The most recent escalation in Jewish-Arab relations and in the public discourse in Israel about the Arab community in Israel began with the kidnapping and murder of three Jewish teenagers in the Gush Etzion area on June 12, 2014. The subsequent kidnapping and murder of an Arab boy in Jerusalem on July 2, 2014 inflamed the Arab community, and was the catalyst for a wave of stormy demonstrations throughout Israel that in several cases developed into violent confrontations with the police. Tension between the Jewish and Arab communities in Israel, which intensified as the fighting in Gaza continued over an extended period, brought to the surface feelings that should be addressed as a basis for policy recommendations to help prevent a widening of the gap between the communities.

On the Eve of the Conflict

The Peace Index surveys conducted between 2010 and 2014 by the Israel Democracy Institute, which included questions referring directly or indirectly to relations between Jews and Arabs, do not indicate a trend of radicalization among Jews in their attitude toward Israel's Arab minority. Close analysis of cross section responses, however, shows that the attitude of Jewish youths toward Arabs in Israel harbors more extremism than is estimated to exist among Jewish adults. It is possible that this finding explains the crude behavior of some youths towards Arabs. The incitement against the Arab community in the country is reflected mostly in the social media, a means of communication especially popular among young people. The escalation that began with the murder of the boys in the Gush Etzion area was marked by racism and extreme nationalism directed against Arabs, apparently similar

to the mood on the eve of the events in October 2000 at the start of the second intifada. Thus in the summer of 2014, a looming question facing public figures and law enforcement agencies was whether Israel was on the brink of a third intifada, but this time waged by the Arab citizens of Israel.

Demonstrations and protests occurred throughout Israel. The main national demonstration took place in Kafr Manda in the Galilee on July 6, 2014, organized by the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel. The themes of this demonstration included protest against expressions of racism and hatred toward the Arab community, primarily in the social networks, and against government policy that appeared to tolerate the phenomenon. The demonstrators demanded that the punitive measures stipulated in the law be taken against such expressions, and protested against calls to boycott Arab businesses (which drew only partial support among the Jewish community), anti-Arab incitement, accusations of lack of loyalty, and calls for collective attacks and punishment of the Arab community. In other demonstrations elsewhere in Israel, according to police reports, a total of 108 demonstrators were arrested, of whom 37 were minors. The Arab media covered these events extensively, with the coverage and criticism focusing on the inability of the law and order agencies and the Jewish community in general to cope with the hatred, racism, violence, and incitement led by the extreme right, including “price tag” actions carried out over the past year.

The demonstrations were marked by two principal trends. The leaders of the Arab local authorities usually acted with restraint. Some expressed opposition to the demonstrations, and those who supported the protest and approved the demonstrations tried to maintain a moderate line. Some even initiated a dialogue with the police and called for restrained demonstrations, fearing damage to shared Jewish-Arab concerns, especially economic interests. In contrast, the Arab Knesset members and political parties tried to put forth a tougher line. Most of them took an active part in the demonstrations, although the lead was taken primarily by Arab *al-khiraq al-shababi* groups (youth movements) and students. The Islamic movements were also linked to the protest, and held separate demonstrations in Jaffa and Lod, among other places.

The Outbreak of the Military Conflict

Operation Protective Edge caught the Arab community in the midst of a wave of protests, demonstrations, and arrests. The operation diverted public

attention away from the preceding events, but gave the signal for another wave of protests and demonstrations. The demonstrations that began with the murder of the Arab boy in Jerusalem became protest demonstrations against the war in the Gaza Strip and again were held in various places in Israel. Some of the demonstrations were led by local forces, some by youth groups, and others by the organized Islamic movements. The nature of the demonstrations differed from place to place; some were rallies sponsored jointly by various political and civil forces and movements, while in other cases separate demonstrations were held in the same area. The High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel tried to achieve unity and lead a uniform line of protest that would include all the political parties and movements, local authorities, and civil organizations; the latter were prominent partners, and sometimes the main players, in the ongoing protest.

As the war continued and the number of civilian fatalities in the Gaza Strip rose, protest among Israeli Arabs increased. The Higher Follow-Up Committee declared a general strike and a national demonstration in Nazareth on July 22, 2014. The number of participants in this demonstration, which was attended by Arab Knesset members, was estimated at only a few hundred, although the Arab media reported a much higher number. The demonstration sparked open tumult, leading to the arrest of 18 participants. Still, in comparison with previous demonstrations, and judging by the police response, this was a relatively restrained demonstration, and the strike that accompanied it in various areas was limited.

Beside broad support in the Arab community for the strike and active participation in protest activity, quiet opposition was also evident, especially among business owners, who were anxious about damage to their livelihood – enhanced by continued calls in the Jewish community, including by Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Lieberman, for a boycott of Arab businesses. Various groups also attempted to find a balance between protests and peaceful coexistence, mainly in mixed Jewish-Arab cities and business zones catering to a mixed audience. The public protest in the Arab community subsided over the final month of Operation Protective Edge, although heated discussions about Jewish-Arab relations continued on the social networks, along with expressions of protest over the military activity.

The Arab Media in Israel and Arab Civil Organizations

Despite the divergent and at times discordant voices among Arab citizens of Israel, there is a large degree of consensus in the Arab media in Israel concerning the “price tag” attacks and slander directed against the Arab communities in Israel. Media coverage of these actions was extensive, and they were the chief catalyst for the dissatisfaction and protest that began before Operation Protective Edge. Bills promoted by the government relating to the Arab community in Israel were portrayed in the Arab media as discriminatory and unjust. Among the focuses of protest were the program for settling the Bedouins in the Negev (the Praver Plan), and the proposed housing policy and VAT discount for those finishing military service. Additional issues included the government’s attempt to encourage the enlistment of Christian Arabs in the IDF, perceived as an attempt to divide the Arab population, and the bill for force feeding of hunger striking administrative prisoners in Israel.

The police were accused of using unnecessary force in demonstrations organized by Arabs and the use of different criteria for Jewish demonstrators. Moreover, the confrontations during the demonstrations between extreme right wing activists and Arab demonstrators were interpreted as evidence of the widening gap in Arab-Jewish relations in Israel as a whole. The same was true of the violence and harsh racist statements on the part of extreme right wing groups. Layoffs of Arabs accused of making critical remarks on the social networks, especially manifestation of solidarity with Palestinian suffering in the Gaza Strip and expressions of pleasure by some at the deaths of IDF soldiers in the conflict, were perceived as being designed to exclude the Arab community from the civil and social system in Israel.

In this regard, the Arab media, like other media in Israel and elsewhere, both reflected public opinion and shaped it. At the same time, exposure in the media was manifestly different in the Jewish and Arab communities in Israel. The growing tension between the communities was covered little in the Jewish media, and most public attention was devoted to the war. If events in the Arab community were reported, the coverage was usually limited and focused on radical voices.

Civil organizations and non-profit organizations were also intensively involved in public discourse and protest actions in the Arab community. Indeed, these were the main active element during this period. Particularly noteworthy are the Adala and Musawa organizations, which played a key role in representing those arrested and providing them with legal defense.

Together with the Anjaz Society and the Arab-Jewish organization Abraham Fund Initiatives, these organizations were active in the protest itself. Their activity, which aimed mainly at the internal Israeli arena, included calls for a halt in the arrests and for action against the anti-Arab incitement. Calls were also heard to supply protection and mobile shelters in the Bedouin area in the south, and to open a war crimes investigation.

In the international theater, a petition was filed with the UN Human Rights Council requesting a discussion of “severe human rights violations and suspected war crimes carried out in the course of Operation Protective Edge.” Fourteen civil organizations signed this petition. An attempt by a group of Arab academics to publish a joint opinion by academic, humanities, cultural, and public figures calling for a halt in the operation was only partially successful: seventy people signed the petition, including many Arab lecturers at Israeli institutions of higher learning.

The Economic Background to the Arab Protest

The socioeconomic situation of Arabs in Israel has long lagged behind that of the Jewish community,¹ and the difficult economic background feeds feeling of discrimination and alienation toward the government and society in general. Recent statistics indicate:

- a. On the average, Arab men earn 60 percent of the salary of Jewish men and retire earlier from the labor market. Participation in the labor market among Arab women is especially low: about 22 percent (according to a personnel survey before the change in the survey in 2012).
- b. The employment rate in the 18-22 age bracket, 26 percent, is particularly low.
- c. The incidence of poverty among all persons is 48 percent, compared with 15 percent in the Jewish non-ultra Orthodox sector.
- d. Similar statistics apply for human capital (relating to education and health). For example, 16 percent of those in the Jewish sector have a low level of education (grammar school only), against 37 percent in the Arab sector. A similar trend appears in the figures for higher education: 40 percent in the Jewish sector, versus only 17 percent in the Arab sector.

A 2012 study by Miaari, Zussman, and Zussman found that the events of October 2000 led to an increase in layoffs of Arab workers.² The report by the Committee on Poverty published in June 2014 addressed problems of the Arab community, and recommended ways of solving them. In particular, the

program devised by Nitsa Kasir of the Bank of Israel and Eran Yashiv of Tel Aviv University was cited as a basis for a policy program.³ The government decided to establish a ministerial committee headed by Minister of Science, Technology, and Space Yaakov Peri to deal with the subject, and the above-mentioned program was to be presented at the committee's first meeting in mid-July 2014. The discussion was postponed, however, due to Operation Protective Edge. The question that greatly concerns the Arab community is whether the calls for a boycott heard during the war, and the actual boycott, will have long term economic effects.

The protest among the Arab community, which began before the military campaign in Gaza, is rooted in longstanding feelings of discrimination that were exacerbated in the weeks leading up to the military conflict by measures and statements perceived by the Arab community as reflecting conscious, if not deliberate, exclusion and discrimination at both the senior government level and among the general public. The escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian theater, which touched the national and humanitarian feelings in the Arab community in Israel, sparked the outbreak of protest, based on frustration and rage caused by ongoing discrimination.

Conclusions

The behavior of the Arab community during Operation Protective Edge was marked by a number of principal features. As a whole, the protest was moderate and restrained. The moderate voices made their voice heard, and played a significant role in public discourse. The recognition that coexistence was more important than the protest was widespread and predominant. Extremist voices were kept in the background, and the general public did not follow them. Furthermore, the Arab politicians and Knesset members did not play a particularly prominent role in public discourse; their place was taken by civil forces, including youth, who made their views known through the social media. The politicians at the national level were confronted by local leaders driven primarily by the welfare of their constituents. They called for restraint and moderation, and they were heeded.

It is not clear whether this general pattern will persist in the future, and there are various forces with opposing agendas in the Arab community. At the same time, these groups all share awareness of the socioeconomic and political distress and discrimination that fed the current protest and are likely to provide a basis for future protest. Indeed, the public debate of the

various consequences of the conflict, including its internal socio-political significance in Israel, is still underway, perhaps particularly among the country's Arab citizens.

The effects of the Gaza conflict on Jewish-Arab relations in Israel and coexistence were shunted aside during the fighting and essentially ignored in public discourse in the Jewish community. Nonetheless, many questions continue to trouble the Arab community, and Israeli society as a whole must be aware of this. The negative phenomena that came into sharp relief during the operation – expressions of lack of tolerance, hatred, and even racism – were mutual between Jews and Arabs, and constitute a threat to coexistence.

The many voices and movements in the Arab community highlight the need for partnership and dialogue within the Arab community itself in order to maintain a reasonable standard of living and the possibility of growth and suitable achievement. They understand the risk of escalation, and are well aware that the first to suffer from it will be the Arabs themselves. It is important to encourage this moderate and pragmatic attitude. In any case, the seriousness of the situation requires understanding and action on the part of both Jewish and Arab leadership. The following measures are therefore recommended:

- a. An official binding declaration that a supreme national goal is the attainment of equal rights and integration of Arab citizens in the daily life of Israel.
- b. Promotion of a policy aimed at equal rights through a budgeted multi-year plan that will make a solution in employment, education, and infrastructure development in the Arab sector a clearly leading priority. Immediate protection for the Arab home front is also required as part of the lessons of the Gaza conflict. Such a policy would certainly help strengthen the moderate element in the Arab community, especially at the municipal level.
- c. A clear attack on anti-Arab racism in the Jewish community. It is best for this to come from the highest levels (the President and the Prime Minister).
- d. A comprehensive program in Jewish and Arab schools to eradicate racism and recognize the “other” as having enjoying equal rights. The focus on youth is essential, and requires systematic thinking and measures with a high priority. Teaching of Arabic in the educational system and preventing damage to the status of Arabs in Israel, mandated since independence was declared, should also be advanced.

There is nothing new about most of these recommendations, and these essentially repeat what was presented in the Orr Commission report following the riots in 2000. Most of these recommendations, which were formally adopted by the government, have not been implemented. It is important now to begin immediate implementation of the recommendations, taking into account the conditions that have changed during the decade that has passed since they were formulated.

Notes

- 1 For a comprehensive description, see Eran Yashiv and Nitsa Kasir (Kaliner), "Patterns of Labor Force Participation among Israeli Arabs," *Israel Economic Review* 9, no. 1 (2011): 53–101; Eran Yashiv and Nitsa Kasir (Kaliner), "Arab Women in the Israeli Labor Market: Characteristics and Policy Proposals," *Israel Economic Review* 10, no. 2 (2011): 1–41.
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- 3 See Eran Yashiv and Nitsa Kasir (Kaliner), "The Labor Market of Israeli Arabs: Key Features and Policy Solutions," Tel Aviv University, 2013, at <http://www.tau.ac.il/~yashiv/Israeli%20Arabs%20in%20the%20Labor%20Market%20--%20Policy%20Paper.pdf>.

Operation Protective Edge: Economic Summary

Eran Yashiv

This article explores three interrelated issues: economic aspects of Operation Protective Edge; implications for both the state budget and aid to Israel's southern population; and an assessment of the economic situation in the Gaza Strip and the prospects for a massive economic program to help solve the conflict. The first two questions are discussed as a description of the developments; the third question combines an economic analysis and policy recommendations.

Economic Aspects of Operation Protective Edge

There are three main aspects to the economic loss: a decline in economic activity and a loss of output; military expenses incurred in the fighting; and damage to inventory and property. Injury or death among soldiers and civilians, and psychological or social effects, which are obviously important, are not included in the current discussion.

Loss of Output

Operation Protective Edge caused a loss of output as a result of absences from work (e.g., people serving in the reserves and mothers forced to stay home with their children), a drop in demand (in particular, internal tourism, foreign tourism, and dining and entertainment services), disruption of regular activity (e.g., work stoppages caused by alerts, disruption of supplier operations), lower productivity, and so on. Small and medium-sized businesses in the south were hit particularly hard. The partial shutdown of flights to Ben Gurion Airport also had a negative impact on economic activity.

Israel's annual GDP totals NIS 1.05 trillion. GDP averages NIS 4.2 billion a day for every working day (248 days per year). During Operation Protective

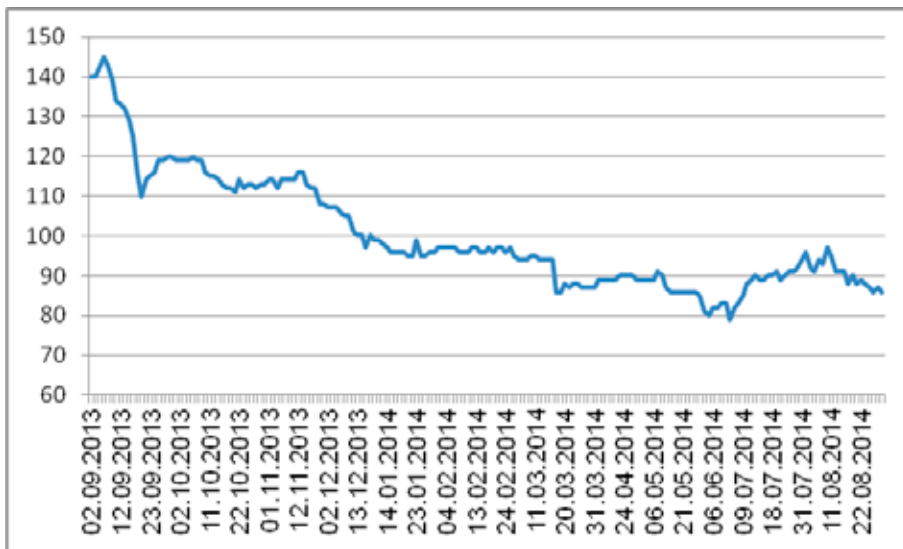


Figure 1. CDS Spread, September 2013-August 2014

Source: Bloomberg; data taken from Deutsche Bank Research

Edge, there was probably a loss of 10-20 percent of this daily GDP; the 43 working days out of the 50 days of the operation, therefore, imply a total loss of NIS 18-36 billion, or 1.7-3.4 percent of annual GDP. A more precise figure is unattainable at present; a clearer estimate will be available in late 2014 with the publication of third quarter national accounts figures by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). According to a CBS report of October 20, 2014, the GDP growth declined by 1 percentage point in 2014. While this is not a measure of the output loss due to Operation Protective Edge, it is consistent with the above numbers.

For the sake of comparison, the growth rate now (in GDP) is about 3 percent a year; Israel has then lost about two thirds of its annual growth for the year. However, this is a one-time occurrence and not a permanent reduction in the rate of growth.

The capital market reacted somewhat to both the operation and the poor economic figures that preceded it. For example, the shekel-dollar exchange rate remained around NIS 3.41 to the dollar during July, but with the publication in early August of figures indicating a slowdown in the first half of 2014, the shekel weakened to NIS 3.58 to the dollar in early September. At the same time, the confidence in the capital market was not affected during the operation. Figure 1 displays the CDS (credit default swap) spread¹ representing the

confidence of overseas investors in the Israeli economy over the past year. A smaller spread indicates more confidence. The spread increased slightly during the operation, meaning a drop in confidence, but fell again when the operation ended. From a year-long perspective, the increase was negligible in comparison with the large scale downtrend in the spread, indicating a major rise in confidence. The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange rose at the beginning of Operation Protective Edge, then fell below the pre-operation level. In late September, it was 2.4 percent higher than before the operation.

Military Expenses

Estimates of the campaign's expenses that appeared in the media, including figures cited by IDF officers, ranged between NIS 100 million per day before the entry of ground troops to NIS 200 million per day during the ground operation. There were reports of massive, even wasteful, use of ammunition in certain cases. A cautious estimate for the military costs during the 50 days of the operation is therefore at least NIS 7 billion, without payment for reserve days and air force armaments. Estimates by the defense establishment of some NIS 9 billion and a demand for an NIS 11 billion supplement to the 2015 defense budget appeared in the media. The same reports quoted sources in the Ministry of Finance, which estimated the costs at NIS 4-5 billion.

For the sake of comparison, the Second Lebanon War lasted 34 days, and at its end the IDF received NIS 8.2 billion in direct compensation (plus more in different forms). Operation Cast Lead lasted 22 days and cost NIS 3.8 billion; the Ministry of Finance paid NIS 2.45 billion. Operation Pillar of Defense lasted eight days, and its cost was approximately NIS 2 billion.

Damage to Inventory – Homes and Means of Production

Rockets and mortars hit private homes, public buildings, companies, factories, and agricultural areas, resulting in loss of capital stock. Losses are difficult to estimate, because they are necessarily based on damage reports and claims for compensation with various biases. According to an announcement by the Ministry of Finance on August 7, 2014, claims for direct damage totaling NIS 50 million were filed. The ministry nevertheless estimated the indirect damage at NIS 750 million-NIS 1 billion, and it is unclear whether this includes GDP damages of the type described above.

Implications for the Government Budget and Israel's Southern Population

The immediate effect of these developments was an increase in the government budget as a percentage of GDP. Spending rose, tax receipts fell with the drop in economic activity, and GDP itself was affected. Even before the operation, the deficit was a problem that was aggravated by these developments.

Discussions of the 2015 budget were postponed due to the operation, and the government was forced to deal with the budget in September-October 2014. The first important discussion in the full cabinet took place on August 31, 2014, when it was decided to cut NIS 2 billion from the 2014 budgets of all government ministries except for defense, increase the defense budget by NIS 1.5 billion, and allocate NIS 500 million to residents of the communities around the Gaza Strip. Additional aid for residents of the south over the next five years was also promised.

Future disputes are expected between the Ministries of Finance and Defense concerning the budget supplements needed by the Ministry of Defense in 2015 and on a subsequent multi-year basis. There are various aspects to this problem: the division between the defense budget and the civilian budgets, the multi-year consequences for the budget, and the consequences of the government deficit and debt. For example, the Locker Committee, which is tasked with discussion of a framework for the multi-year defense budget, will have to include the consequences of Operation Protective Edge in its recommendations.

The budget approval process is expected to include both professional disputes, as that between the Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Israel, for example, and political disputes. As of the writing of this paper, it is too early to know what the effect of the operation will be on the 2015 budget, not to mention the following years. Aid for residents of the south will be greatly affected by the decisions made about the defense budget.

Over the years, there has been a significant drop in defense spending as a percentage of GDP, from over 30 percent in the early 1970s, to 20-25 percent by the mid-1980s, and around 6 percent in recent years. The decline notwithstanding, according to the World Bank Israel had the fourth highest rate of defense spending in the world in 2009-13, 5.6 percent of GDP, behind Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan. For the sake of comparison, the World Bank figures put US defense spending at 3.8 percent of GDP, and

the UK and France at 2.3 percent, meaning that by international standards, defense spending in Israel is still high. In order to remain at these levels, the defense budget must be increased by no more than 3 percent a year, Israel's expected economic growth rate for the coming years, amounting to an annual increase of no more than NIS 2 billion in 2014 terms.

An Economic Program for the Gaza Strip

Background

Even before Operation Protective Edge, the Gaza Strip was at the bottom of the global economic totem pole: 1.76 million residents live amidst the third highest population density in the world – 4,800 people per square kilometer. The infrastructure in Gaza is insufficient, and even in peacetime there are many halts and disruptions in electric, water, sewage, and other systems; power outages of 7-8 hours, for example, are a matter of routine. The labor market is marked by high unemployment: in the Gaza Strip in the second quarter of 2014 it was 45 percent, compared with 26 percent in the West Bank. Among young people in the 15-29 age group, unemployment was 58 percent. Under these conditions, there is no possibility of production on a significant scale. Per capita GDP in the Gaza Strip is around \$1,500-1,600 per year, compared with \$3,100-3,200 in the West Bank. On a global scale, the Gaza Strip ranks 174 out of 223 countries in the World Bank's calculation. In comparison, Israel is 32 on this scale, with a per capita GDP of \$36,000 per year. Given these figures, the poverty indicators are predictable: the incidence of poverty is 39 percent (compared with 18 percent in the West Bank), with the poverty line being a monthly income of NIS 2,293 per five-person household. The incidence of extreme poverty is 21 percent (compared with 8 percent in the West Bank), with the extreme poverty line being NIS 1,832 in monthly income. It is obvious what standard of living is possible when per capita income is NIS 400 a month (about \$4 a day).

Economic distress frequently drives nations into military conflict or other aggression. Furthermore, the already desperate economic situation in Gaza worsened with the change of regime in Egypt, its activity to close the tunnels and border crossings, and the more stringent border restrictions imposed by Israel. Indeed, the Gaza Strip has been under a severe closure regime imposed by Israel and Egypt for a long time. In addition to the general economic restrictions, financial support for Hamas from Iran and Syria has waned, and there are problems in paying public sector salaries in Gaza.

This is the reason why Hamas' demands in both the ceasefire negotiations and the negotiations with Fatah on establishing a reconciliation government concentrated on the "blockade" of Gaza and the opening of the economy. The tunnels to Sinai are the "natural" response to a state of economic isolation.

The Economic Program

One solution to this situation is a substantial improvement in the economic situation. If Gazans have something to lose, they will be much less ready to enter into a conflict. Economic prosperity is likely to reduce the power of Hamas and other Islamic movements, provided that the economic change is substantial and carried out by suitable agencies. Minor changes of the type already tried in the past will not bring about the desired change.

The Gaza Strip has several economic possibilities,² among them development of tourism along the coast, development of services (including entry into hi tech, as has occurred among Israeli Arabs in the north), and gas production (following the discovery of a significant off-shore gas field in 1999). In the short and medium terms, investment and employment can be channeled toward development of physical infrastructure and public services. It is important to stress, however, that a fundamental change means a major step forward, not merely the easing of the blockade and some opening of the border crossings. Small steps will not achieve the actual goal, and will even make the situation worse in the long term. The establishment of new international mechanisms to implement the change is needed, not handling by Hamas or Israel. These mechanisms require the agreement of several countries and international agencies to join together in a serious effort. This means the establishment of special agencies with professional personnel and knowledge. If goals and parameters are not stated specifically and concretely, they will dissolve, and the hoped for turnaround will not take place.

How can this be achieved? The following elements are needed:

- a. *Repair and construction of infrastructure:* Concomitant with the repair of the ruins from the July-August 2014 attacks, repair of infrastructure and construction of absent infrastructure should begin. An international agency, such as the World Bank, can assemble a task force that will review the situation and establish priorities over time. It can be expected that Gaza can be brought to a reasonable state of economic infrastructure within three years (from the start of work), and to a good situation

within 6-8 years, in part by employing local unemployed workers. It is very important that this mechanism be under international control, use external specialists, and clearly and transparently publicize its work. The transparency will promote the change in awareness necessary for economic progress in the Gaza Strip. Beyond the cost of rebuilding the destroyed houses and buildings, \$800 million-1 billion in infrastructure investment is needed in each of the next three years, and \$500 million in investment in the 3-5 years following. Reconstruction of the homes and buildings at a much higher level than they were before destruction will be a positive step; such action can greatly bolster the population's support for economic development.

- b. *Financing*: Financing for moving the Gazan economy forward will come from rich Arab and Western countries. It is very important that there be a variety of donor countries to share the financing risks and to prevent one country from taking over the process is important. At the outset, this can be done through an emergency fund managed by the World Bank. In the medium and long terms, a special bank can be set up for development of Gaza on the same format as institutions of this type around the world, such as those established in Eastern Europe in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet bloc.
- c. *Supervision of inputs*: A key question in Israel about the Gaza Strip is concern that inputs for production can be used for military needs. This concern notoriously materialized in the use of building materials to create dozens of offensive tunnels, under conditions of the Israeli closure. This issue has been solved elsewhere: the World Bank and other institutions have discovered more than once that aid was reaching corrupt rulers or self-interested groups, instead of the intended recipients. Mechanisms were therefore developed for transferring economic assistance, usually in the form of direct transfer to the recipients, while making receipt contingent on progress in the projects. Such methods can also be used in the current case through moderate Arab parties and international agencies. These mechanisms must also include supervision of the selection of the aid recipients themselves, which are liable to emerge as targets for control or influence by Hamas.
- d. *The political environment*: These measures cannot be carried out in the midst of a cycle of violence. The entry of a UN force into Gaza is necessary, for example, the type of force stationed in 1992-95 in the countries that

were formerly part of Yugoslavia, which constituted an international force making economic activity possible. The active involvement of the UN, the World Bank, and the Development Bank will include hundreds of foreigners – both soldiers and specialists – “on the ground” in Gaza. The combination of these functions is essential, as is the transparency and public reporting of their actions.

The activity of Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad in the West Bank in 2007-13 is proof that substantial economic progress can be achieved when professional parties lead the processes. The idea that economic progress prevents war is deeply rooted in Europe, and was successfully applied in the second half of the twentieth century, following two world wars in the first half of the century. The opposite is also true: economic distress leads to conflict and bloodshed. At the same time, the implementation of these ideas is highly dubious right now, due to the lack of willingness on the part of the relevant countries and the fact that they are not initiating this type of process. Continuation of the economic problems, with all their negative political consequences, is therefore a highly plausible scenario.

Notes

- 1 The CDS spread is a financial instrument that provides insurance against a default, in this case on Israeli government debt. The spread is actually the insurance premium. A higher premium represents a greater risk. Data for the figure was taken from [https://www.dbresearch.com/servlet/reweb2.ReWEB?rwnode=DBR_INTERNET_EN-PROD\\$EM&rwobj=CDS.calias&rwsite=DBR_INTERNET_en-PROD](https://www.dbresearch.com/servlet/reweb2.ReWEB?rwnode=DBR_INTERNET_EN-PROD$EM&rwobj=CDS.calias&rwsite=DBR_INTERNET_en-PROD).
- 2 It is obviously desirable that a development process take place in addition and independently in traditional fields, such as textiles and agriculture, and that there be a removal of the (strict) export barriers to Israel.

Civilian Settlement: Not Designed to be a Fortress of Power

David Tal

In addition to the clear benefit provided by the Iron Dome system of preventing serious injury and loss of life among the Israeli population, the system also provided the Israeli government with a level of freedom of action that it would not have enjoyed had the rockets from Gaza caused significant injury to the Israeli civilian population. One example of this effect was Prime Minister Netanyahu's acknowledgement that his decision to refrain from sending IDF forces into the heart of the Gaza Strip was facilitated by the protection provided by the Iron Dome system. Whether justified or not, the Prime Minister avoided a more extensive ground operation in the Gaza Strip under cover of Israel's effective missile defense system.

Against the background of this important strategic advantage, the government's weakness vis-à-vis the settlements of the western Negev, located in the region referred to as "the Gaza envelope," stands out in strong relief. These settlements sustained heavy fire, particularly mortar fire, and their residents were forced to weigh continuing to live in such difficult conditions against abandoning their homes for safer locations for the duration of the fighting. The longer the fighting went on, the greater was the hardship faced by the western Negev population, and the louder and more widespread their protests became. Among other charges, the inhabitants complained that the government had not assumed the task of evacuating them in organized fashion from their homes that were under bombardment.

The government's decision to refrain from assuming responsibility for the organized evacuation of these citizens presumably stemmed in part from economic considerations, although the Zionist ethos regarding the importance of settlement to national security also likely played an important role. This

ethos, which has accompanied the modern Zionist enterprise almost since its inception, is entirely without foundation.

According to the pre-state Zionist ethos, the borders of the Jewish state would be determined by the settlement map, with Jewish settlements constituting fortresses of power with military significance for the anticipated clash with the Palestinian Arabs during the period preceding the establishment of the state, and with the Arab armies in the course of Israel's War of Independence and during the period following the establishment of the state. These were groundless premises. First, the borders of the state were not determined by settlement. The settlements that were established throughout Mandatory Palestine were in most cases established in areas with a relatively small Arab population, such as the Western and Eastern Galilee, the Jezreel Valley, the coastal plain and lowlands, and the northern Negev. Virtually no Jewish settlements were established in areas containing significant Arab populations, such as Judea, Samaria, and the central Galilee. In other words, the outline of the *yishuv* (the pre-state community) was determined by geography and demography, not by the intentional mapping of Jewish settlement patterns. Moreover, Jewish settlements established in regions in which Arabs accounted for a majority of the population were destined, under the United Nations resolution on partition, to be included in the Arab portion. These included settlements such as Kfar Darom and Hanita. In other words, the borders of the State of Israel as demarcated by partition were determined not by the settlement map but by existing blocs of Jewish and Arab communities.

During the 1948 War, the Israeli forces conquered areas intended for incorporation into the Arab state that contained Jewish settlements (e.g., Hanita). These conquests did not follow the line of the Jewish settlements, rather the line of the Arab military formations present in those regions. Thus, in the course of October-December 1948, IDF forces conquered the central Galilee, which was then held by the relatively weak Arab Liberation Army but contained no Jewish settlements whatsoever. At the same time, a region containing Jewish settlements, such as Kfar Darom in the Gaza Strip, was not conquered due to the success of the Egyptian forces in the area in holding off the IDF. Similarly, IDF forces did not conquer the Jewish settlements that were abandoned in northern Jerusalem and Beit Haarava.

The claim that settlement has played a security role is also without foundation. The perceived security-settlement-land connection led the Zionist leadership to decide that even if fighting were to break out as a result of the

declaration of the establishment of the Jewish state in May 1948, Jewish settlements in isolated or frontier regions would not be evacuated. The decision to refrain from evacuating settlements was based on two main factors: the argument that “the entire country is the front lines” and that there was no place that was not vulnerable to injury, whether in the heart of the country or in the periphery; and the belief that evacuation would disrupt the very fabric of life in the *yishuv* and undermine the resolve of the population. These two arguments collapsed the moment the Arab invasion began. At this point, a clear line between the front lines and the home front was established, and it became evident that the evacuation of frontier settlements neither harmed the *yishuv*’s fabric of life nor weakened the resolve of the population or of the *yishuv* as a whole.

The *yishuv* leadership, however, had made no preparations for the possibility of evacuation. As a result, on May 15, 1948, a non-combatant civilian population, including children, occupied the decisive majority of the country’s Jewish frontier communities, including settlements such as Yad Mordechai, Degania Alef and Bet, and the other communities of the Jordan Valley. The moment that enemy forces began crossing the border, the evacuation of the non-combatant population from these settlements began. Because the *yishuv* leadership had not prepared for this possibility, the evacuation process involved improvisation and difficulties. At this point, it also became clear that the evacuation of civilians not only did not harm the war effort of the Haganah/IDF but actually enabled it to move fighting forces away from the communities themselves and toward the primary effort engaged in fending off the invading forces.

Although settlement clearly did not play a significant role in the Israeli military campaign of 1948, the lesson was not internalized. Instead, the concept that settlement is important for security continued to exist after the war as well. It was then that the IDF established its system of “regional defense” (*hagana merhavit*), which was meant to solve a challenging strategic problem then confronting the State of Israel: the state’s lack of strategic depth to allow for sufficient warning in the event of an Arab attack. In this framework, the frontier settlements were organized to operate as an obstacle for invading enemy forces and provide the state with artificial “strategic depth” until forces of the IDF could make their way to the point of invasion. However, the logic of the regional defense system was negated from the very outset, when in September 1949 Prime Minister and Defense Minister

David Ben Gurion announced that from that point on, the IDF's defensive and offensive formations would be based on attack forces and not on "static defense," as he described it. Yet despite Ben Gurion's words, no change was made to the principle underlying the IDF's approach to regional defense as a means of holding off a surprise enemy attack, although in practice this element was now neglected.

The logic underlying the regional defense system appears to have been more political than military. It was meant to give the inhabitants of frontier regions the sense that they were militarily protected and to continue feeding the ethos linking settlement and security. Nonetheless, frontier settlement played no practical role in the IDF's defensive formations against the possibility of the invasion of an Arab army. And when such an invasion occurred in the Golan Heights during the Yom Kippur War, the civilian population of the region was immediately evacuated. In this way, from both the perspective of the territory it occupied and the population itself, settlement played no military role in the war.

The premise that the evacuation of settlements can be interpreted as the relinquishing of sovereignty is also incorrect. Although objections to Israeli sovereignty over the territory within the armistice lines agreed upon with the Arab countries in the course of 1949 were voiced during the first years of Israeli statehood up to the Sinai Campaign, the situation changed following the 1956 war and even more so after the Six Day War, after which opposition to Israeli sovereignty within the territory demarcated by Israel's peace borders (in the case of Egypt and Jordan) and armistice lines (in the case of Syria and Lebanon) ebbed. After all, the territory along Israel's border with the Gaza Strip and Egypt, and with Jordan the length of the Arava desert, is far more unpopulated than it is populated. Nonetheless, Israeli sovereignty in these regions is unequivocal.

Despite Israel's many years of experience, the equation linking security and settlement has still not disappeared. The ethos is stronger than the reality and has continued to be fed by proponents of the Jewish settlement enterprise in the West Bank, and the inhabitants of the western Negev are yet more of its victims. It makes sense to sever the Gordian knot between settlement and security and to begin to see settlement for what it truly is: a concentration of a non-combatant civilian population including women, children, and the elderly. It is also logical to prevent civilians from being

placed in harm's way, and to cease fearing that the evacuation of settlements holds significant negative social or political implications of some kind.

Perhaps the evacuation of frontier settlements imbues the enemy with a sense of victory and accomplishment. Indeed, Hamas spokesmen have frequently highlighted the departure of inhabitants of the western Negev as an achievement. However, the benefit of evacuating settlements is much greater than the ostensible damage it may cause. First, the damage caused to a civilian population that is not evacuated is much greater than the damage caused by evacuation not only from a material perspective but from a strategic perspective as well, as civilian injury may require the government to make decisions that it might otherwise seek to avoid. Second, in terms of the image it conveys, a government-conducted orderly evacuation to organized places of refuge presumably constitutes a strong signal to the enemy, particularly the civilian population on the other side of the border that does not enjoy the assistance of government bodies. Based on this calculation, the potential benefit to Israel of evacuating the civilian population from areas of fighting is much greater than any image-related damage it may suffer. Moreover, such an evacuation would enable the Israeli leadership to make operational decisions related to IDF capabilities and relieve it of the concern for the fate of a population vulnerable to rocket fire. The Iron Dome achieved the same result with regard to the Israeli population living far enough away from the Gaza Strip and provided them with protection. This protection enabled Israeli decision makers to conduct the fighting in the Gaza Strip without sustaining a large number of Israeli casualties as a result of rocket fire.

It is recommended to apply this logic as well to the civilian population that does not enjoy the protection of the Iron Dome system. In the absence of a missile interception system capable of drastically reducing the damage and injury caused by the mortar fire and short range rockets that the Iron Dome system cannot intercept, it makes sense to conduct an organized and orderly evacuation of the civilian population living in range of these weapons. To do so, Israel needs to take actions similar to those taken by Britain during World War II. Based on the experience of World War I, the British government prepared itself for the possibility that it may come under air attack and that its civilian population may be vulnerable to injury. Against this background, the British government drew up organized plans for the evacuation of non-combatants, especially children. The plans were put into operation with the onset of the German bombardment of British

cities, and thousands of children were evacuated from the cities undergoing bombardment. This conceptual model must also be applied to the Israeli civilian population.

The Israeli government must prepare itself for a situation in which civilians are exposed to rocket and missile fire by preparing an operational plan for the evacuation of the population to safer, protected areas. The problem in making this change is more conceptual than organizational. The civilian defense systems in Israel, in their various forms, are capable of organizing such an operation through advance planning and making the necessary preparations. The true problem is conceptual: the government needs to abandon the approach that links settlement and security and start viewing the civilian frontier population as a security and political burden. Ensuring the security and well-being of inhabitants by keeping them out of the line of fire would provide the government with the same freedom of action with which the Iron Dome system provided it during Operation Protective Edge.

Part IV

The Regional and International Arenas

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Reviving a Regional Approach

Gilead Sher and Liran Ofek

Despite the physical demarcation of the zone of the recent military confrontation between Israel and Hamas, the broader context went well beyond the geographical area and the ranges of the rockets shot from it. The operation illustrated the convergence of interests between Israel and Arab states, chiefly Egypt under Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, which is once again playing a central and influential role in the efforts to promote a ceasefire. Moreover, after the operation, Israeli cabinet ministers spoke of the need to promote a regional initiative, either to achieve a long term solution concerning Hamas¹ and/or as an alternative to bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.²

Has a foundation been created for a paradigm shift – from a framework of bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians to multilateral regional dialogue? Israel's official stance toward the Arab Peace Initiative, which is a proposed framework for multilateral engagement, has remained rather skeptical, and many still see it as a prescription for surrender more than an invitation to negotiations.³ On the other hand, those who support a regional format believe that the Arab initiative is meant to leverage interests common to Israel and some of the leading Arab states (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates), and that to this end, it should be reexamined as a framework for negotiations.

The Arab Peace Initiative was announced in 2002, just before Operation Defensive Shield, and has since been ratified repeatedly at the annual Arab League summits. The initiative proposed an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict in exchange for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a agreed solution to the refugee problem. This initiative is not necessarily the only format for regional

dialogue. However, Israel ought to announce that with concrete reservations, it is adopting the principles of the initiative as part of the framework for negotiations to end the Arab-Israeli conflict in general, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular.

Hamas as a Regional Challenge

According to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Hamas is an enemy of any peace-loving entity. Indeed, Hamas has demonstrated this well: beyond the fact that Hamas fires rockets and mortar shells at Israel, the General Security Services exposed a Hamas military infrastructure in the West Bank intended to be used for attacks against Israel and even a coup against the Palestinian Authority (PA).⁴ PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas has accused Hamas of working against the Palestinian consensus, of being behind the abduction and murder of the three Israeli teenagers in June 2014 – which started a chain of escalation leading to Operation Protective Edge, and of strengthening ties with Muhammad Dahlan, Abbas' political rival.⁵ At the same time, Abbas presented his independent plan to Khaled Mashal in Doha to unilaterally establish a Palestinian state and was even reported to have received Mashal's signature on it.⁶

The current Egyptian regime under el-Sisi sees Hamas, a subsidiary of the Muslim Brotherhood, as a radical terrorist organization that aspires to undermine stability at home. Cairo blames Hamas, inter alia, for attacking the Rafah crossing and abducting Egyptian soldiers in Sinai. During Operation Protective Edge, Egyptian journalists supported the operation and called for IDF operations in Gaza to be intensified. Hamas is not even mentioned in the ceasefire agreement that Egypt brokered, and above all, Cairo recognizes the PA as the only entity authorized to help the future reconstruction efforts in Gaza, in coordination with Israel and the international community.⁷

Saudi Arabia supports Cairo's tough stance against Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. In March 2014, Riyadh declared Hamas a terrorist organization⁸ – a decision with direct political implications for the group. Similarly, since December 2013 Hamas has been an unwanted guest in Jordan,⁹ and even Qatari pressure to allow Hamas to reopen its offices in Amman was to no avail.¹⁰ However, unlike Egypt, Jordan expressed concern that the fighting in Gaza would undermine the stability of the kingdom, and therefore it allowed demonstrations to enable the disgruntled population to let off steam.

It would appear that key regional players characterize Hamas according to their respective local-national interests, and not with a regional perspective. Thus, for example, Israel used force against Hamas in order to remove an intolerable threat the organization posed along Israel's borders and to the Israeli civilian population, and Egypt is taking a hard line intended to preserve stability at home and security on its borders. Jordan and the PA in the West Bank are acting in kind. Hamas as a current threat could encourage security coordination between Israel and the countries of the region, but the coordination on this issue is usually localized and does not set overt regional processes in motion.

At the end of the day, the support Israel received from the leaders of the Egyptian-Jordanian-Saudi bloc during the campaign in Gaza was limited in time, scope, and context. During the first three weeks of the operation, Arab leaders did not criticize the military operation against Hamas, but strong criticism developed as the fighting progressed because of the extent of the death and destruction in Gaza. Thus, for example, Saudi King Abdullah claimed in early August that the operation in Gaza is a war crime, and his Jordanian counterpart stated that the extensive harm to the civilian population contradicted Israel's claim that the war was justified. The Egyptian Foreign Minister also spoke out against continuing what he called the "inhumane" blockade of Gaza.¹¹ This criticism – primarily lip service, which is also how Israel relates to it – stems from the need of the Arab regimes to appease public opinion in their respective countries. Obviously, this approach prevents open regional cooperation with Israel.

Nevertheless, Progress toward a Regional Process

Even before Operation Protective Edge, the last round of talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which took place under the direction of US Secretary of State John Kerry, deepened the mistrust between Israeli and Palestinian leaders and between the two societies. The Netanyahu-led government evinced a lack of confidence in the political process with the PA, and its actions and statements eroded Palestinian trust in Israel's intentions concerning political progress toward a settlement. In tandem, Abbas' actions and lapses, along with his unilateral international diplomatic activity, have eroded public support in Israel for the political process and reinforced the rejectionist image of the PA in the minds of many.

In his speech to the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Netanyahu addressed certain threats common to Israel and the Egyptian-Jordanian-Saudi bloc, led by radical Islamic terror – Sunni and Shiite – and the fear of a nuclear Iran. The threat of terrorism, according to Netanyahu, is directed against all religions and ethnic groups, including Muslims.¹² This threat indeed constitutes a sufficiently concrete danger in the eyes of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and they have thus joined the US coalition against the Islamic State (IS). Pilots from these countries, the UAE, and Bahrain are participating in attacks on the organization's bases and its strongholds in Syria and Iraq. El-Sisi has also announced that Egypt, even though it is not a member of the coalition, "will do whatever is required" to help the forces fighting IS.¹³ Israel is not participating in the fighting, but it is providing intelligence as part of the strategic cooperation between Jerusalem and Washington.¹⁴ The Arab involvement in the coalition is also noteworthy against the background of the US refusal to include Iran in this effort. This refusal is connected in part to Iran's support for the Assad regime and its intentions to develop a military nuclear program. In the Prime Minister's opinion, this situation constitutes an opportunity to build an axis for broader regional cooperation than what has existed until now.¹⁵

According to Netanyahu, the active involvement of Arab countries could lead to a settlement with the Palestinians. However, regional frameworks such as the Arab Peace Initiative, while they cannot serve as an alternative to bilateral negotiations, can constitute an incentive to complete them.¹⁶ Prince Turki al-Faisal, former head of Saudi intelligence, addressed this when he noted that Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries would support an Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty, but that the treaty would be achieved only through negotiations between Jerusalem and Ramallah. He also added that Israel could ask to discuss the clauses of the Arab initiative, but would have to recognize the proposal and show genuine willingness to progress on the Palestinian issue.¹⁷

Indeed, a regional process would presumably not be possible without genuine progress in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Therefore, Israel could announce that in principle, it recognizes the Arab initiative as a basis for dialogue and as part of the framework for negotiations for ending the Arab-Israeli conflict. In addition, it should consider initiating regional economic and security arrangements to form an axis based on interests it shares with Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf emirates, with support by the US and

the Quartet. In this way, Israel could discuss its reservations to the initiative with countries in the region, and thus there would also be an opportunity to formulate points of agreement on graduated solutions to the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, a multi-level mechanism for dialogue with the following elements could follow, specifically:

- a. A regional channel: to promote negotiations between Israel, the PA, and other members of the Arab League on the basis of the Arab initiative or other regional initiatives and support negotiations on long term settlements.
- b. An Israeli-Palestinian track: to promote negotiations with the PA that would gradually lead to permanent settlements through interim agreements, constructive independent steps, and partial agreements.
- c. An implementation mechanism: to ensure the success of the blueprint for rebuilding Gaza, implement understandings reached during the negotiations on other tracks, demilitarize the future Palestinian state, and create a real change on the ground, while strengthening the moderate Palestinian leadership, continuing to build the institutions of the Palestinian state, and rebuilding the economy.

Conclusion

Operation Protective Edge brought to the surface an intriguing set of interests shared by Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the PA, both collectively and on concrete bilateral bases. Those organizing themselves along this axis are working, each in its own way, against Hamas, radical Islamic terror, and certain aspects of the Iranian issue that affect Israel as well. Nevertheless, the congruence of security-political interests alone does not indicate that there is a joint regional approach ensuring an axis for long term multilateral dialogue. At the time of this writing, it is still too early to say whether the government of Israel will decide to adopt a regional approach, in whose context significant progress can be made on the Israeli-Palestinian track.

While the frequent changes in the Middle East create new opportunities, the ability to take advantage of them depends on whether the leaders, the centers of power in the region, can set in motion regional political processes and mobilize their respective constituencies. This is a difficult process, given the starting conditions: 80 percent of Palestinians support rocket fire at Israel if the blockade of Gaza is not lifted and 60 percent claim that the two-state solution is no longer practicable.¹⁸ Similarly, there is continued

Israeli construction in Judea and Samaria, and bills on annexing territories or applying Israeli law to settlements in the West Bank have been proposed. However, in order to ensure a Jewish majority in democratic Israel within its sovereign territory and block the possibility of a bi-national state while fighting terror and other threats to Israel, the government would do well to adopt a sophisticated and creative regional approach.

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The Gaza Campaign: An Arena for Inter-Arab Confrontation

Yoel Guzansky

The Arab world was never a paragon of cooperation and unity, and the respective approaches in the region to political Islam, which have become more distinct since the upheavals of the so-called Arab Spring, have further eroded the ability of the region's states to come together, even on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, which traditionally garnered much consensus. The division resulting from differing political and ideological approaches was also evident during Operation Protective Edge. Not only were many Arab states focused on domestic problems, but battles for status and prestige and conflicts of interest among those involved in the negotiations made it difficult to draft terms for a ceasefire and a new arrangement in Gaza.

The Region and Political Islam

Two prominent camps comprise the regional mosaic today. One, including Qatar and Turkey, is made up of countries identified with political Islam, and the other is a coalition led by Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which sees the Muslim Brotherhood, and Hamas in particular, as a threat to stability and security. To these latter countries, Hamas – beyond the fact that it is a militant Muslim Brotherhood proxy that entangles the Egyptian regime with Israel, undermines the rule of the Palestinian Authority (PA), and serves as an example of Islamic movements' ability to seize power – is an organization that collaborated, and to some extent still collaborates, with Iran.¹ Thus, there is evident tension in the position of these countries between hostility toward Hamas and the ideology it represents and a traditional drive to show solidarity with the Palestinians. The attitude of the “moderate” camp toward Hamas in the recent conflict with Israel was similar to regional responses to

Hizbollah actions that led to the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006, which included much criticism of Hizbollah's "adventure" that ultimately hurt many Lebanese civilians. Likewise in the summer of 2014, Hamas was accused of acting irresponsibly and harming Palestinian interests and civilians.

Indeed, from the outset of the crisis, Hamas was the target of harsh criticism for its conduct and its refusal to accept the terms for a ceasefire formulated by Egypt. Egyptian and Saudi commentators bemoaned the fact that Hamas rejected the Egyptian initiative and argued that this caused the deaths of many Palestinians in Gaza. In their view, in rejecting this initiative, Hamas was in fact acting in the service of Iranian interests and those of the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies, Qatar and Turkey. Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry even accused Qatar (and Turkey) of an attempt to thwart the Egyptian mediation initiative and commandeer Egypt's leading position.

During Operation Protective Edge, Hamas in fact garnered minimal support compared to its record in previous rounds of fighting with Israel.² The damage to its standing in the region was evident even before the outbreak of the fighting and reflected developments in the region, led by the civil war in Syria and the change of leadership in Egypt. As a result of the war in Syria, Hamas lost its stronghold in Damascus, and the fall of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt denied Hamas Egyptian support. The government of Abdel el-Sisi strove to entrench Hamas' political and economic isolation, even at the price of prolonging the conflict: the ceasefire terms drafted in Cairo were such that they would clearly be difficult for Hamas to accept.

While Cairo condemned the escalation of Israeli operations and demanded that Israel strive for maximum restraint, Egyptian condemnations of Hamas were no less vehement. Foreign Minister Shoukry stated that Hamas could have saved the lives of many Palestinians had it accepted the Egyptian initiative.³ Cairo's approach to Hamas was clearly reflected in the terms for a ceasefire and a new arrangement in the Gaza Strip that it placed on the regional agenda. Egypt demanded that the economic aid to rebuild Gaza come from countries sharing Egypt's view of the Muslim Brotherhood, that it be transferred through Egypt and the Palestinian Authority (PA), and that it be channeled for civilian, not military reconstruction of Gaza. Nevertheless, as the conflict dragged on, and particularly during the Israeli ground operation, calls began to be heard in Egypt to relieve the suffering of the civilian population in Gaza and open the Rafah border crossing.

This growing popular sentiment propelled the Egyptian leadership to show greater flexibility in its talks with Hamas. Still, Hamas' leaders, particularly Political Bureau chief Khaled Mashal, were not permitted to enter Egypt to participate in the negotiations, and the organization was forced to take part in a delegation headed by a PA official.

Qatar, which has sought to expand its regional influence, and in so doing has angered various Middle East regimes, played a key role, mainly negative, in the efforts to promote a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel. As the main supporter of Hamas, Qatar sought to maintain the organization's rule in Gaza, which explains the opposition by Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia to the Qatari (and Turkish) ceasefire initiative that accepted most, if not all, of Hamas' terms. In a concomitant drive, Qatar also sought through its mediation efforts to harm the regional interests of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Qatar's rivalry with the el-Sisi regime in Cairo and with Riyadh is connected, first and foremost, to Doha's support for the Muslim Brotherhood and its proxies in the region.

The US government, which did not take direct part in the ceasefire negotiations, initially supported the Qatari mediation initiative. US economic and security interests in the emirate, as well as chilly Washington-Cairo relations following the fall of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt in what the administration views as a military coup, formed the background to this support.

The Cairo-Doha rivalry presented the Hamas leadership with a dilemma: should it adopt the Egyptian mediation initiative and thus risk the loss of Qatari aid, or should it prefer the support of the wealthy emirate and incur the risk that Gaza would be cut off from its Egyptian lifeline? Hamas' intransigent position toward the Egyptian mediation initiative during the campaign was attributed to Qatari influence over the organization. Nevertheless, and under heavy Egyptian pressure, Hamas was ultimately forced to accept the Egyptian proposal when it appeared that the extent of the death and destruction in Gaza was threatening its very rule. Predictably, Qatar was not pleased with its inability to influence the ceasefire negotiations as it had hoped or with the political priority given to the Egyptian political effort.

In addition to the limitations on Qatari influence in the region, the Hamas leadership was also forced to contend with what appeared to be a small regional matter regarding the events in Gaza and the Palestinian arena in general: the instability in Iraq and Syria and the takeover of large parts of

these countries by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is at the top of the political and defense agenda of many states in the region. The Sunni monarchies in the Gulf seek to stop the progress of radical Islamic forces in Iraq and Syria as well as in Lebanon and the Maghreb. As part of this effort, on several occasions forces from Egypt and the United Arab Emirates attacked Islamic forces in Libya, which enjoy Qatari support.

Saudi Arabia's relatively minor interest in the events in Gaza was explained by its need to concentrate on events beyond its borders. The kingdom is focused on the challenge to stability in its vicinity from radical Islamic forces in Yemen and Iraq and on the effort to fend off the danger that domestic struggles from those countries will spill over into Saudi Arabia. Riyadh participation was limited to behind-the-scenes support for the Egyptian political line, which can be interpreted as tacit agreement with Israel's operations against Hamas. Riyadh sees Hamas as a hostile organization, but it sought to avoid being seen as unsupportive of the Palestinian issue. Therefore, as occurred more than once in the past, the Saudi king gave a forceful speech implicitly criticizing Hamas' conduct as well as those who carried out what he called "war crimes" in Gaza, although he did not mention Israel by name.⁴ Even before the ceasefire announcement, Saudi officials and commentators joined the call for a comprehensive regional political settlement on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative.

Toward a Regional Arrangement?

Is inter-Arab polarization beneficial to Israel? The "Arab street," like the rulers of Arab countries, remained largely indifferent to the conflict in Gaza. The source of this relative apathy is loathing of Hamas and a desire for it to be weakened, as well as the focus on a political and security agenda that is not connected to events in the Israeli-Palestinian arena. On the other hand, the diplomatic proceedings around the attempts to formulate a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, and in particular, the difficulty in drafting joint principles for a cessation of hostilities, reflected the centrality of the power struggles in the Arab world. A necessary conclusion is that in the future as well, these power struggles could cause wars to be prolonged, even if this gives Israel more political and military leeway. However, the rivalries in the Arab world, particularly between Egypt on one side and Qatar and Turkey on the other, could hamper the creation of effective leverage for pressuring Hamas. This danger fits into a regional trend, in which non-state actors play

a key role due to the erosion of the power of Arab states, the relationships among them, and the web of threats in the region.

On the other hand, Israel's ability to strike at Hamas' military force buildup will improve if an effort in this direction is made in the context of a regional political framework that is as broad as possible. Reconstruction of Gaza with the backing of the "moderate" Arab states is an Israeli interest: vigorous joint action to rebuild Gaza will reduce the inflammatory influence of Qatar (and Turkey) over the organization. In order to promote this interest, Israel must turn to those countries in the Arab world that are interested in working for the benefit of the people of Gaza while curbing Qatar and weakening Hamas. "The good news" according to Mamoun Fandy, writing in *a-Sharq al-Awsat*, "is that if Israel wants to strike a grand deal with the Arabs, now is the time to do it... Arab states are in their weakest political positions for a long time, and given their internal political upheavals they are ready to sign a comprehensive deal."⁵

While some would say that the division between Arab states and the weakening of those states is actually an argument in favor of Israel's avoiding agreements, since Israel's partners would find it difficult to implement the agreement and meet their obligations, there is much room between a comprehensive regional political settlement and a lack of cooperation, and Israel can utilize this fluid situation. Against the backdrop of the campaign in Gaza, several political possibilities have become clear that can deepen ties between Israel and the Sunni-monarchic-secular bloc. Aside from a common interest in curbing the Iranian nuclear threat, this bloc also shares the Israeli interest in weakening state and non-state regional forces that are affiliated with radical political Islam.

Notes

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Operation Protective Edge: Deepening the Rift between Israel and Turkey

Gallia Lindenstrauss

Operation Protective Edge deepened the crisis in relations between Israel and Turkey, as evidenced in a number of ways. During the campaign, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan made very strong statements about Israel, among them, that Israel has been carrying out “systematic genocide” against Palestinians since 1948,¹ that Israel has “surpassed Hitler in barbarism,”² and that Israel is killing Palestinian women “so they cannot give birth.”³ In one instance, Erdogan even indicated that Israel-Turkey relations would not improve as long as he was in power.⁴ Furthermore, Ankara declared three days of mourning over the events in Gaza,⁵ and demands were voiced that Turkey’s Jewish community apologize for Israel’s actions.⁶ Turkish opposition members did not voice different views from those expressed by Erdogan and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), and even accused the government of failing to match the bellicose rhetoric with practical actions. In particular, opposition figures again made the erroneous claim that the NATO radar based in Malatya in eastern Turkey is intended, inter alia, to provide information to Israel, specifically about what is occurring in Gaza.⁷ Violent demonstrations were held near the Israeli embassy in Ankara and the consulate in Istanbul; in turn, the Israeli Foreign Ministry reduced the diplomatic staff in both cities and announced that Israelis had better avoid travel to Turkey. There have been calls in both countries to boycott goods from each other.

Despite its initial hesitation, Israel allowed Turkey to transfer large scale humanitarian aid to Gaza and transfer wounded Palestinians from Gaza to Turkey.⁸ Even though most of the aid was coordinated by the Turkish governmental aid organization TIKA and the Turkish Red Crescent, also

prominent among the organizations that took part in the effort was IHH, one of the main driving forces behind the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla in May 2010, an event that brought the tension between Turkey and Israel to new heights.⁹ During Operation Protective Edge, IHH even announced that it was considering sending a flotilla to Gaza, and following the Turkish presidential elections (apparently it did not want to raise sensitive issues before the elections) the organization announced that the flotilla to Gaza would embark during 2014.¹⁰

The process of deterioration in Turkey-Israel relations is not new. However, in late April 2014, in an interview with an American media outlet, Erdogan, referring to the bilateral friction, stated that an agreement between the two countries on normalizing relations was expected to be signed in the coming weeks.¹¹ While measures taken by Turkey in response to the events in Gaza were not fundamentally different from other manifestations of the increased tension between the two countries, the scope and severity of the rhetoric made this crisis especially severe.

Several factors led to the most recent rift in relations. First, there is a correlation between the state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general and events in Gaza in particular on the one hand, and Turkish-Israeli relations on the other. Every time there is a crisis between Israel and the Palestinians, and especially if it is as serious as the crisis in the wake of Operation Protective Edge, tension increases between Israel and Turkey. For example, in 2002, then-Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit described the events in Jenin during Operation Defensive Shield as “genocide.” In recent years, Gaza has become a focus of the debate in Turkey about the Palestinian issue. The close ties between the AKP and Hamas reinforce the Turkish emphasis on events in the Gaza Strip.¹²

Second, given the tension between Turkey and Egypt over the ouster of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood-led government, the initiatives proposed by Egypt to end the fighting between Israel and Hamas were perceived as challenges to the initiatives proposed by Qatar and Turkey. Already in mid-July, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman accused Qatar and Turkey of sabotaging the possibility of a ceasefire agreement.¹³ Erdogan’s criticism of Egyptian President Abdel el-Sisi, whom he called a “tyrant,” and of Egypt’s policy toward Gaza in the current conflict, led to a rebuke of the Turkish diplomatic representative in

Egypt (the Turkish ambassador to Egypt was already expelled in November 2013).¹⁴

Finally, the proximity of the Turkish presidential elections, which were scheduled to take place on August 10, 2014, provided fertile ground for Erdogan's harsh comments about Gaza in election speeches around the country. Erdogan, who needed more than 50 percent of the vote in order to be elected in the first round of the elections, chose to highlight this topic, on which there is a broad consensus in Turkey and which is identified with his term as Prime Minister: milestones in the deterioration of Israel-Turkey relations in connection with Israeli policy toward Gaza were the incident between Erdogan and then-Israeli President Shimon Peres during the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2009 as well as the *Mavi Marmara* affair.

Hammas ultimately accepted Egypt as the principal mediator, evidence that in this round of conflict, Turkey was at a disadvantage.¹⁵ Furthermore, it appears that Turkey is playing second fiddle in relation to Qatar as well. Yet another indication of Turkey's limited influence over diplomatic events in the Middle East was the fact that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon skipped Ankara during his shuttle diplomacy in the region to promote a ceasefire.¹⁶ On the other hand, it appears that US Secretary of State John Kerry attributed greater importance to the mediation efforts of Qatar and Turkey and included their Foreign Ministers in a meeting he convened in Paris in late July in an attempt to end the fighting.¹⁷

During Operation Protective Edge, the influence of Turkish policy on Israel's calculations was limited, and if Qatar and Turkey indeed successfully sabotaged the ceasefire agreement at the start of the campaign, the influence was essentially negative. While many in the West dismissed the Turkish rhetoric as excessive, it nevertheless perhaps contributed to a general line of condemnation of Israel.

In contrast, Turkish policy toward Gaza in recent years has had a much greater impact. Many of the Israeli restrictions on the passage of goods to Gaza were eased after the *Mavi Marmara* crisis and as part of the talks between Turkey and Israel intended to resolve the crisis. In addition, based on the conclusions of the Turkel commission, which investigated the events surrounding the flotilla, a change was made in procedures for documenting and investigating IDF operations that are likely to engender international criticism.¹⁸ Presumably these changes also had practical manifestations in the

nature of the actions during Operation Protective Edge. Moreover, decision makers in Israel cannot ignore the threat Erdogan made in 2011 (even if it is not likely to be carried out) that next time, a humanitarian flotilla to Gaza, such as the one currently organized by IHH, will be escorted by ships from the Turkish navy.

The deterioration in Israel-Turkey relations against the backdrop of Operation Protective Edge raises certain questions about the general claim that mutual dependence, especially on economic issues, will curb major deterioration in relations. In the year prior to Operation Protective Edge, the volume of trade between Turkey and Israel was some \$5 billion (compared to about \$3.5 billion in 2012), and if not for the operation, it would have likely reached a new high. Turkish Airlines, which operated between seven and eight daily flights to Ben Gurion Airport (making it the largest foreign air carrier at the time from this airport), canceled two daily flights in the aftermath of the campaign, as fewer Israelis were now willing to fly through Turkey because of the hostile atmosphere in the country toward Israel.¹⁹ During the operation, the Turkish energy minister announced that talks between Turkey and Israel on the option of natural gas exports from Israel to and from Turkey were frozen for now.²⁰ In light of the volume of economic activity between the two countries, one might have expected that the public debate in both nations would include more moderate voices, but in fact, there were no prominent voices contradicting the dominant hostile discourse.

In conclusion, despite the many efforts undertaken in recent years to rehabilitate Israel-Turkey relations, it appears that the crisis, which deepened against the background of the campaign in Gaza, has struck a heavy blow to relations, and it is currently not clear how this can be overcome. The latest crisis may be especially serious because of the tumultuous relations between Israel and Turkey in recent years, which deprived Jerusalem and Ankara of the stable foundation that could be relied on to reduce tension. Israel in 2014 was more steadfast in its refusal to accept Turkish mediation efforts than in similar cases in the past. That being the case, it appears that unless a fundamental and positive change occurs in the situation in Gaza, the subject will continue to be a focus of considerable tension between Israel and Turkey, and bilateral relations will not return to the path of normalization.

Notes

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Egypt: The Non-Neutral Broker

Ephraim Kam

In the end, it was Egypt that headed the negotiations for a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, and perhaps it will also lead the discussions about an arrangement in the Gaza Strip. Although Egypt has been a mediator between Israel and Hamas in the past, this time its involvement could not be taken for granted. Preoccupied with domestic problems, Egypt's standing in the Arab world on the eve of Operation Protective Edge was at a low point, and there were other candidates to lead the negotiations: the United States, Turkey, and Qatar, and perhaps the Palestinian Authority (PA). Most importantly, Hamas did not want Egypt as a mediator because it believed – correctly – that Egypt was hostile to it, that the Egyptian position was biased in favor of Israel, and that Egypt was an interested party and not a neutral mediator. For these reasons, Hamas announced at an early stage of the negotiations that it did not recognize the Egyptian ceasefire initiative and would not accept Egypt's proposals.

Despite these difficulties, Egypt led the negotiations to their conclusion in the first stage, with three factors contributing to this outcome. First, the other candidates for leading the talks were out of the picture. Other than Hamas, no relevant player wanted Turkey and Qatar as mediators, and the US administration preferred to support Egypt and assist it behind the scenes, especially since others – the Arab League, Saudi Arabia, the PA, and Israel – supported it. Second, Hamas needed the ceasefire urgently, and in the absence of alternatives, it had no choice but to accept Egyptian mediation, in spite of what from its point of view were decided disadvantages. Third, since the Gaza Strip borders Egypt and the geographical connection has central importance in the talks, it would have been impossible to reach an agreement without Egyptian participation.

Egypt had its own interest in leading the talks and reaching a settlement. It was important for Egypt to act as mediator to improve its standing in the Arab world, restore its position of influence, and strengthen President el-Sisi's domestic status as the element addressing the Palestinian problem and stabilizing the region. It was even more important for Egypt to influence the arrangement in the Gaza Strip in accordance with its own interests, given the connection between the situation in Gaza and the security problems in the Sinai Peninsula.

For Egypt, there is a twofold consideration concerning the arrangement in Gaza. On the one hand, Egypt seeks to rein in Hamas as much as possible. The Egyptian regime views the group as a terrorist organization associated with the Muslim Brotherhood that endangers Egypt's security, especially in Sinai, and damages Egypt's efforts to rebuild its economy. For this reason, Egypt has banned Hamas activity on its territory, including activity by associations and institutions connected to the organization and acceptance of funding from the organization. This is also the reason why Egypt closed the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Sinai after Hamas seized power in Gaza in 2007, and made its reopening conditional on the PA's return to power in Gaza. From Egypt's perspective, opening the crossing means recognizing the Hamas government in Gaza, giving Hamas strategic depth by means of Sinai, and strengthening the Muslim Brotherhood. During Operation Protective Edge, Egypt allowed only limited openings of the crossing for humanitarian purposes, mainly to transport the wounded and bring in medicine and food. More importantly, much more than its predecessors, the current Egyptian regime is working to destroy the smuggling tunnels on the border with Gaza. While Egypt identifies with the suffering of the people in Gaza and is committed to helping the Gaza population, it distinguishes between the people and the Hamas leadership, which it perceives as an enemy. During Operation Protective Edge, some elements in Egypt even took a positive view of Israel's efforts to strike Hamas and blamed the organization for causing the deterioration in the situation.

During the ceasefire negotiations, Egypt took advantage of Hamas' weakness and distress to dictate terms that were not acceptable to the organization. Thus, Egypt did not allow several Hamas leaders, in particular Khaled Mashal and Ismail Haniyeh, to come to Cairo for the talks and preferred to conduct the negotiations with Mousa Abu Marzouk, who lives in Cairo and has a relationship with the Egyptians. In general, Egyptian proposals on the

contents of the arrangement were closer to the position of Israel, which in principle was also ready to accept them, than that of Hamas.

Egypt's second consideration concerns the PA's status in the Gaza Strip. From the outset Egypt demanded that the PA head the Palestinian delegation to the ceasefire talks and that the discussions with the delegation be conducted through the PA. More importantly, in order to prevent smuggling of arms and materials that could be used to enhance the rocket industry or dig tunnels, Egypt insisted that the opening of the Rafah border crossing as part of the easing of restrictions on Hamas be made conditional on PA security control of the crossing, and Hamas was forced to accept this condition. The Egyptian regime's interest in strengthening the status of the PA in Gaza and ultimately returning it to power there reflects its perception that Hamas is a threat to Egypt, its view that the PA is the authorized representative of the Palestinian people, and the assumption that consolidating the government in the West Bank and Gaza under the PA and weakening Hamas are crucial for promoting a solution to the Palestinian problem.

To Egypt, the most desirable arrangement would apparently be to demilitarize Gaza in exchange for its reconstruction. Even if no such arrangement is agreed on – and apparently the chances are slim – Egypt will do its best to block the arms smuggling routes through Sinai and the sea and from Sudan and Libya into Egypt, while taking advantage of the destruction of the Hamas military infrastructure during Operation Protective Edge and the difficulty in rebuilding it. At the same time, Egypt is likely to actively help rebuild the civilian infrastructure destroyed in Gaza and raise money from abroad for this purpose.

Despite the hostility between Egypt and Hamas, both sides consider improved relations to be of fundamental importance. Hamas has a significant interest in rehabilitating its relations with Egypt for several reasons. Opening the Rafah crossing depends on Cairo, and Hamas' connection to Egypt is the critical economic route for the movement of people and goods to and from Gaza, especially since it lost Israel as its main source of employment. On the other hand, Egypt also has an interest in binding Hamas to itself again in order to moderate the organization's approach to the PA and Israel, prevent another Hamas military conflict with Israel, cut it off from the Muslim Brotherhood, and sever its ties to states like Iran, Syria, Turkey, and Qatar. In addition, Egypt has an interest in leading the reconstruction of Gaza. It is therefore possible that Hamas, because of its distress, its political isolation

in the Arab world, its damaged relations with traditional allies such as Iran and Syria, and its need for substantial outside financial aid to rebuild Gaza, will seek ways to build a closer and more balanced relationship with Egypt.

Egypt's position toward Operation Protective Edge also reflects the current regime's relations with Israel. For several reasons, the security ties between the two countries are closer than in the past and are certainly stronger than when the Muslim Brotherhood was in power. First, Egypt is concerned by the wave of terrorist attacks it is suffering, particularly in the Sinai Peninsula, and it sees Hamas as the Muslim Brotherhood's partner in these attacks. Egypt's view of Hamas as an enemy, or at least a threat, has created a common Egyptian-Israeli interest, which was reflected in the Egyptian aim in mediating the ceasefire: to weaken Hamas, reduce its capabilities, and if possible, restore the PA to the helm in Gaza. Second, Israel is helping Egypt strengthen its control of Sinai, including through willingness to allow Egypt to position larger military forces there than is stipulated in the military appendix to the peace treaty. And third, Israel has attempted to help Egypt in Washington with the delay in the shipment of weapons by the US administration in response to the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt.

However, the regime in Egypt also feels it has an obligation to consider the mood in the country concerning the Palestinians, which is not excessively sympathetic to Hamas but shows great sensitivity to the suffering of the Palestinian population in Gaza and anger at Israel. For this reason, the regime publicly expresses its attitude toward Hamas but plays down security coordination with Israel. Moreover, Egypt still considers it very important to progress in solving the Palestinian problem, which the regime sees as the key to a fundamental and open improvement in its relations with Israel. Thus as long as there is no progress on the Palestinian track, despite the improvement in security coordination and President el-Sisi's more positive attitude to Israel, the Palestinian issue will continue to trouble Israeli-Egyptian relations.

The United States and Israel in Crossfire

Oded Eran

The dilemmas facing the US in the Middle East since Barack Obama entered the White House, and certainly since the Arab Spring began, resurfaced clearly during Operation Protective Edge. The first dilemma concerns relations between Israel and the United States. Since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in 2006, Israel has launched three military campaigns against the terrorism and rocket fire emanating from the area. The first, Operation Cast Lead, ended a few hours before President Obama's inauguration in January 2009; this was apparently a factor in timing the end of the operation. Operation Pillar of Defense occurred in November 2012, at the end of Obama's first term, while the third campaign, Operation Protective Edge, took place nearly midway through his second term.

During the recent conflict, the Obama administration reiterated consistently that Israel has the right to defend itself, while at the same time demanding vociferously that Israel refrain from harming innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip. Indeed, a degree of hardening in the American attitude to civilian casualties was discernible, which can be attributed to the number of casualties. During the week-long Operation Pillar of Defense, 180 people were killed in Gaza; in contrast, Operation Protective Edge continued for 50 days and over 2,200 people in Gaza were killed. Schools and other civilian facilities used as a base for rocket fire against Israel were used by Gaza civilians as shelters; for its part, Israel had no choice but to attack these launch sites. However, official US statements such as the one issued on August 3, 2014 stating that "the United States is appalled by today's disgraceful shelling outside an UNRWA school in Rafah" aroused much anger in Israel that will be difficult to assuage.

Furthermore, during the recent conflict the US took measures that had not been used for many years. Washington suspended a shipment of military equipment to Israel, albeit for a few days only. In the course of his six years in office, and even though relations with the Israeli government and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have been tense if not stormy on more than one occasion, President Obama has reiterated the US commitment to Israel's security. However, when Israel embarked on a military operation whose justification the US did not dispute, the President had recourse to a measure that was absent from US-Israel relations for over three decades. Some have also cited the decision by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to ban flights by US airlines to Israel for security reasons as a signal of the administration's dismay at the force of Israel's operation in Gaza. This author, however, is inclined to believe that the decision was motivated by professional and safety reasons only.

The conflict in Gaza also focused renewed attention on US-Egypt relations. These relations are not strictly bilateral, as there is a triangular relationship between Israel, Egypt, and the US. The countries considered the partners of the US in the Middle East, led by Israel and Egypt, were disappointed, if not disturbed, by the abandonment of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak during the internal conflict in Egypt in 2011 that led to his overthrow. They subsequently watched with dismay what they regarded as American indifference to the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power in Egypt and the vocal criticism in Washington of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who was elected following the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood government, and his efforts to suppress the opposition in Egypt.

For its part, Israel did not conceal its satisfaction with the coup that returned the Egyptian military to the Cairo helm, and the army's determination to fight terror cells in Sinai and rein in the tunnel activity between Sinai and the Gaza Strip. Israel's lobbying in Washington on behalf of the old-new regime in Egypt is well known. Israel and Egypt find themselves on the same side against Hamas, and Israel prefers Egypt-led mediation with Hamas over any other mediation – including mediation involving the US. Although US involvement in the ceasefire outline proposed by Qatar and Turkey was minor, the American administration was expected to evince more understanding for Israel's sensitivity – certainly with respect to Turkey, as Erdogan, Turkish Prime Minister at the time, made particularly vitriolic statements against Israel during the operation. The divergent Israeli and

American responses to the proposal by Turkey and Qatar, some of which were aired publicly, were especially sharp, indicating the frayed nerves on the two sides regarding their relationship.

The grating tones were not directly related to the dispute about Israel's policy on Gaza and Hamas. There has virtually never been an Israeli military operation in which the US did not vacillate between support in principle for Israel's right to defend itself and criticism of Israel for civilian casualties and damage to civilian targets. However, American criticism of these or other aspects of Operation Protective Edge may well have been related to the frustration of the Obama administration vis-à-vis Israel, especially during the nine months ending in late April 2014, in which US Secretary of State John Kerry made an effort to jumpstart substantive negotiations toward an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. The Americans did not hide their opinion that the principal, if not exclusive, blame for the failure of the talks lay with the Israeli Prime Minister. Furthermore, Washington is still trying to use the end of the fighting as leverage to restore the Palestinian Authority (PA) to power in the Gaza Strip. It can be assumed that the American administration expected Israel to provide PA President Mahmoud Abbas with a diplomatic bridge in the form of willingness to compromise in the West Bank, which Abbas can use as a springboard toward power in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli government, however, hastened to make clear to the administration that it saw matters differently. Moreover, the speeches by Abu Mazen and Netanyahu at the UN General Assembly in September 2014 have given a new negative twist to the situation, and an immediate return to talks is highly unlikely.

Even without events in the Gaza Strip, the American administration faces a dilemma over how to handle Palestinian political measures designed in part to fill the political vacuum created following the most recent round of talks. If implementation of Palestinian or other political initiatives depends on a resolution by the UN Security Council, the US will have to decide whether to cast a veto or allow resolutions to pass, thereby becoming milestones and/or stumbling blocks in the political process between Israel and the Palestinians. There may be other questions involving American efforts to deter various Palestinian initiatives regarding international organizations that are not directly related to a vote in the Security Council. The views of Israel and the US on issues relating to reconstruction in the Gaza Strip, such as Israel's involvement in the establishment of international mechanisms, supervision

of these mechanisms, and the use of equipment and raw materials used by Hamas in building tunnels, are also liable to affect relations between the two countries.

The US could not have prevented the formation of an investigative committee by the UN Human Rights Council, but it can, should it choose to do so, use its weight to influence other UN forums to limit the damage that the expected report is liable to cause Israel. In the past, Congress pressured the administration in this direction through its authority to approve budgets for US participation in various international organizations. The accumulation of hostile activity against Israel in international agencies is liable to put this issue back on the agenda, and serve as the background for a confrontation between the current administration and Congress.

There is no proof that the responses and reactions by the US and Israel are affected by considerations related to the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear issue. These negotiations are continuing, and it does not appear that the US is exerting pressure on Israel to refrain from crushing the military infrastructure of Hamas, Iran's ally. No activity in the Gaza military campaign by either Israel or Iran can be cited as designed to send a specific message to each other. Israel's actions during Operation Protective Edge do not give much indication to how it will act if the current negotiations do not lead to a suspension of Iranian nuclear activity. On the other hand, the regime in Tehran has made no threat or taken any other action against Israel and/or the US suggesting linkage in Iran's view between the nuclear negotiations and events in Gaza.

The events in the international arena that were unrelated to the conflict between Israel and Hamas were instrumental in preventing further deterioration in Israel-US relations. The violent confrontation in Ukraine between the government and pro-Russian elements and the extension of control by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) will continue to occupy the American administration in the coming months. The increased American involvement in the struggle against ISIS eased the tension between Washington and Jerusalem. The disagreements that caused that tension, however, even before the outbreak of fighting in Gaza, have not dissipated. The end of negotiations with Tehran in late November 2014 on Iran's nuclear program is liable to ignite the dispute on this issue between Israel and the US anew. Political initiatives involving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, even if they do not originate with the US, such as a Palestinian approach to international

agencies and institutions could also restore the Israeli-American differences to the headlines.

The three military operations conducted by Israel in Gaza since Hamas seized power have not solved the main questions – political, military, and economic – in that area. In the absence of a long term arrangement in Gaza, a renewed outbreak of hostilities is very likely. At this stage, Israel finds relief in its dialogue with Egypt on security matters of interest to both countries and in the role Egypt is playing in reaching a stable ceasefire. Israel can expand this dialogue to include Jordan, which has an interest in weakening the Muslim Brotherhood in its own territory. While the value of this identity of interests with Jordan and Egypt as far as Gaza and offshoots of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood movement are concerned should not be underestimated, their life span should not be overestimated, either. Both Egypt and certainly Jordan will need the “cover” of an ongoing political process between Israel and the Palestinians to sustain their cooperation with Israel. This assessment is also valid for the Gulf states and the concerns they share with Israel as a result of Iran’s nuclear project.

Such a partnership, as far as it goes, also depends on the Arab side’s perspective of the relations between Israel and the US. Outside observers cannot ignore the erosion in Israel-US relations, relations that constitute a key element in any version of Israel’s security concept. Israel cannot afford further decline in these relations. President Obama will remain in the White House for more than another two years. This is a long period by any standard, especially in a dynamic region undergoing upheavals at an increasingly fast pace. Extra effort is therefore required to renew the dialogue between the two countries at the highest levels, even though the difficulty of this task is clear.

A New Opportunity to Confront the Delegitimization of Israel

Gilead Sher and Einav Yogev

During Operation Protective Edge, the Jewish community of Rome awoke one morning to anti-Semitic graffiti sprayed on the walls of the city. Posters in the streets proclaimed that “a boycott of every type of Jewish product and merchant is fundamental to stopping the slaughter in Palestine,” because “every Jewish-owned industry, factory, and business earmarks a percentage of its sales for Israel to supply it with weapons and continue to kill those who have a right to live in their own homeland.” The posters listed some forty businesses – clothing stores, butcher shops, restaurants, bars, and hotels – that, it was claimed, have Jewish owners and should be boycotted.¹

The Rome incident is one of many such cases that occurred against the backdrop of the recent military campaign in Gaza. A report by the Anti-Defamation League found that 51 percent of the anti-Semitic incidents in July showed a direct connection with Operation Protective Edge. The report, which compared the responses around the world over the summer of 2014 with those during Operation Cast Lead in 2009, claims that there is a substantive deterioration with regard to attitudes to Israel. In addition, many pundits argue that this time, the waves of anti-Israel boycotts and protests expanded, reflected in violent incidents, speeches spewing hatred, and attacks against Jews,² as well as participation by hundreds of thousands in the consumer boycott of Israeli products in general and products from the settlements in particular.³

On the other hand, during the seven weeks of fighting in Gaza, other than a small number of condemnations and scattered calls for a ceasefire, the international community allowed Israel relative freedom of action. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine on the one hand and the campaign by

the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) on the other dominated international attention. However, the relative quiet on the diplomatic front during the fighting could mislead those who do not look beyond the actual military campaign against Hamas. The European Union, Israel's largest trading partner, announced that it is considering a general boycott of products from Israel if their origin is not displayed in advance;⁴ prominent allies such as Great Britain and Spain announced during the fighting that they were weighing the continued export of weapons to Israel; Israeli participation in some international festivals was canceled;⁵ Israeli tourists were ejected from restaurants and tourist sites in disgrace, and in some cases, were removed from such sites in order to protect them from hostile elements;⁶ and overall, the consumer boycott of Israeli goods was expanded, particularly in Europe.⁷ Furthermore, after Operation Protective Edge, Mahmoud Abbas joined the already unsettled atmosphere with his old-new program, whose second and third phases deal with the possible failure of the negotiations or a moratorium on talks. In the second phase of the plan, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Arab League countries will appeal to the UN Security Council and demand that it order Israel to evacuate Palestinian territory within three to five years. In the third and final phase, the PA will join all international institutions, sign the Rome Statute, which created the International Criminal Court in The Hague, and file a claim against Israel and its leaders. This Palestinian unilateral approach has already eroded Israel's status with Britain's House of Commons voting in mid-October, 274-12, in favor of a symbolic motion that stands as an initial stage of UK recognition of a Palestinian state and a similar declaration by the Swedish Foreign Minister.

Clearly, the latest round of fighting with Hamas heightened the challenges facing Israel in the political-diplomatic, media, economic, and legal arenas. The increasing pressure indicates that legitimate criticism of Israeli government policy by the international community is slowly evolving into measures to influence Israel's conduct and its decisions as a sovereign democratic state. During and after Operation Protective Edge, those driving the campaign to delegitimize Israel viewed Israel's gradually eroding international status with much satisfaction. The campaign to delegitimize Israel inevitably limits Israel's political and military room to maneuver, and the expansion of delegitimization efforts in Western public opinion could limit it even further.

One explanation for the unprecedented momentum in the delegitimization campaign during and after Operation Protective Edge is the feeling in world

public opinion that Israel, whose citizens enjoyed the effective protection of the Iron Dome system, responded disproportionately and indiscriminately, harming innocent civilians while wreaking great destruction in Gaza. This sentiment bespeaks a lack of understanding of the nature of fighting by a democratic state against non-state powerful and organized militias. For more than a decade, Western countries, first and foremost the United States, Israel, and Great Britain, have confronted terrorist organizations that protect themselves by blending in with the civilian population, sowing terror, and fighting from within clearly civilian institutions. Taking these disadvantageous circumstances into consideration, during Operation Protective Edge the government of Israel generally adopted a limited, proportional, and restrained policy in fighting against Hamas.

Those behind the wave of anti-Semitism and condemnation of Israel seek to maximize the element of asymmetry in capabilities and powers, while stirring up feelings of subversion and illegitimacy in the media and among the general public. Furthermore, studies indicate a dangerous congruence between the objectives of the Islamic fundamentalist terrorist resistance movements and the network of groups seeking to delegitimize the State of Israel. Both sets of movements seek to undermine Israel's very existence as the Jewish national state, one by means of a militant, asymmetric war of attrition and the other by boycotts and construction of a narrative that blackens and dehumanizes the concept of Zionism.⁸

In general, an examination of Israel's conduct in recent years shows that between the rounds of fighting in Gaza, Israel developed a partial operational and defensive solution to the threat of delegitimization. During Operation Protective Edge, concern for cooperation with the international community and for positive international public opinion, Israel, even while under attacks, was careful to pay attention to the international community and honor ceasefires even when they were systematically violated by Hamas and were often against Israel's best interests. It also exercised great military caution, reflected in the warning leaflets it dropped before firing on Gaza, the instructions to evacuate areas such as Shejaiya and Beit Hanoun, and explicit commands not to fire at areas in which there was a great likelihood of hurting civilians. While this conduct is due primarily to the IDF's ethical code, it also reflects Israel's generally meticulous compliance with international norms.

On the legal front, in part as a result of the lessons learned from Operation Cast Lead and the *Mavi Marmara* episode, Israel strictly adheres to the rules

of international law. Lawyers are included in the decision making process at middle and high military levels and in the headquarters of maneuvering forces. Furthermore, during the fighting, the State Comptroller announced that his office, in coordination with the Prime Minister, would check the political and military decision making processes and examine the IDF and the government's inspection and investigation mechanisms.⁹

The IDF has also learned from past errors, and even before a commission of inquiry was established under the auspices of the UN secretary general, announced that it would conduct a legal investigation of ninety incidents from Operation Protective Edge. These include the deaths of four children on a Gaza beach, the bombing of a school in which fourteen were killed, and an incident of looting in Shejaiya.¹⁰

The international commission established by the UN Human Rights Council and headed by William Schabas has an overwhelming majority of Asian, African, and South American countries – 34 out of 47 – including Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Cuba, and Venezuela. Each is known for its consistent violation of human rights, and therefore, there is nothing easier than to condemn Israel automatically in the council as part of the double standard familiar in the international arena. However, past experience teaches that Israel's reluctance to cooperate with commissions of this kind serves little purpose. Israel's criticism of the mandate and staffing of these commissions, including the body established after Operation Protective Edge, is appropriate, and Israel must formally protest and make its criticism known to the international community. At the same time, it must demand to submit – under protest – its factual and legal arguments so that they will be presented to the commission, even if it chooses to ignore them.

These efforts notwithstanding, the accelerated erosion of Israel's position in the wake of the operation indicates that a measured security strategy, operational caution, and legal-military deployment are not enough. The harsh images from Gaza, broadcast on international and regional Arab networks, frequently unfiltered and tendentiously edited, are what remain seared in the minds of Arabs and Westerners. Moreover, the demonstrations and events around the world indicate that the Palestinian struggle has long transcended the borders of the Middle East. The Palestinian narrative has been internationalized and framed as a just struggle among many audiences in academia, economics, politics, and public opinion.

This is the background to the organized strategy behind the campaign to turn Israel into a pariah state, as occurred with South Africa. Its purpose is to increase international involvement in Israel itself, and thereby dictate the terms of Israel's independent existence and borders while eroding its standing as the sovereign state of the Jewish people. This is done by tactically and manipulatively copying the global campaign once conducted against the racist dictatorship of South Africa and applying it to the Palestinian-Israeli national conflict.

Israel is not an apartheid state, and the democratic and liberal forces prominent in its society will endeavor to ensure that it would never become one. Nevertheless, during and especially after Operation Protective Edge, as in every round of fighting in which Israel was involved in the past decade, there were increasing comparisons, superficial and baseless though they were, between Israel and the South African apartheid regime. The measures intended to ingrain into Western consciousness that Israel equals apartheid began several years ago among activists and NGOs. They are based in part on repeated comparisons between Israel and South Africa that use racist and inflammatory language to describe Israel's conduct in the territories as a holocaust, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

In the campaign to delegitimize Israel, there are no clear and defined milestones. The campaign is being conducted at varying intensities, overtly and covertly. Thus, there is a lurking danger not only of rapid deterioration, up to isolation and censure of Israel, but also that Israel will unfortunately awaken late to the need to deploy against the campaign. South Africa's position in the international community did not get worse overnight; it was a process of ongoing erosion. Over the course of some twenty years, opposition to apartheid spread in world public opinion in the form of boycotts and divestment, in cultural and academic institutions, and in corporations and financial companies. Eventually, Western democratic governments, first and foremost the United States, joined the campaign. This creeping isolation could be Israel's fate, despite its democratic character, military achievements, and measured defense policy.

Now, with Israel's military achievements in Operation Protective Edge and the growing threat from extremist organizations in the Middle East, an opportunity has been created for a political turnabout in Israel's conduct and an effective response, with real significance, to the campaign to delegitimize Israel and blacken its name. Israel should work to end the Arab-Israeli

conflict, with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at its center, while ensuring the state's existence and security in the heart of the stormy Middle East marked by the waves of fundamentalist Islamic terror.

The revolutions in Arab countries, the civil war in Syria, the growing strength of Salafist jihad, the collapse of government systems, ISIS terror, the rise of the power of the "Arab street," and the weakening of the regimes in all countries in the region make it necessary for Israel to adopt a policy of caution and alertness. However, this does not mean perpetuating the status quo. It appears that today, circumstances and opportunities have been created for Israel. The current regional constellation – a weakened Hamas, a relatively moderate PA leader, an Egypt willing and able to mediate, and a concerted fight against ISIS that includes Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab states – provides tailwind for Israel. Moreover, Israel maintains a pivotal position within the international community's efforts to rehabilitate Gaza and hopefully aid the transition to a gradual resumption of power in Gaza by the Palestinian Authority under Abbas, with Hamas eventually disarmed. That should be exploited to combine a regional political initiative with Israeli-Palestinian negotiations while independently and unconditionally preparing to separate from the Palestinians. Such a combined and graduated initiative would seek to end the Arab-Israeli conflict and ensure the future of Israel as the safe, democratic state of the Jewish people with a responsible, long term, sober view of security for Israel and its citizens.

But that is not enough. In tandem with its political moves, Israel must undertake a national and international effort to confront the effective delegitimization campaign being waged against it on all fronts mentioned above. In academia, the economy, culture, trade, and tourism, Israeli citizens face a delegitimization front and bear the burden of the campaign – economically, in terms of image, and sometimes personally. It is the state's obligation to shield all individuals who stand on the front lines but are not a formal part of the governmental or military system through a protective arrangement that does not leave them on their own. Therefore, the government must allocate resources, combine forces, develop operational and combat doctrines, recruit institutions and individuals from outside the government, and organize these efforts urgently under the umbrella of imperative strategy. Israel today has the power to engender change and lead to a turnabout to cope with this complex threat, and the sooner it does so, the better.

Notes

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Conclusion

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Conclusion

The Strategic Balance of Operation Protective Edge: Achieving the Strategic Goal Better, Faster, and at a Lower Cost

Amos Yadlin

Three military campaigns between Israel and Hamas have ended in an asymmetric strategic tie. On the one hand, there is no doubt that in the summer of 2014 Hamas suffered an enormous military blow and failed to achieve both its stated demands and its strategic goals. On the other hand, Hamas survived the battle against the IDF, the strongest army in the Middle East; it reasserted its ethos of “heroic resistance” through armed struggle and reached a ceasefire agreement whereby it neither gives up its weapons caches nor accepts restrictions on future arms buildup. In the short run, moreover, Hamas has likewise improved its standing among Palestinians. Given this outcome, Israel’s strategic thinking ought to focus on how to achieve a better strategic result in the next round of fighting, which one must presume will ultimately arrive.

Operation Protective Edge, the third round of fighting between Israel and Hamas, lasted 50 days. When it was over, Israel’s main accomplishment was a “ceasefire with no gains for Hamas,” as described by Israel’s Prime Minister. Nonetheless, and even if Israel did not initiate the fighting and was dragged into it, it should have leveraged Hamas’ determination to continue the battle in order to better achieve its strategic objective.

The way in which the campaign was conducted countered Israel’s traditional security concept, which is based on deterrence, early warning, and decision. Israel’s overwhelming military power and the results of the previous conflicts did not deter Hamas from initiating the recent offensive.

There was no specific intelligence indication or strategic warning about the approaching conflict, as demonstrated by cuts in the 2013 defense budget, the reduction in reserve soldier training, and the cessation of IAF training flights. Likewise, in the conflict itself, Israel did not achieve a decisive victory. Clearly, it is not possible to apply the traditional security concept to every campaign or round of conflict, but it is important that it serve as a fundamental frame of reference for the Israeli defense leadership. The IDF must strive to develop an operational concept that allows implementation of strategic objectives and conforms as much as possible to the State of Israel's current security concept.

Only the defense pillar of the current security concept (which was added at the recommendation of the Meridor Committee in 2005-6) functioned appropriately during Operation Protective Edge. However, the highly successful performance of Israel's defensive arrays allowed and brought about an estrangement from other very important elements of the traditional security concept: a short campaign, a clear victory, and the transfer of the fighting to enemy territory. In addition, because of strengthened defenses, many classic principles of war were disregarded: taking the initiative and going on the offensive; surprise and deception; concentration of effort; throwing the enemy off balance; and continuity of assault.

On the other hand, there is much logic to the claim that a campaign such as Protective Edge should not be examined on the basis of the IDF's traditional security concept or principles of war. It is very difficult to deter a terrorist organization, and it is certainly difficult to defeat it in a short war. A better analogy and reference point might be prolonged counterterrorism campaigns. For example, if one were to compare Operation Protective Edge to the challenging first three years of the second intifada and the waves of suicide bombings that killed hundreds of soldiers and civilians in Israel, Protective Edge presents as a short campaign with reasonable costs. Even the United States, the greatest military power in the world, was unable to achieve a decisive victory against the Taliban in Afghanistan, defeat al-Qaeda in the global war on terror, or eradicate Sunni and Shiite terrorism in Iraq over the course of a decade. With those military experiences as reference point, Israel's performance in Protective Edge is above par, notably when considering the fact that its main cities and population centers were targeted by rocket fire throughout the campaign.

No doubt in the world of asymmetric conflicts, other rules of war apply. This article discusses the tension between the need to preserve Israel's classic security concept while addressing the ever-changing characteristics of contemporary war. In this case, a war was waged against a low signature, semi-state organization that hides behind its civilians on the one hand, and has state responsibility and significant military capabilities on the other.

The article's central argument is that Hamas in Gaza is neither a classic terrorist organization nor it is a normal state. It falls under a new definition of a hybrid organization that includes elements of the two configurations. Therefore, when fighting against it, it is necessary to apply all elements of the classic security doctrine as well as mission-specific elements of a war against non-state terrorist organizations. Many of the principles of war remain valid for a war against an organization of this type. However, the main challenge is to identify the right elements of the battle against a hybrid threat and to prepare military solutions that will gain the following objectives: a clear political advantage in the arrangements subsequent to the battle; significantly enhanced deterrence; a shorter campaign duration; reduced costs; minimized damage to Israel's international standing; and the absence of escalation on Israel's other borders.

From Israel's perspective, some of the negative aspects of the recent campaign stemmed, paradoxically, from the relative success of Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012. It is commonplace that anyone who wins a battle and rests on his laurels has less motivation to learn, investigate, and prepare tactical and doctrinal solutions for the next round. Suffering significant blows, it appears that Hamas learned the lessons of Operation Cast Lead and Operation Pillar of Defense well, and prepared strategic tools and tactical solutions to neutralize Israel's advantages as those manifest in previous campaigns, mainly in intelligence and precision strike capabilities. In an INSS memorandum published in December 2012 following Operation Pillar of Defense, I wrote about the need to investigate and study a dozen key issues, including the failure to address the other side's arms buildup in the post-conflict settlement; the need for a deeper understanding of the asymmetry between the two sides' objectives and their respective definitions of victory; and the formulation of concrete military responses to address this asymmetry.

An excerpt from the recommendation I wrote then is still valid today:

Even if the IDF and the State of Israel believe that they won the battle, it is important that Israel conduct an investigation into the eight days of fighting [Operation Pillar of Defense]. This would be an investigation rather than an inquiry: an investigation seeks information on how to conduct the next battle more effectively, whereas an inquiry seeks to discover who is at fault, and who can be blamed for past actions. The political echelon can appoint its own internal Winograd commission, without public or media pressure and without the expectation that heads will roll or that a senior political or military figure will be removed from office. The chief of staff can also appoint a group of senior reservists to examine the systemic, strategic, operative, and logistical questions connected to the campaign.

Apparently, this recommendation was not adopted, perhaps explaining part of the problematic choice of strategic objectives and the operating concepts chosen for their implementation throughout Operation Protective Edge.

What follows are ten questions and topics for investigation to be explored in depth, this time in the wake of Operation Protective Edge. It would be best to probe these issues and questions in the appropriate forums in the General Staff, the Ministry of Defense, and the cabinet, and to provide a strategic, tactical, and operational response through a current and relevant security concept, a matching operational concept, and suitable force buildup and directives on the use of force.

1. *Did Israel understand the enemy's rationale and decision making process correctly?*

It is impossible to formulate a strategic objective without an in-depth understanding of the adversary. A professional debriefing process should be conducted with the goal of improving Israel's understanding of the rationale underlying Hamas' decisions and the manner in which it made them. This is the only way through which Israel might understand why it had no strategic warning that the deterrence achieved in Pillar of Defense eroded to a point of renewed hostilities in the summer of 2014. It would appear that there was a failure to internalize the realization that Hamas had given up on a Hamas-run Islamic state in Gaza because of its difficult political and financial situation following the change of regime in Egypt. The fact that the "keys to Gaza" were handed to the Palestinian unity government increased the attractiveness

of the military option for Hamas, and the significance of the military wing commanders increased in contrast to Hamas' political leadership in Gaza, whose influence ebbed. Even if the claim that Hamas itself did not intend to enter into battle is correct, why, nonetheless, was it dragged into one? In addition, it must be understood why Hamas repeatedly refused to accept the ceasefire proposals and why it violated them. After all, an organization that had been deterred and was not interested in fighting would be expected to accept a ceasefire at an early stage of the campaign, whereas Hamas agreed to a truce only after seven weeks of combat.

2. *Were the goals of the campaign correct? Were they too limited at the outset and unrealistic later on?*

Initially, Operation Protective Edge had three modest objectives: restore quiet to the south; restore deterrence; and strike a hard blow against Hamas. In fact, these three goals constituted different dimensions of the same objective: only if Hamas were hit sufficiently hard would it be deterred from further fighting, and thus quiet would be restored in the south. This goal was not achieved in six weeks of fighting and thousands of precision attacks against Hamas targets. Only in the seventh week, when the heads of the military wing of Hamas were targeted successfully and multi-story buildings in Gaza were struck, was Hamas hit hard enough to be deterred, and thereupon quiet was restored. The question of whether these objectives could have been achieved in the first or second week of the campaign is one Israel needs to probe thoroughly.

A subsequent goal was to destroy Hamas' offensive tunnels, and in this the IDF was very successful. The question here is why this objective was not defined at an earlier stage, as soon as the campaign began. Another goal, demilitarizing Gaza, was added to the list of objectives halfway through the operation. This is an important, worthwhile, and ambitious goal, but the way in which the operation developed did not support it. There was absolutely no chance that Hamas would voluntarily disarm. Neither Egypt nor NATO – let alone the Palestinian Authority – would be prepared to undertake a process that the IDF itself was not prepared to carry out. It would have been appropriate to set a more realistic goal for the political settlement stage, namely, preventing Hamas from undertaking a military buildup after the conflict. The correct approach would have been to agree on this not with Hamas, but with Israel's allies, Egypt and the United States, and to focus

in the agreement on preventing smuggling into the Gaza Strip and on the legitimacy of action against rocket and launch sites and production facilities, and against the digging of new offensive tunnels in Gaza.

3. *Was the paradigm of maintaining Hamas as the sovereign correct?*

In Israel's defense and political community in recent years, a basic assumption has taken hold that keeping Hamas as the sovereign power in Gaza is an Israeli interest because Hamas serves as a responsible ruling power that can also be deterred. This assumption was strengthened by the relative quiet between Israel and Hamas following Operation Pillar of Defense, after Hamas effectively enforced its rule in the entire area while preventing Islamic Jihad, the Popular Resistance Committees, and other armed groups from carrying out operations against Israel. Israel was concerned that without Hamas, a political vacuum would be created in Gaza that would serve as fertile ground for even more dangerous activity or a failed state, as occurred in Somalia and Libya. This paradigm led to a limited, gradual, and ineffective use of force that was contrary to the principles of war and the important objective of shortening the duration of the conflict.

This problematic paradigm should have been examined for the following reasons: (a) Hamas, with the help of Iranian and Qatari support, has proven that it is a danger to Israel's security, and that it is capable of establishing a rocket and tunnel arsenal that posed a strategic threat to the State of Israel. The substitute for Hamas – a collection of organizations that would fight each other – lacks the ability to create strategic threats on the scale of those Hamas created for Israel. (b) Since the Syrian state disintegrated, similar concerns have arisen about the danger of a lack of a central government on Israel's northeastern border, but thus far, this threat has not materialized. The situation on the Israeli-Syrian border is relatively stable and the assessments about waves of jihadists coming to attack Israel have not materialized. (c) Since Hamas knows in advance that Israel will not allow it to fall, it operates and attacks Israel with a certain immunity, which weakens Israel's position both militarily and politically. (d) A greatly weakened Hamas is a condition for an arrangement advantageous to Israel and for the possibility of effectively bringing the PA back to Gaza. Only if Israel had struck Hamas while liberating itself from concern for the group's survival could Hamas have been sufficiently weakened to allow for a good political arrangement after the operation.

4. *How should victory be defined? What is the appropriate concept when “victory” and “defeat” appear less relevant?*

In the past, victory in a war was clear: conquest of enemy territory and destruction of the enemy’s army. In Operation Protective Edge, neither side achieved victory in this sense, yet both sides claimed victory at the end of the campaign. On the one hand, there is no doubt that Israel was victorious militarily and accomplished most of the modest objectives it had set for itself. Moreover, Israel denied Hamas achievements from the two strategic military capabilities it had built since Operation Pillar of Defense: long range rockets, which, thanks to the Iron Dome system, were of minimal effectiveness, and offensive tunnels, which were destroyed by the IDF. On the other hand, Hamas too has a victory narrative that is based on having successfully coped with the strongest army in the Middle East, fired rockets for 50 days at most of Israel’s territory, pushed the IDF back to the Gaza border, harmed Israel’s economy, caused the closure of Israel’s airport, and emptied Israeli communities near Gaza of most of their residents. Hamas also showed the Palestinian people that the armed resistance was not defeated, that it retained its weapons, and that its path is preferable to Fatah’s political path.

Victory in a contemporary hybrid battle is achieved largely on the level of perceived perceptions, and in order to amass accomplishments on this level, force should be used in ways that achieve the necessary effect even under the limitations of asymmetric conflict. Using force in a creative and surprising way, beyond the enemy’s expectations, while effectively incorporating diplomacy and skillfully leveraging the issue in the media can create an effect of victory even in the modern battlefield against a hybrid enemy that combines the low signature of a terrorist organization with state responsibility and a state configuration. An unequivocal military achievement creates conditions for accomplishing political objectives.

It is too early to judge who won in the political arena. This can be assessed only when we study the arrangement that has still not been concluded. And if no formal arrangement is reached, it can be judged by the actual arrangement: Will deterrence be achieved and will there be quiet? For how long? Will Hamas return to a military buildup? What will be the outcome of the campaign from the broader perspective of Israeli-Palestinian relations? How will it influence potential future arenas of combat as Israel’s international standing?

5. *Was it possible to formulate a “third strategy”?*

The public, media, and political discourse in Israel debated two strategies: whether the goal was to strive for a ceasefire in Gaza – the position taken by the Prime Minister and the Defense Minister – or aim to conquer Gaza and eradicate Hamas, which was the Foreign Minister’s position. What was missing from the discussion was the “third strategy”: dealing a stronger blow against Hamas, with an emphasis on its military wing and its military installations, while undermining its confidence and capabilities through an ongoing series of surprise ground and air operations that are different from what could have been expected from the IDF. The attack vectors used by the IDF during Protective Edge were similar to those used in the past, and were therefore predicted and prepared for by Hamas. More innovative methods might include (a) pinpoint ground operations in Hamas’ core areas by a special task force, but not with the aim of conquering the entire Gaza Strip. Such a ground operation could take place in a number of unexpected ways; (b) surgical strikes against the heads of Hamas in the early stages of the fighting; (c) special forces operations to harm or arrest heads of Hamas and damage the organization’s strategic capabilities. It was wrong to discuss the IDF’s ground capabilities in terms of “all or nothing,” while creative ways could have been sought to strike Hamas effectively and quickly. At the heart of the third strategy is a different goal, which includes a better arrangement for Israel, based on preventing Hamas from growing stronger in the future. Hamas should have been weakened in such a way that it left the Palestinian people no doubt that the organization’s strategy of violence will not be able to promote its political objectives.

6. *How can the important accomplishment of preventing regional escalation be preserved?*

It is very important to create a supportive regional environment for an Israeli operation against a semi-state terrorist organization. It is even more important for a military operation in Gaza or Lebanon not to escalate into a regional conflict with Egypt, Jordan, Syria, or Iran. From this perspective, Operation Protective Edge was managed well: for 50 days, Israel carried out operations in the air, on land, and at sea, and the conflict was well contained. There was no military escalation to another front and almost no international pressure, and the “legitimacy battery” was recharged steadily through Israel’s repeated responsiveness to ceasefire proposals. Israel had

never before conducted a campaign in which other countries in the region, particularly Egypt, saw eye-to-eye with it on its operations against Hamas and gave it their backing, openly and through covert channels.

At the same time, while the Arab world agreed that Hamas terrorists should be dealt a hard blow, it unequivocally condemned the harm to innocent civilians in Gaza. In addition, the support for Israel's actions was apparently contingent on its not launching a ground operation, which is a very sensitive issue in the Arab world. It was the obligation of the intelligence agencies, the top military echelon, and the political leadership to ask themselves during every day of fighting whether the campaign was still limited to one front and what should be done in order to prevent escalation to others.

7. *How should Hamas' military buildup and the "trickle" between rounds of fighting be handled?*

The original sin of the arrangements between Hamas and the international community after Operations Cast Lead and Pillar of Defense was that the issue of the Hamas arms buildup was not dealt with effectively. In addition, the response to the renewal of the trickle of fire from Gaza was not sufficiently strong. Therefore, Hamas rebuilt its capabilities, and after a short time started firing again at Israel. If Israel does not wish to find itself in another conflict with Hamas within one to two years, it should carefully study its past failure in preventing Hamas' military buildup and the laxity of its response to Hamas fire. Mechanisms should be found to allow Israel, through cooperation with Egypt and the international community, to enforce effective prevention of a military buildup in the Gaza Strip. It is clear that this objective will not be achieved through the indirect talks in Cairo on a political arrangement between Israel and Hamas. Therefore, Israel should reach an agreement with its main allies, with the possibility of passing a resolution in the UN Security Council that would preserve its freedom of action against a Hamas buildup by means of rockets, tunnels, or any other way.

It is also important to ensure that the reconstruction of Gaza does not serve as a cover for a renewed buildup by Hamas, and that dual-use materials are used for civilian purposes only. The leading strategy ought to be an easing of the economic and civilian blockade, concomitant with a tightening of the blockade against the military buildup. The idea of economic and civilian reconstruction of Gaza will also help to establish deterrence – to raise the price for Hamas of losing a future conflict. A status quo should be established

in which Hamas does not engage in a military buildup and in which force buildup and/or a trickle of fire from Gaza are considered unacceptable and give Israel maximum legitimacy for an operation whose goal is to establish effective deterrence and prevent Hamas from rebuilding its military power.

8. *How can unnecessary friction between Israel and its most important ally – the United States - be avoided?*

The United States is not only Israel's most important ally – sometimes it is its only ally. In Operation Protective Edge, Israel had unnecessary altercations with the United States. The frustration after the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations were suspended several weeks before the start of the conflict in Gaza, as well as the ongoing lack of trust between the administration in Washington and Jerusalem, required greater attention to the formulation of understandings and a common language about the events taking place. Washington unequivocally supported Israel's right to self-defense. Nonetheless, the United States, like the Arab world, could not accept the number of casualties of uninvolved citizens and remain indifferent to the media reports from Gaza. Instead of working to strengthen communication and understandings between the countries, some senior officials and even the political leadership in both countries gave negative briefings and provided problematic leaks that aggravated the situation. Therefore, in any future campaign in which Israel is involved, expectations, rules of conduct, channels for achieving political settlements, and the red lines of the two countries should be clarified, with close attention paid to the need to maintain the important bilateral strategic alliance.

9. *Are we learning the correct lessons for confronting Hizbollah, Syria, and Iran?*

Iron Dome's ability to seal Israel's skies almost hermetically must not be allowed to create the illusion that the home front will be protected to a similar extent from the threat in the north. Israel's other enemies have much more extensive and more accurate missiles and drones, with heavier warheads. Therefore, the difference in the threat must be understood and a different answer provided. In particular, the public's expectations must be adjusted in order to prevent serious damage to its morale and functioning when the level of the response is different from that in Protective Edge. While a response to the missile and rocket threat from the north and the east is

more complicated, it is certainly possible if correct preparations are made. An attempt by Hizbollah to conquer territory in the north would not be an intelligence surprise; the group's leaders have spoken about this publicly. But anyone expecting that the enemy will reach Israel only through tunnels must assume that the border with Lebanon allows overland passage in areas with dense vegetation, and that it will be easier for the enemy to reach Israel by this route than through the tunnels. The enemy has also studied the IAF's ability to cause enormous damage to thousands of targets, its impressive attack output, its ability to hit state infrastructures, its well protected, armor-shielded tanks, and its other advanced capabilities. Thus, even if deterrence in the north has been very strong since 2006, Hizbollah's ability to arm itself with advanced systems and attempt to neutralize the IDF's advantages requires in-depth thinking and the ability to keep one step ahead of it.

10. *How can the asymmetric strategic tie be broken?*

The concept of an asymmetric strategic tie was coined after the first two weeks of the campaign, during which the IDF was unable to impose a ceasefire on Hamas or achieve the modest goal set by the cabinet: quiet in exchange for quiet. Despite the number of targets struck and the intensity of the fire against Hamas assets in Gaza, it was clear that the attacks on Hamas did not achieve the desired effect. In particular, it was clear that the military wing of Hamas was not sufficiently harmed and that it wasn't been pressured enough by the public in Gaza to cease firing. On the other hand, Hamas had important propaganda achievements: it fired continuously at all ranges in the State of Israel; it forced millions of Israelis to run to shelters; it attacked IDF soldiers in assembly areas and in the guard tower on Kibbutz Nahal Oz; it dealt a heavy blow to the Israeli economy (estimated at 20 billion NIS); and it undermined the sense of security in the Gaza perimeter communities to the point that a large part of the population abandoned the area. Hamas also boasts that it succeeded standing up to the IDF for 50 days.

The heart of the solution to the asymmetric strategic tie is to free ourselves from the paradigm of maintaining Hamas as the party in charge, which compels us to limit the use of force. We should return to the use of force that contains innovative elements of surprise, stratagems, and maneuvers against important enemy centers of gravity. We must not return to the routine use of force seen in the last three rounds of fighting with Hamas. The challenge facing the top IDF echelon and the defense establishment

is to create the operational tools and plans that can go beyond the use of standoff firepower and achieve more meaningful strategic objectives than a conventional ceasefire and in a shorter time.

Conclusion

Hamas in the Gaza Strip is not a major threat to the State of Israel or its security. Iran on the nuclear threshold, with the ability to break out to a nuclear bomb, remains Israel's most serious threat. Hizbollah is the second most serious military threat, and Syria, despite the civil war, also poses a greater threat than Hamas. In the summer of 2014, the IDF faced the weakest of Israel's enemies. Nevertheless, the modest objectives of Operation Protective Edge took too long to achieve, which is contrary to Israel's security concept. The price paid in terms of the economy; the ongoing damage to front line communities; the danger of regional escalation; the fear of an operational error with strategic significance; and the harm to Israel's relations with the nations of the world all make it necessary to have a clearer victory and a shorter campaign. This is also true about understanding the need for "strategic patience," which is derived from the limitations on the use of force in an asymmetric environment.

In light of the hybrid threat, the security concept must be updated to address both a conflict limited to the Gaza Strip and an all-out war scenario. The next conflict with Hamas in Gaza could take place at the same time as a conflict in the north against Hizbollah and/or Syria and Iran. Israel cannot proclaim victory in Operation Protective Edge and thus neglect the necessary challenge of debriefing thoroughly and learning. The Iranian issue and the emerging "bad deal" between the world powers and Iran will also return to the headlines soon, ahead of the November 24, 2014 deadline for the talks. Israel must not be distracted by current events and must complete the lesson learning process. It is inconceivable that the State of Israel and the IDF would not have a more sophisticated, decisive response to the threat of terror from Gaza. Before the next conflict erupts, new tools, mechanisms, and doctrinal methods must be developed that will allow a shorter campaign and a more decisive victory. Only in this way will it be entirely clear that Israel has not settled for a strategic tie. Israel must aim for a military victory, even without the toppling of Hamas and the total conquest of Gaza, while scoring clear military gains and striking a severe blow against Hamas capabilities. This victory will enable the achievement of the political goals, led by preventing a

Hamas military buildup; postponing the next conflict for as long as possible by depriving the enemy of capabilities and influencing its intentions (achieving deterrence); and above all, eliciting a deep understanding on the part of the Palestinians that they will not achieve more through violence than they would through peaceful negotiations.

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