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The purpose of *Strategic Assessment* is to stimulate and enrich the public debate on issues that are, or should be, on Israel's national security agenda.

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The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)
40 Haim Levanon • POB 39950 • Tel Aviv 6997556 • Israel
Tel: +972-3-640-0400 • Fax: +972-3-744-7590 • E-mail: info@inss.org.il

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Abstracts

Russia in Syria and the Implications for Israel

Amos Yadlin

Ten months have passed since Russia surprised the world with its military intervention in Syria and its deployment of a substantial military force beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union. As such, enough time has elapsed since Russia launched its campaign to save the Assad regime to examine the campaign's successes and failures. This article analyzes the objectives of the Russian campaign and its military, diplomatic, and international aspects, discusses the balance of Russia's successes and failures, and considers Russia's relations with the actors involved in the fighting. Finally, it looks at the impact on Israel of the intensified Russian involvement in the Middle East.

Keywords: Syria, Russia, Israel, Middle East

Israel's Imagined Role in the Syrian Civil War

Tha'er al-Nashef and Ofir Winter

Despite its policy of non-intervention in the Syrian civil war, Israel, in contradictory and competing conspiracy theories rampant in Syrian political discourse, is presented as commanding a central role in the outbreak of the crisis, the course of its events, and its prolonged duration. This essay presents the popular conspiracy theories about Israel concocted by both the Assad regime and the opposition forces, analyzes their various political functions, and examines their ramifications. The damage they do is twofold: on the one hand, they twist the Syrians' perception of reality and impair their practical ability to cope with the crisis in their country; on the other hand, they make it difficult for Israel to take advantage of opportunities to strengthen ties with Syrian actors with whom Israel has common interests. The authors – a Syrian and an Israeli – propose some steps to help Syrians and Israelis challenge the conspiracy-based mindset and replace it with a new balanced and constructive perception of reality based on knowledge, dialogue, and encounter.

Keywords: Syria, Israel, Arab Spring, conspiracy theories, Assad regime, Islamic State

Will Russia and Iran Walk Hand in Hand?

Ephraim Kam

Since 2012 there has been a significant improvement in Russia-Iran relations, evidenced by meetings between senior figures, joint military activities in Syria, and plans for a substantive expansion of connections, including in weapons supply, nuclear facilities, and economic ties. This improvement reflects shared Russian and Iranian interests and the countries' need for one another. However, their shared interests have not yet led to an alliance, and their relations are marked by disagreements and distrust, resulting from their respective goals and global and regional considerations. For Israel, the warming of Russia-Iran relations has negative implications: Russia is willing to provide high quality weapons to Iran, some of which may reach Hezbollah; both countries will work to weaken American influence in the region; Iran is expected to strengthen its regional standing; and Iran may receive Russian help with nuclear matters. At the same time, there may be positive aspects for Israel: the improvement in relations could help stabilize the situation in Syria and weaken the jihadist organizations, and may enable Russia to serve as a moderating influence on Iran in the future.

Keywords: Russia, Iran, Syrian civil war, arms supply to Iran

Changes in Hezbollah's Identity and Fundamental Worldview

Roman Levi

At every point that it has faced a major crossroads, Hezbollah has chosen to close ranks with the Lebanese state. This process has consistently obligated the organization to temper the influence of the Islamic-Shiite agenda on its decision making, and encourage it to take instrumental, utilitarian, and calculated action to achieve its goals. In this way, Hezbollah has gradually consolidated its grip on the elements of internal power in Lebanon through the political system by means of rapid military and economic buildup. The switch to activity of a state-like character required a more responsible policy on the part of Hezbollah, due to the range of new considerations in its decision making process. In addition, Hezbollah was required to adapt quickly to new situations and exhibit flexibility in face of pressures leveled on it. Understanding how the organization has integrated into Lebanon is important for the overall understanding of Hezbollah's operations and an assessment of how this may alter the organization's future strategy.

Keywords: Hezbollah, Lebanon, Israel, Syria, Iran

No Magic Solution: The Effectiveness of Deporting Terrorists as a Counterterrorism Policy Measure

Adam Hoffman

Since the outbreak of the recent wave of Palestinian terrorism in Israel, several proposals have urged the government to deport terrorists and their families to the Gaza Strip. These proposals are not new, and the idea of deporting terrorists is not unique to Israel. Deportation of terrorists is regarded as a solution that distances the threat, thereby reducing the likelihood of terrorist attacks; damages the organizational infrastructure of the terrorist organizations; and deters others from committing terrorist acts. Past cases, however, show that in the long term, deporting terrorists is liable to have negative consequences and encourage terrorism – instead of reducing it. This article examines the impact of the expulsion of terrorists in two cases: the deportation of senior Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives to southern Lebanon in 1992, and the political exile of senior al-Qaeda leaders in the 1980s and 1990s. In light of these precedents, this article recommends against the deportation of terrorists, or calls on policymakers at least to take the negative consequences of this measure into account when considering this measure.

Keywords: deportation of terrorists, counterterrorism, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, al-Qaeda

A Troubling Correlation: The Ongoing Economic Deterioration in East Jerusalem and the Current Wave of Terror

Amit Efrati

This article examines the economic element at the root of the current wave of terror, positing a link between the socio-economic changes that have taken place in East Jerusalem neighborhoods since the security fence was constructed and the participation of the local populations in the cycle of violence. The negative economic consequences of the security fence, together with the poor educational infrastructure and limited employment opportunities of East Jerusalem neighborhoods, block any possibility of educational, occupational, or personal development among the population. Both the sense of frustration and the ongoing neglect caused by these impediments have penetrated the mindset of the local youth, who feel that in the current reality they have "nothing left to lose." Addressing this issue constructively requires substantive improvements in the educational and

employment infrastructure in these neighborhoods. Such changes will be able to instill some hope in the population that local residents will have the opportunity to make a respectable living. This in turn creates a significant cost for participation in the cycle of violence.

Keywords: Israel, Palestinians, East Jerusalem, economic condition, economics and peace

Troubles in Paradise: The New Arab Leadership in Israel and the Challenges of the Hour

Doron Matza, Meir Elran, and Mohammed Abo Nasra

This article analyzes the changes in the political leadership of Israel's Arab minority since the establishment of the Joint List in advance of the March 2015 elections. The essay deals with the change that emerged in the Arab leadership's strategy as it adopted a social action approach, which corresponds with the dominance captured by social issues in the protests in Israel in the summer of 2011 and elsewhere in the world. In addition, the article examines new difficulties confronting the Joint List since the outbreak of Palestinian violence in the fall of 2015, which brought the heated debate between Israel's Jews and Palestinians back to center stage. Yet notwithstanding this development, the changes in the Arab leadership represent a basic trend in Israel's Arab society that can serve as a meaningful opportunity for the Israeli government to promote stability and prosperity in the Arab sector. MK Ayman Odeh's policy and conduct can encourage restraint of the extremist discourse between Israel's Jewish majority and Arab minority; reduce the civil gaps between the sectors; and promote the integration of the Arab population into the Israeli state.

Keywords: Joint List, Arabs in Israel, Ayman Odeh, Arab minority integration, Islamic Movement, Hadash: Democratic Front for Peace and Equality

Selective Engagement: China's Middle East Policy after the Arab Spring

Wang Jin

Following three decades of economic reconstruction, when in late 1978 a "reform and opening up" policy was adopted by the Chinese Communist Party, China spared no efforts in developing relations with Middle East states and establishing a prominent economic presence in the region. With

the growing significance of the Middle East for China, especially given the country's spiraling energy needs, China's approach to the Middle East is prudent and pragmatic. This paper argues that China's Middle East policy since the Arab Spring can be cast as "selective engagement" with specific states and areas, driven by three dimensions. The first dimension is China's need for a stable Middle East, in order to secure the requisite energy supply for its economic development. The second dimension is China's concern that the Arab Spring could influence, if not undermine, the legitimacy of its own government. The third dimension is China's fear of the expansion of terrorism and Islamic extremism, which may provoke the Muslim minority inside China, especially in the Xinjiang Uyghur region. However, China's "selective engagement" policy in the Middle East may be challenged by the emerging Sunni-Shiite rivalries and the Chinese leadership's future ambitions.

Keywords: China, Middle East, Arab Spring, Chinese Communist Party

China and Turkey: Closer Relations Mixed with Suspicion

Galia Lavi and Gallia Lindenstrauss

This article explores the factors that influence relations between China and Turkey. The article cites political and security considerations, disputes concerning the situation of the Uyghur minority in China (a minority of Turkic origin), and economic aspects as playing a key role in the inter-state dynamics. It argues that together with the warming of relations between the countries, beginning in the 1990s and reaching new heights in the twenty-first century, obstacles and suspicion still stand in the way of a more substantial relationship between the two countries. At the same time, the growing Chinese interest in investments in both Israel and Turkey, particularly in transportation, could contain potential for regional cooperation that includes significant roles for Israel and Turkey.

Keywords: China, Turkey, Uyghurs, NATO, Silk Road

Israel and the International Criminal Court: A Legal Battlefield

Bar Levy and Shir Rozenzweig

The International Criminal Court (ICC), seated in The Hague in the Netherlands, was established by virtue of the 1998 Rome Statute and began functioning in 2002. Its purpose is to prosecute individuals suspected of

having committed war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, and in the future, crimes of aggression. Despite its initial support for the idea of the court, Israel harbored concerns that the ICC would serve as an instrument of lawfare that could be used against it. Thus, when an article was inserted into the Rome Statute defining a transfer of the population of an occupying nation to occupied territory as a war crime, even in the absence of force, and thus liable to incriminate Israelis settling in the West Bank, Israel decided not to ratify the statute or become a member of the ICC. But when legal warfare is just as important as war on the physical battlefield, it is critical to know the rulebook even if one refuses to be a player. It is therefore important to be familiar with the ICC and its activities and understand its potential as a key element in the realm of legal warfare between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Keywords: Israel, ICC, international law, Palestinian Authority

Israel's Second War Doctrine

Ron Tira

On the shelves of the Israeli defense establishment lie many documents defining Israel's defense concept and painting a relatively clear and consistent picture of the IDF's strategy and doctrine – although two recent documents, the National Security Council's draft defense concept and "IDF Strategy," which is signed by the IDF Chief of Staff, indicate a new trend. Perhaps the recent documents bespeak the awareness that in its last six major campaigns, the IDF has operated repeatedly according to patterns that were inconsistent with the written defense concept at that time. Indeed, there is a broad common denominator between Operation Accountability (1993), Operation Grapes of Wrath (1996), the Second Lebanon War (2006), Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Operation Pillar of Defense (2012), and Operation Protective Edge (2014). This article will probe the second, unwritten Israeli doctrine that was applied in practice in these six campaigns.

Keywords: IDF, defense concept, doctrine, strategy

Russia in Syria and the Implications for Israel

Amos Yadlin

> The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch and do nothing.
> Albert Einstein

Russia's direct military involvement in Syria in the latter months of 2015 and initial months of 2016 was a demonstration that military force can "make all the difference," and was further proof that strategic wisdom is best reflected in a correct combination of military power and political process. The Russian military campaign in Syria during the autumn of 2015 saved the Assad regime from downfall, changed the balance of power in Syria, and leveraged the dynamics in order to pursue a ceasefire and diplomatic talks. To be sure, Russia's involvement in Syria did not begin in the final days of September 2015, when President Vladimir Putin announced that he was reinforcing his military presence in Syria at the invitation of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, to assist "the legitimate regime" in the country. This involvement, likewise, did not end in mid-March 2016, when Putin announced the end of the campaign and a partial withdrawal of Russian troops from Syria. Russia's involvement in Syria has gone on for decades, since Hafez al-Assad headed the government, and it continued through the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the leadership changes in both countries. Russia maintained its hold in Syria thanks to weapons deals, the expansion of Russian military bases in Syria, and the presence of military advisors and representatives of intelligence agencies – as well as Russia's forgiveness of the Syrian debt to the Soviet Union. Russia viewed Syria as its last stable and reliable strategic stronghold in the Middle East after it had lost its traditional allies – Egypt, and subsequently, Iraq and Libya.

Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin is the Executive Director of INSS.

Under Putin's leadership, Russia, taking calculated risks, took advantage of the global weakness of the United States over the last decade and acted to promote its vital interests in Europe and the Middle East and to reposition itself as a world power. Russia began its involvement in the civil war in Syria with the eruption of the fighting, inserting Russian advisors among Syrian combat forces from the beginning. More important, Russia wielded its political weight in the international arena, and exercised its veto power to block possibilities for action against the Assad regime and condemnations by international organizations. In addition, Russia played a key role in achieving the agreement for disarming the Assad regime of chemical weapons. These measures served as a catalyst for Russia's becoming a "veto player" on Syria, whereby Russia's consent was necessary for every proposed solution.

In late September 2015, approximately one week before Russia's announcement of its plan to increase involvement in Syria, *Jane's* reported that Russia had already deployed special units within Syrian territory in months prior.[1] SVR (foreign intelligence) units were deployed to protect Russian assets in the event of the collapse of Assad's regime, and GRU (military intelligence) units were flown in to work with Syrian security personnel. Already by the summer of 2015, Russian UAVs were flying over Syrian air space, and in early September 2015, Russia even admitted that the airport in Latakia and the adjoining base had been expanded to accommodate Russian forces. Not long after, heavy Russian military cargo planes landed at the airport, and hundreds of soldiers were sent to secure the base and prepare it for the arrival of Su-24 Fencer attack aircraft, Su-25 Frogfoot strike aircraft, Su-30 Flanker multirole fighter aircraft, and numerous Ka-52 helicopters. In a telephone conversation on September 18, 2015, less than two weeks before Russia's announcement of its military involvement in Syria, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu assured US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter that Russia's actions were entirely defensive in nature.

Russia's assurance was not fully reliable, and on September 30, 2015, in a surprise move, President Vladimir Putin announced that Russian military forces were invited by the legitimate regime in Syria to assist it in fighting "terrorists." Considering Russia's deep involvement in the civil war, both prior to the public announcement and its subsequent involvement, it is evident that Russia does not see itself as an invading force; as far as it is concerned, Russia is part of the sole legitimate external force involved in

the fighting in Syria. From the Russians' perspective, they reinforced their forces pursuant to an official invitation from the Syrian government, and after having received the approval of the Russian parliament.

The Objectives of Russian Intervention

Notwithstanding Putin's unequivocal announcement that the purpose of Russia's military intervention was to fight extremist Islamic terrorist groups – contrary to the prevailing view that the Russians came to save Assad's regime – upon examining the map of the Russian attacks, it appears that battling the Islamic State was a low priority, particularly during the initial stages of the campaign. The Russians had more important objectives in their involvement in the fighting.

It appears that the primary objective behind the increased Russian involvement in Syria was to reposition Russia as a world power. To Putin, Russia's VIP seat at the global game was upset by the West upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, perceived as the greatest catastrophe of the twentieth century.[2] For Moscow, Russia's involvement in the Middle East arena served first and foremost to restore Russia to its proper standing in the world. Through its focused and determined intervention in Syria, Russia demonstrated that it is a key player whose involvement is essential to the resolution of international issues. The West, which for more than four years had failed to resolve a steadily exacerbating problem in Syria, was now forced to consider the Russian positions even more carefully, and to involve Moscow in resolving the crisis.

The second objective of Russia's involvement was to leverage the Syrian issue in order to resolve problems in other arenas important to it, mainly Europe in general and Ukraine in particular. Russian involvement in Syria was intended to apply pressure on the West to remove the sanctions imposed by the United States and Europe following the Russian operations in Ukraine. In the meantime, Russia is presumably open to an agreement with the West that on the one hand will guarantee continued Russian influence in Ukraine and provide legitimacy for its annexation of Crimea, while on the other hand, will compel the Russians to assist in promoting the West's demands in a future arrangement in Syria. One possible accord of this type is Russian involvement in the formation of a government in Syria

> Russia does not see itself as an invading force: as far as it is concerned, Russia is part of the sole legitimate external force involved in the fighting in Syria.

that will incorporate the interests of all actors involved. Such a deal would guarantee the security of the Alawite minority and its role in a future Syrian government, but at the same time, accept the position of the West and the opposition that removing Assad is a key to success in fighting the Islamic State. In other words, Moscow brought Assad to the negotiating table as a means to build a world order that better serves the interests of the Russians.

The third objective stemmed from Putin's domestic considerations. War allows him to divert public attention from the grave economic and social problems plaguing Russia: economic recession due to plummeting oil prices and international sanctions, tensions between Russians and ethnic minorities, and tensions between the middle class and the lower class and the Russian rural population. When the army is engaged in battle, patriotic sentiments increase among the population, which helps boost national pride. A survey published in early April 2016[3] showed that 58 percent of Russian citizens believed that the objective of the Russian air force missions in Syria was to protect Russia from Islamic terrorism; 27 percent believed that the Russian involvement prevented a "color revolution" in Syria (similar to that in Ukraine) provoked by the United States. Significantly, 69 percent thought that the Russian air force had already achieved its objectives, and 81 percent supported the announcement of the partial Russian withdrawal from Syria.[4] It appears that when it comes to Russia's internal perceptions, Moscow's image of success is unequivocal.

The fourth objective behind the Russian involvement was to save a friendly regime on the brink of collapse through the application of military and political pressure. The Russians and the Syrians have a long history of cooperation, and Russia has strategic interests in Syria: a port in the Mediterranean Sea, influence in the Arab world, a market for weapons sales, and physical access to the borders of other key countries in the Middle East, including Turkey, Iraq, and Israel. Its strategy for saving Assad's regime focused on crippling the relatively moderate opposition in order to present the Assad regime as the only viable alternative to the Islamic State.

The fifth objective was to present Russia as a reliable and loyal ally. Operations in Syria sent a clear message to Russia's allies and to other countries in the world that unlike the United States, given the way it conducted itself vis-à-vis Mubarak in Egypt, and vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Turkey, and Israel, Russia indeed supports its allies.

Finally, Russia sought to fight the radical Sunni jihadists. Russia is concerned that the absence of a solution to a local problem in the Middle

East is liable to mushroom and reach Russia in the form of another wave of terrorist attacks inside Russia itself. Indeed, Russian is the third most spoken language in the so-called Islamic State caliphate, and Russians make up a disproportionate share of the Islamic State high command.[5] Therefore, from Russia's perspective, intervening on foreign soil at a relatively low cost could prevent the problem of Islamic terrorist attacks expanding to a bloodbath inside Russia itself.

The Military Campaign

Of the thousands of Russian soldiers participating in the campaign in Syria, some were combat soldiers, but most were maintenance and service personnel stationed at the navy base in Tartus and the air force base in Khmeimim, in northern Syria.[6] Scores of aircraft (including Tu-22, Tu-95, Tu-160, Su-30, Su-35, Su-24, and Su-25), helicopters (Ka-52, Mi-28, and Mi-35), and UAVs participated in the campaign. The Russian naval forces participating in the fighting included frigates, corvettes, battle cruisers, and even a submarine. Espionage measures deployed during the campaign included naval units (a Meridian intelligence ship for collecting signals intelligence and communications intelligence), air units (Tu-214R and Il-20M1 aircraft), and ground units (advanced radar systems, deployed electronic warfare systems, and special forces). The Russians also launched rockets, missiles, and modern Kalibr cruise missiles, and deployed advanced air defense systems (naval versions of the S-300 missile and S-400 missiles).

As of the spring of 2016, the cost of the campaign to Russia was $500-600 million.[7] At the peak of the Russian onslaught, dozens of aerial attacks were launched per day, and in total, more than 9,000 aerial sorties were carried out. Among Russia's achievements were a significant reduction in territory held by the rebels and damage to infrastructures and to the energy industry, thereby reducing the rebels' revenues from oil and oil byproducts. According to announcements by the Soviet Observatory for Human Rights, between September and the March announcement of Russia's withdrawal, approximately 4,500 people were killed during the Russian attacks; of these fatalities, more than 1,700 were civilians and about 200 were children. At the time of the announcement of the reduction of the Russian forces, Defense Minister Shoigu announced that the Russian forces had "eliminated" more than 2,000 fighters of Russian origin aligned with terrorist groups, including 17 field commanders.[8]

For its part, Russia did not regularly report on casualties, but it is known that about ten Russian soldiers were killed. The most significant combat casualty was the pilot of the plane shot down by the Turkish army who was then killed by rebel forces in northern Syria after ejecting from the plane. In addition, there was a report of two Russian casualties among soldiers fighting as mercenaries, although they may have belonged to one of the secret Russian units fighting in Syria for some time. Two additional Russian casualties occurred when on April 11, 2016 an attack helicopter crashed due to a technical malfunction.[9] The latest Russian fatalities occurred on July 9, 2016 near Palmyra, when a Mi-25 helicopter was downed by the rebels, and its two pilots were killed.[10]

Compared to modern aerial campaigns over the last decade (in Gaza, Yemen, the campaign by the West against the Islamic State) the Russians can label their air campaign a success. The Russians understood the importance of a critical mass of attacks based on high quality intelligence, and allowed themselves to operate under open-fire rules free of considerations of collateral damage and possible civilian casualties. Yet while an air campaign can change the course of a war, achieving all of the targeted aims requires synergies with ground forces. The Russian air effort was accompanied by coordinated ground attacks of loyalists of the Syrian regime, Iranian forces, Shiite militias, and Hezbollah. The Russians established an effective defensive cover against ground attacks on their key facilities – the navy base in Tartus and the air base in Latakia. Russia denied reports[11] of the destruction of some of its aircraft and equipment at the Tias air base on the outskirts of Homs. Ultimately, the Russian air campaign turned the tide in the fighting and led to several ceasefires and to a political process under conditions that the opposition had not agreed to prior to the air strikes. The low number of known casualties and the fact that not one Russian pilot was captured alive by the rebels enabled Moscow to preserve the Russian population's favorable perception of the campaign. The price paid for the downed passenger plane in Sinai was not associated directly with the fighting in Syria, and the Russians presented it more as justification for military intervention and not as a price incurred by the intervention.

While an air campaign can change the course of a war, achieving all the targeted aims requires synergies with ground forces. The Russian air effort was accompanied by coordinated ground attacks of the regime loyalists, Iranian forces, Shiite militias, and Hezbollah.

Achievements and Failures during the Campaign

Following months of Russian fighting, an examination of what was achieved by the Russian intervention is warranted. First, Russia's aggressive action clearly positions it as a key element in Syria's future, dictating both the military and political developments in the arena. In the global theater, the Russians have returned to center stage and repositioned themselves as an important force in international politics that can contribute to the resolution of serious disputes around the world. Putin even said that Russia's efforts in combating international terrorism have helped Russia improve its relations with the leading world powers.[12] Second, the format of the Russian operations, which combined military and diplomatic measures, proved that a correct use of military force can be an effective tool for jumpstarting stalled political processes. Third, the Russians saved the Alawite regime from losing its seat, and thereby sent a message to both current and potential allies that they are a reliable partner that comes to the rescue in times of need. Furthermore, by expressing their willingness to compromise on President Assad's future but not on the regime, the Russians have signaled to the other players that they are ready to compromise in exchange for Western compromises on other matters.

The Russian announcement of a "withdrawal" lowered Assad's aspirations, although this announcement followed a number of impressive victories by Assad's forces on the ground with Russian and Shiite support, and the Syrian President's hardening of his positions in negotiations with the Syrian opposition forces. Nevertheless, by leaving military forces in Syria, the Russians have made it clear that they have the power to deter any future escalation by rebel forces. The Russians constitute a force that promotes an arrangement based on a balance of power and on the understanding that no side is strong enough to overcome the others on the battlefield.

In the military dimension, the Russians have proven that their army has modernized and has very good operational and technological capabilities. State-of-the art Russian artillery and weapon systems were tested and used under real conditions for the first time. The demonstration of a wide array of Russian weapons platforms will serve as sales promotions for the Russian military industries that employ millions of citizens and could, in the future, serve as a lucrative source of foreign currency from future arms deals. Furthermore, the Russian army acquired critical combat experience. Finally, after years of erosion of its stature, Russia strengthened its position

as a powerful country with significant military strength, and it did so at a time when tensions were rising between Russia and its neighbors in the European Union and NATO.

Alongside the many achievements, there are areas in which the Russians failed to achieve their strategic objectives. First and foremost, the Russian efforts did not lead to a solution or to stability: the ceasefire is partial, and the fighting continues to claim casualties (including many hundreds of civilian deaths since the ceasefire was announced). The humanitarian assistance to hundreds of thousands of Syrians is blocked and the assistance that manages to get through is mostly pillaged by the Syrian military forces. On the strategic level, the majority of the Russian achievements during the civil war in Syria are short term, psychological victories. The Russian fighting has decisively contributed to the destruction of Syria and its infrastructure. It is difficult to overstate the scope of the effort and resources that will be required to rehabilitate Syria at the end of the war. Furthermore, Russia significantly contributed to the increased number of Syrian refugees and displaced peoples, human resources that are critical for rehabilitating Syria in any future solution.

Mission Accomplished?

After the Russians changed the course of the fighting in Syria, restored their status as a world power, demonstrated that their importance in the Middle East is not inferior to that of the United States, and conducted field trials of their new weapon systems, they moved to the next step. Again they surprised the international community in March 2016 with the announcement of a partial withdrawal of their troops from Syria, effective immediately (in the same fashion as when they announced their increased involvement in Syria six months earlier). Putin decided that he had reached maximum achievement, and that additional risks and costs in the campaign could jeopardize these achievements. Yet notwithstanding the announcement of the withdrawal of the Russian forces from Syria, it appears that what is taking place is more of a rotation and adjustment of forces in accordance with the changing nature of the fighting than an end to the Russian operations in Syria. Up to one third[13] of the aircraft stationed in Syria returned to Russian soil and were welcomed home with much fanfare; these were replaced with attack helicopters that are more compatible for supporting ground combat (Ka-52, Mi-28, and Mi-35 helicopters). The helicopters were deployed in bases closer to the battlefront, in order to maximize their

combat time and shorten the travel time to provide air support to ground forces.[14] Furthermore, Russian forces are assisting the Syrian army and the coalition forces fighting alongside it on the ground. Russian forces helped regain control over the city of Palmyra,[15] and Russian engineering forces were even photographed clearing the area of landmines[16] and explosive devices left on site by the retreating Islamic State forces.

The Russian media reported that Russia would be retaining two battalions (about 800 soldiers), as well as its S-400 air defense system on Syrian soil, in order to protect the Russian missions.[17] Besides this, there were reports that Russian ships passing through the Bosphorus Straits on their way to Syria were more heavily laden en route to Syria than on their way home.[18] Statements made by Russian senior officials reinforced this point concerning the future of the Russian forces in Syria, both in relation to security forces and attack forces, and even to their continued deployment. In the meantime, commander of the Russian military Sergei Ivanov said in March that Russia would take action to secure the safety of its soldiers remaining in Syria. Deputy Defense Minister Pankov elaborated and said that Russian forces will proceed with their attacks against terrorist targets. In an interview with *Time* magazine, Prime Minister Medvedev said that Russia does not intend to stop its campaign until Russia's allies in Damascus are able to keep the peace under "adequate conditions."

The move to end its military intervention was not criticized on the Russian street, and retaining its forces in Syria ensures Russia's continued influence over what happens in Syria and avoids a situation whereby the fighting might again change direction. A partial withdrawal of forces sends a clear message to Assad that Russia will not remain in Syria for a prolonged period in the current circumstances, and that it has no intention of fighting the Alawite ruler's war indefinitely, and not even until there is a decisive victory on the battlefield. The purpose of this clear statement about the limits of the Russian intervention, and even concerning the campaign's objectives, were to soften Assad in preparation for the talks with the rebels and to "encourage" him to compromise concerning Syria's future.

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Russia and the Sunni world

Moscow's alliance with Iran and Hezbollah in its assistance to the Assad regime, all of which led to the reinforcement of the Shiite axis, could have been expected to damage Russia's relations with the Arab-Sunni world. However, using the whole spectrum of positive and negative foreign policy tools at its disposal vis-à-vis the regional powers in the Middle East, Russia maneuvered very skillfully around many Sunni countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey. While Russia and Saudi Arabia are positioned at opposite sides of the divide on the subject of Assad's future and relations with Iran, both countries share interests on energy, export of weapon systems, and the additional support from world powers that the Saudis seek, as their trust in the US has declined. In this context, it is worth mentioning the Saudi Defense Minister's visits to Russia and his close relations with the Russian leadership, the attempt to lead a multi-party energy agreement to freeze oil output, and even the possibility of future cooperation between Russia and Saudi Arabia on civilian nuclear power. In the Egyptian context, the warming of relations between Russia and Egypt includes civil nuclear power deals, as well as major arms deals.

While Russia attempted to warm relations with Saudi Arabia, Turkey found itself in direct confrontation with Moscow. Turkey's downing of a Russian Su-24 aircraft in November 2015 near the Syria-Turkey border exacerbated the widening schism between Moscow and Ankara. The incident, which the Russians perceived as intentional provocation by Ankara, triggered an aggressive and rapid response by Russia. Moscow intensified its measures against Turkey, particularly on the economic front, and the cost of the Russian measures against Turkey to date in terms of agriculture, tourism, and energy is estimated at more than $10 billion. In various public statements, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov intensified his rhetoric against Turkey, with accusations of the Turkish army crossing into Syrian territory, Turkish bombings of civilian areas beyond the border, the building of security buffer zones south of Turkey, and foreign fighters crossing through Syrian's northern border.

Using the whole spectrum of positive and negative foreign policy tools at its disposal vis-à-vis the regional powers in the Middle East, Russia maneuvered very skillfully around many Sunni countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey.

The downing of the Russian aircraft pushed the Russians to strengthen their ties with Kurdish groups in Syria. Since November, Russia has

supported Kurdish forces in order to advance its own objectives, provoke Turkey, and weaken Turkey's influence over the future arrangement in Syria. In the meantime, Lavrov has stated frequently that the inclusion of the Kurds in talks about the future of Syria is essential to a stable future for Syria, and he urged the UN not to capitulate to "foreign dictates" (of Turkey) regarding the inclusion of Kurdish representatives in the talks. Kremlin Press Secretary Dmitri Peskov sharpened this point when he said, "These negotiations should be only inclusive...including Kurds, to find a really lasting solution...and to enable Syrians themselves to decide their destiny."[19]

It appears that Russia's pressure on Turkey was successful. Over time, relations between the two countries have warmed, and attempts were made to alleviate tensions. The Russian media reported that Turkey's President Erdogan sent a letter of apology for the incident, and the Russians sent an official invitation to the Turkish Foreign Minister to participate in a meeting of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization in Sochi, an invitation that was accepted. A few days later, the leaders of both countries spoke directly.[20]

In summary, Russia's use of the gamut of positive tools (both hard, e.g., weapons deals, and soft, e.g., strengthened diplomatic relations), as well as negative tools (such as economic and political pressure) pushed Middle East countries in Moscow's direction. Thus, it seems that Russia is on a path that leads to a favorable development in its relations with all key countries in the Middle East and mitigates the damage caused by its image as an ally of Iran and a friend of the Assad regime.

Russia versus the United States and the West

The United States and Europe condemned Russia at the outset of its military intervention, and President Obama predicted that Moscow would soon become mired in Syria. After the Russians' tactical success and the understanding that they were achieving their objectives, however, at least in the short term, the Americans attempted to leverage Russian success to promote their objectives against the Islamic State and reach an arrangement that would end the civil war and the human tragedy in Syria. Effective ground and air coordination was achieved and talks began at the level of foreign ministers, during which it became clear that the resolution of the civil war in Syria might be within reach.

Nevertheless, the gap between the world powers is still wide. The United States has left the Ukraine-related sanctions on Russia in place, even after the countries drew closer on the subject of Syria (Europe is expected to extend its sanctions soon), and the bilateral dialogue is faltering. Nevertheless, Russia is trying to show that it is seeking a diplomatic point of departure, and is attempting to work according to agreements with the United States. The Russian media reports regularly that Foreign Minister Lavrov is in contact with his American counterpart, and that they announced initiatives for joint ground operations between Russian forces and American forces in Syria.[21]

What Lies Ahead?

The complexity of the conflict in Syria is evident from the fact that parallel, complex processes are underway with a problematic counter-impact: on the one hand, a ceasefire is ostensibly in place; on the other hand, the fighting against the Islamic State and the Nusra Front persists; concurrently, the attempt to arrive at a political arrangement through multi-player political negotiations continues, albeit sluggishly and without reciprocal trust. Complicating the situation even further, the Kurds continue their struggle for autonomy; Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia are involved in a dispute over direct and indirect intervention, and so are the world powers. Against this background, it is necessary to analyze how the events in Syria are developing, while identifying the difficulties in arriving at an end to the civil war and an arrangement that would facilitate the country's rehabilitation.

The primary problem with the ceasefire is that the Islamic State and the Nusra Front are not part of the agreement, and therefore the war against them continues. The fact that the demarcation between ceasefire zones and areas where the fighting continues is blurred enables the Syrian regime, Iran, and Russia to continue fighting, causing many casualties among civilians and among the opposition forces included in the ceasefire.[22]

At the peace talks in Geneva, the Assad regime's increased self-confidence due to the achievements of the campaign led by Russia clashes with the opposition's demand to remove Assad from office. The regime's continued attacks on opposition forces included in the ceasefire pose a significant obstacle to any progress in the talks. Furthermore, among the unresolved topics are fundamental disagreements on who should participate in the talks and the future of Assad and the Baath regime. While all countries agree that the Islamic State should not be included as a party to the talks, other opposition forces are still in contention, for example, the Syrian

Kurdish forces. Both the United States and Russia support the Kurdish forces fighting the Islamic State and urge their inclusion in the peace talks. Turkey, however, which has a complicated history with the Kurdish minority within its borders and with the Kurds in Syria and Iraq, does not want to see the Kurds taking a legitimate part in designing Syria's future.

Another disputed point is the territorial and governmental structure of post-war Syria. In February 2016, the Russians were vehemently opposed to the division of Syria and were proponents of a united Syria in its current borders as a precondition of any future solution, and did not agree to comment publicly on the nature of a future arrangement. Subsequently, the Russians appeared inclined to accept the federalization of Syria as a future solution. Nevertheless, senior Russian officials reiterate that Russia will support any agreement that the warring parties achieve in Syria. They have thus prepared the ground for a solution that retains a regime that is friendly to them, but could include Assad's removal from office as a concession to United States demands.

Even if it appears that all the powers in play are interested in the ceasefire and in promoting a political process to narrow the gaps between them, the ongoing attacks by the Syrian regime and its allies against moderate factions will likely ultimately lead to the collapse of both the ceasefire and the peace talks in Geneva. In the meantime, the representative of the moderate rebels, Mohammed Alloush,[23] announced he was resigning from the talks, due – in his view – to their failure.[24]

As for the Islamic State, all of the powers continue to fight against this organization. While Russia has reduced its aerial presence, the United States has deployed its heavy B-52 bombers to the region[25] and reinforced the presence of its special forces stationed in the region, in parallel to continued air strikes and the re-conquest of rebel-held areas by the Syrian army and its allies. Furthermore, the Islamic State finds itself contending with steadily growing military, governance-related, and economic difficulties that are hurting the organization, arresting its progress, and even causing it to retreat. Nevertheless, and despite the announcements of the forces fighting against

> Israel can leverage the relationship forged with Russia to encourage Russian restraint of Hezbollah. In addition, Israel must do more to halt the genocide in Syria through humanitarian and, if necessary offensive, measures, in conjunction with pragmatic Arab and Muslim countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan.

them, the Islamic State understands that the West and even Russia are not ready to send ground forces against them, and even leading Sunni regimes such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia are not rushing to send in ground forces to liberate the Islamic State's Syrian capital, al-Raqqah. The Islamic State is attempting to cope with its failures in Syria and Iraq by executing brazen terrorist attacks in Europe and by shifting a significant portion of its operations to Libya. President Obama's announcement that the Islamic State will not be defeated during the remaining months of his presidency,[26] and his adamant position that American soldiers would not be sent to Syria, gives the Islamic State some breathing room.

The future of Assad's regime remains a central issue in three spheres – inside Syria, inside the Middle East, where Iran and the Hezbollah are contending with Saudi Arabia and Turkey, and between world powers, in the disagreements between Russia and the United States. Only if Russia decides that the time has come to remove Assad from office (in favor of an arrangement with the opposition or in return for allowances on Ukraine from the West), while safeguarding the Alawites and the country's systems – and only if it receives Iran's consent to this arrangement – will there be some chance of ending the civil war. In this instance, two main issues would still remain – the battle against the Islamic State, and the Kurdish issue. The fact that the United States and Russia have shared interests on these two issues offers hope that if the problem of removing Assad from office is resolved, then the road to a solution will be simpler.

Advancing Israeli Interests

Throughout the civil war in Syria, Israel has made an effort to remain outside of the fighting as much as possible. Officially, Israel abstained from supporting any of the sides, and did not even express an opinion about its preferred solution. Israel's policy in the field was limited to retaliatory fire at sources of fire from Syria, humanitarian assistance, and the denial of Hezbollah's efforts to strengthen its arsenal with sophisticated weapons.

Upon the increase in Russian involvement and its shift to direct air sorties, Israel conducted itself with extreme caution, was careful to avoid any Russian fighter planes, and took into account the Russians' firepower and their sophisticated air defense systems. During his visit to Russia, Prime Minister Netanyahu, accompanied by the IDF Chief of Staff, laid a foundation for a tactical deconfliction mechanism, the clarification of both countries' red lines, and perhaps even the beginning of strategic

understandings about the future of Syria. For their part, the Russians have stated openly that they have a deep understanding of Israeli interests in Syria and that Russia's future actions in Syria will not jeopardize Israel's security.

The Russian intervention in Syria had a number of favorable consequences for Israel. First, Russia contributed to the stabilization of the situation in Syria and to a possible future arrangement in the country. Israel, in the interest of prudence, prefers to preserve stability and a clear demarcation of its borders. Russia can serve as a mediator between Israel and the Shiite camp if necessary, and could even constitute a source of pressure on this camp if Israel succeeds in convincing the Russians of the advantages of restraint. Second, the coordination with Russia demonstrated Israel's standing as a reliable and stable element in the region. Third, the tactical understandings with Russia are an excellent foundation for building a relationship at the strategic level between the countries. And finally, it appears that Russia's involvement and the strengthening of the Shiite camp have indirectly contributed to increased cooperation between Israel and Sunni countries in the region, led by Saudi Arabia.

On the other hand, the Russian course of action could potentially have very negative strategic implications for Israel. The Russian intervention led to the strengthening of the radical Shiite axis, with its problematic positioning close to Israel's borders. The strengthening of the Iran-Hezbollah-Syria axis, its return to being a dominant force in Syria, its acquisition of sophisticated, high quality equipment, high quality intelligence about Israel at the disposal of the axis, and the improvement in Hezbollah's fighting capabilities could jeopardize Israel's security in the future. The increased presence of Iran and Hezbollah in the Golan Heights is a negative strategic development for Israel.

Furthermore, the Russian involvement in the war introduced advanced weapon systems into the arena. At least some of them will likely remain inside Syria after the fighting, and will join the weapon systems directed against Israel. In addition, it appears that the Russians' training exercises, doctrines, and operational experience reached not only the Syrian army, but also other forces fighting alongside Assad, including Hezbollah. And thus, Hezbollah has succeeded in upgrading its command and control capabilities, its ability to operate forces on a more substantial scale than it could previously, and its offensive capabilities (as opposed to its historic defensive stance against Israel). Sophisticated war materiel acquired by

Hezbollah, along with the combat experience that the Shiite organization acquired, increases the dangers that Israel can expect to encounter during the next round of fighting on the northern front.

Against this backdrop, what should Israel do to improve its strategic stance? First, the strategic relationship forged with Russia must be cultivated, and it is imperative that Russia recognize Israel's map of interests and red lines in the Syrian and Lebanese contexts. As it contributes to the design of Syria's future, Russia must take into account Israel's position on the subject of the Golan Heights, preventing Hezbollah from opening an additional front in southern Syria and limiting Iranian influence in Syria. Second, Israel must emphasize that it will continue to take military action when its interests are threatened, mainly on the issues of transfer of high quality weapons to Hezbollah, the deployment of hostile forces in the Golan Heights, and activities relating to unconventional weapons. Third, Israel must clarify its understandings with Saudi Arabia and Turkey about the future of Syria and the proactive measures to strengthen moderate Sunni factions in Syria. Fourth, Israel can leverage the relationship forged with Russia to encourage Russian restraint of Hezbollah, which can reduce the chances of destabilizing tactics by Hezbollah in the future. Finally, Israel must make itself heard on the greater moral issue: the genocide in Syria, caused primarily by the Assad regime, but with the support of its allies. Israel must do more to halt the genocide, and it can do this through humanitarian and offensive measures, if necessary, in conjunction with pragmatic Arab and Muslim countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan.

Israel's possible actions should include, inter alia, contributing intelligence to future international criminal court proceedings on the serious war crimes committed by the Assad regime and his supporters. Israel must strengthen all of the international elements (both political and supra-political) striving to reach a solution that replaces Bashar al-Assad and minimizes the Hezbollah and Iranian presence in Syria. Israel can take an active role near the border in order to ensure that moderate factions will control the region. Beyond these measures, Israel must be involved far more intensively in all aspects pertaining to humanitarian aid to the civilian population in Syria, through shipments of food and other humanitarian assistance, and through its continued medical care for those wounded during the civil war.

The strengthening of the radical Shiite axis on its northern border demands that Israel continually update its defense strategy regarding the

complex, dynamic northern front that differs from past years, particularly given the strong Russian presence.

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Israel's Imagined Role in the Syrian Civil War

Tha'er al-Nashef and Ofir Winter

Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has often figured in Arab political discourse in the context of conspiracies, intrigues, and plots, along the lines of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Half a century ago, Yehoshafat Harkabi noted the popular sentiment that cast the Zionist movement as a satanic organization that, while exploiting its vast economic resources and global media domination, was intent on gradually seizing control of the Arab sphere and then of the rest of the world.[1] Over the years, these perceptions took deep root, and with the encouragement of various Arab regimes, became self-evident truths that were hardly questioned. The regional upheaval of recent years somewhat marginalized the conflict with Israel in Arab discourse, but paradoxically, this very fact stressed that the basic suspicion of Israel remained even when viewed apart from the Palestinian issue. As Esther Webman has pointed out, the Arab Spring gave new life to the conspiracy theorists who accused the Jews of all internal crises in the Arab sphere. Competing political forces in the countries that experienced revolutions accused their opponents of cooperating with Israel and labeled them "Jews," a metaphor for villains hostile to Arab and Muslim societies. Ascribing responsibility for the disasters in the Arab world to Israel became a conceptual tool to explain the regional upheaval.[2]

The conspiracy theories involving Israel were especially prominent in the context of the civil war in Syria, even though from the outset Israel adopted the stance of a bystander, stressing publicly its policy of non-intervention beyond the scope of its predefined security red lines.[3] However, the intra-Syrian and the wider Arab discourse read Israel's neutral position

Tha'er al-Nashef is a Syrian writer and media figure. Dr. Ofir Winter is a research fellow at INSS.

very differently. Rival parties attributed to Israel key roles in the outbreak of the war, its development, and its extended duration, and by means of contradictory conspiracy theories presented Israeli policy as actively and intentionally serving their enemies. The Assad regime called the rebellion "a Zionist conspiracy to weaken the resistance axis" and dubbed the rebels "Israel's servants"; opposition groups accused Israel of being responsible for the survival of the Assad regime; the Islamic State described the Assad regime as the bulwark protecting Israel from its onslaught; and rivals of the Islamic State said that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was actually a Jewish agent of the Mossad seeking to sow destruction and anarchy in Syria and other regional states so as to make it easier for Israel to dominate over them.

The conspiracy theories have contradictory ramifications for their composers and audience: for the Syrian actors, presenting the civil war as an Israeli plot serves political propaganda functions, but negatively affects their ability to examine the fundamental problems afflicting their country and identify genuine solutions that could help alleviate them; for Israel, its presentation as an all-powerful force reinforces its deterrence, but at the same time tarnishes its image in the region and becomes an obstacle that impedes productive and realistic relations with Syrian actors with whom it shares similar interests and common enemies.

The Assad Regime and the "Hebrew Spring" Theory

For decades, the Syrian Baath regime cultivated, disseminated, and planted conspiracy theories and exploited official state propaganda mechanisms to link its political opponents with Israel. After the Hama revolt in the early 1980s, then-President Hafez al-Assad accused Israel of supplying money and arms to the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood so as to destabilize the "resistance regime." Government propaganda publications, such as *The Muslim Brotherhood: Dubious Beginnings and Dark History*, claimed that the family roots of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the movement, lay in the Jewish communities of Egypt and Morocco. The rebels were accused of receiving their operational plans from the Israeli intelligence services so that Israel could realize its vision of "greater Israel." Every morning for years, millions of Syrian schoolchildren were made to chant, "We swear to battle imperialism, Zionism, and reactionism, and smash their vile tool – the traitorous gang of the Muslim Brotherhood."[4]

As was the case during the elder Assad's regime, so too in the time of his son: as soon as the unrest began in 2011, the Syrian regime began spreading

conspiracy theories that accused Israel of fomenting the protests and described the opposition as Zionist agents. Throughout the civil war, such theories have served the regime in five different ways: one, they justified the use of disproportionate force against non-violent demonstrators and the recourse to warfare methods that included chemical weapons, explosives-laden barrels against civilians, sieges, and starvation; two, claims about external Israeli conspiracies allowed the regime to explain its utter failure in containing the internal crisis; three, the conspiracy theories allowed the regime to blame Israel for the human disaster in Syria while denying its own responsibility for the hundreds of thousands of dead, the millions of refugees and displaced people, the ruin of cities, and the destruction of national infrastructures; four, the conspiracy theories helped the regime tarnish the reputation of its enemies by describing them as servants of "the Zionist enemy" and casting doubt on their loyalty to the hegemonic core values of the nation; and five, the conspiracy theories were meant to inspire the Syrian public to rally around the regime in its effort to foil "the Zionist plot" and defeat "its proxies" in Syria.

Already from the outset of the uprising in March 2011, the Syrian regime claimed that the revolt was a Zionist plot to sow anarchy, spark riots, and bring Syria to civil war, all in order to redraw the Syrian map and uproot the last stronghold of "Arab resistance." Only one week after the popular demonstrations began in Daraa, the official Syrian news agency cited "an official source" as saying that external elements were trying to incite Syrian citizens against the regime by sending false telephone messages about massacres in the city. According to this source, "More than a million recorded messages were sent [to Daraa residents] from outside Syria, especially Israel, instructing rioters to use mosques as their bases of operations."[5] Senior Syrian figures, including presidential political and media advisor Buthayna Shaaban, have on multiple occasions described regime opponents as "vile terrorists" who made "a full organic alliance with global Zionism in order to destroy the region," serve Israel's interests, and take their orders from the Zionist state.[6] In August 2015, Bashar al-Assad himself declared that the terrorists are "the real tool of Israel [in Syria]" and that "if we want to stand against Israel, we must stop its tools inside Syria and defeat them." When speaking of the occasional

> As soon as the unrest began in 2011, the Syrian regime began spreading conspiracy theories that accused Israel of fomenting the protests and described the opposition as Zionist agents.

military attacks in Syria attributed to Israel, he pointed his finger at the rebels, saying that "Israel's audacity in [attacking in] Syria stems, above all, from the fact that there are those willing to cooperate with Israel and accept medical care in its hospitals, and those who have the gall to openly praise Israel in the social media for bombing their own country."[7]

The Syrian regime mouthpieces have placed full responsibility on Israel and the United States for the state of affairs in Arab countries following the non-violent protests that began in Tunisia in late 2010. In a play on words, the "Arab Spring" soon became the "Hebrew Spring," activated by Israeli and US intelligence agencies with the backing of the global Jewish community. The institutional conspiracy theories were collected in a book published in 2015 by Muhammad al-Hurani, chairman of the Arab Writers' Association in Damascus, called *The Role of Israel and Its Allies in Arab Rebellions: Syria as a Case Study*. The book claims that Arab revolts were meant to fulfill the Zionist vision of the new Middle East and extricate the region from Arab national control by fanning the flames of ethnic, national, tribal, and religious conflicts among Arabs in general and the citizens of Arab countries in particular. According to al-Hurani, the plot, formed in the shadow of a forum held in Doha in February 2006, was woven by former US President Bill Clinton, former National Security Advisor and then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, founder of the Albert Einstein Institution Gene Sharp, and French-Jewish intellectual Bernard-Henri Lévy. At the heart of the plot lies a secret three-way pact among Israel, Turkey, and the Islamic State, intent on destroying Syria, undermining the stability of the Arab world, dismantling Arab armies, and destabilizing Arab national security.[8]

The Syrian Opposition and the "Israeli-Iranian Alliance"

Many Syrian opposition groups are also possessed by conspiracy theories involving Israel, though from the opposite perspective. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has for decades tried to plant the idea that the survival of the Assad regime is a direct consequence of a historic strategic alliance whereby the Baath regime agreed to cooperate with Israel colonialist policy. In this narrative, the elder Assad was selected to serve as commander of the Syrian air force by none other than Israeli spy Eli Cohen, and from there, rising through the ranks of the Defense Ministry, ultimately reached the republic's presidency. He "sold" the Golan Heights to Israel in the Six Day War as part of secret understandings made under the auspices

of the British and US intelligence services, and committed Syria to keep the peace along Israel's northern borders. In exchange, he was rewarded with Syria's highest office as well as $70 million. And in response to the institutional conspiracy theories about Hassan al-Banna's Jewish heritage, the Muslim Brotherhood countered with "the Jewish roots" of Michel Aflaq, the founder of the Baath party.[9]

Similar conspiracy theories were revived in recent years. A popular claim in Syrian opposition circles is that the Syrian president is the "loyal lapdog" of the State of Israel. According to this narrative, the Syrian regime and Israel are partners in a dirty deal: Assad will destroy Syria and strengthen Israeli security, and in return, Israel will provide an insurance policy for the unhindered continuation of his presidency. Theories about Israeli support for Assad and his regime serve the opposition in three ways: one, they cast the regime that parades its commitment to "resistance" to Israel as betraying the interests of the Syrian people and the Arab and Islamic *ummah*; two, "the evil, titanic intrigues" of Israel are an excuse for the Syrian opposition's inability to attain a decision on the battlefield and enlist the world in decisive action to replace the regime and its leader; and finally, they divert attention away from the charge that the revolution has failed to achieve its goals due to internal strife, corruption, and radicalization among the ranks of the Syrian opposition, placing the blame instead on the ultimate external object, Israel, which ostensibly bears definitive culpability for stopping any political arrangement in Syria and prolonging the humanitarian disaster there.

These conspiracy theories have been disseminated by a host of Syrian opposition elements, especially in the Islamist and left wing factions. The official line adopted by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, the main umbrella organization of the rebels, has defined the Assad regime as Israel's covert ally, defending its border while spouting belligerent rhetoric, and serving Israel's desire to destroy Syria and harm the Syrian people.[10] This description is usually attended by the assertion that the international community's negligence in promoting a political settlement to the Syrian crisis is a direct consequence of Israeli pressure. For example, in a December 2015 interview, Zuhayr Salim, the official spokesman of the Muslim Brotherhood, said that

The official line adopted by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, the main umbrella organization of the rebels, has defined the Assad regime as Israel's covert ally, serving Israel's desire to destroy Syria and harm the Syrian people.

"the world has not yet found an alternative [to the Assad regime] because it has protected the Golan Heights border for forty years and allowed the Zionists to enjoy its land and water without interference."[11]

Syrian journalist Faysal al-Qasim, the moderator of al-Jazeera's flagship program "The Opposite Direction," reflected the prevalence of this conspiratorial line of thinking even within the liberal camp of the opposition. In one essay he spoke of a "close alliance" between Israel and the Arab regimes surrounding it, first and foremost Syria, which thwarted the democratic revolutions of the Arab Spring. According to al-Qasim, Israel for years prevented the ouster of the Arab dictators from power; in exchange, they protected Israel from the Arab people, left their own nations backwards politically, socially, economically, scientifically, and industrially, and ensured Israel's continued total superiority over them. Similarly, given the regional upheavals, Israel gave its neighbors a choice between "accepting the authority of military dictatorship, such as the Assad regime" or "Israeli action to destroy its neighboring countries, expel their people, and set them back by decades – all of this, of course, by means of its agents, i.e., the Arab armies and their generals."[12] In another essay, al-Qasim claimed that the key to understanding the weak stance of the United States and Russia toward the crimes committed by the Assad regime lies in Israeli interests. After all, "any child knows that Israel sets US policy in the Middle East, not the US State Department…Therefore, the United States is satisfied with Russia's involvement in Syria as long as it gets the green light from Israel." Furthermore, "it is well known that the Russian-Israeli alliance is ten times stronger than the strategic alliance with Russia flaunted by the 'resistance' front," because of the influence immigrants from Russia wield in Israeli politics.[13]

Competing forces have used conspiracy theories to vilify their opponents, shirk their responsibility for their own failures, and harmonize the dissonances that occurred following the shocking regional developments since late 2010.

Some of the originators of the conspiracy theories have let their imaginations roam even further afield, reading the suppression of the popular uprising in Syria as an Israeli-Iranian plot. Yihya al-Aridi, a Syrian journalist formerly associated with the Assad regime who defected to the opposition in the early months of the revolt, noted the "organic connection" and "strategic coordination" on Syria between Israel and Iran under the guise of extreme hostility. In his opinion, the basis for this hidden

cooperation is the similarity of religious foundations and a congruent interest to expand at the expense of the Arab states. Al-Aridi enumerated a long list of "evidence" for his thesis: the most important rabbis in Israel are Iranians from Isfahan; former Israeli President Moshe Katzav was born in Iran and has a close personal relationship with Khamenei; Jewish pilgrims visit the graves of Benjamin, Esther, Mordechai, Daniel, and Habakkuk in Iran; Iran is accorded holy status by Jews; more than 60 percent of those serving in the IDF are of Iranian descent; Israeli investments in Iran are worth over $40 billion; more than 200 Jewish companies have commercial ties with Iran; Israel provided arms to Iran during its war with Iraq; and Israel has never known as much peace and quiet and stability as it has since Khomeini's revolution.[14]

Statements by Israeli politicians and security personnel, most of them retired, have been used by Syrian oppositionists as clear evidence validating their various conspiracy theories, whereby Israel supports the Assad regime in spite of the Syrian people's desire for change. Among those cited are: Shaul Mofaz who, while serving as chair of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, said that "the more the final death of the Assad regime approaches, the more the threat to Israel rises";[15] Dan Haloutz, former IDF chief of staff, who said that Israel prefers Assad's rule to his replacement by radical Islamists;[16] former Mossad chief Efraim Halevy, who wrote an essay in which he called Assad "Israel's man in Damascus," and noted with approval the peace and quiet on the Golan for the past 40 years;[17] and Israel's former Washington Ambassador Michael Oren, who testified that Israel was the first to suggest dismantling the chemical stockpiles in Assad's army. According to one conspiracy theory, the suggestion of this idea was meant to help Israel's Syrian ally escape the US military threat. According to a different version, it expressed Israel's concern lest the chemical weapons fall into the hands of the new Syrian regime, which would not be loyal to it.[18]

The Islamic State and the Jewish Caliph

The conspiracy theories surrounding Israel's role in the Syrian civil war are often a double-edged sword, because those who plant them easily turn from accusers into accused. This was the fate of the Islamic State, which describes Syria as Israel's "first line of defense," its ally, and servant operating against the interests of believing Muslims. This narrative both sneers at the secular president who is lax in observing the commandment

of jihad against Israel, and heralds the greater glory of the Islamic State as a military force dedicated to this mission, framing Syria as the "entrance gate" to Palestine on the way to the liberation of Jerusalem. In its publications, the Islamic State lays down an orderly battle plan: it is first necessary to defeat the "close enemy," i.e., the heretical Arab rulers in Syria and the other Arab states, topple their regimes, and destroy their armies; later, there will be a direct military confrontation with the "far enemy," which includes the Jewish state.[19]

The Islamic State's support for prioritizing the struggle for Syria over the struggle for Palestine has aroused the criticism of rival forces, which have accused the Islamic State of neglecting the Palestinian issue. It has also given rise to the development of anti-jihadist conspiracy theories, whereby Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-appointed caliph of the Islamic State, is a Jewish Mossad agent operating at Israel's behest. This bizarre plot twist, spread by Islamic State enemies in Syria and elsewhere, serves two goals: one, it helps mitigate the extreme theological and moral dissonance between the barbaric acts of the Islamic State and its use of Islam as its rallying cry, saying that despite the Islamic symbols displayed by the Islamic State and the thousands of young Muslims streaming to its ranks, it in no way represents the spirit of Islam and in fact operates contrary to the tenets of the religion; and two, it reframes the perception of reality through the familiar lens of the regional order in which Israel is the demonic enemy and the Syrians and Arabs the victims of its intrigues.

The conspiracy theory about al-Baghdadi's alleged Jewish origins has appeared in countless websites, social media, Syrian publications, and the Arab press. It began making the media rounds in August 2014 and cited dubious sources, some of which were Iranian, with accompanying "before" and "after" pictures ostensibly displaying the original identity of the Jewish caliph. According to the most popular version, documents leaked by Edward Snowden show that al-Baghdadi was nothing but a Mossad agent named Simon (or Shimon) Elliott who, in the name of the Islamic State, promoted a three-stage Zionist plot – first penetrating the countries threatening Israel, then destroying them, and finally seizing control of the Middle East – designed to fulfill the vision of "greater Israel." Eventually, this conspiracy theory developed in different directions. Several articles pointed to the "similarities" and "common denominators" between the Islamic State and Israel: the use of foreign mercenaries, the commission of war crimes against innocent civilians, the promotion of a vision based

on religious zealotry, land seizure from the legal owners, the redrawing of the region's maps, and more.[20] As a Saudi columnist concluded: "Even if al-Baghdadi isn't personally from a Jewish family, there is no doubt that his actions and declarations are religiously and conceptually Jewish and Zionist."[21]

Moreover, the equation of al-Baghdadi with Jew and the Islamic State with Zionism is meant to damage the religious and political legitimacy of the calls for renewing the caliphate at the expense of the modern Arab nation states. For example, an article in a Lebanese newspaper closely associated with Hezbollah identified the parallels between the caliphate and the promised land, and between Jewish fundamentalism and Salafı jihadism.[22] An article in a Jordanian government newspaper noted that just as Israel relied on its Jewish religious nature to appeal to Jews to immigrate to Palestine, so the Islamic State borrows Islamic religious clothing to draw in Muslims.[23] Sheikh Abd al-Aziz b. Abdallah Aal al-Sheikh, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, declared that the direct belligerent threats Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi explicitly made against Israel in December 2015 are "a lie, because he and his men are nothing but [Israel's] soldiers."[24]

Conclusion and Recommendations

A close look at the Syrian, and sometimes also the wider Arab political discourse, shows the vast gulf between the policy of non-intervention Israel adopted on the Syrian civil war and the imagined roles ascribed to Israel by popular conspiracy theories since the war started. Competing forces have used these theories in order to vilify their opponents, shirk their own responsibility for their failures, and harmonize the dissonances that occurred following the shocking regional developments since late 2010. The political discourse described herein relies on a plot-oriented mindset that is part of the Arab cultural and political heritage that tends to read every Israeli utterance, move, and gesture in absurd conspiratorial contexts. It is fed by a flawed, distorted interpretation of Israel's policy in the Syrian and Arab media, and by vague and contradictory messages put out by official Israel and unofficial Israeli spokespeople since the war broke out.

> The victims of conspiracy theories are first of all Syrians who, because of these fabrications, can neither see the political reality around them for what it is nor adopt a rational, sober perspective that doesn't blame Israel for Syria's fundamental ills.

The victims of conspiracy theories are first of all Syrians who, because of them, cannot see the political reality around them for what it is and adopt a rational, sober perspective that doesn't blame Israel for Syria's fundamental ills. Several Syrians have spoken out publicly against the conspiratorial discourse,[25] the most prominent of whom is Kamal al-Labwani, an independent opponent of the regime who called on his countrymen to view reality without the distorted lenses offered by conspiracy theories. He found a direct correlation between the revolution's success against the Assad regime and the undermining of the dogmatic, deceitful, ignorant mindset whose core is "the Zionist conspiracy" crediting magical power to Israel that "verges on idolatry and heresy." According to al-Labwani, accusing Israel of the crimes committed in Syria absolves the real criminals of liability and provides them with immunity. On the other hand, adopting a rational mindset would allow the Syrian people to advance critical processes of self-examination and soul-reckoning, and ultimately embark on the "real, practical" path toward pulling themselves out of the morass and rebuilding their country. If they do so, he argues, Syrians will realize that peaceful relations with Israel, which will in no way impinge on the national rights of the Palestinians or the Syrians, may help resuscitate Syria as a democratic, prosperous country and its boarding the train of civilization.[26]

Al-Labwani, who has forged relationships with civilian and political figures in Israel and openly visited the country on two occasions,[27] has through his own actions charted a possible course for eliminating suspicion, shattering preconceptions, and breaking the barriers of fear and ignorance rampant among Syrians when it comes to Israel. A dialogue and encounter between Syrians and Israelis, even if initially carried out at the popular and civil levels, may help free people from the shackles of conspiracy theories, first among individuals and then among groups. Such interactions could allow Syrians to understand Israel's essential interests better, learn its strengths, limitations, and fears, and prevent the formation of surreal conclusions about Israel's role in Syria in particular and the Middle East in general. In such encounters, participants would be able to examine the demonic perceptions in a critical manner, see the humane face of the other side of the border, and perhaps even develop some empathy for its concerns. The accusations of treason automatically hurled at Syrians who want to get to know Israel and its citizens in an unmediated fashion are an unfortunate product of conspiracy theories as they perpetuate this pathological mindset.

For its part, Israel's position vis-à-vis the conspiracy theories is a function of contradictory interests. On the one hand, Israel's deterrence in the Syrian sphere is strengthened with its enemies portraying it as a powerful, intrigue-oriented, omnipotent entity. This has even prompted some Syrian opposition members to approach Israel, whether openly or secretly, as they overestimate Israel's role in the Syrian crisis and its ability to manipulate Western powers in shaping the future of the Middle East to conform to its own agenda. On the other hand, deterrence based on conspiracy theories does not discriminate between obvious enemies and potential friends. This obstacle is particularly troubling given the presence of local Syrian actors in southern Syria who have interests similar to Israel's, sharing a fundamental desire to weaken Iranian and Salafist jihadist influences along the Golan Heights border, and might become suitable candidates for coordination and cooperation. However, the conspiracy theories make it difficult for Israel to forge realistic relations with these actors and take advantage of the opportunities to work with them toward the promotion of common goals.

A series of steps could help Israel lower the level of hostility toward it and replace its conspiratorial image in the eyes of its Syrian neighbors. These include expanding the channels of humanitarian aid; encouraging mutual interactions between Syrians and Israelis; publicly expressing support for the establishment of representative democracy in Syria; and taking a staunch – if only moral rather than practical – stance decrying the war crimes committed there. While such steps cannot be expected to generate an immediate reversal of Israel's image in Syrian public opinion and erase decades of institutional propaganda about its intrigues, and might even be interpreted as more "proof" of Israel's deceit, a credible and consistent Israeli policy in this direction could, with time, bear fruit and help Israel project a new, authentic, and more balanced image. Replacing the conspiratorial image of Israel with the image of a friendly state seeking good neighborly relations will serve Israel's broader long term strategic interests, which go much beyond deterrence of its enemies. This is the time for both Syrians and Israelis to quash existing conspiracy theories, which for too long have overshadowed any possible relationship and their ability to shape the future together.

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Will Russia and Iran Walk Hand in Hand?

Ephraim Kam

Since 2012 relations between Russia and Iran have improved significantly. This warming of relations can be seen in a series of visits and meetings between leaders and senior figures from the two countries, significant cooperation and coordination of military activities in Syria, and plans for the substantial expansion of connections regarding weapons supply, nuclear infrastructure, economic ventures, and trade.

Iran's relations with Russia have fluctuated over the years. During the reign of the Shah, Iran perceived the Soviet Union as the greatest threat – a historic threat stemming from Iranian fears that the Soviet Union intended to take over parts of Iran, as it did in the nineteenth century and for short periods in the twentieth century, and as it did in Afghanistan. This threat was also fed by the fact that Iran was then a central ally of the United States, and from the fear in Iran that communism would overrun its borders. However, in the late 1980s, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Iran's urgent need for arms following its heavy losses in the war with Iraq, relations with Russia changed significantly. From 1989 Russia became Iran's main arms supplier, and since 1995 it has been a central player in the construction of Iran's nuclear infrastructure. This change also reflected a decline in Iran's level of suspicion toward Russia, due to the collapse of the communist bloc, the departure of Russian forces from Afghanistan, and the disappearance of the shared border between Iran and Russia, which are now separated by the southern republics that gained independence with the breakup of the Soviet Union. Yet notwithstanding these developments, tensions between the two sides continued. Russia's arms supply to Iran was concentrated in the years 1989-1995, and thereafter

Dr. Ephraim Kam is a senior research fellow at INSS.

declined significantly; in addition, Russia did not agree to some of the Iranian requests for higher quality weapon systems. There were likewise tensions relating to the nuclear issue – especially when the construction of the reactor in Bushehr by the Russians took many years longer than planned, which led to serious allegations by the Iranians.

Strengthened relations between Russia and Iran are the result of a number of regional and global developments. The risks and problems for both Russia and Iran presented by the turbulence in the Middle East have prompted them to expand cooperation. Both countries view stabilizing the Assad regime and contending with the Islamic State as critically important, with Russia seeing Iran as a counterweight to the threat of Sunni radicalism. At the same time, Iran's growing influence in Syria and Iraq and in the Middle East in general, and the international legitimacy it gained with the nuclear agreement, has increased its importance from Russia's perspective as well. Moreover, the lifting of the nuclear-related sanctions allows Russia to expand its economic relations with Iran, and perhaps also to renew its arms supply. In tandem, the Ukraine crisis and the Western sanctions imposed on Russia in the wake of the crisis have spurred Russia to flex its muscles in the Middle East, especially at a time when the Obama administration is seen as demonstrating weakness in the Middle East, which leaves an opening for both Russia and Iran to make gains in the region.

The impact of these developments highlights the shared interests of Iran and Russia in the framework of their Middle East policies. They do not have true allies in the Middle East – apart from Iran's close relationship with the Assad regime, Hezbollah, and other Shiite militias – and therefore each side relies on the other to advance shared interests. Both aim to diminish US involvement and influence in the Middle East and to highlight American weaknesses. Iran does not have an alternative to the supply of high quality weapons from Russia, and it seeks Russian nuclear assistance. Meanwhile, Russia seeks Iranian assistance in stabilizing the region and preventing unrest in the Caucasus. And beyond aid to the Assad regime, Russia and Iran have other shared regional interests, including distrust of Turkey and the campaign against extremist organizations in Afghanistan.

However, alongside these shared interests are conflicting interests on central issues. Russia's global and regional interests and priorities, which are different from those of Iran, at times lead to Russian actions that harm Iran's interests. For example, Russia voted four times in the Security Council in favor of imposing sanctions on Iran – albeit softened sanctions – due

to the nuclear issue. In addition, Iranians have harbored deep distrust toward Russia for generations, including concerns about Russia's efforts to expand its influence in the region, in part at the expense of Iran. And while perception of the Russian threat on the part of Iran has diminished over time, having been replaced by the American threat, a residue of distrust toward Russia and its intentions remains among the Iranian leadership.

Thus, shared interests coupled with mutual tension are reflected in two of the central issues on the Russia-Iran agenda: the civil war in Syria and Russia's provision of weapons to Iran.

The Syrian Crisis

The connection between the Iranian regime and the Assad regime has existed since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, and the stability and survival of the Assad regime is a strategic interest of the utmost importance for Iran. From Tehran's perspective, there is no substitute for the Assad regime, and its collapse would seriously harm the Iran-Iraq-Syria-Lebanon axis, and particularly the Iran-Hezbollah-Lebanon connection and the Iranian front against Israel. Due to the indispensability of the connection with the Assad regime, since 2012 Iran has invested much effort in aiding its survival – with money, weapons, and participation in the fighting. These efforts peaked in 2015, when Iran dispatched 3000 fighters from the ranks of the Revolutionary Guards – from the ground forces of the Guards as well as the Quds Force – to aid Assad's army in the war. Toward the same end, Iran effected the deployment in Syria of a significant force of 4,000-5,000 Hezbollah fighters, as well as Shiite militias under Iranian influence from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Russia too has an even older connection to the Assad regime, although the special security and military ties that characterized the relationship from the 1960s disappeared following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia sees importance in a connection with Syria, a major Arab country, as a means for a significant power base on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. What tipped the scale in favor of military involvement in the Syrian civil war was the appearance of Sunni jihadist organizations in the Syrian arena, and the threat they posed for the Assad regime. Yet from Russia's perspective, beyond the importance of Assad's survival is the stability of the Syrian regime, which contributes to the creation of a new order in the Middle East that strengthens Russia's international standing, widens its influence in the region, and diminishes Western dominance. This new

order could also aid Russia in lessening the economic pressure placed on it by the West in the wake of the Ukraine crisis.

In 2014, with increased tension between Russia and the US over Ukraine, Russia's interest in strengthening its cooperation with Iran increased in general, and regarding Syria in particular. Russia saw this cooperation as a way to overcome its isolation and eyed Syria as an arena for economic investment, especially regarding construction of nuclear reactors and increased weapon sales. Iran, meanwhile, saw Russia as an important partner in stabilizing the Assad regime. This shared interest led to coordinated Russian and Iranian military intervention in September 2015, with the aim of empowering and stabilizing the Assad regime. It seems that the two countries succeeded in dividing up responsibilities, with Russia contributing military technology and firepower, mainly in the form of air strikes, while Iran contributed ground operations and military involvement by Hezbollah and Shiite militias.

Due to the improved state of the Assad regime since late 2015, and in the wake of the relatively high casualty rate among the Iranian forces in the fighting – at least 350 killed, including senior officers – Iran withdrew the majority of its forces from Syria in late 2015 (but apparently returned additional fighting forces to Syria in early April 2016). In March 2016, Russia too withdrew part of its airpower from Syria, but kept part of this force there – two air bases and two navy bases – as well as its command, control, and intelligence system and its maintenance infrastructure. For Russia, the decision to change the nature of its involvement in Syria stemmed primarily from its estimation that, with the enhancement of Assad's control over part of Syria, the main goals of the intervention were achieved. At the same time, both Russia and Iran maintain the ability to continue to provide military assistance to the Assad regime – Iran through ground warfare and Russia through air strikes.[1]

Russian and Iranian involvement in Syria demonstrates the similarities and differences in their approaches toward the situation. Both countries have a significant interest in the stability of the Assad regime, to the extent that they were willing to intervene militarily in the fighting. But from Iran's perspective, Assad's survival is of substantial importance, since any regime that would take its place would be much less convenient for Iran, perhaps even adversarial. In contrast, the Assad regime is important but not critical for Russia, and Russia is likely to continue to have relations with Syria even under a different regime, mainly via its military relations. It is important to

Russia that Syria end up with an arrangement accepted by the international community, even without Assad, as long as Russia retains its influence in Syria, including the maritime services that it receives at the port of Tartus, and as long as the arrangement contributes to the consolidation of Russia's status in the Middle East and in the international arena. If the price of such an arrangement in Syria is the removal of Bashar al-Assad, Russia might be willing to pay that price.

Russia has become the major player in determining the current order in Syria and in achieving the (currently precarious) ceasefire on the basis of a roadmap for ending hostilities and bringing about a transitional period to solve the crisis. Russia's achievement is largely due to its military involvement in the fighting, its success in improving the state of the regime, its connections with Assad, its activities with Iran, and its ability to engage with the American administration regarding the Syrian issue. However, it seems that Russia's enhanced standing vis-à-vis the arrangement in Syria is not to Iran's liking. Even though Iran's most important goal is the survival of the Assad regime – and Assad's situation has improved – the possibility of Russia sacrificing the regime as part of a future arrangement worries Iran. Mohammad Ali Jafari, the commander of the Revolutionary Guards, said in November 2015 that Russia intervened in Syria in order to serve its own interests and does not care whether Assad survives, as does Iran.[2]

The fate of the Assad regime has implications for the future of Syria in general. Russia prefers an arrangement accepted by the United States, and is willing to compromise on the establishment of a federation in Syria, on the condition that Moscow's interests are preserved. Iran likely understands that under the conditions that have developed, Syria will not continue to be what it once was, and an arrangement involving painful compromises will be necessary in order to rebuild a stable regime in Syria. But for the time being Iran insists on maintaining a central government in Syria headed by Assad, and rejects the possibility of a federation. Its opposition to a federation is also in part a fear that Kurdish autonomy in Syria would have an impact on the future of the Kurdish minority in Iran, especially because the Kurds achieved autonomy in Iraq beginning in the early 1990s.[3]

Furthermore, Russia's actions in the arena have overshadowed Iran's involvement. While Russia favored Iran's participation in diplomacy surrounding the Syrian issue, it has acted independently in the process, and does not appear as a partner of Iran. Iran has reservations regarding Russia's willingness to include the West and the Sunni countries in its efforts

to stabilize the political situation in Syria, and fears that a Russian-American arrangement would marginalize Iran.[4] In addition, the casualties suffered by Iranian ground forces in Syria – while Russian air forces suffered few casualties – aroused criticism in Iran regarding involvement in Syria, and forced the regime to explain how critical its military assistance to Syria is to Iran's interests. Complaints were also sounded on the Iranian side about inadequate coordination between the Russian air force and Syrian and Iranian forces, which contributed to Iranian casualties. It was reported that Russian warplanes did not assist Revolutionary Guards forces who were in distress in the Aleppo region in June 2016 and who were forced to bring in reinforcements from Iran and from Assad's army.[5]

In addition, Iran has reservations about the improved relations and high level talks between Russia and Israel, including President Putin's visits to Israel in 2005 and 2012 and Prime Minister Netanyahu's visits to Moscow. This is also connected to Syria. The military coordination between Russia and Israel at the level of deputy chiefs of staff since the start of Russia's intervention in Syria does not suit Iran. More importantly, this coordination is liable to obstruct Iran's efforts to establish an infrastructure in southern Syria for terrorist activity by Hezbollah against Israel, which would connect to the terrorist infrastructure in southern Lebanon.

Supply of Weapons from Russia to Iran

The supply of weapons from Russia to Iran, a central issue in the bilateral relations, began after the Iran-Iraq War, when Iran lost around half of its weapons. Between 1989 and 1991 the two countries signed four weapons deals with a total value of approximately $5 billion, consisting mainly of 24 MIG-29 aircraft, 12 Sukhoi-24 aircraft, SA-5 air defense systems, three submarines, T-72 tanks, and BMP-2 armored personnel carriers. The supply of most of the weapon systems was completed by the mid 1990s. Since then, Russia has supplied Iran with air defense systems, helicopters, and military equipment but only a small number of primary weapon systems, and there has also been a decline in new deals.

There is no doubt that for the past two decades, Iran has been interested in a comprehensive arms deal with Russia. A significant portion of Iran's weaponry is obsolete – especially the air force, which includes American warplanes that are over 40 years old, and Russian aircraft that are over 25 years old. In order to upgrade its weapon systems, Iran engaged in several rounds of negotiations with Russia with the aim of closing a major multi-

billion dollar weapons deal. However, these talks yielded few results, and Russia's supply of weapons to Iran decreased over the years.

There are two reasons for the decline in Russia's supply of weapons to Iran. One is financial: Iran lacked the monetary resources to fund new large weapons deals, given the need to recover from the damage incurred in the war with Iraq and to fund the weapons deals of the late 1980s. In this situation, Iran preferred to invest resources in its nuclear program and missile program, at the expense of its conventional forces, since the former were more important to it regarding deterrence against the United States and Israel, and because of the disappearance of the Iraqi military threat to Iran. The second reason is Russia's relations with the United States. During the 1990s the American administration placed heavy pressure on Russia to refrain from providing high quality weapons to Iran, claiming that such weapons would endanger American forces in the Middle East. Indeed, in 1994-95 an understanding was reached between the governments of the United States and Russia to the effect that Russia would complete the supply of weapons to Iran included in deals it had already signed, but would not sign new weapons deals. This agreement remained in force – albeit with limited violations – until 2000, when Russia cancelled it.

After 2000 the Russian government announced its intention to renew the supply of weapons to Iran. However, even then, the American administration continued to pressure the Russian government to refrain from supplying high quality weapons to Iran, and in certain instances it succeeded in deferring or limiting the implementation of weapons deals, as with the advanced S-300 anti-aircraft missile system. From the 1990s there were repeated requests by Iran to Russia to purchase the system, yet only in 2007 was a deal signed to supply it. Even then, Russia refrained from supplying the system for almost a decade, and began delivery only in March 2016.

The timing of the supply of the S-300 system is connected to the nuclear agreement (the JCPOA) and the lifting of sanctions against Iran. The JCPOA is also closely connected to the strengthening of military relations between Russia and Iran in general. In January 2015, before the agreement was signed, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited Iran for the first time in 15 years. During his visit the two countries signed an agreement on military cooperation that included cooperation against terrorism, maritime exchanges, and Russian training for Iranian forces.[6]

A year later, in February 2016, Iranian Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan visited Moscow and discussed a large weapons deal with Russia. According

to reports in the Russian and Iranian media, the deal is worth $8 billion, with the Iranians seeking to purchase Sukhoi SU-30 warplanes; advanced Yak-130 training jets, which can also be used as light attack aircraft; MI-8 and MI-17 helicopters; mobile coast-defense missile systems equipped with anti-ship cruise missiles; frigates, and submarines; T-90 tanks; and artillery. Iran is eager to receive Russian licenses to construct factories for the production of Russian weapon systems, including warplanes, helicopters, aircraft engines, and T-90 tanks. Iran has also expressed interest in acquiring the S-400 air defense system, which is more advanced than the S-300, but the assumption is that at least in the near future, Russia will not accede to the request.[7]

A few obstacles may stand in the way of a large deal. First, although it is possible that Iran is capable of financing such a deal after the lifting of sanctions, and although Russia's economic plight likewise makes the deal highly attractive, Iran's economic situation has not yet significantly improved following the lifting of the sanctions. Iran's government may prefer to use available resources for civilian needs, in order to prevent unrest stemming from disappointment with the economic situation. Even more important, according to the nuclear agreement, the UN Security Council has not yet lifted the sanctions on weapons sales to Iran, which are to remain in place until 2020, and Security Council approval is required for weapons sales. It is unlikely that the American administration and Western governments would agree to lift the prohibition, especially since Iran has continued testing missiles and aiding terrorism, despite the agreement.

However, there are signs that Russia and Iran may sign a large weapons deal, despite the prohibition and the challenges. In December 2015, the commander of Iran's ground forces said that his country will soon acquire T-90 tanks. In May 2016 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia will consider an Iranian request to acquire tanks, warplanes, and APCs, and that supply of the S-300 system would be completed by the end of 2016; in his eyes, the prohibition against the sale of such weapons to Iran has been lifted.[8]

Russia and Iran: Implications

Military involvement in the fighting in Syria and talks on large scale weapons supply to Iran highlight the shared interests of Russia and Iran. Both countries are in need of and benefit from cooperation on these issues. Iran needs to upgrade its arsenal, and it has no alternative to the Russian weapons market

for obtaining high quality weapons. Russia is also interested in increasing its weapons exports and its investment in Iran's nuclear infrastructure, and it sees post-sanctions Iran as an opportunity. Iran feels that no country other than Russia would be as willing to aid it in stabilizing the situation in Syria; for its part, Russia is interested in Iran's military intervention to assist Russia in expanding its influence in Syria. Their joint activity in Syria has already proven itself and led to gains on the ground, even if rebel forces have not yet been defeated and a political arrangement is still far off. In addition, Russia and Iran seek each other's assistance to expand their influence in the region, while diminishing the US influence there, and Russia is able to aid Iran, at least to a limited extent, in coping with American pressure.

However, shared interests, and even practical cooperation, do not yet mean an alliance. The shared interests between Russia and Iran are limited, and Russia has yet to demonstrate a deep commitment to assist Iran with key issues. Both countries seek to stabilize the situation in Syria, but their goals are not identical. Both countries are likewise interested in furthering a large weapons deal, but the fact that such a deal has not been signed for over two decades indicates differences between them. The respective goals and the disputes between Russia and Iran over the years stem from different sets of regional and global considerations. For example, relations between Moscow and Washington are important to Russia, and as such, American pressure can influence Russia's stance on both Syria and the supply of weapons to Iran, such that an improvement in Russia's relations with the United States might prompt Moscow to refrain from – or at least delay or curtail – supplying high quality weapons to Iran. Russia also values its relationships with countries in the Middle East – including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Israel – to the dismay of Iran. And above all, there is considerable suspicion between Russia and Iran, mainly on the part of Iran toward Russia, stemming from disagreements on important issues and from Russian conduct that runs contrary to Iran's interests.

Iran's nuclear program is an important issue in the bilateral relations. Russia played a major role in building Iran's nuclear infrastructure, and Iran expects Russia to help it cope with American pressure, including on the nuclear issue. But there is no reason to assume that Russia is willing to accept Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons, given the negative consequences that such a development would have on stability in the Middle East. That said, Russia has thus far been unwilling to pressure Iran heavily, and it is

unlikely that Russia would hurry to join renewed sanctions on Iran should the American administration seek to take such a step. But if it were to become clear that Iran is violating the nuclear agreement and attempting to obtain nuclear weapons, Russia might join in pressuring Iran, especially if the United States would compensate it for this effort.

The bottom line is that there is room for improvement in Iran-Russia relations. They will presumably continue to cooperate regarding the situation in Syria, since their joint military activity has led to gains for both countries. At the same time, disputes are likely to arise from time to time, especially regarding the future of the Assad regime and the nature of the political arrangement that will come into place in Syria. In the immediate future Russia might refrain from supplying significant amounts of high quality weapons to Iran, even if it signs a new agreement, and will prefer to wait for the Security Council to remove restrictions on weapons sales to Iran.

Strengthened relations between Russia and Iran have a few implications for Israel – most of them negative. First, the high quality weapons Russia can supply to Iran pose risks for Israel. Especially important are the substantial upgrades expected to Iran's air force and air defense systems, and at a later stage Iran is liable to pass on high quality Russian-made weapon systems to Hezbollah. Since Iran intends, as usual, to request license from Russia to produce some of the weapon systems by itself, local production would contribute to the enhancement of Iran's military industry. However, American pressure, and perhaps Israeli appeals, may encourage Russian restraint in terms of the amount and quality of weapons supplied to Iran.

Second, an improvement in relations and cooperation between Russia and Iran would strengthen Iran's regional standing and might well weaken US influence. This is already apparent in the Syrian crisis, where Russia – and not the United States – is the party leading talks to stabilize the situation and reach an agreement, and along with Iran is leading a significant part of the fighting against jihadist organizations in Syria. For the past few years Iran has been strengthening its regional status – against the backdrop of its widened influence in Iraq, its military involvement in Syria, the signed nuclear agreement, and the weakened US posture. Tightened connections with Russia would further strengthen Iran's standing, while improving its military capabilities and expanding its nuclear infrastructure. And if in the coming years the Western governments demand renewed sanctions on Iran – in the event of a significant violation of the nuclear agreement, or

due to Tehran's expansion of its missile program – it may receive Russia's assistance in dealing with the sanctions.

Finally, the improvement of Russia-Iran relations has a positive aspect for Israel, though overshadowed by the negative implications. Due to Russia's perception of global considerations, the importance of its relations with the United States, and the talks it has held with Israel and moderate Arab countries, Russia could play a moderating role regarding Iran. Moreover, the military involvement of Russia and Iran in Syria could significantly damage the jihadist organizations in Syria, and Israel has an interest in restored stability in Syria, an internally strong central government in Damascus, and damage to organizations like the Islamic State.

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Changes in Hezbollah's Identity and Fundamental Worldview

Roman Levi

Since Hezbollah was founded, a prominent feature of its basic worldview has been a dilemma regarding its identity, goals, and future path. This dilemma was particularly evident following the end of the civil war in Lebanon in the late 1980s; after Israel withdrew from the security zone in 2000; following the Second Lebanon War in 2006; following the bloody clashes in Lebanon and the Doha Agreement in 2008; and while fighting for the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war. This dilemma centers on the choice between two opposite vectors that have characterized Hezbollah's development. On the one hand is its commitment to the ideological, religious, and denominational foundations upon which it began its journey and in whose shadow it chose a path of persistent resistance to Israel. On the other hand is the increasing aspiration over the past decade to divert resources toward entrenching the organization's hold in Lebanon through politics and the economy, while receiving widespread legitimacy in the torn state and alongside a rapid military buildup. The first vector is accompanied by extremism, and points toward escalation and a civil war in Lebanon, while the second vector demands moderation and acceptance of the country's prevailing rules of the game. Hezbollah's response to this dilemma shapes the organization's fundamental worldview on various fronts, and is likely to alter the organization's strategy in the future. It is possible that this decision will determine the nature of Hezbollah's next round of war with Israel, and when it will occur.

An analysis of Hezbollah's development indicates the evolution of its identity as follows: at first, it was defined by a non-state identity, coupled

Roman Levi, an intern at INSS, is a graduate of the Executive M.A. program in Security and Diplomacy Studies at Tel Aviv University and holds an M.A. in political science from Tel Aviv University.

with a supra-state identity reflecting ideological and religious concepts above the level of the state and activity beyond any defined territory. This was followed by the salience of a sub-state identity, reflecting sectoral activity more limited than state level activity. Today, Hezbollah's activity features predominantly state characteristics. This dynamic reflects the organization's effort to contain Lebanese politics through dialogue, and its willingness to compromise with various forces in Lebanon. In effect, the inflexible principles on which Hezbollah was founded have evolved and effected a change in the organization's basic worldview. Furthermore, Hezbollah's activity has featured a heightened response to the threat to its physical power and its continued buildup within Lebanon.

Thus, for instance, one can explain Hezbollah's relative restraint in the face of Israeli actions, for fear of being recklessly dragged into an escalating confrontation. The growing consideration of the international arena and the closer ties and security and strategic agreements between Hezbollah and Russia in Syria could also be explained in this manner, as well as the organization's intention to invest considerable resources in deterring and threatening Israel, while still being immersed in the fighting in Syria. At the same time, with regard to Hezbollah's attempts to legitimize its existence and worldview as "the defender of the Lebanese nation," its maneuverability and ideological flexibility that have characterized its evolvement may present its fight against the Sunni jihad not merely as an ideological addendum, but also as a substitute for the long fought *muqawama* (violent resistance) against Israel.

This development has been reflected in decisions based on a clear and unmistakable set of priorities derived from a logical system of rules: first, stability and control in the internal Lebanese arena, along with defense against concrete threats from Syrian territory, and only then, principled ideological opposition to Israel.

Dynamics in the Lebanese Arena

The four million people living in Lebanon are divided religiously and ethnically into 18 different communities. This demographic makeup constitutes the basis for the deep rifts and power struggles that have characterized all aspects of Lebanese society. The background is important for understanding the long road traveled by the Shiites in Lebanon as a minority that suffered from lack of recognition and oppression while controlled by a Western-oriented Sunni and Christian majority. This was

the basis for the founding of Hezbollah, the shaping of its ideas, and the decisions it has taken over the years.

Hezbollah's ideas were also shaped by the difficult situation in Lebanon during the civil war that erupted in 1975. Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese lost their lives in this war, and hundreds of thousands became refugees. The agreement signed in Taif, Saudi Arabia in 1989 ended the war, and signaled the beginning of a long and prolonged process of reconstruction in Lebanon. Since then, the possibility of reversion to internal warfare in Lebanon is a matter of concern to all the religious groups and factions in Lebanon, including Hezbollah and the greater Shiite community. Therefore, in 1992, with support from Iran, Hezbollah became a political organization that began legitimately representing the Shiites as a political party in parliament and in the local authorities.

During the 1990s, Hezbollah escalated its operations against Israel with rocket fire at Israeli communities, mainly from positions located in the center of populated villages. During these years, the incidental damage suffered by the population of South Lebanon did not prompt changes in the nature of Hezbollah's military activity. For Hezbollah, the disruption of daily life in South Lebanon was of little importance, compared to military action – Hezbollah's main concern at the time.

Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 was regarded in the Arab world as a success for the idea of resistance. The following period constituted the best years for Hezbollah, whose success was perceived by many Muslims as theological validation of their belief in God. At the same time, geopolitical changes in the region have significantly affected Hezbollah's prosperity, despite the fact that Hezbollah's military and political strength has since increased. From 2000 and onwards, Hezbollah's strategy was faced with numerous obstacles, mainly regarding events in Lebanon, which created a discrepancy between the organization's basic worldview and the changing balance of power and geopolitical developments in Lebanon and the region.

The death of President Hafez al-Assad in June 2000 and the dramatic decision by his son Bashar al-Assad to withdraw his forces from Lebanon in 2005 destabilized the Syrian order in Lebanon and strengthened the Lebanese camp opposed to Syria and Hezbollah. More specifically, Syria's exit from Lebanon gave rise to an ongoing struggle against Hezbollah and supporters of the Syrian regime by moderate, pro-Western groups in Lebanon. Against the backdrop of this friction, former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Harari was assassinated in 2005, leading to an unusual

wave of popular protest in Lebanon. The demonstrators demanded a new Lebanese order – more liberal, democratic, and open, hearkening back to what prevailed before the outbreak of the civil war in Lebanon in 1975.[1] These events marked the beginning of a disturbing trend for Hezbollah, which included pressure and demands for change by the general public in Lebanon. Overall, the organization found itself facing a new situation that was less convenient for retaining its power, and forced it to enter the political vacuum that emerged in Lebanon.

The Second Lebanon War was an unplanned event, following an erroneous assessment by Hezbollah about the nature of the Israeli response to the kidnapping of soldiers at the border. While the war was a successful operation for Hezbollah, strategically it led to a low point in its complex relations with the Lebanese state, and to a concrete threat of another civil war in the country.

The struggle reached a peak in 2008, when violent conflicts erupted between Hezbollah and the Lebanese army and Christian and Druze groups. At the end of 18 months of fighting, Hezbollah gained the upper hand, leading to the disarming of the rival militias and the government's surrender to its dictates, as stipulated in the Doha Agreement, which gave Hezbollah and its political allies veto power in the Lebanese cabinet.[2] On the other hand, from a broader perspective, the Hezbollah "victory" over its opponents in the Lebanese arena became a factor increasing the already strong pressure on the organization. Hezbollah's opponents asserted that the events in 2008 proved that the organization was capable of using its weapons internally in Lebanon, in contrast to the image it had always tried to portray of being "solely a defender of Lebanon against external threats." This public criticism was reflected in the 2009 elections, which reduced Hezbollah's political power.[3]

Hezbollah's intensive involvement in events in Syria since 2011 is also evidence of the change in trend that began in 2005. On the one hand, this involvement is related to Hezbollah's original foundations and its partnership with its ideological, religious, and ethnic allies – a partnership that reflects shared morals and values. On the other hand, Hezbollah's involvement in Syria is a function of material interests and the fulfillment of practical needs aimed at preserving its strategic alliance with its partners in order to counter the threat to Lebanon posed by radical jihad Sunni organizations. When the fighting began to approach Lebanon's eastern border, Hezbollah was prompted to operate in Syrian territory in order

to avoid having to stand against these threats on Lebanese soil. However, Hezbollah's activity in Syria continues to undermine its status in Lebanon, and interferes with its efforts to project its strength. Hezbollah is regarded by many in Lebanon as a "warmonger bringing disaster on the country."[4] The decline in the organization's standing in Lebanese public opinion led to the collapse of Hezbollah's March 8 alliance in 2013.[5]

In response to the bloody terrorist attacks carried out by Lebanese Salafı-jihad organizations against Hezbollah and its supporters in 2013 in protest of the organization's involvement in the Syrian civil war, Hezbollah made great efforts to protect its assets, its operatives, and the Shiite villages, while at the same time tightening its cooperation with the Lebanese security agencies.[6] Cooperation of this sort has political consequences, and it was important for Hezbollah to ensure that the attacks against it would be treated as terrorists threats of a national character directed against the Lebanese state, not only against the organization.[7] At the same time, the organization tried to maintain relative tranquility in the Lebanese political system, and Hezbollah's leadership therefore preferred to reach a compromise on the appointment of a prime minister in Lebanon, while postponing the parliamentary elections.[8]

The importance attributed by Hezbollah to Lebanese unity at that time was reflected in Nasrallah's speech marking the sixth anniversary of the Second Lebanon War:[9]

> Today, there are tensions in Lebanon, for which there are reasons, some political, some economic, some social...To the people of Lebanon and all those present and listening, especially the people of the resistance, I call for calm, patience, restraint... experience proves that our blood, that of our children, and our lives are ransom for the peace of the country, its honor, and its stability... If something of our honor is sacrificed, this is not a problem. Do not succumb to every provocation; there are those trying to provoke you. Someone is accelerating anarchy in Lebanon, a civil war in Lebanon. We are not among them, so I call on you to show restraint and discipline...We have therefore assumed the silence of the strong.

One indication of a change in the organization's priorities during these years was the belief among many in Lebanon that Hezbollah was unable or unwilling to conduct the *muqawama* against Israel. The conflict with Israel was marginalized, due to the pressure exerted on Hezbollah in

Lebanon concerning its involvement in Syria,[10] in addition to the heightened awareness in the Arab world of the public uprising, which forced Hezbollah to concentrate on internal policy.[11]

Nasrallah's comments on two questions stood out in his speech marking the eighth anniversary of the Second Lebanon War. Already in his opening remarks, he noted the path followed in Hezbollah's actions in Lebanon – through Lebanese politics and the attempt to settle the disputes between the various factions in Lebanon:[12]

> This is a coalition government just like any coalition government in the world. It has blocs, convictions, and views which might agree and disagree with each other. However, in principle we seek to solve our problems and disputes through dialogue and close discussion. We in Hezbollah are and will be committed to keep any dispute with any component in the current government and any dispute with our allies covert and not make it open...We do not mention our criticisms openly...We prefer dialogue...We stress this alliance, which is a strategic alliance.

Nasrallah's second point was the identification of the new threat to Lebanon, while appealing to the unity of Lebanon:[13]

> Brothers and sisters, I call on the Lebanese and all the peoples of the region... regardless of what has been happening for the past three years, with the disputes that have arisen about it...Let us put it to one side, because all this is of no use now, and why? Because there is a real danger to our existence, our countries, and our homes...This is therefore no time for criticism. You want to criticize? All right, we'll do it later, but now all the peoples in the region face a great, new, and real danger, this thing called ISIS...The slaughter that has been committed is first and foremost against the Sunnis...What we want, therefore, is that no one should portray this campaign as an ethnic campaign. I call on every Lebanese – put tribal fanaticism aside.

The combination of Lebanon's weakness and inability to defend itself against external threats, as reflected in the increasing Sunni jihad attacks beginning in 2014, strengthened the connection between Hezbollah and the Lebanese state. This situation brought public opinion in Lebanon to favor the organization, which was perceived as the central element that could prevent anarchy from penetrating into Lebanon.[14] A key indication

of this emerging connection can be seen in the dramatic decision by Saudi Arabia, a traditional supporter of Lebanon, to halt its crucial aid to the country, in the wake of Hezbollah's activity.[15]

Hezbollah in the International Arena

Hezbollah's first two decades were defined primarily by non-state or supra-state activity, with no commitment whatsoever to international agreements and with no concrete influence of the international community on the organization's development. UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701 forced Hezbollah, for the first time, to confront through the internal Lebanese political theater, calls for its disarmament and the imposition of an embargo on the organization.

To this was added a turn of events that had a strong influence on Hezbollah – the establishment of a special UN tribunal for Lebanon for the purpose of investigating the 2005 murder of Rafiq al-Harari. The establishment of the tribunal and the international community's involvement in the murder investigation were the source of much controversy and a focus of political conflict. The pro-Syrian alliance, led by Hezbollah, rejected the establishment of the tribunal, alleging that the international investigation was designed as a political tool to weaken Syria and its ally in Lebanon.[16] This was the background to the withdrawal of Hezbollah's representatives from the Lebanese government and the overthrow of the government in November 2006 – a measure that paralyzed the Lebanese political system for an extended period. After the court was set up in 2009, the political conflicts concerning Harari's assassination continued to reflect deep and wide internal political fissures, more than the issue of the murder itself. With the country in the grip of these conflicts, Hezbollah's representatives resigned from the government a second time, leading to its collapse in 2011, followed by a rapprochement between the Druze and the Shiites, which made it possible to form a government more to Hezbollah's liking.[17]

In contrast to Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701, which challenged Hezbollah only moderately and for a limited time, the long process of setting up the international tribunal and conducting the trials has left a mark on the political system in Lebanon from 2005 until today. It forced Hezbollah to devote extensive resources and efforts to limit the ongoing and exhausting international penetration into the organization's sphere of influence in Lebanon. This reduced Hezbollah's capabilities of maneuver and control in the political theater, and also its ability to plan

its moves in the political system – a difficult enough task in its own right. The process sharpened the dilemma facing Hezbollah: it was forced to choose between uncompromising resistance to cooperation on the part of the political system with the international tribunal, and its desire to appear to the international community as a legitimate faction in Lebanon.

Another threat against Hezbollah in the international arena involving its legitimacy followed its classification as a terrorist organization by leading Western countries. This trend gained force in Europe following the terrorist attack attributed to Hezbollah against a bus of Israeli tourists in Bulgaria in 2012.[18] Therefore, during the months prior to the European Union's decision to classify it as a terrorist organization, Hezbollah invested lobbying efforts and political capital in order to thwart the process, while emphasizing the manner in which it differs from other terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda.[19] This is further evidence of the change in Hezbollah's orientation from an organization with sub-state characteristics to an organization defined by a national dimension and concerns of international diplomacy.

Hezbollah's deep involvement in Syria and its readiness to suffer severe losses have led to an important development concerning its regional status and role as seen by the international community. The tightening of the security and strategic connections between Hezbollah and Russia above all highlights the organization's actual influence on events in the region. Together with its Iranian and Russian allies, Hezbollah has become a key partner in decision making, and thereby regards itself as having the influence of a state.[20]

The Change in the Balance between Hezbollah and Iran

Iran's activity in Lebanon is based on its hegemonic ambitions in the region. From this perspective, Iran built its status in Lebanon out of the chaos and anarchy in the civil war in the 1980s, followed by the various periods of paralysis in the Lebanese political system that have occurred since. Outbreaks of violence and Lebanon's continued weakness have therefore abetted Iran's prolonged grip in this region.[21]

Since 2011, the geopolitical events in the region have changed the balance and quality of the relations between the two actors, and have caused the emergence of vectors that do not necessarily overlap. The Iranian nuclear agreement and Hezbollah's integration into Lebanon have led Iran-Hezbollah relations to a new and complex era in their special relationship. First, Iran's desire for relations with the West on the nuclear issue required the

downplaying of its direct connection with Hezbollah, at least for the sake of appearances. As a result, Iran reduced its financial support for Hezbollah, a cut reflected in Hezbollah's ability to allocate resources for its military and social-institutional activity in Lebanon.[22] Second, since 2011, due to Hezbollah's growing involvement in Syria, the organization has acquired the reputation of a strong player willing to roll up its sleeves and get its hands dirty. While Hezbollah has been successful in exerting considerable influence on events in Syria, the Iranians have shown their sensitivity to losses in personnel and hesitation in sending massive forces into the fighting in Syria.[23] In addition, the war in Syria reflects different interests. For example, the Iranian effort is dispersed in remote regions, in eastern and northern Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, while Hezbollah is operating, almost independently, closer to Lebanon. Furthermore, as the list of Hezbollah fatalities in the fighting in Syria has grown and concern about a civil war in Lebanon has risen, more and more voices among the Shiites in Lebanon are questioning "Islamic unity" with Iran.[24]

Therefore, to the extent that these trends continue to develop in the future, Iran is likely to discover that the use of Hezbollah for particular needs is more difficult than in the past. For its part, Hezbollah realizes that demonstrable actions at Iran's side are likely to damage its standing in Lebanon. All this generates a change in the subordination that formerly characterized relations between Iran and Hezbollah.

The Economic Influence on Hezbollah's Development

Hezbollah's socioeconomic power was tested after the Second Lebanon War. Believing that the money received from Iran was not sufficient to achieve its objectives, and in consideration of the possibility that this budget might be cut, over the years the organization has developed independent sources of income designed to reduce its dependence on Iran. These sources include commercial companies managed by Hezbollah, or companies in which it is a partner; donations in Lebanon and throughout the world; money from criminal activity in Lebanon and throughout the world; and payments charged by Hezbollah for social services.[25] In Iraq, for example, the organization has begun investing in the development of commercial companies. This income is used for a variety of purposes, including the promotion of political objectives and a continued grip on the country.[26]

Hezbollah's intense involvement in the war in Syria starting in 2011 effected a turning point in the organization's economy. First, Iran, which

over the years was considered the main source of support for Hezbollah, began to cut back on its financial support for the organization. Second, this multi-faceted war required many resources, at the expense of allocations for Hezbollah's development and grip in Lebanon. To this was added the increasing enforcement by the American administration of sanctions and economic isolation against Hezbollah.[27]

Thus as Hezbollah became stronger, it had to exercise judgment in managing its budget at both the institutional level and in its socioeconomic support, while highlighting its involvement in expanding circles within Lebanon.

The Dynamic in the Israeli Arena

The IDF's insights from the Second Lebanon War concerning the extent and nature of the Hezbollah threat have led Israel to sharpen operational plans and build a stronger operational response. This response by Israel prompted in turn a reflexive change in Hezbollah's strategy. Since 2006, the organization has taken care to observe clear rules of the game between being deterred and deterrence against Israel.[28] Within a decade, Hezbollah more than doubled its number of soldiers, from 20,000 to 45,000; expanded its arsenal of missiles and rockets ten-fold to 130,000; and introduced advanced systems against aircraft, thousands of anti-tank missiles, and hundreds of miniature unmanned aerial vehicles. Beyond this, from being primarily defensive, the organization's operative plans have become based on attack and conquering territory on the Israeli side of the border. These dimensions indicate preserving a deterrent balance against Israel, despite the organization's efforts in the internal Lebanese arena and its participation in the fighting in Syria.[29]

The development of the abovementioned military balance allows an understanding of the development of Hezbollah's fundamental worldview on a deeper level. One can say that since 2006, due to the significant events occurring in 2005 and 2006, as well as the military balance, Hezbollah's actions vis-à-vis Israel have become more calculated and cautious than ever before. In addition to the known and direct threat to the organization, the Second Lebanon War proved Israel's willingness to target Lebanese national infrastructure, create destruction, and force the Lebanese population in southern Lebanon to flee northwards, given Hezbollah's inability to prevent the havoc caused by the IDF attacks and protect the civilians. This has subsequently created an indirect though significant threat to Hezbollah,

sparking internal pressure within Lebanon through public opinion and the political system, and ultimately challenging Hezbollah's legitimacy to operate in Lebanon. In other words, since 2006, Hezbollah has included the possible consequences of a conflict with Israel as part of its broader calculations from a long term perspective.

Under new, self-drawn rules of the game, Hezbollah has shown greater self control vis-à-vis Israel, insofar as the Israeli threat is much more subject to control than the other threats facing Hezbollah. The organization's leadership, in cooperation with the Iranian leadership, has enjoyed quiet in the Israeli arena, while the threats to the organization in Lebanon and Syria have grown. This quiet is achieved by operating beneath the Israeli response threshold, which is relatively stable and predictable. This assumption fits in with its relatively restrained policy, as reflected in 2008, when attacks on Hezbollah military wing commander Imad Mughniyeh and Syrian general Muhammad Suleiman were attributed to Israel. The same is true of the attack on Hassan al-Laqqis in Beirut in 2013 and a recent attack against Hezbollah operatives, including Jihad Mughniyeh and a senior Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander. These attacks are in addition to many other operations attributed to Israel, including attacks in Syria and Lebanon against arms shipments to Hezbollah. The organization's response included one significant action – an attack in July 2012 in Burgas, Bulgaria – plus unsuccessful attempts at other attacks outside Lebanon and isolated calculated attacks on Israel's borders with Lebanon and Syria.

Conclusions and Consequences

Despite Hassan Nasrallah's fervent declarations reflecting basic Islamic-Shiite ideology, over the past decade developmental dynamics have seen an increase in Hezbollah's instrumental-utilitarian operations, in an attempt to reinforce its state-related identity. First, Hezbollah has assigned increasing importance to the threats facing it, while considering the wider scope of events in Lebanon, as well as the background and history that have led to this strategy. In addition, Hezbollah has exhibited an ability to study and assess the enemy and adapt its operations accordingly, thus reflecting a clear set of priorities established by a clear set of rules – achieving stability and control inside Lebanon, while defending against tangible threats from Syria, and only afterwards pursuing the struggle with Israel. Second, events in its various circles of influence indicate the great degree of control in the organization's strategy and operations. Third, considering the analysis of

events, one can notice a correlation between the means used to achieve the objectives and the degree to which these objectives were achieved. Thus the organization's objectives reflect an internal logic and consistency. Fourth, the organization's operations vis-à-vis Israel over the past decade, as expressed in Nasrallah's statements and the manner in which the organization operated, reflect the ability to consider alternatives carefully while attempting to manage elements of uncertainty. In addition, when assessing the result, the means used to achieve its objectives justified the risks taken. In addition, the organization was extremely involved in the political arena in order to ensure the support of its decisions and objectives, while attempting to appease popular opinion in Lebanon.

Since 2011, as a result of Hezbollah's growing involvement in Lebanon, the organization has earned the reputation of a strong actor that achieves its objectives, and succeeds in exerting considerable influence on the chaos in Syrian territory. Today there are many indications of Hezbollah's new status and of its position among the leading elements affecting events in the region. Thus from an Iranian proxy, Hezbollah has evolved to a central partner in the political regional decision making process, alongside its Iranian and Russian allies. This process is likely to worsen Hezbollah's strategic balance with Israel. The moment Hezbollah is committed to Lebanon more than ever before, and not just the Shiites and Iran, as in the past, the threat to the organization and its potential loss increases, due to the ability of its enemies to exert pressure on it by damaging infrastructure and daily life in Lebanon, without any ability on the part of the organization to prevent this damage.

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No Magic Solution: The Effectiveness of Deporting Terrorists as a Counterterrorism Policy Measure

Adam Hoffman

Since the outbreak of the Palestinian attacks against Israelis in September 2015, a number of different proposals have been sounded on measures to help stop the latest wave of terrorism. One such proposal was the deportation of terrorists or their families to the Gaza Strip. The defense establishment considered this measure already in November 2015,[1] and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu subsequently asked Attorney General Avihai Mandelblit for a legal opinion about deporting the families of terrorists abetting terrorism to the Gaza Strip. According to Netanyahu, "The use of this tool will substantially reduce terrorist acts against Israel, its citizens, and its residents."[2] Although the Attorney General opposed the measure, arguing that it violated Israeli and international law,[3] the proposal to deport terrorists still garners broad support among government ministers and among the families of victims of terrorism,[4] and will presumably resurface in future debates about how to deal with the threat of terrorism.

This article considers the effectiveness of the deportation of terrorists and their families as a counterterrorism measure. To date, Israel has resorted to this measure a number of times in order to cope with Palestinian terrorism – including in 1992, when 415 Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives were expelled to Lebanon, and in 2011 as part of the deal to release of the kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. Despite the use of this tool, however, both its effectiveness in reducing terrorism and its effects on the deported militants are unclear. This assessment relies on an analysis of two case studies: the

Adam Hoffman, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, teaches at the Rothberg International School and is a researcher in the Middle Eastern Social Networks Analysis Desk at the Moshe Dayan Center at Tel Aviv University.

deportation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives in 1992, and the exile of key al-Qaeda figures in the 1980s and 1990s. The goal in this article is to provide an informed perspective, based on past cases in Israel and elsewhere, on the effectiveness of deporting terrorists in order to reduce terrorist activity. Unlike other measures in the fight against terrorism, such as demolition of terrorists' homes, which was assessed by an IDF research team appointed in late 2004 by then-IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon and found to be ineffective,[5] the policy of deporting terrorists has so far not been studied and still maintains its popularity as a means of combating terrorism. Using past case studies, this article examines the question in order to assist policymakers in the future debate regarding the use of this measure.

The Israeli Discourse Regarding the Deportation of Terrorists

The call to deport terrorists is not unique to Israel; in fact, many countries regard it as an important measure in the War on Terror. France, which in recent years has faced the terrorist threat and suffered Islamic terrorist attacks, is regarded as particularly aggressive in its stance on the deportation of terrorists, expelling 129 suspected foreign terrorists between 2003 and 2013.[6] Following the November 2015 attacks in Paris, President François Hollande sought to expedite the required legal proceeding in order to rapidly deport "foreigners constituting an especially severe threat to public order."[7] Furthermore, deportation as a counterterrorism measure was also used by the British authorities in Mandatory Palestine: in response to Jewish underground activity against the British Mandate forces, the British exiled 251 Etzel (National Military Organization) and Lehi (Freedom Fighters of Israel) members to detention camps in Africa in October 1944. Those deported were able to return only in July 1948, two months after the State of Israel was established. The British justified the deportations in part as a means of deterrence, but primarily as a means of removing these individuals from operational activity against British forces in Israel/Palestine.[8]

Israel's ongoing struggle against Palestinian terrorism has long featured proposals to deport terrorists, which was also evident in various proposed bills. Already in 1992, in the framework of the debate on a bill introduced by MK Benjamin Netanyahu on simplifying the proceedings for deporting terrorists, MK Michael Eitan cited part of the rationale for this measure, saying, "When they [the terrorists] are deported, they can no longer murder Jews."[9] In other words, deporting terrorists removes them far from the

theater of activity, thereby preventing them from committing additional acts of terrorism.

Beyond this, however, deporting terrorists is regarded as a measure that deters others from committing similar acts, and therefore plays an important role in establishing Israeli deterrence against terrorist organizations and preventing additional terrorist attacks. Deputy Minister of Defense Eli Ben Dahan cited this rationale when he said that "the only way [to stop the terrorists] is to deter them. It is necessary to explain to [potential terrorists] that at the end of the day, if they carry out an attack, their families will suffer greatly. I don't think there is any greater damage than to deport them."[10] Former General Security Agency (Shin Bet) Director MK Avi Dichter is a prominent supporter of deporting terrorists, saying: "The most deterring punishment I have ever seen is deportation. Nothing frightens a terrorist more than [the fear] that he and his family will be deported, because it disrupts their entire way of life."[11] Some validation of the severity of the punishment of deportation and the fear of deportation within Hamas can be found in a statement by Hamas spokesperson Sami Abu Zuhri, who said that if Israel carries out its threat to deport the leaders of the organization from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip, it would "open the gateway to hell."[12]

In light of this combination of prevention and deterrence, the idea of deporting terrorists has earned much popularity among Israeli legislators. For example, MK Yoav Kish argued that "deporting terrorists and their families is a war against terrorism... it will indisputably cause a halt in incitement and knife attacks,"[13] and Minister of Transportation Yisrael Katz, who sponsored a bill on deporting the families of terrorists, said, "Deporting families of terrorists will prevent this terrorism."[14] Indeed, the defense establishment likewise regarded this measure as an effective means in the struggle against terrorism. In a 2002 Supreme Court hearing, the Court accepted the view of the IDF that deporting the families of terrorists from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip would help deter potential terrorists.[15] In the context of the current wave of Palestinian violence, in late November 2015 the defense establishment again considered the deportation of families of terrorists to the Gaza Strip as a good policy step to halt the wave of terrorism.[16] At the same time, the defense establishment has not always supported the deportation of terrorists: in

> The very fact of their deportation affected the Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists sent to Lebanon in 1992 in a number of ways that improved the status and capabilities of their respective organizations.

June 2014, following the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers by a Hamas cell, the defense establishment opposed the deportation of dozens of Hamas operatives from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip.[17]

Deportation is indeed a severe punishment that removes the person deported from his surroundings, and makes it difficult for him to carry out terrorist acts. Yet while those advocating the deportation of terrorists as a policy tool in the struggle against terrorism stress the removal of the terrorist from his surroundings, they often do not consider the processes occurring during the period of the deportation. A number of studies on political exiles – those deported or forced to leave their homeland because of political activity – have emphasized the formative impact of exile on positions and views, as well as on strategies of struggle and political behavior.[18] One important work argues that exile proved a watershed in processes of fundamental importance for political rethinking, and that exile offered learning opportunities for political players that were forced to live and study agendas and political projects formerly unknown to them.[19] The period of exile following the deportation thereby provides an opportunity to forge new organizational connections, pursue possibilities for cooperation, and test new strategies of struggle, as well as ideational and ideological development. Two case studies can help illuminate some effects of deportation on terrorists: the deportation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives to Lebanon in 1992, and the political exile of key al-Qaeda figures during the 1980s and 1990s. An examination of the effects of the period of exile in these two cases, taken from two different political contexts, will facilitate a better understanding of the long term effects of deporting terrorists.

The Deportation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad Operatives in 1992

The first instance in which Israel used mass deportation as a tool for dealing with Palestinian terrorism occurred in December 1992. Terrorist attacks against Israel at that time had escalated, peaking with the kidnapping and murder of Border Policeman Senior Sergeant Nissim Toledano by Hamas on December 13, 1992. Hamas members kidnapped Toledano in order to obtain the release of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who was being held in an Israeli prison. In response to the event, the Rabin government decided to deport 415 Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists to Lebanon immediately.[20] The mass deportation of leaders and senior figures was intended to damage the organizational infrastructure and operational capabilities of the two

organizations. Israel deported activists from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in trucks to southern Lebanon, but Lebanon refused to accept them into its territory. As a result, they settled in a tent camp in Marj al-Zohour, north of the Security Zone in southern Lebanon.[21]

The deportation to Marj al-Zohour had several significant effects on the Hamas and Islamic Jihad deportees. First, the tent camp where those deported resided was controlled by Hezbollah. The Shiite organization welcomed the deportees with open arms and regarded the deportation as an opportunity to forge connections with the Palestinian terrorist organizations, and as such, operational connections between the Sunni Hamas and Shiite Hezbollah.[22] Hezbollah trained the deportees, supplied them with food and equipment, taught them new fighting tactics, and upgraded their terrorism capabilities. They also taught Hamas and Islamic Jihad personnel how to make the explosives and car bombs needed for suicide attacks – a terrorist tactic that was hitherto unique to Hezbollah among Middle East terrorist organizations, but that became a strategic weapon for Hamas after the Oslo Agreements were signed. Although Hamas was founded in 1987, its first suicide attack came only in April 1993 at the Mehola Junction in the Jordan Valley. According to Israeli journalist Shlomi Eldar, who specializes in Palestinian politics and interviewed key members of Hamas, "this was an import of a new jihad pattern, which was copied from Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and later adopted by the military wing of Islamic Jihad,"[23] whose leaders and operatives were among those deported to Lebanon. Instead of a deterrent designed to damage the organizational infrastructure and operational capabilities of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the deportation to southern Lebanon amounted to a "terrorism school" in which the deportees learned new highly destructive tactics that they implemented in Israel upon their return.

In addition to training together and learning new capabilities, the deportation to Lebanon also provided an opportunity for Palestinians to form long term connections with Hezbollah and Iran. Before the deportation to Lebanon, Hamas, the Palestinian extension of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood movement, was averse to connections with Shiite Iran. However, according to Sakr Abu Fakher, a Lebanese researcher specializing in Palestinian politics, this view changed during the exile of Hamas activists in Lebanon. "The psychological taboo [among Hamas members] against Shiism was broken in Marj al-Zohour, where the Palestinians came into close contact with Hezbollah and actually got along."[24] Hezbollah and Hamas realized

that they could establish long term relations on the basis of their common *muqawama* (violent resistance) activities against Israel, despite the sectarian and ideological gaps between them. This connection paved the way for a relationship between Hamas and Iran, which was subsequently of great help to Hamas. Following the initial connection with Hezbollah, senior Hamas officials later secretly visited Iran in order to "get better acquainted with the Iranian mentality," and to learn from the Revolutionary Guards' experience in their struggle against Israel.[25] Finally, the shared stay in Marj al-Zohour also led to closer cooperation between Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The gap in principle between the two organizations persisted, but the new circumstances overcame the internal disputes of Palestinian politics of that period, and a new era of practical cooperation between them began, which intensified over the following years.[26]

In addition to the establishment of connections with Hezbollah and Iran, the deportation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists helped raise the status of the deportees among the Palestinian public. Among Hamas, the group included many renowned figures in the movement, who later became prominent leaders in the organization. The case of Ismail Haniyeh, elected Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority in 2006, demonstrates this effect: according to Eldar, "the deportation to Marj al-Zohour and the interactions with the movement's leadership" gave Haniyeh the biggest political opportunity of his life. During the period of his deportation, Haniyeh acquired new connections and political expertise, "with the active student becoming a junior leader."[27] Another junior activist, Hamas operative Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, became a leader and spokesman of the deportees, and the deportation to Lebanon thus became the primary catalyst for Rantisi's rise within Hamas.[28] Haniyeh, Rantisi, Mahmoud al-Zahar, Ismail Abu Shanab, and other Hamas members later said that their stay in the deportation camp was a turning point for them, and shaped their future course after their return.[29]

The Political Exile of al-Qaeda Leaders

The very fact of their deportation affected the Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists sent to Lebanon in 1992 in a number of ways that improved the status and capabilities of their respective organizations. This change among the terrorists during exile, however, was not unique to members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad: a similar change is also evident in the case of key al-Qaeda figures who were political exiles.

Osama Bin Laden, who founded and led the al-Qaeda organization until his death in May 2011, was a political exile. Bin Laden, a Saudi citizen close to the royal family, was expelled from Saudi Arabia in 1991 following his public criticism of the Saudi regime and his support for Islamic terrorist organizations.[30] From Saudi Arabia, Bin Laden went to Sudan, where he stayed until May 1998, when under American pressure he was expelled from the country. During his stay in Sudan, he continued his outspoken criticism of the Saudi royal family, which he defined as un-Islamic, but also forged connections with other Islamic terrorist organizations. He developed close ties with Ayman al-Zawahiri,[31] leader of the Egyptian al-Jihad organization, who later became Bin Laden's right hand man (and leader of al-Qaeda after Bin Laden's death). Al-Zawahiri left Egypt in 1985, after being tried and imprisoned for his role in the assassination of President Anwar Sadat.[32] He then went to Pakistan, where he joined the so-called Afghan Arabs who fought against the Soviet forces that had invaded Afghanistan in 1979. After the war ended, al-Zawahiri was unable to return to Egypt because of his activity in al-Jihad. Instead, he joined Bin Laden in Sudan.[33]

The reunion of Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri and their shared exile in Sudan were an especially significant chapter in their personal histories and the evolution of al-Qaeda. Bin Laden said that his stay in Sudan and the meetings he held during this period were "the most important and fruitful of his life."[34] Most notably, he used Sudan as a base for his future jihad activity against the US: although al-Qaeda was formally established in 1988, only during Bin Laden's stay in Sudan did its leader begin the operational planning for a terrorist campaign against the United States. According to testimony from various sources, only in Sudan did Bin Laden begin to "deliberately focus" on the US as the "common and clear enemy [of the various jihad organizations] rather than the nearest enemy [the Arab regimes]." During this time, he began to engage in "building a considerable military organization to carry out operations against U.S. military, administrative, and business targets."[35] Bin Laden thus continued his activity against the Saudi regime from Sudan, but also began simultaneously to plan his war against the US from this country, in which he was far from the reach of the American and Saudi intelligence services.

Since leaving Egypt, al-Zawahiri searched for a base for jihad activity in Egypt.[36] Exile in Sudan provided him with this "safe haven," and enabled al-Zawahiri and his associates to carry out increasingly deadly terrorist attacks against Egyptian targets without interference. In Sudan, al-Zawahiri

planned al-Jihad's two leading operations: the attack on the Egyptian embassy in Pakistan in November 1995, which killed 16 people,[37] and the failed assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Ethiopia in June 1995. Planned in Sudan, this assassination was also assisted by the Sudanese intelligence services.[38] Exile in Sudan thus became a base for international terrorist activity by al-Zawahiri and the Egyptian al-Jihad organization, as well as an operational base for al-Qaeda activity in East Africa and a point of departure for Bin Laden's war against the United States.

Following the unsuccessful assassination attempt against Mubarak, Egypt, the United States, and other countries exerted pressure on Sudan to expel Bin Laden and al-Qaeda operatives from its territory. Bin Laden was thus subsequently forced to leave Sudan, and he returned to Afghanistan in May 1996. Upon his return, Bin Laden described Afghanistan as "an invincible land which enjoys security, pride, and immunity against the humiliation and subjugation to which our brothers are subject to in their own country [Saudi Arabia]."[39] Bin Laden returned to Afghanistan as a hero, receiving from the Taliban regime a generous welcome and protection. He exploited this immunity in order to publish his famous declaration of war against the US, in which he advocated killing Americans and their allies, both civilians and military.[40] More importantly, however, from the site of his exile in Afghanistan, Bin Laden planned the first of al-Qaeda's major attacks: the attacks against the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998, the attack against the *USS Cole* in the port of Aden in October 2000, and the September 11 attacks in the US itself. The planning of these missions would have been impossible without the presence of Bin Laden and other senior al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan, where al-Qaeda's training camps were also located.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The deportation of terrorists is frequently regarded in Israel as an easy and quick solution to the challenge of terrorism. It was first used in 1992 against Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives, again as part of the Shalit deal in 2011, and in a number of other cases. Elsewhere, France has deported many terrorism suspects from its territory, and the British Mandatory authorities exiled hundreds of Etzel and Lehi operatives to Africa as part of their counterterrorism struggle against the Jewish undergrounds before the establishment of the State of Israel. Deportation of terrorists is regarded

as an act that distances the threat, thereby decreasing the likelihood of terrorist attacks; damages the terrorist groups' organizational infrastructure (especially in cases of mass deportation); and deters others from committing terrorist acts.

Deportation, however, is highly problematic under international law,[41] and is also liable to heighten – rather than reduce – the motivation to undertake terrorist attacks. Furthermore, as argued in this article, deporting terrorists could potentially enhance the capabilities of terrorists and their organizations, aid them in fostering new connections with other terrorist organizations, and enhance their status in local public opinion. The use of suicide attacks among Palestinian terrorist groups is largely a result of the deportation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives to southern Lebanon, where they became acquainted with members of Hezbollah and learned new terror tactics from them. This innovation introduced a new dimension of lethality into the history of Palestinian terrorism, which was reflected in the wave of suicide attacks that were carried out in 1994. In contrast, the exile of senior al-Qaeda leaders to Sudan, and later to Afghanistan, contributed significantly to the internationalization of the terrorism of Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, played an important role in escalating Bin Laden's struggle against the US, enabled the deadly terrorist attacks against Egypt from Sudan, and helped orchestrate al-Qaeda's deadly terrorist attacks, including the September 11 attacks.

> If Israel decides to resort to deportations, it is best to restrict them to extreme cases and to individuals, rather than undertake a mass deportation of operatives from a single organization, and ensure that the deportation is to a Western country with political ties to Israel, instead of to a country that is likely to support terrorist activity from its territory.

Despite the negative effects of deportation in these two cases, however, not every act of deportation necessarily leads to ideological extremism or to the improvement of terrorist capabilities among those deported. For example, most of the members of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade who barricaded themselves in the Church of the Nativity in 2002 and were deported to European countries and the Gaza Strip did not return to terrorist activity, and some of them even spoke openly about the need for dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the basis of the 1967 borders.[42] It appears that the effect of deportation of terrorists depends mainly on the nature of the regime and the degree of governance in the country to which

the terrorists are expelled. While a country like Sudan, which sponsored terrorism, supported and aided Bin Laden and his associates in committing terrorist acts from its territory, and Hezbollah gladly adopted the Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives, a responsible country that is eager to belong to the international community, with all the norms that this entails, will refrain from such support. Under conditions of limited governance or a regime that sponsors terrorism (as is the case in many so-called "failed states"), however, deportation can be a formula for remotely controlled terrorism. Such a situation is likely to both increase the terrorist threat against Israel and make it more difficult to thwart and prevent terrorist attacks, due to the geographic distance and the limited intelligence control in a hostile country.

These findings call for a renewed debate about the deportation of terrorists, particularly as this idea surfaces repeatedly in Israeli discourse on measures to counter and deter Palestinian terrorism. Given the potential negative long term consequences, it is preferable to refrain from using this tool, or at least to take the negative consequences of this measure into consideration. It is questionable whether Hamas and Islamic Jihad would have learned how to prepare the explosive charges and car bombs necessary to carry out suicide terrorist attacks had they not met and trained together with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, or whether the Egyptian al-Jihad organization under Ayman al-Zawahiri would have been able to operate so freely in carrying out deadly terrorist attacks had he not been living in Sudan, far from the reach of the Egyptian security services. In the event that Israel decides to resort to deportations, it is best to restrict them to extreme cases and to individuals, rather than a mass deportation of operatives from a single organization, and ensure that the deportation is to a Western country with political ties to Israel, instead of to a country that is likely to support terrorist activity from its territory.

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A Troubling Correlation: The Ongoing Economic Deterioration in East Jerusalem and the Current Wave of Terror

Amit Efrati

Background

"What do I care about the Temple Mount?" sighs Ali Awasat, an East Jerusalem resident. "As far as I'm concerned, let the Jews take it. They're all liars. What's important to me is what I have in my pocket. People in the east of the city don't have work, don't have proper salaries. This is the problem, and this is what leads to despair."[1] Although Awasat's attitude is not typical of the inflammatory Islamic-nationalistic discourse highlighted on the social networks and in Palestinian media, it reflects the deep roots of the current wave of terror, which stems mainly from ongoing despair in a gloomy economic reality, and the sense among Palestinian youth that all paths to advancement are blocked. Nevertheless, the economic aspects of the current wave of terror are hardly mentioned at all in the public discourse in Israel, which tends to characterize the violence as a dark and ISIS-like Islamic religious war whose participants are a Palestinian "Shabaab" that sanctifies death and sees the world from a different perspective.[2] In fact, however, an examination of those committing the recent terror attacks in Israel reveals a profile that is secular, young, poorly educated, and lacking any organizational affiliation.

The economic aspects of the current terror wave are reflected in a survey conducted in March 2016 among Palestinian youth from the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, which indicated that the highest percentage (33.8 percent) believe that the wave of terror that broke out in

Amit Efrati holds an M.A. in international affairs from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and researches Israel-Palestinian relations.

late 2015 stems mainly from the frustration of many young Palestinians with their economic state.[3] These findings are akin to the fact that at least 75 percent of the attacks carried out within the Green Line since September 2015 were perpetrated by youth aged 16-22 from East Jerusalem, especially neighborhoods with the worst socio-economic conditions.[4] The most prominent neighborhood in this respect is Jabel Mukaber, one of the poorest neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and in all of Israel, and from which nine residents perpetrated significant attacks involving the injury of at least one Israeli with moderate wounds, or worse, between September 2015 and May 2016. This number is out of the 28 attacks of similar severity carried out by residents of East Jerusalem neighborhoods during this period.

The attacks executed by Jabel Mukaber residents killed four Israelis and wounded seven with moderate-severe injuries. In this context, two other neighborhoods stand out, which are also among the lowest socio-economic level in the region and the state – Beit Hanina and Sur Baher, which were the origins of five and six attackers, respectively. In contrast, there has not been even one attacker from the East Jerusalem neighborhoods considered to have relatively high socio-economic levels, such as Sheikh Jarrah and Bab a-Zahara. However, despite additional similar data that point to a connection between the deteriorating economic state of East Jerusalem neighborhoods and their high number of attackers, quite often claims are heard that this number is the result of the relatively greater freedom of movement of East Jerusalem residents versus West Bank residents, as well as the neighborhoods' physical proximity to the Temple Mount area (in light of the perceived change in Israeli policy).[5] Nevertheless, since East Jerusalem residents have always enjoyed great freedom of movement in West Jerusalem and elsewhere in Israel, and given that there is nothing new in Israel's Temple Mount policy, these arguments cannot explain the significant rise in involvement of East Jerusalem residents in the cycle of violence at this particular time. Furthermore, these arguments fail to explain why specifically the poorer East Jerusalem neighborhoods have a tendency to be represented in the cycle of terror at higher rates than the well-off neighborhoods.

In general terms, the poor economic condition of East Jerusalem residents, home to some 320,000 people,[6] stems mainly from their occupational profile. Although participation in the labor force among East Jerusalem working age men is relatively high in comparison to their Jewish counterparts (82 versus 72 percent[7]), the poor "quality" of their employment, and not the

"quantity," is the critical factor. In day-to-day reality, most of these East Jerusalem laborers make a living from part time, nonprofessional jobs in a narrow job market where the demand for employment far outpaces the supply, and this in turn depresses wages and terms of employment. These job market characteristics, combined with the ongoing neglect on the part of municipal authorities – against the backdrop of the political conflict – have led to a significant rise in the percentage of East Jerusalem Arab families who live under the poverty line (now 77 percent, versus 64 percent in 2006), as well as an 84 percent poverty rate among children of the area.[8] This joins the low quality of the local educational, occupational, and welfare institutions, which affects potential for the youth's future advancement and development. These elements combine to induce much despair among the local population, and prompt solid grounds for religious radicalization, a sense of humiliation and deprivation, and an assumption that there is "nothing to lose."

The Decline in the Economic Condition of East Jerusalem Arabs

The gradual worsening of the economic state of East Jerusalem Arabs can be traced back to 2002, when the Israeli government commenced construction of the security fence, which cut off the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem from the Palestinian villages surrounding the city and the West Bank. For the residents of these neighborhoods, who commonly worked in the hotel and restaurant industries (25 percent), education (19 percent), and general services (19 percent),[9] the geographic division dealt what in many respects was a fatal blow.

First, the stricter checkpoint policy made access to the neighborhoods more difficult and led to a sharp drop in the influx of foreign and domestic tourists to the area. Significantly, this policy reduced the access for residents of the West Bank and Palestinian towns near Jerusalem who would commonly shop in East Jerusalem and use its educational, health, and welfare institutions. The preference of these Palestinians to shop and seek services in areas that do not require crossing checkpoints raised the status of West Bank cities such as Ramallah on the one hand, and left East Jerusalem hotel owners and service providers without work, on the other.

Second, the security fence restricted access for East Jerusalem residents to sources of employment, education, and welfare located in the West Bank. The long waits at checkpoints, stemming mainly from unforeseen delays and sudden closures, worsened individual lives and potential options.

For example, a drive from the East Jerusalem neighborhoods to Ramallah, where there are many sources of employment and trade, or to Bir Zeit or Bethlehem, where there are developed educational institutions, today takes some two hours in each direction, despite the short geographical distance involved. The checkpoint policy also increased the cumbersome bureaucracy involved in export from East Jerusalem to the West Bank, which raises the price of merchandise produced in these neighborhoods, lowers the economic feasibility of trade, and deters businesspeople from starting economic ventures in East Jerusalem.

The ugly employment reality that has taken shape continues to cast shadows over the local educational system, which has been significantly weakened in respect to infrastructure and quality. The East Jerusalem educational system, which has some 100,000 students, has three types of educational institutions: official-municipal, unofficial recognized, and private. The fundamental difference between the first type and the other two is that in the official-municipal schools, Hebrew is taught as a mandatory subject, and the curriculum relies on textbooks routinely overseen by the municipality.[10] Nevertheless, due to the severe shortage of classrooms in the official-municipal institutions, only 43 percent of local elementary school-age students are "privileged" to attend these schools, while the other 57,000 elementary school-age students are left without any place and forced to purchase education at unsupervised educational institutions.[11] In any case, the official-municipal educational institutions, which cost significantly less, are perceived by the locals as low quality and neglected, and thus mainly students from the weaker strata attend them. Moreover, the severe shortage of classrooms in the East Jerusalem educational institutions affects more than just the elementary schools. For example, 30 percent of students who remain in the elementary schools drop out afterwards due to a shortage of space in the secondary education system. Dropout rates of older students are even higher – 16 percent among tenth graders; 26 percent among eleventh graders; and 33 percent among twelfth graders – with nearly half of the students from these neighborhoods failing to complete 12 years of education.[12]

Construction of the security fence, which commenced in 2002, cut off the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem from the Palestinian villages surrounding the city and the West Bank. For the residents of these neighborhoods, the geographic division dealt what in many respects was a fatal blow.

Based on the above data, and given the connection between education level and occupational and economic development on the one hand, and between development and occupational potential and the recourse to violence and crime on the other, it is no surprise that all of the East Jerusalem attackers who perpetrated significant attacks since September 2015 lacked higher education. Moreover, the future for some 60 percent[13] of twelfth grade students in East Jerusalem neighborhoods, who pass the local matriculation exams, is not much brighter. The fact that the institutions of higher education in Israel do not recognize matriculation certificates received in the Palestinian schooling track (Tawjihi), which is the system in 172 out of 180 local educational institutions,[14] leads to the situation where East Jerusalem recipients of matriculation certificates are rejected repeatedly by these institutions, unless they pass special exams. In this situation, holders of Tawjihi certificates interested in higher education are forced to relocate to the West Bank or Arab countries where such a certificate is recognized, a process that involves significant economic expense. And even after receiving an academic degree, these individuals have much difficulty integrating into the Israeli job market, which does not recognize their education and requires them to pass additional exams. Therefore, besides emigration, most degree holders, similar to dropouts of the local educational system, have one option – employment in the Israeli labor market in unskilled occupations, due to the restricted access to the West Bank and limited industry in their neighborhoods, which cannot support the great demand for work among the local population.

However, even when the residents of East Jerusalem turn to the Israeli labor market as a last resort, they encounter high barriers. First of all, the fact that most East Jerusalem schools do not teach Hebrew at a reasonable level, whether as a mandatory or elective subject, significantly limits the ability of the neighborhoods' young people to integrate into the job market. Furthermore, the lower cost of employing West Bank Palestinians, along with the Israeli interest in granting work permits for Palestinians, has led to a competition with West Bank Palestinians for unskilled jobs that East Jerusalem Arabs cannot win. In this situation, most East Jerusalem Arabs have been left to work within their neighborhoods in part time, limited jobs, as store clerks and laborers in the industry and construction sectors. This reality explains why such a high percentage of East Jerusalem residents live under the poverty line, and why some 8,501 children from these neighborhoods have been categorized as at-risk. Notwithstanding these

figures, and despite the fact that 37 percent of welfare service recipients in Jerusalem offices are East Jerusalem residents, only five welfare offices operate in East Jerusalem neighborhoods, employing 88 social workers. This is in contrast to the 22 welfare offices operating in West Jerusalem, which employ 300 social workers.[15] Therefore, it is no surprise that over 800 East Jerusalem families who applied for social work assistance are still waiting.

The reality described above produces a three-phase process that is common among East Jerusalem youth. First, they absorb their parents' ongoing sense of frustration, deprivation, and neglect. Second, based on their own limited options, they consider their occupational future as similarly bleak. Third, they come to an understanding that they have nothing left to lose, an understanding that is liable to translate into a worsening of the capital's already precarious security situation.

A Tale of Two Neighborhoods

While the economic situation of all East Jerusalem neighborhoods is not good, a comparison between two of them, Jabel Mukaber and Bab a-Zahara, demonstrates the link between socioeconomic conditions in a specific neighborhood and the participation of its residents in the cycle of terror over the last 10 months.

Jabel Mukaber

The Jabel Mukaber neighborhood, which is the western portion of the original Palestinian village al-Sawahra, is located in the southern portion of East Jerusalem and numbers some 30,000 residents.[16] This neighborhood formed its identity in the wake of the Six Day War, when the original village of al-Sawahra was split into two parts: the Western part was annexed to the Jerusalem municipal territory, and its residents received blue identification cards, while the eastern part remained outside of municipal territory and its residents received orange identification cards. This division was made despite the fact that in many cases members of the same family lived on different sides of the village. Until the construction of the security barrier, access between the two parts of the village was relatively easy, and the population's living routine was unaffected. However, since the security fence was for the most part built along the route of lands annexed in 1967, the fence now represents an actual barrier between the two parts of the village. On a related note, the fence divides between the original parts of two other Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, Sur Baher and Beit Hanina.

One of the main problems faced by the Jabel Mukaber neighborhood is its singularly low level of transportation infrastructure, which affects access to educational institutions and local residences. Due to neglect on the part of the municipality, the roads were paved by neighborhood residents in unprofessional and dangerous fashion. Nor is this the only example of poor infrastructure. Many neighborhood homes are not connected properly to the water system or to the municipal sewage and electricity systems, and only 19.9 percent have a regular internet connection.[17] Twenty schools operate in the neighborhood and suffer from overcrowding and a shortage of classrooms, such that out of 183 neighborhood classrooms, nine are bomb shelters, 22 are in residential buildings, and three are in trailers set up in schoolyards.[18] Regarding employment, approximately 77 percent of neighborhood residents work in the Israeli labor market, most of them in unskilled occupations, with the rest being self-employed and shopkeepers.[19] According to Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) data, based on the 2008 census, the average salary of the neighborhood worker is NIS 1,603, and 53 percent of income earners in the neighborhood earn less than minimum wage. The figures also show that Jabel Mukaber is ranked in Cluster 2 regarding socioeconomic classification (1 being the lowest and 20 being the highest), and ranks 150 out of 153 statistical zones in Jerusalem. On a national scale, the neighborhood ranks 1,608 out of 1,616 statistical zones in Israel.[20]

Of all East Jerusalem neighborhoods Jabel Mukaber has produced the highest number of attackers (nine) during the current terror wave, including the two terrorists who perpetrated the attack on Egged Bus 78 in the Armon Hanatziv neighborhood on October 13, 2015, which killed three Israelis, and the Bezeq technician who carried out a car ramming attack that same day, killing another Israeli. This latter terrorist was the cousin of two other neighborhood residents who perpetrated the Har Nof synagogue attack in 2014, which killed six Israelis. Furthermore, a survey of the 740 criminal cases opened against East Jerusalem residents in 2015 for national security crimes, which included, inter alia, illegal arms possession and stone and firebomb throwing, indicates that 125 cases were opened against residents of Jabel Mukaber (17 percent). This is despite the fact that the neighborhood's population is less

> East Jerusalem youth commonly absorb their parents' ongoing sense of frustration, deprivation, and neglect; consider their occupational future as similarly bleak; and come to an understanding that they have nothing left to lose.

than 10 percent of the total East Jerusalem population.[21] The survey also indicated that 42.5 percent of the cases were opened against residents of Jabel Mukaber, Beit Hanina, and Sur Baher – as noted, three neighborhoods where the security fence created an actual barrier between their different original sections – despite the fact that they comprise less than 20 percent of the entire East Jerusalem population. Finally, 62.5 percent of these criminal cases were opened against residents of East Jerusalem neighborhoods whose socioeconomic level was categorized as Cluster 2.

Bab a-Zahara

The Bab a-Zahara neighborhood is located in the northern section of Jerusalem's Old City, between Damascus Gate and Herod's Gate, and is home to 3,500 residents.[22] This neighborhood, which was one of the first Arab neighborhoods outside of walled Jerusalem, has since 1948 become the commercial and business center of East Jerusalem, with major bank branches and restaurants. Thirteen schools, all of which are official-municipal schools, operate around the neighborhood, and the average number of students per class is 25 (the lowest in East Jerusalem). Not surprisingly, therefore, 46.8 percent of neighborhood residents hold an academic degree (the highest percentage in East Jerusalem).[23] According to CBS statistics, the neighborhood ranks in socioeconomic Cluster 5. Out of 153 statistical zones in Jerusalem, the neighborhood ranks 106, and its poverty ranking is mid-range; in national ranking, it is 1,336 out of 1,616 statistical zones. The neighborhood's average monthly salary per person is NIS 2,089 (59 percent lower than minimum wage) and 48.6 percent of the residents have internet access.[24]

Thus a comparison of the two neighborhoods shows clearly that the socioeconomic state of Bab a-Zahara is much better than that of Jabel Mukaber. The average salary is 33 percent higher, 28.7 percent more people are connected to the internet, and 38 percent more hold academic degrees. In contrast with Jabel Mukaber, since the outbreak of violence in September 2015, not one attacker has come from Bab a-Zahara. Furthermore, only 13 criminal cases of a national security nature were opened against neighborhood residents (1.7 percent of all cases), lower than its proportionate share of the East Jerusalem population.

Attempts to Improve the Situation

Following many years of neglect, in 2014 Israel's government launched a five-year plan for East Jerusalem with a total budget of approximately NIS 300 million. Already then, the architects of the plan acknowledged the "understanding that there is a close connection between the extent and level of violence among East Jerusalem residents and the standard of living in the neighborhoods in the city's east side."[25] Beside the fact that only two thirds of the total sum was in the end actually allocated for improving local infrastructure, the main problem with the plan was that the funds would not necessarily go toward the welfare of the residents. Thus, for example, NIS 18 million, 38 percent of the budget designated for development of the educational institutions, were allocated for increasing the number of students completing Israeli matriculation exams, although only 4 percent of East Jerusalem educational institutions teach the Israeli curriculum.

Moreover, in order to deal with the poor level of Hebrew among East Jerusalem residents, the government allocated a negligible sum of approximately NIS 4 million to institutionalize a Hebrew studies booster program in the local schools.[26] In addition, the government invested NIS 5 million to deal with the dropout problem among neighborhood students, NIS 11 million less than the municipality's educational administration requested for the issue,[27] while completely ignoring the urgent need for construction of new municipal schools, though this shortage serves as one of the primary roots of the problem. Furthermore, instead of investing funds for construction of commercial centers for the local population, a step that could provide long term employment for many residents, the government preferred to invest NIS 100 million in increasing security in East Jerusalem neighborhoods in the framework of the five-year plan, and an additional NIS 85 million for securing adjacent Jewish neighborhoods, as part of the Ministry of Construction and Housing budget.[28]

> An improved economic state for East Jerusalem neighborhoods will significantly reduce the pool of potential attackers, mainly thanks to the hope such a change will instill in the residents, suddenly creating "something to lose."

The government's shortsighted attitude toward the East Jerusalem distress can also be seen in its response to the current wave of violence. Instead of taking steps with long term effects capable of rooting out the problem that increases the likelihood of new terror, the government has preferred steps such as revocation of

the residency status of a number of the residents who were involved in the planning and execution of terror attacks, erection of concrete barriers separating Jewish and Muslim neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, and consideration of the option of deporting attackers' families from East Jerusalem to the Gaza Strip. Beyond the fact that such steps are meant to curry public favor, and to put a "small, used, Band-Aid on a bleeding wound," the question remains to what extent they are effective in eradicating the basic causes leading to 16-year old children fearlessly taking a kitchen knife to stab Israelis.

What Can be Done?

Improved economic circumstances for East Jerusalem residents will not completely eradicate their involvement in terror. As central as it is, the economic factor alone does not account for the rise of involvement in terror. On the contrary, the increase stems from a broad spectrum of causes, including the political stalemate, the issue of the residents' legal standing, and religious radicalization in the mosques. Nevertheless, an improved economic state for East Jerusalem neighborhoods will significantly reduce the pool of potential attackers, mainly thanks to the hope such a change will instill in the residents, suddenly creating "something to lose." Therefore, the Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, together with the Ministers of Welfare, Finance, and Education, would do well to formulate a new strategy for the Israeli government's policy in East Jerusalem. This strategy should be built in conjunction with the Jerusalem municipality, and in dialogue with neighborhood representatives in order to understand their problems and build an orderly, joint work plan to deal with educational and employment issues.

The relative quiet of the past months in the East Jerusalem neighborhoods, and the fact that no terrorist launched an attack from this area with serious consequences, is of no relevance to the highly volatile situation that is liable to explode in the future and exact additional Israeli casualties.

In the short term, regarding education, it is recommended that extensive budget resources be used to increase the number of classrooms in the official-municipal schools, both elementary and secondary, and to improve their quality significantly. In this way, more East Jerusalem students will be able to acquire proper education at supervised educational institutions. At the same time, in line with the School Supervision Law (1969), which applies, inter alia, to the

recognized unofficial schools as well, the Jerusalem municipality should increase enforcement and supervision of educational content studied in these institutions. Furthermore, the municipality should make sure that Hebrew language is taught as a mandatory subject at all local educational institutions, starting from a young age, and ensure that proficiency in Hebrew is a condition for a matriculation certificate within these institutions. Moreover, it is important to improve the municipal preschool system, which currently does not meet local needs, and thus prevents many East Jerusalem mothers from joining the labor force (only 22 percent of East Jerusalem women aged 25-54 are currently employed, compared with 82 percent of their Jewish counterparts in Jerusalem, and 35 percent of their Israeli Arab counterparts[29]). It is also recommended to build and develop institutions and organizations dealing with informal education in the afternoon hours, a type of institution that barely exists today.

From an employment perspective, it is important to invest extensive funds in the creation of jobs in East Jerusalem. This should be done through the creation of commercial and industrial zones near the most disadvantaged neighborhoods such as Jabel Mukaber and Beit Hanina, which will provide at least minimum wage. In this context, it is crucial to encourage and subsidize both Israeli and Arab companies, with an emphasis on hi-tech companies, so they will open branches in these commercial zones.

In the long term, regarding education, the inability of East Jerusalem residents holding Palestinian matriculation certificates to attend Israeli institutions of higher learning should be addressed, as well as their need to obtain professional jobs appropriate for their education. Perhaps the Palestinian curriculum currently taught at East Jerusalem educational institutions should be replaced with the curriculum taught in the Israeli Arab educational system, or at least Israeli core subjects should be added to the Palestinian curriculum. Regarding employment, subject to security arrangements, it is worth reconsidering access of West Bank residents to East Jerusalem neighborhoods and vice versa, or at least easing the bureaucracy involved in the process, in light of the positive effect this will have on East Jerusalem commerce and employment. Furthermore, a long term program should be institutionalized for development and empowerment of the private sector in East Jerusalem, especially in the sectors of tourism, trade, and hi-tech.

The relative quiet of the past two months in the East Jerusalem neighborhoods, and the fact that no terrorist has launched an attack from

this area that injured at least one Israeli with moderate or more severe wounds, is of no relevance to the highly volatile situation that is liable to explode in the future and take a toll on additional Israeli casualties. If the foregoing recommendations are implemented, the "opportunity cost" for East Jerusalem residents turning to violence, i.e., the cost for lost opportunities, will increase dramatically. This cost, which barely exists today, and which will include lost possibilities of future education, employment, and welfare for local youth, will make them think twice before taking one problematic path or another, and contribute to the creation of healthy competition oriented toward careers and personal development, rather than dubious fame rooted in violence.

Notes

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Troubles in Paradise: The New Arab Leadership in Israel and the Challenges of the Hour

Doron Matza, Meir Elran, and Mohammed Abo Nasra

This paper examines the political leadership represented by the Joint List and its prospects for survival, given the difficult challenges before it: the internal challenges, particularly the ideological gaps between the parties; and the external challenges, chief among them, government policy and hostile nationalist discourse within the Jewish population. The article first considers the background to the establishment of the political party through three lenses – political-parliamentary, intra-Arab, and regional – and assesses the strategic significance of the party for the nature of Arab leadership and political strategy. It then surveys the severe challenges to the Joint List in light of the changes in Israel's security situation since the fall of 2015, and examines the significance of this development both for the survival of the new leadership and its ability to continue to adhere to the social action strategy it adopted, and for the Israeli establishment and the state's Jewish majority.

The Establishment of the Joint List

The formation in January 2015 of the Joint List, headed by Ayman Odeh of Hadash: the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, marked the beginning of a new trend in Arab politics in Israel. After many years in which the

Dr Doron Matza, who worked in intelligence in the Israel Security Agency, is a lecturer at the Achva Academic College, within the framework of the Ben Gurion University program for Middle East Studies. Brig. Gen. (ret.) Meir Elran is a senior research fellow at INSS. Mohammed Abo Nasra is a Neubauer research associate at INSS. This essay was written within the framework of the INSS Research Program on Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel, which is supported by the Joseph and Jeanette Neubauer Foundation of Philadelphia.

Arab leadership suffered from internal political divisions, a course was charted to close the ranks. It was the most notable political development of its type in Arab society since the establishment of the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel in the early 1980s and the founding of Arab political parties, which replaced the affiliated Arab parties that acted under the auspices of the Mapai party. Now, more than a year since the founding of the Joint List, it seems that the events of late 2015 and early 2016 pose substantial challenges to its role and leader, and have caused the first cracks in the vision and goals of the Joint List. To understand the meaning of those challenges, it is necessary to revisit the three levels underlying the party's formation: the political-parliamentary, the intra-sectoral, and the regional Arab level, which lay in the background of the social justice movement in Israel.

The Political-Parliamentary Context: The New Electoral Threshold

Part of the political-parliamentary context behind the establishment of the Joint List was the initiative of the political party Yisrael Beiteinu, headed by Avigdor Liberman, to raise the electoral threshold in the elections for the 20th Knesset (March 2015). While the move was described as designed to enhance governance by reducing the influence of small political parties in the Knesset, it was virtually impossible to refute the charge that the bill aimed to reduce Arab representation and especially that of parties such as Balad: the National Democratic Assembly, which since the 1990s had tested the limits of democratic discourse in Israel. The bill to raise the electoral threshold was preceded by a series of legislative initiatives in the 19th Knesset aimed at excluding the Arab minority from Israel's political and cultural spheres, for example, the Law on Nationality promoted by MK Avi Dichter, then of Kadima. However, the move backfired and prompted the formation of the Joint List, which resulted in a new record: the party earned 13 seats in the 20th Knesset.

The Intra-Arab Context: The Leadership Crisis in the Arab Sector

Much has been said in recent years about the leadership crisis in the Arab society in Israel. From an Arab perspective, the source of this crisis was the under-representation of Arabs in Israeli politics and the limited ability of Arab MKs to translate their election into actual achievements, given their circumscribed access to the state's decision makers and resources. Indeed, since the establishment of the State of Israel, no Arab party has

ever been part of the government. Only once, at the end of Yitzhak Rabin's term in office, did the Arab parties provide a swing vote in the Knesset – on the Oslo Accords. The common narrative in the Jewish public sphere is that the Arab MKs prefer to focus on political issues relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which in turn negatively affects their ability to advance the agenda of the Arab public, which would rather promote social and civic issues over national goals.[1]

Either way, the steady decline in voting rates among Arabs for the Israeli parliament in recent years (in the 1950s, some 80 percent of eligible voters participated in the electoral process, while in the 2009 election voter turnout was only 53 percent) reflects not only the distancing of the Arab population from the state and its representative institutions but also criticism of the Arab MKs. In terms of civil society, this dissatisfaction was manifested in the founding of NGOs in the Arab sector, some Jewish-Arab and some Arab only, such as Adalah: the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, Injaz, and Mossawa: the Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel, all of which play an important role in the Arab community and in mediating between that community and state authorities. The culmination of this political alienation was the publication of the Arab vision statements in 2006 and 2007, when prominent NGO representatives as well as Arab intellectuals in effect replaced the veteran political parties to articulate the national demands of Israel's Arab minority. It is no wonder that one of the offshoots of the publication of those documents was the dispute between the authors and the Arab political parties over the originality and exclusivity of the ideas cited in the vision statements. In the course of the dispute, political factions in the Arab sector attempted to silence and censor the authors, and this ultimately led to the dissolution of the initiative.

The failure of the Arab intellectual leadership to marginalize the veteran political leadership created a public vacuum that worsened the ongoing leadership crisis in the Arab sector. The parallel effort by the Northern Faction of the Islamic Movement, led by Sheikh Raed Salah, to constitute a political-religious alternative had a limited effect. The strategy it pursued in recent years – a focus on the issue of the Temple Mount and other holy places, along with ongoing social action within the Arab sector (which was supposed to mobilize additional support from within the Arab population) – ran into trouble, mostly because Israel took legal steps against the movement's leader.

The trigger was an extreme speech given by Sheikh Salah in February 2007 at a demonstration against construction at the Mughrabi Ascent to the Temple Mount. The speech, in which he alluded to a blood libel against the Jewish people, led to violent riots, and Salah was jailed in 2013 for incitement to violence. After the appeals process was exhausted, Salah entered prison in May 2016 to begin serving his sentence. But the Islamic Movement sustained another blow before he was imprisoned when, in face of the wave of violence that began in the fall of 2015 and the charges that Sheikh Salah and other Movement activists were behind the attacks, the Israeli cabinet declared it an unlawful organization. Thus, the State of Israel drew clear borders for the Islamic Movement's Temple Mount strategy and forced it to reorganize. This is the background to the announcement in April 2016 of the new Islamic movement al-Wafaawa-al-Islah (Loyalty and Reform), headed by Sheikh Hosam Abu Leil. It is still too early to assess the implications of these moves for the policies and status of the religious movement in the Arab public.

The ongoing Arab leadership crisis also reflected the relative weakness of two types of discourse and political action strategies. On the one hand was the national discourse, deeply invested in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and represented by the veteran Arab political parties and Arab intellectuals, with the presentation of positions, such as the Arab vision documents, that tested the limits of the Israeli consensus.[2] Time and again, they expressed their clear opposition to the fundamental conditions defining the relationship between the Arab minority and Jewish majority, while attempting to leverage basic changes through the model of consociationalism, such as exists in Belgium, which provides a national minority the right to veto decisions affecting it. On the other hand is the religious Islamic discourse, which challenges the existing arrangement by means of a struggle in the name of the holy sites in Jerusalem. Despite the gulf that seems to separate the political and religious discourse, they share a common denominator: both tested the limits of the Jewish consensus, heightened the sense of enmity and alienation of Jews toward Arabs, and emerged as unproductive in terms of their ability to promote the social and economic interests of the Arab public. Thus the Arab political leaders operated using tools that increasingly eroded their base of support and consequently became progressively irrelevant.

The Regional Context: In the Spirit of the Arab Spring

The events that began in late 2010, soon thereafter dubbed the Arab Spring, were significant for the Israeli Arab public, not only because they threatened to dismantle the old order of the veteran Arab regimes and establish a new order in their stead, but also because they tried to redefine the rules of the Arab political game. Tahrir Square symbolized the desire to close ranks among a range of social activist groups, each of which might represent an independent political agenda yet shared the desire for changing the social and political order. It was an expression of the longing for political and social cohesiveness, even at the expense of blurring the differences in the ideological approaches of the different political groups and at the expense of a clear vision as to the revolution's goals. The events in the Arab world presumably provided inspiration to the Arabs in Israel. The political partnership among traditionally rival parties did not blur their respective political uniqueness, yet created a political framework with a common ideological denominator on which each of the constituent factions could agree. This common denominator, based on the heightened social justice discourse, is the third context behind the formation of the Joint List.

The Strategy of the New Arab Leadership

The focus on social justice in the Israeli public in the summer of 2011 – partly an echo of the Arab Spring that began late in 2010 and inspired by the global financial crisis of 2008-9 – heralded, if only temporarily, a new interest in social issues. The social discourse did not bypass Arab society, which was naturally attuned to it, given the civil problems and social inequality that divide it from the Jewish majority. The formation of the Joint List also embodied a conceptual change within at least part of the Arab leadership, manifested in the willingness to accentuate social goals and social discourse in the new agenda, without taking the national discourse off the table and without blurring the political disagreements among the different Arab parties. Placing social issues at the center has likewise not blunted the religious discourse. What is evident is the emergence of the willingness to focus the Arab public discourse on a level that allows for concurrent promotion of the public's civil and social aspirations and efforts to use it to promote political presence and influence, along with issues of broader national significance.

The appointment of Ayman Odeh at the head of the Joint List was no accident. Odeh, a lawyer by training, represents the young generation

of Hadash, which throughout its existence was able to wave two flags simultaneously (and to this day remains the secret of its political centrality): that of Arab-Palestinian national identity and that of civil and social equality for the Arabs in Israel. Hadash's political operational rationale dovetailed with the conceptual change manifested in the formation of the Joint List, and this explains Hadash's leading position as a political party and Odeh's personal leadership in this formative move. An example of the Joint List's new political strategy, which to a large extent relied on Hadash's hybrid approach, was evident in one of Odeh's first acts after the Knesset election: an initiative to resolve the status of the unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev, an issue that Odeh has championed since 2009. From a Jewish perspective, the issue was seen as having national significance. For his part, Odeh attempted to connect the issue to the social justice discourse. In this sense, the social action strategy applied by the Joint List at the beginning did not represent the eclipse of previous political agendas and did not attempt to challenge them. Rather, it was an attempt to add a new, relevant ideological-political dimension that was also an outgrowth of the social discourse in the greater Israeli sphere, not to mention of that in the regional and global spheres.

From the Joint List's perspective, and especially that of its leader, the new social strategy embodied clear political and public advantages: one, the ability to offer the Arab population an agenda based on an understanding of its civil and social ills, while retaining Arab national identity; two, the ability to create a joint political reality and presence among the various forces in Arab society; three, the possibility of blurring, via the social discourse, the tensions created by the national and religious discourses between the Arab sector on the one hand, and the state authorities and the Jewish public on the other, by preferring a promotion of social and civil issues that the government and bureaucratic systems would seem – at least outwardly – to have an interest in promoting; four, strengthening the potential for connecting with the heart of the consensus of Jewish society.

The clearest manifestation of the attempt by Odeh and the Joint List to leverage the new strategy was the support for the government initiative, which passed in December 2015, to invest NIS 15 billion in the Arab sector to reduce gaps that divide it from the Israeli Jewish society.[3] The funds are intended to finance a far-reaching program to overcome discrimination and reform government financial distribution mechanisms to Arab, Druze, and Circassian citizens and towns. The five-year plan has garnered enthusiastic

support from the Finance Minister and the Budget Division at the Finance Ministry, as well as from important professional and political figures, including President Reuven Rivlin.[4] Just as important was Odeh's extensive involvement, beginning in December 2014, in the formulation of the program headed by the budget supervisor at the Finance Ministry in the context of the "The 120 Days Team."[5] Adopting the program and integrating the Arab leadership in its formulation was a new benchmark in the updated approach that underlay the establishment of the Joint List.

Difficulties in Promoting the Social Vision in Light of the Security Situation

The changes of the past ten months in the political and security situation in Israel posed immediate challenges to the Joint List strategy. The current Palestinian wave of terrorism, which erupted in the fall of 2015, generated fundamental changes in the Israeli political climate. Public attention was again drawn to the security issue. The fact that the violence also created aftershocks in the Israeli Arab sector, in the form of demonstrations in Arab towns in October-November and the few cases of terrorists who were Israeli citizens, rebranded the Arab population in Jewish public opinion and politics in the familiar category of "an extension of the hostile Palestinian sphere." The January 6, 2016 attack in Tel Aviv by Nasat Malhem, a resident of Arara, highlighted the separatist national discourse at the expense of the inclusive social discourse. This was made clear in various political statements to the effect that the five-year program for the Arab sector must be made contingent on collecting all firearms from Arab towns and villages, increasing police enforcement, and increasing enforcement of construction laws.[6]

The changes in security resulted not only in increased hostility toward the Arab minority and its political representatives, but also in the Joint List's difficulties in maintaining its strategy. From the outset, the composition of the list represented a limited degree of agreement among the constituent political parties. The return of the national discourse in the Arab and Jewish publics returned some of the Arab parties – especially Balad – to the familiar platform of support for the Palestinian struggle against Israel, even the violent struggle. One of the prominent manifestations of this was the visit on April 2, 2016 by MKs Hanin Zoabi, Jamal Zahalka, and Basel Ghattas, all of Balad, to the Palestinian families in Ramallah whose sons were killed following the attacks they perpetrated in Jerusalem. This and similar actions also posed a problem for the head of the Joint List, who

since the start of the current wave of violence had worked to deescalate the radicalization trend and restore the discourse to the pragmatic civil setting. This tempered policy was likewise evident in the fall of 2015, when Odeh successfully blocked other Arab politicians from ascending the Temple Mount, a move that might have greatly exacerbated tensions with the Jewish public.

It is doubtful, however, if these efforts changed the negative trend of mutual hostility. Expressions by senior politicians and exclusionary legislative initiatives aimed at reducing the sphere of Arab representation in Israeli politics continue. Especially prominent is the law passed on July 20, 2016 allowing the Knesset, with a vote of 90 MKs, to dismiss an MK for actions or statements that identify with acts of terrorism. While Balad continues to be the most radical wing championing the national discourse, even Hadash, representing the central and most moderate axis in the Joint List, joined in the public denunciation of Saudi Arabia for having defined Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.[7]

The Significance of the Challenges: The Arab and Jewish Political Perspectives

The deterioration in the security situation and the ensuing political and social changes appear to challenge the delicate balance the Joint List has attempted to strike between the different strands and discourses in Arab Israeli politics. They also continue to hamper Odeh's drive to give preference to his social strategy and to realize its full potential. This evolving reality, including the establishment of a broader right wing government in Israel and the addition of Yisrael Beiteinu as a senior coalition partner, raises questions about the Joint List's ability to continue to offer a diverse, multifaceted political menu that has characterized its conceptual basis. The Joint List's political agenda will presumably continue to prevail, if only by virtue of the political need to preserve its standing in parliament. The political and security situations, which reduce its ability to promote its socio-economic agenda, paradoxically serve as the glue that holds the parties together through the basic common denominator of national Arab solidarity.

But the possibility – or even expectation – that the Joint List might be swept toward the national discourse pole might greatly reduce its ability to promote the social agenda and make positive changes regarding the issues that are of primary concern to the majority of the Arab public in Israel. In such a scenario, its political status in the Arab public could be weakened

and the Joint List might be marginalized to the point of political irrelevance, which was the fate of Arab parties before the List's formation. The extreme scenario in such a process could include a widespread popular boycott of the elections and a consequent decrease in Arab representation in the Knesset. On the other hand, a reduction in terrorist acts will help Odeh preserve the relevance of the civil action strategy at the heart of the List's founding, and could even create a renewed impetus in the government's flagship program of bolstering the socio-economic basis of the Israeli Arab sector.

Failure on this level bodes ill for Israel. A retreat by the Arab leadership from the social strategy and a return to the familiar national discourse will only aggravate tensions between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority, to the point that the government program intended to narrow gaps and benefit the Arab population might be revoked. Such an unfortunate forecast demands that the government halt the slide down the slippery slope in Jewish-Arab relations, already in motion in light of the Palestinian violence and the Arab-Jewish tension. Stopping the dangerous trend first requires the understanding that the Joint List, under the leadership of Ayman Odeh and with its social action strategy, represents an important opportunity to shape Jewish-Arab relations on the basis of shared interests. This understanding could help both sides form a foundation for co-existence, especially with integration of the Arab minority in the national economy. This concept has become a part of the government's platform in recent years, as an important part of an overall approach that favors a strategic effort to reduce the economic dependence of the weak sectors – the Arabs and ultra-Orthodox – on the state's coffers. Pursuit of this path justifies a pragmatic policy designed to reverse the growing anti-Arab sentiment and incitement, which some of the nation's senior leaders are responsible for creating. It also justifies a restraint in the radicalized national discourse in the Arab sector, which affects even the moderates in the camp.[8]

The leaders on both sides have a decisive role to play in this process, particularly through restraining the hostile nationalistic discourse. But the role of the government is most significant. To restore the discourse to the civil action issues, the government must moderate legislative initiatives aimed against the Arab public and its elected representatives, and in particular, accelerate the implementation in full of the five-year program for economic assistance to the Arab sector. This should be done together with the active involvement of the Arab leaders (such as the Follow-Up Committee) and especially that of Ayman Odeh. The alternative to such

a policy is liable to accelerate a steep plunge into the extreme nationalist discourse, threatening the critical interests of both the Jewish majority and the Arab minority, as well as national stability as a whole.

NOTES

1 This is clearly manifested in public opinion polls conducted in Arab society. Of 700 respondents polled by the StatNet Research Institute in December 2014 for INSS, 48 percent felt that the Arab MKs had done very little or little to promote the interests of the Arab public – i.e., a high degree of dissatisfaction with the representatives of this population. When respondents were asked what they thought was the most important issue for Israel's Arab population, 70 percent said it was improving the sector's socioeconomic status, while only 30 percent said it was resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These findings are to a large extent congruent with the concerns of Israel's Jewish citizens, most of whom emphasize economic issues over the peace process when voting. For example, a January 2015 survey by BizPortal found that 36.1 percent of the Jewish population noted the cost of living as the most important issue of the election campaign in 2014, with only 13.1 percent mentioning the Israeli-Palestinian peace process as the most important issue.

2 For the vision statement of the Committee of Local Council Leaders, see http://www.netanya.ac.il/Lib/Documents/tasawor-mostaqbali.pdf.

3 See reports in the financial press, such as Motti Basuk and Tali Haruti-Sover, "Government Approves Large Plan for Arab Sector: Cost is 15 Billion NIS," *TheMarker*, December 30, 2015, http://www.themarker.com/news/macro/1.2810489.

4 See the President's statement on the topic at the *Calcalist* convention that took place in December 2015, http://www.calcalist.co.il/local/articles/0,7340,L-3677269,00.html.

5 See report on the acceptance of the team's recommendation at the Prime Minister's Office website, http://www.pmo.gov.il/Secretary/GovDecisions/2015/Pages/dec208.aspx.

6 See, e.g., the call of MK Issawi Frej of Meretz to establish a parliamentary commission of inquiry into the issue of illegal firearms in Arab population centers after the attack in Tel Aviv, http://www.maariv.co.il/news/politics/Article-520384.

7 Jack Khoury, "Hadash and Balad Condemned Announcement of Hezbollah as Terrorist Organization," *Haaretz*, March 7, 2016, http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.2875301.

8 In this context, see Zouheir Bahloul's statement on the Palestinian stabber in Hebron in an interview with the IDF radio station, in Moran Azoulay, "The Zouheir Bahloul Storm: 'The Stabber from Hebron is Not a Terrorist," *Ynet*, April 7, 2016, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4788747,00.html.

Selective Engagement: China's Middle East Policy after the Arab Spring

Wang Jin

Since the Arab Spring, which significantly changed the Middle East and influenced the greater geopolitical environment, China's interests in the region have been primarily twofold. Economically, China is anxious to protect its overseas projects and secure its energy supplies, and politically, it is intent on averting both internal democratization challenges and the expansion of Islamic extremism among Chinese Muslim minority groups. Consequently, China's foreign policy in the Middle East after 2011 is based on "selective engagement" with particular states and particular issues. This paper analyzes China's Middle East policy choices and its selective engagement framework through official newspapers and official speeches by Chinese leaders.

Energy Security and Economic Cooperation

Since 1979 when Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping launched a "reform and opening up policy," China's political policy in the Middle East shifted from a rigid ideological stand (i.e., assessing to what degree any is state aligned with a revolutionary vs. non-revolutionary or imperialistic outlook) to the promotion of economic growth, while downgrading the salience of the ideology. As the world's leading oil producer, the Middle East has become increasingly important for China's economic development, and it is essential for China to establish and maintain good relations with all Middle East states, including Israel, as well as Arab and Muslim states – both Shiite and Sunni.

Wang Jin is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science, International Division, at the University of Haifa.

China's diplomatic initiatives and increasing interest in the Middle East can be understood by China's burgeoning energy demands. China is the world's most populous country with a fast-growing economy that has made it the largest energy producer[1] and consumer in the world. Its rapidly widening oil demand and consumption-production gap prompted China to focus on the Middle East and the security of its oil supply. China was a net oil exporter until 1993, but as the economy flourished, so did its oil consumption levels (table 1). With fast economic development, China's level of imports climbed significantly over the past decade, from 30 percent to 57 percent of its oil demand.[2] With China now the second largest oil consumer in the world, it overtook the United States as the world's largest oil importer (table 2). To confront this crisis, China began to build up its own strategic petroleum reserve (SPR) in 2004, and aims to fill up its reserve with 500 million barrels by 2020. At the same time, China seeks to secure its import supplies by diversifying its oil import resources (table 3).

Saudi Arabia has been China's top crude oil supplier for the past decade, and established itself as a very reliable supplier in both word and deed. Saudi officials have repeatedly reassured the Chinese that they can count on Saudi Arabia to provide China with the oil it needs for continued economic growth.[3] Saudi Aramco, the largest Saudi oil company, has backed up this commitment with its participation in a joint venture refinery in China's Fujian Province, which processes Saudi crude oil. However, to protect its oil supply, it is vital for China to keep good relations with all Middle East states (table 4).

Table 1. China's Oil Production and Consumption, 2009-2014 (million tons)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Production	202.8	217.9	218.7	222.2	227.1	228.9
Consumption	408.3	439.2	470.1	493.6	499.2	518.1

Source: Sinopec Yearly Report

Table 2. Top 10 Annual Net Oil Importers, 2014 (million barrels per day)

China	US	Japan	India	S. Korea	Germany	France	Spain	Italy	Taiwan
6.1	5.1	4.2	2.7	2.3	2.2	1.6	1.2	1.1	1.0

Source: US Energy Information Administration

Table 3. Source of China's Imported Oil, 2014 (percent)

Saudi Arabia	Angola	Russia	Oman	Iraq	Iran	Others
16	13	11	10	9	9	32

Source: Oil Observer

Table 4. China's Cooperation with Gulf States, 2009-2015

State	Project	Year Started	Undertaken By
Iran	North Azadegan oil field	2009	China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC)
	North Pars gas field	2009	China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC)
	South Pars gas field	2009	CNPC
	Azadegan oil field	2009	CNPC
	Refinery construction	2010	CNPC
	Red Sea refinery company	2011	Sinopec
Iraq	Rumaila oil field	2009	CNPC
	Halefaya oil field	2009	CNPC
	Maysan oil field	2010	CNOOC and Sinopec
Qatar	District B and C of offshore oil field	2009	CNOOC and CNPC
Yemen	Number 71 of abaa-1 drill	2010	CNOOC
UAE	Mand oil field	2015	CNPC

Source: Based on data from China's Ministry of Commerce Ministry and other official reports

Indeed, another important source of imported oil imports for China is Iran. Although China's oil imports from Iran decreased during the past years, largely as a result of pressure from the international community and US sanctions, Iran and China still maintain very solid relations, and the two states cooperate closely on oil supplies. In 2013, bilateral trade reached $39 billion, and then soared by a further 33.4 percent to nearly $52 billion in 2014. In 2014, Iran's imports from China amounted to some $24.35 billion, and exports to China, dominated by energy products, were worth around $27.5 billion. China imported 27.5 million tons of Iranian crude and condensate, an increase of 28.3 percent over 2013. In the aftermath of the agreement between the P5+1 and Iran, China's crude oil imports from

Iran reached over 500 thousand barrels a day. To prioritize the relationship between Iran and China, Chinese President Xi Jinping made Iran one of his three Middle East destinations in January 2016 (along with Saudi Arabia and Egypt) in his first official visit to the Middle East since he assumed the highest position in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2012.

The Threat of Terrorism and Extremism

Of the significant threats facing China from the expansion of Islamic terrorism and extremism since 2011, the Uyghur population is the principal Chinese concern. In July 2014, Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi blamed China for the oppression of the Muslim Uyghur minority in Xinjiang province.[4] The plight of the Uyghurs is not new, but what is new is the phenomenon of disenchanted Uyghurs taking up the Islamic State message of violence. China's extensive overseas interests were also threatened by the expansion of terrorism and extremism. As a partial consequence of its principle of non-interference in others' internal affairs, China lacks security protection for its overseas projects and individuals, and Chinese individuals abroad have become targets for kidnapping and sabotage. In September 2015, the Islamic State taunted China in its online magazine *Dabiq*, showing the beheading of Fan Jinghui, a freelance consultant from Beijing.[5]

China's foreign policy toward the Middle East since the onset of the Arab Spring is driven by Beijing's perception of its tangible interests in the region; the fear of the expansion of terrorism and extremism; and the drive to prevent internal unrest provoked by social problems similar to those in the Middle East.

To confront the crisis, China first raised its budget to counter the threats of terrorism and extremism. In 2010, its security budget was $87 billion, while defense was $84.6 billion; in 2014, the Communist government deliberately withheld full disclosure of the security budget due to its sensitive nature, while defense was $131.57 billion. Based on previous trends, the security budget was likely higher than the defense budget.[6] China fears that the inability to safeguard the security of energy supply lines from increasingly Islamist and unstable countries will harm its continued economic growth, which underpins the legitimacy and survival of the Communist regime.

Second, China hopes to strengthen international cooperation with other states, especially in the Middle East, to confront attacks on China's homeland and overseas targets from radical groups and individuals. For example, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is

the most prominent of Chinese efforts to mobilize international cooperation to confront terrorism in Central Asia. Founded in 2001, the SCO consists of China, Russia, and the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, and its objective is to fight the "three evils" of terrorism, extremism, and separatism. The SCO has a permanent Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent, and RATS director Zhang Xinfeng expressed concern that all member states had citizens who have joined the Islamic State.[7]

Third, China passed a new anti-terrorism law to help legalize and direct anti-terrorism activity. Drafts of the law included some controversial provisions that could be invoked in order to intrude on a citizen's personal privacy, but increasing concern about threats at home and abroad resulted in the passage of the law, which went into effect in January 2015. Hence the requirement, for example, that companies provide "technical means of support" for anti-terror investigations, including data decryption, and that they act to prevent the spread of materials supporting terrorism or extremism.[8] This law provides a legal framework for the country's war on terrorism and allows China's armed forces to take part in counterterrorism operations abroad, which will help legalize China's military actions regarding its own citizens and interests overseas. Guided by this new law, China sent a fleet of vessels to Yemen in 2015 and organized a large scale evacuation of its nationals there.

Stability and Unrest

China also faces tremendous pressure at home, with demands for democracy and political reforms. The Arab Spring rhetoric calling for democracy and social justice is closely linked to socioeconomic inequities, the perception of official corruption, and a high rate of unemployment among the younger labor force. Many of these factors are also present and increasingly prominent in China. Zhao Suisheng maintains that the Arab Spring "frightened the Chinese government because China faces social and potential tensions caused by rising inequality, injustice, and corruption."[9]

In China a large number of educated youth became increasingly frustrated with its poor job prospects, which likely play a key role in fueling political unrest. According to Chinese official data only a small portion of Chinese college graduates (4.1 percent) are unemployed,[10] but the actual unemployment rate in China is much higher. The number of graduates unable to find jobs has risen, while the desirable jobs in state-

owned companies, schools, and hospitals are shared among the vested groups inside government and different institutions, prompting the public dissatisfaction to grow significantly, particularly among recent graduates. Meanwhile, the rising costs of living, including housing, make the lives of graduates in cities, especially in first-tier cities (such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou) and second-tier cities (such as Nanjing, Tianjin, Chongqing, and others), very difficult to sustain.

Similar to Tunisia and Egypt,[11] the socioeconomic gap between the rich and poor has widened in China and become a troubling source of social instability and unrest. According to Statistics of China data, city dwellers earned 3.33 times as much as farmers, with per capita disposable income of urban households standing at $2641 and per capita of rural households at $792.[12] According to a 2014 report by Institute of Social Science of Peking University, the income inequality among Chinese is highly pronounced, with 1 percent of the Chinese population possessing one third of the country's wealth.[13] According to the Pew Global Attitudes Survey in China, 78 percent of Chinese respondents considered corrupt officials to be a "very big" or "moderately big" problem;[14] 67.5 percent of respondents viewed official corruption to be a "serious" problem.[15] In short, much like their counterparts in Tunisia and Egypt, the average Chinese considers corruption to be a widespread and serious problem.

In the Chinese media the preferred terms are "Arab revolt," "Arab turmoil" (*a la bo dong dang*) and "Middle East turmoil" (*zhong dong dong dang*), over "Arab Spring," and the events are associated with "disorder," "civil war," and "irrationality." China's main official newspaper – *People's Daily* – describes the Arab Spring as the major source of regional unrest, state disorder, and civilian suffering: "Libya after Qaddafi becomes the battlefields where different armed groups compete and fight with each other," Egypt after the dictator Mubarak "suffers from endless riots and protests, killing, robberies and thefts threatens Egyptians' daily life," and Tunisia after Ben Ali also becomes "a state full of protests and endless political struggles."[16] The *People's Daily* described the Arab Spring as "a movement that sacrifices people's interests," and argued that "the 'freedom' finally makes the people threatened by death and humanitarian crisis." It called on the Chinese people to learn from the "Arab turmoil" that "the beautiful

Even if it has strategic partners in the Middle East, China has no formal allies in the region, nor does it have any military presence there to assert its political resolve.

prospect of the revolution will surely collapse without the stability of society and government."[17] Thus, "China has its own special characteristics and must go ahead by herself, led by Chinese Communist Party, while to copy other states' political systems can only give rise to instability."[18]

Selected Target States

Accordingly, China's foreign policy toward the Middle East since the onset of the Arab Spring is driven by Beijing's perception of its tangible interests in the region (commercial and energy interests, the safety of overseas nationals); the fear of the expansion of terrorism and extremism; and the drive to prevent internal unrest provoked by social problems similar to those in the Middle East. China believes it can achieve such goals through a flexible and cautious policy (table 5).

Table 5. China's Interests and Engagements in Middle East

Issue	Inter/intra-state	China's Economic Interest	Chinese Engagement
Iran nuclear talks	Inter-state	High	High
Syrian civil war	Inter and intra-state	Middle	Middle
Israel-Palestinian	Inter-state	Middle	Middle
West Sahara	Inter-state	Low	Low
Yemen civil war	Inter and intra-state	Low	Low
Darfur, Sudan	Intra-state	High	High
South Sudan civil conflict	Intra-state	High	High
Lebanon civil clashes	Intra-state	Low	Low
Libya civil war	Intra-state	High/Low[19]	Low
Strike ISIS	Inter-state	Low	Middle

Source: Collected and organized by the author

For instance, China contacted the Libyan transitional government in Benghazi and received representatives from Qaddafı's regime who wanted to buy weapons from China's arsenals (including China North Industries Group Corporation, China Precision Machinery Import and Export Corporation, and China Xinxing Corporation). In the crisis between Saudi Arabia and Iran, China has also tried to maintain close relations with all states regardless of ideologies. According to China's Arab Policy Paper

issued in January 2016, "China upholds the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, namely, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence" to develop their relationship with Middle East states.[20]

China and Iran have developed a broad and deep relationship centered on China's energy needs and Iran's abundant resources, as well as significant non-energy economic ties, including arms sales and defense cooperation. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China actively participated in the Iran nuclear talks under the P5+1 framework, hoping a successful nuclear agreement would relax or cancel the international sanctions against Iran and further the economic and energy cooperation between China and Iran.[21]

China also follows the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and hopes to consolidate its relationship with Israel while projecting an image of a "responsible power" in the Arab world. China is eager to protect its economic interests with Israel. It has acquired, either in full or in part, multiple Israeli companies of significant size, and both Chinese and Israeli companies are benefiting from partnering with each other in the field of hi-tech startups, with venture capital and private equity deals spanning Beijing's Zhongguancun – popularly referred to as "China's Silicon Valley"– and Israel's Silicon Wadi. China also cooperates with Israel on military, technology, agriculture, and other cutting-edge fields, and cultural and education exchanges and communications have developed very fast since 2011.

Although Chinese economic involvement with the Palestinians is not extensive, Beijing understands the importance of its role as an "old friend" of the Palestine Liberation Organization. China considers the importance of the Palestinian cause with its relationship with Arab states and China's international image as a responsible power. Beijing continues to hold a reception every November commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and in a rare show of China's particular attention to the Palestinian cause, President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter to the commemoration in 2014.

In the Syrian civil war, China stands behind Russia and keeps a relatively low profile. As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told the UN Security Council, the world cannot afford to stand by, but must also must not "arbitrarily interfere" in the Syrian crisis.[22] China maintains that the world should "respect Syrian territory, sovereignty, and independence."[23] China

also approved Security Council Resolutions 2170 and 2178 to attack the Islamic State. However, China did not join the military actions against the Islamic State led by the US, Europe, Turkey, and the Gulf states.[24] From 2011 to 2015, several Syrian opposition delegations visited China and were hosted by Chinese high level diplomats. Delegations from the Syrian National Committee for Democratic Change and the Syrian National Council visited China at the invitation of semi-official groups of the China Diplomatic Association and the Chinese People's Friendship Association and met with high level officials from the Chinese Foreign Ministry. China also participates in the humanitarian efforts in Syria, and has offered five humanitarian aid packages to Syrian refugees, including in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan.

Selected Areas

Although China has tried to promote a new image in the Middle East through its limited humanitarian aid and its balanced foreign policy, its priority remains to expand economic and energy cooperation with Middle East. During his visit in Israel in December 2013, Wang Yi expressed China's desire to construct both the new Silk Road connecting Europe and Asia and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route connecting the Pacific and Indian Ocean, with these two "belts" meeting in the Middle East.[25] The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), directed and organized by China and joined by 57 member-states including Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, UAE, Kuwait, Oman, and Turkey, will play an important role in uniting Middle East elements, while simultaneously supporting the development of the Silk Road.

Economic relations between China and the Middle East continue to strengthen. China's exports to the Middle East increased from $6.4 billion in 1999 to $121 billion in 2012. The Middle East has also become important in infrastructure construction, and in 2011 Chinese activity reached $21 billion. From 2005 to 2013, China's overseas interests in the Middle East spread in different Middle East states, including $20.3 billion in Iran, $15 billion in Saudi Arabia, $8.5 billion in Iraq, $4.7 billion in Qatar, $4.5 billion in Algeria, $3.7 billion in Syria, $2.7 billion in Egypt, $1.8 billion in Kuwait, $1.6 billion in the UAE, and $1.6 billion in Israel.[26] China hopes to further economic relations with all Middle East states within the One Belt One Road framework. In the spirit of deepening cooperation between China and the Gulf states, China and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council

launched free trade area (FTA) talks in 2004, and a deal will help China cut costs on energy imports from the region.[27]

China also cooperated with the Middle East on transportation projects. China has been a major driver in the growth of regional and global mergers and regional transportation connectivity, which helps China export its surplus capital as well as the infrastructure construction capacity that it has developed over the years. In May 2013 when Prime Minister Netanyahu visited China, China and Israel signed an agreement on the construction by a Chinese company of the Red Sea Land Bridge, a high-speed road connecting Haifa and Eilat. Once constructed, Israel will become China's new traffic hub (China hopes that Israel's geography can enable it to serve as an important hub) connecting the Middle East and Europe.[28]

China's infrastructure companies have also undertaken projects in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Qatar. In Saudi Arabia, China participated in the Haramain High-Speed Railway Project. Announced by the Saudi Railway Organization, the project involves a 450 km rail link between Makkah (Mecca) and Medina. In Egypt, China has become the biggest client of the Suez Canal, which is the transportation avenue for more than 60 percent of China's exports to Europe. In 2007, China and Egypt co-initiated the Suez Trade and Economic Cooperation Zone (STECZ), backed by Chinese Tianjin Economy and Technology Development Zone and the Taida Investment Company. On December 26, 2015, one month before President Xi Jinping's visit to Egypt, STECZ came into implementation; China hopes to make it the major model of China-Egypt cooperation.[29] A Chinese company also participates in Qatar's new port project, designed to meet Qatar's future requirements for all types of cargo while also meeting the needs of the military.

Conclusion

Since the onset of the Arab Spring in 2011, Chinese diplomacy in the Middle East has recalibrated, in order to take into the account recommendations and criticism from both the media and academics. China hopes to maintain good relations with all Middle East states via the selective engagement policy to protect its energy security, further economic communications, and contain the expansion of extremism and terrorism in the fragmented Middle East.

However, China's selective engagement in Middle East still faces a series of challenges. First, China faces an increasingly fragmented Middle

East. China's selective engagement is largely based on its "making friends with all" principle, which helps China secure its relationship and interests with all Middle East states given its limited military presence. However, China has been compelled at times to take sides. For example, when China called the newly established National Transitional Council (NTC) of Libya in 2011 to protect its projects, the NTC replied with humiliating words of "we have no problems with West, but may have with China."[30]

Second, based on the principle of non-interference in others' internal affairs, China chooses to cooperate and mediate only with recognized governments concerning economic and other important areas. However, even if it has strategic partners in the Middle East, such as Algeria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, China has no formal allies in the region, nor does it have any military presence there to assert its political resolve. Due to lack of communications with different civil groups and camps inside other states, China's commercial and energy interests would inevitably be harmed once a civil war started, which may significantly influence investment confidence at home.

Finally, the new leadership of the CCP elected in November 2012 and led by President Xi Jinping, who seems to be more aggressive and assertive in foreign policy than his predecessors, may abandon the traditional principle to "keep a low profile and make a difference" established by former CCP leader Deng Xiaoping. Indeed, Xi Jinping has already changed this principle into "continue keeping a low profile while actively making a difference," which demonstrates his ambition in foreign affairs. The new leadership may adopt a more assertive and hawkish policy in Middle East in the future.

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China and Turkey: Closer Relations Mixed with Suspicion

Galia Lavi and Gallia Lindenstrauss

"Anti-terrorism and security cooperation are important components of China-Turkey political trust," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in a meeting with his Turkish counterpart, Mevlut Cavusoglu, at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in late April 2016. The two ministers pledged to cooperate on security matters and to combat the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) terrorist group. This movement contains members from the Uyghur minority in China (a minority of Turkic origin) who advocate secession from China.[1] Yet while Turkey shares China's concern about terrorism, there is tension between the two countries on the subject of China's treatment of the Uyghurs and the aid given to them by Turkey. This pattern of common interests on the one hand and suspicion on the other is typical of China-Turkey relations.

This article explores the factors that influence relations between China and Turkey, and considers how the relations affect, and are affected by, relations between Turkey and its NATO allies and by Turkey-Russia relations. Beyond the significance of the Uyghur issue, both China and Turkey have an interest in security cooperation, although Turkey's membership in NATO complicates cultivating this cooperation. In addition, the two countries have a common interest in economic cooperation. For China, this involves a more comprehensive policy of the Silk Roads initiative, while Turkey needs to increase foreign investment, and also wants to redress, even if only slightly, its negative trade balance with China. In the Israeli context, the improvement in Turkey-China relations in recent years was perceived as part of Turkey's distancing itself from the West. At the same time, the growing Chinese interest in investments in both Israel and Turkey, particularly in

Galia Lavi is a research assistant in the China research program at INSS.
Dr. Gallia Lindenstrauss is a research fellow at INSS.

transportation, could contain potential for regional cooperation and include a significant role for both Israel and Turkey.

Background

China and Turkey forged diplomatic relations only in 1971. The two countries were estranged for many years prior, because Turkey was part of the coalition that fought against China in the Korean War, and Turkey's participation in that war paved the way for its accession to NATO. Even after diplomatic relations began, relations between the two countries stagnated during the last two decades of the Cold War. Some improvement in relations occurred in the 1990s with limited military cooperation, in part due to the West's refusal to sell certain weapon systems to Turkey in the context of its conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). As a result of this cooperation, the Turks obtained from China the knowledge necessary to develop artillery and ballistic missiles with a range of 100-150 kilometers. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the volume of bilateral trade grew substantially, rising from $1 billion in 2000 to $28.6 billion in 2014.[2] Most of this trade was based on Turkish imports from China; Turkey has been striving for many years to increase its exports to China.

Political and Security Considerations

The stance of the Western powers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries toward the Ottoman Empire and China, and their ability to weaken both Turkey and China, still affects these countries' suspicion of the West, and is manifest in the political systems and among large sections of the respective populations. In the framework of the Turkish attempt in the early twenty-first century to design an independent foreign policy and reduce its dependence on the West, efforts were made to attain warmer relations with China. In 2010, in part as a result of the termination of aerial cooperation between Turkey and Israel following the deterioration of relations between those two countries, Turkey and China conducted joint maneuvers at the Konya airbase.[3] Turkey is also a "dialogue partner" in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization led by Russia and China (India too is expected to join as a full partner in 2016). Before the crisis in Russia-Turkey relations following the downing of a Russian plane in November 2015, from time to time Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan toyed with the idea of Turkey becoming a full member of this organization, despite Turkish

ambitions to join the European Union (EU). He even presented this idea, only partly in jest, as an alternative to joining the EU.

While NATO membership constitutes a significant anchor in Turkish foreign policy and security, it does not prevent the Turks from considering the expansion of their security cooperation with China. In September 2013, the Chinese corporation CPMIEC won a Turkish tender for the purchase of anti-missile defense systems. The Turks selected the Chinese bid because it was the cheapest and promised the earliest delivery date, and the Chinese corporation was generous in the option of technological cooperation. For Turkey, which emphasizes development of its own military industry, the option of cooperation with the Chinese corporation in the production process was a key consideration. For China, the fact that a NATO member was interested in buying advanced systems from it made it possible to portray itself as a supplier of advanced weapons, and constituted a certificate of quality of sorts on advances in Chinese military technology.[4] The possibility of Turkey progressing in the deal with the Chinese aroused hard feelings in NATO, and was portrayed by Turkey's Western allies as a potential Trojan horse. The United States in particular strongly opposed the impending transaction. After many delays, the Turks announced the complete cancellation of the tender in November 2015, and claimed that Turkey would move toward independent production of the systems. In response, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry said, "The relevant issue will be handled by the two sides' relevant departments and companies through consultations,"[5] but apart from this official statement, the Chinese press completely ignored the affair. The reticence was particularly notable given that the Chinese perceived the timing of the cancellation as an insult, because the announcement was made during the G-20 conference in Antalya, where Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Turkish President Erdogan.

In addition, the crisis in Turkey-Russia relations posed another challenge to China-Turkey relations, as it potentially could have developed into a head-on clash between Russia and NATO, leading to global instability. As an editorial in the *Global Times*, considered the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, said, "Ankara must be well aware of what it means to shoot down a Russian warplane. Next it will be careful enough not to give Russia a chance to down one of its warplanes in retaliation."[6] A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman likewise noted, "China is deeply concerned about this issue."[7] Turkey and China are not of like mind about the crisis in Syria; while Turkey seeks the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad, China,

like Russia, wants his rule to continue. At the same time, even though the crisis with Russia highlighted Turkey's dependence on NATO, it also revealed Turkish fears that NATO will not stand by its side when the chips are down. In this respect, the crisis has encouraged Turkey to continue its drive toward independent defense procurement and self-reliance, and cooperation with the Chinese is likely to be an option for consideration with respect to both of these aims.

The Uyghur Minority

A major weak point in China-Turkey relations concerns the Uyghur minority, Muslims living in the Xinjiang region in northwestern China who aspire to reestablish "East Turkestan." The Uyghurs constitute a majority of the Muslim population in this region; according to a 2010 Chinese census, they are an estimated population of 10 million.[8] In a longstanding dispute, China accuses the Uyghurs of various terrorist actions, and harasses them with frequent arrests and various restrictions. For their part, the Uyghurs accuse the government of sinicization efforts. Over the years, Uyghur activists have found shelter in Turkey, to which they have a strong ethnic and historical affinity. This connection is a source of ongoing tension between the two countries.

In July 2009, when 184 people were killed and about 1,000 wounded in riots in the Xinjiang area, then-Prime Minister Erdogan said that the events there were "a kind of genocide."[9] In response, it was reported in China that most of those killed in the riots were Chinese of Han origin, and it was demanded that Erdogan retract his comments, which were perceived as interference in China's internal affairs. And indeed, despite this criticism and as part of the efforts to improve economic relations between the two countries, Erdogan visited China in 2012, accompanied by 300 Turkish businessmen. During his visit, he also visited the Xinjiang region, and declared his intention of investing in the region's developing industrial zone.[10] This plan suits the Chinese policy of attempting to ease the tensions with the Uyghur minority through economic development of the region.

Relations between China and Turkey fluctuate, given the concomitant desire for economic cooperation, lack of political trust, and anxiety about conflicting security interests.

In July 2015, violent riots broke out in front of the Chinese embassy in Turkey, following rumors that China was preventing the Uyghurs from

observing Ramadan fasting. The demonstrations and disturbances, which included attacks on Chinese restaurants and Korean tourists (mistakenly identified as Chinese) and the burning of Chinese flags, continued for ten days, and Chinese denial of the rumors and assertions that China respected freedom of religion were of no avail.[11] Demonstrations also took place following Thailand's decision to expel 100 Uyghurs to China, and demonstrators attacked the Thai consulate in Istanbul.[12] Before and during the Turkish President's visit to China that month, following progress in talks between the countries on a tender for the purchase of anti-missile defense systems, Erdogan took a milder position, stating that many of the pictures of the riots shown by the social media and news reports were "exaggerated and false," and that the Xinjiang region is an inseparable part of China.[13]

Previously, however, in late 2014, China had expressed anger about an "ambiguous Turkish policy" in helping Uyghur Chinese cross the border and leave China easily on their way to join terrorist groups.[14] China is very concerned about terrorism, particularly in view of many indications in recent months that Uyghurs are leaving China by way of Turkey and joining the Islamic State organization in Syria.[15] Although it is unclear how many Chinese Uyghurs have already joined the Islamic State, estimates range from several hundred to several thousand, and China fears that these terrorists will return to its territory and escalate the Uyghur struggle in Xinjiang, as well as create a negative image of the country. China has repeatedly asked the international community to unite in the war against terrorism.[16] In view of the close ties between the Chinese Uyghurs and the Turks, China is interested in strengthening cooperation with Turkey, thereby, making the passage of extremist Uyghurs to the Islamic State more difficult. In July 2015, the Presidents of China and Turkey agreed that Ankara would "not allow anyone to use Turkey's territory to do anything to harm China's national interests and security."[17] It may be that as a result of these agreements Turkey increased its efforts to detect Uyghurs infiltrating into its territory. In May 2016, the Turkish police announced the arrest in Istanbul Airport of approximately 100 Chinese Uyghurs with forged passports on their way to Saudi Arabia.[18]

The Silk Roads Initiative and Economic Cooperation

In contrast to the disputes concerning the Uyghur minority, economic cooperation is a factor in the strengthening of the relations between the two countries. One important venture in this context is the Silk Roads

initiative (the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road – One Belt, One Road, or OBOR), an initiative President Xi Jinping announced in late 2013,[19] aimed at connecting China to Europe by way of a land route through Central Asia and a maritime route through the Indian Ocean and the Suez Canal. The OBOR initiative is expected to involve more than 60 countries, comprising 63 percent of the world's population (4.4 billion people) and 29 percent ($21 trillion) of its total GDP.[20] China wants to achieve four main goals through its initiative: infrastructure development and acceleration of Chinese economic growth; a guaranteed supply of energy, principally from the Middle East, with expanded and developed Chinese export routes to the entire world; narrower economic gaps in China through large scale infrastructure development and employment for the population of western China; and eased tensions with the Uyghurs in northwest China through economic development in the region.

Cooperation between China and Turkey in infrastructure is underway. In October 2015 a high-speed railway between Ankara and Istanbul was launched, constructed by the Chinese state-owned railway company and a private Turkish company.[21] In addition, as a follow-up project to construction of the railway line between Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan (Kars-Tbilisi-Baku), Turkey is interested in Chinese aid for building a high-speed internal railway connecting eastern and western Turkey (Kars-Edirne).[22] China is eager to extend its cooperation with Turkey in the framework of the OBOR initiative, and the Chinese vice premier discussed the subject with his Turkish counterpart at a meeting in Shanghai in February 2016.[23] That same month, Chinese companies acquired 65 percent of the ownership of Kumport Terminal, which is part of Ambarli Port in Istanbul.[24] In addition, Turkey is one of the 50 founding members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) launched by China, and one of AIIB's goals is to finance infrastructure on the new Silk Roads initiative route.[25]

China also sees potential in the Silk Road Economic Belt for building nuclear reactors in cooperation with countries along the route. The president of the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) declared that by 2030, China plans to build 30 nuclear reactors, and has already signed agreements with various countries on this matter, including Egypt and Jordan.[26] Turkey, which like China is very dependent on energy imports, is interested in promoting development aimed at the construction of nuclear reactors for electricity production, and is holding talks with China about the construction of its third nuclear power plant. Reports stated that Chinese

government-owned State Nuclear Power Technology Corporation (SNPTC), in cooperation with American company Westinghouse (most of which is owned by the Japanese corporation Toshiba), entered exclusive negotiations with Turkey for the construction of four reactors in the framework of this power plant.[27] However, it was also reported that Turkey was interested in making as much independent progress as possible in the construction of this power plant, and it therefore remains to be seen whether the parties will succeed in signing an agreement that will satisfy Turkey's desire for independent development.

Conclusion

Relations between China and Turkey fluctuate, given the concomitant desire for economic cooperation, lack of political trust, and anxiety about conflicting security interests. Together with the obvious advantages of promoting joint economic projects, the absence of sufficient history of joint cooperation is an obstacle, especially where current disputes about the actions needed to combat terrorist groups are concerned. The crisis with Russia also makes it difficult for Turkey to achieve progress in its relations with China, because it makes Turkey even more dependent on the United States and NATO. On the other hand, the factors that have encouraged the two countries to develop their relations in the twenty-first century remain strong. The frustration with the West and even the basic hostility to what is sometimes perceived as neo-imperialism are to a large degree shared by China and Turkey. Furthermore, the Turkish need for Chinese technology and foreign investments, and the Chinese desire to move its OBOR initiative forward, provide potential for a connection between the countries.

The fact that some members of the Uyghur minority have chosen to volunteer for the Islamic State, along with the fear that these volunteers number in the thousands, has increased China's concern about events in Syria, beyond its interest in the continued rule of the Assad regime. The ongoing civil war has prolonged China's interest in events in Syria, which will continue to constitute a source of suspicion between the two sides.

The frustration with the West and even the basic hostility to what is sometimes perceived as neo-imperialism are to a large degree shared by China and Turkey.

In the Middle East, the question arises whether the growing Chinese interest in investments in Turkey and Israel can also be utilized for broader

cooperation at the regional level. For example, can the Jezreel Valley Railway line, scheduled for opening in 2016, also be used to transport cargo from Turkey by sea to Haifa Port, and from there on the Jezreel Valley Railway to Jordan – and in the reverse direction as well?[28] In this context, the fact that a Chinese company won a tender to operate the new Haifa Port for 25 years, which will make it easier for China to ship goods from Turkey to Jordan, and perhaps from this port further east, is significant.

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Israel and the International Criminal Court: A Legal Battlefield

Bar Levy and Shir Rozenzweig

The International Criminal Court: Background

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an unprecedented institution in terms of international relations, because it is the first permanent criminal court of its type after the existence of several ad hoc international criminal courts. The ICC hears cases against individuals,[1] and no one – including heads of state and senior officials – enjoys immunity. Any state can join as a member by signing and ratifying the Rome Statute. So far, 123 of the world's 193 nations have joined, including the vast majority of European nations; all countries in the Americas except for the United States; Australia; most African nations; and a few Asian and Middle East nations, including Jordan. Israel is not a member.[2]

The ICC includes several organs, including the Office of the Prosecutor, an autonomous body that acts independently. Among the realms of authority of the Office of the Prosecutor is the operational authority to conduct a proactive investigation of its choice. Its purview is under the judicial review of the Pre-Trial Chamber,[3] a legal body overseeing the Office of the Prosecutor's decisions. Since 2012, Fatou Bensouda, a Gambian national, has served as ICC prosecutor; she was previously the deputy to the first ICC prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo, and legal counsel and prosecutor in the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda.[4] Another court component is the panel of judges, which includes 18 from various ICC member states; they are elected every three years by the Assembly of States parties to the

Bar Levy, an officer in the IDF Military Advocate General Corps, is an intern at INSS in the Law and National Security research program. This article was written within the framework of her academic studies and reflects solely her own views. Shir Rozenzweig, a law student at Tel Aviv University, is an intern at INSS in the Law and National Security research program.

ICC, or alternatively, by a consulting appointments committee established by the Assembly.

Proceedings in the court usually, begin with a preliminary examination, not limited by time, of the conditions in a particular nation. Using available information, the Office of the Prosecutor examines the appropriateness of launching an independent investigation of the case. Starting an investigation allows the Office of the Prosecutor to act. It has the authority to conduct independent investigations and issue arrest warrants that all ICC member states are obligated to honor with regard to suspects on their soil.[5]

As of the time of this writing, 23 cases in nine countries are under investigation by the Office of the Prosecutor,[6] and nine other cases are under preliminary examination.[7] Most of the cases were referred to the court by signatories to the Rome Statute, except for two, which were referred by the UN Security Council, for investigating cases in nations that are not ICC members.[8] The Office of the Prosecutor has also initiated investigations *proprio motu* of cases under the jurisdiction of the ICC with regard to three nations without a referral by either a member state or the Security Council.[9]

To date, three legal proceedings have ended with convictions: the first in the matter of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, a militia leader from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who was convicted of kidnapping children and turning them into soldiers and sentenced to 14 years in prison; the second in the matter of Germain Katanga, a militia leader also from the DRC, who was convicted of aiding and abetting crimes against humanity and war crimes and sentenced to 12 years in prison; and the third in the matter of Jean-Pierre Bema Gombo, former vice president of the Congo, who was convicted of two counts of crimes against humanity and sentenced to 18 years in prison.

Referral by the Union of the Comoros: The MV *Mavi Marmara*

In May 2010, a flotilla of six ships departed Turkey, sailing for Gaza. The explicit intent was to break the naval blockade on Gaza, though Israel, based on similar previous attempts and intelligence information, was concerned that this was a ruse for smuggling weapons into the Gaza Strip. Israel demanded that the ships obey the blockade and stop their advance to Gaza's shores and unload in the port of Ashdod, Israel, but the flotilla continued. In response, IDF naval commandoes seized control of the ships in international waters. In the course of the seizure of the *Marmara*, a violent confrontation between the IDF forces and flotilla participants

ensued. Ten of the passengers were killed and some 50 wounded; ten IDF soldiers suffered injuries.[10]

Following the incident, Israel was condemned by many countries as well as the UN Security Council,[11] diplomatic relations between Israel and Turkey deteriorated, and Israeli and international commissions of inquiry were established.[12] As the MV *Mavi Marmara* was Comoros-flagged,[13] on May 14, 2013, Comoros, which is a member of the ICC, submitted a request to investigate the events surrounding the flotilla, claiming that Israel had committed war crimes. On the basis of this request, the Office of the Prosecutor began a preliminary examination of the incident.[14] In the course of a preliminary examination, issues of jurisdiction, principles of admissibility (based on principles of gravity and complementarity), and interests of justice are tested.[15]

Regarding jurisdiction, on the basis of the Rome Statute, the ICC has the jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute a criminal only if there is a territorial link: the crime must have taken place on the soil of a member state, or, in the case of a crime committed on the soil of a non-member state, that state has to have agreed ad hoc to be subject to the court's jurisdiction. Alternately, the court's jurisdiction applies if there is citizenship link, i.e., the suspect is a citizen either of a member state or of a state that has agreed ad hoc to be subject to the court's jurisdiction. In addition, the court can apply its jurisdiction when the case is referred to the Office of the Prosecutor by the Security Council.[16] In the case of the *Marmara*, the court's jurisdiction was in force by virtue of the territorial link, because the ship was an extension of Comoros, a signatory to the Rome Statute. Moreover, the court's jurisdiction applies to crimes committed after the court's establishment (post-July 1, 2002), or after the state where the crime took place became a member of the court, or if the suspect is a citizen of a member state (after the establishment of the ICC),[17] and only if the crime falls under the rubric of the crimes for which the court has jurisdiction.

Regarding admissibility, the Office of the Prosecutor must consider the principles of gravity and complementarity. According to the principle of gravity, the ICC will not hear a case if "the case is not of sufficient gravity to justify further action by the Court," given that the purpose of the court is to prosecute individuals who have committed the most heinous of crimes and are thus troublesome to the international community. While the statute does not provide a precise formula or threshold for invoking the principle of gravity, the Office of the Prosecutor determined that the

major criteria for assessing the gravity of the case would include the crime's scope, nature, and the manner of the command given, as well as the effects of the crime.[18] Furthermore, the decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber stated that it was necessary to include qualitative and quantitative considerations affected directly and indirectly by the attack, as the indirect effects might at times be more damaging than the direct ones.

On November 6, 2014, the ICC prosecutor issued her decision not to open an investigation into the matter of the MV *Mavi Marmara*, noting that although there was reasonable foundation to believe that war crimes had been committed on its decks, it seemed that any case opened as a result of an investigation would be inadmissible because the crimes lacked sufficient gravity.[19] The prosecutor stated that the situation examined was limited, as the incident involved only the *Marmara*, one of six ships in the flotilla; the number of victims was relatively small (ten killed and some 50 injured); and the overall qualitative considerations of gravity were limited.

On January 29, 2015, Comoros objected to the decision of the prosecutor in the Pre-Trial Chamber. The decision published on July 16, 2015 determined that the prosecutor had to reexamine her decision because she erred in assessing the gravity of the case. In response, the prosecutor appealed, arguing that the judges erred in assessing the scope of the judicial review at their disposal in interpreting the law and the conclusions. The appeal was rejected by the Appeals Chamber, which determined that the prosecutor had no authority to appeal the first decision. However, the Appeals Chamber did not take a stance on the prosecutor's actual assertion and did not discuss the admissibility of the case or the court's jurisdiction.[20] The case was passed back to the prosecutor for reexamination. She has yet to issue her new decision.

In the reexamination of the admissibility of the case, the Office of the Prosecutor will have to reassess the gravity of the incident. It will likely hold a discussion of the principle of complementarity, an issue the prosecutor did not discuss in her first decision. According to this principle, the ICC's jurisdiction is secondary and complementary to the jurisdiction of the national court system. The court must examine if there were or are investigative processes or prosecutions involved in the incident by the official authorities of the country involved, and if a decision was made not to prosecute on the basis of that investigation. If the state involved has held a genuine procedure, not tainted by unwillingness or inability in

practice to undertake national procedures, then according to the principle of complementarity, the case is inadmissible before the court.

In the case of the *Marmara*, the principle of complementarity may prove to be a successful defense because the incident was investigated by several forums in Israel, including a government commission of inquiry headed by Supreme Court Justice Jacob Turkel. Furthermore, several petitions were submitted to the High Court of Justice, which were rejected out of hand,[21] and soldiers who participated in the raid were investigated and judged by the military court system.[22]

An important development in the case occurred on June 27, 2016, when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim reached a reconciliation agreement ending the crisis in Israeli-Turkish relations subsequent to the flotilla raid. The following day, the agreement was signed by the director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and a similar ceremony was held in Ankara. The agreement does not mention Comoros's referral to the ICC, and in purely legal terms, the agreement means very little for the application to the ICC. It was not Turkey that referred the matter to the ICC but Comoros, and Turkey is in any case not an ICC member. Still, it will be interesting to see if the court considers the agreement when judging the case's admissibility. Given that most of the victims were of Turkish nationality, the Office of the Prosecutor may conclude that a post-reconciliation agreement investigation will not serve interests of justice, including the victims' best interests.[23] The agreement appears to relate to this aspect, as it stipulates that the Israeli government will pay a sum of $20 million to a humanitarian fund to be established to compensate the families of the Turkish dead and wounded.

Referral by the Palestinian Authority

On January 21, 2009, the Palestinian Authority (PA) asked to join the ICC as member and accept its jurisdiction. The request was rejected by then-Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo on the basis of Article 12(3) of the statute, whereby only a state recognized in the international arena as such can accept the court's jurisdiction.[24] Still, the prosecutor noted that should the PA be recognized as a state by the committee of the Rome Statute's member states or by the UN, the decision might be otherwise.

On November 29, 2012, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 67/19, which upgraded the status of the Palestinian Authority to that of a "non-member observer state."[25] This allowed the PA to ratify the statute

on January 2, 2015. On January 6, 2015, the General Assembly, bearing the court's power of attorney, accepted the ratification,[26] which went into effect on April 1, 2015.[27] Furthermore, the PA announced that it agrees ad hoc to apply the court's jurisdiction retroactively to crimes committed on occupied Palestinian land from June 13, 2014.[28] Consequently, the prosecutor announced the start of a preliminary examination of crimes that might have been committed in PA territory in those years, both by Israelis and Palestinians, including crimes committed by the parties during Operation Protective Edge,[29] and crimes related to Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. These include the planning, construction, development, entrenchment, and encouragement of the establishment of settlements, and planning and authorizing settlement expansions in those location, as well as home demolitions, administrative detentions, settler violence against Palestinian communities, and claims of mistreatment of Palestinians arrested, detained, and indicted by the Israeli military court system.[30] As part of the preliminary examination, the Office of the Prosecutor looks at all the information published with regard to those events, such as reports by UN agencies, the Israeli government, and PA reports, and reports issued by international organizations and NGOs. As part of the preliminary examination, the actions of all sides involved in the conflict are scrutinized, not just those of Israel.

Operation Protective Edge

In response to long bouts of sporadic rocket fire launched from the Gaza Strip to Israel, the IDF launched Operation Protective Edge on July 7, 2014, whose purpose was to restore security to the citizens of Israel suffering from these attacks and destroy the system of subterranean tunnels dug by Hamas between Gaza and Israel.[31] During the operation, thousands of rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel and thousands of targets in Gaza were attacked by the IDF. In the course of the fighting, more than 2,000 Palestinians were killed; the number of civilians among them is subject to dispute.[32] On the Israeli side, 67 soldiers and five civilians were killed.[33]

Does the war meet the criteria for a preliminary examination? First, it would seem that according to the prosecutor's approach, the recognition of the PA as the State of Palestine and all occupied territories as part of this state fulfills the jurisdictional requirement on the base of the territorial link principle. Second is the question of admissibility before the ICC, and here the principles of gravity and complementarity must be examined. To

help answer this question, the prosecutor will make use of the information available in published international reports and publications issued by the parties involved.

As part of the investigation of the gravity – as was the case in the MV *Mavi Marmara* – the Office of the Prosecutor will investigate the scope of damage to the Palestinian side, the effects on the lives of the Palestinians, and so on, based on qualitative and quantitative considerations stemming from both direct and indirect effects of the operation.

The Israeli investigative system will be examined through the lens of complementarity. An Israeli investigation of the events was conducted by the Military Advocate General Corps, which examined several irregular incidents that occurred during the operation and were the subject of complaints. Complaints regarding about 100 irregular events were forwarded by the Military Advocate General Corps for further investigation via a new General Staff investigative apparatus, used for the first time in connection with this operation. In addition, the Military Advocate General opened 19 criminal investigations against soldiers who are suspected of violations of the laws of warfare.[34] However, it is unclear if these investigative steps will satisfy the Office of the Prosecutor on the issue of complementarity, because thus far not a single soldier has been tried, not even at the disciplinary hearing level.[35]

The preliminary examination looking at the conditions described herein will be based on information available to the prosecutor, including reports published subsequent to the operation. To date, several reports have been issued, all of which present a fairly gloomy picture of the IDF's conduct during the fighting in Operation Protective Edge. In May 2015, the Israeli organization Breaking the Silence published a report containing anonymous testimony submitted by 60 soldiers about incidents involving harm to innocent individuals in the Gaza Strip that allegedly occurred during the war. On the basis of these testimonies, the organization concluded that:

> The guiding military principle of "minimum risk to our forces, even at the cost of harming innocent civilians," alongside efforts to deter and intimidate the Palestinians, led to massive and unprecedented harm to the population and the civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. Policymakers could have predicted these results prior to the operation and were surely aware of them throughout.[36]

Another report, published in June 2015, consists of the conclusions of a commission of inquiry (COI) established by the UN Human Rights Council; the COI, headed by US Justice Mary McGowan Davis, examined actions by both sides through the joint lens of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.[37] In trying to establish the factual part of the report, the members of the COI were angered by Israel's refusal to cooperate. Israel did not submit information of any kind, and in addition, blocked access to PA areas.[38] The report therefore relies on testimony submitted by victims and witnesses on the Palestinian side who shared their war experiences and on documentation of events by various organizations. The COI's most salient conclusion was that considering the thousands of dead civilians on the Palestinian side and the IDF's military superiority compared to the Palestinian's offensive capabilities, during Operation Protective Edge the IDF committed several war crimes against the Palestinian population, who fall under ICC jurisdiction.[39]

While such reports do not constitute an investigation by the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC, in all likelihood the office will use them in its preliminary examination. Thus the publication of reports with such negative conclusions about Israel's conduct has significant ramifications for Israel in the international lawfare battlefield in general and in the preliminary examination of the ICC's Office of the Prosecutor in particular.

The Settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem

The fact that Israeli citizens live in Judea, Samaria, and East Jerusalem could be counted as a war crime according to the Rome Statute, which defines as a crime "the transfer, directly or indirectly, by the Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, or the deportation or transfer of all or parts of the population of the occupied territory within or outside this territory."[40] The test of occupation is factual, given who has effective control of the territory; based on the stance of most nations in the world, the PA is under Israeli occupation.[41] The issue of the Jewish settlements was mentioned in the report of the prosecutor in the context of preliminary investigative activity, heightening the question how the court could possibly avoid dealing with the issue.

As for the court's jurisdiction, there are many questions concerning PA territory and jurisdiction on the basis of the territorial link. Therefore, if jurisdiction is deemed applicable, this will have far reaching geopolitical implications for issues not yet officially determined in any international

forum except the Oslo Accords.[42] Given the ICC's past conduct, it therefore seems that the application of its jurisdiction on the issue of the Jewish settlements would be exceptional, because the ICC has never dealt with incidents involving political-territorial conflicts. In addition, investigating this issue is liable to endanger the court's own legitimacy, both vis-à-vis signatories and non-signatories to the Rome Statute, because such a decision could have implications for determining sovereignty over disputed territories in the absence of an agreement between states.[43] Furthermore, the timing of the establishment of the Jewish settlements is relevant, as some, noted in the prosecutor's report, were established many years ago, soon after the Six Day War, in 1967. Therefore, the Office of the Prosecutor must examine if the establishment of those settlements is included in the ICC's jurisdiction, as they were built before the court was constituted, or alternatively, if they can be described as a continuing crime that began before the constitution of the court but to which its jurisdiction applies because it continues to be perpetrated after the court's constitution.[44]

In this context, Israel would have no claim of complementarity because internal Israeli investigations on such issues do not take place due to government policy, and even the High Court of Justice's intervention on the issue is minor.[45]

The Possibility of an Investigation

If a decision is made to start an investigation subsequent to the preliminary examination, it could apply both to Israel's senior military and political echelons, no member of which would have immunity regarding personal responsibility in face of suspected crimes that are the subject of preliminary examination.[46] In the context of the investigation, the Office of the Prosecutor has operational authority that includes issuing arrest warrants. The prosecutor could elect to employ secrecy in sending such warrants to the nations in question, so that the suspects are not aware of their existence, and every state that is a member of the court is obligated to honor them. Thus, senior Israelis are liable to be arrested if they visit an ICC member state. The risk of investigation also applies to personnel in lower echelons, not only senior officers, if the suspicion arises that they carried out war crimes, although the probability of proceedings being instituted against lower-ranking personnel is low.[47] The end of such an investigation might result in indictments being handed down against Israelis, although in order

to reach that stage the Office of the Prosecutor would have to conclude that it could prove beyond doubt that the crime in question was committed.

Why Israel is Not an ICC Member

This review depicts why Israel has many reservations regarding membership in the ICC, including the concern that Israelis would be prosecuted for war crimes, whether they reside in the settlements, given that according to the Rome Statute settlements on occupied territory are considered a war crime, or they are military and government personnel involved in war crimes that allegedly took place during Operation Protective Edge. Still, these reservations are incongruous with the reality, insofar that the PA is already an ICC member, which justifies the ICC's jurisdiction over the alleged crimes given the PA's territorial link and the citizenship of the victims. Before the PA was accepted as a member state, Israel was correct in thinking that not having ratified the statute and not having joined the court would protect it from the court's jurisdiction over the alleged crimes suspected of having been committed on its territory or by its citizens against the Palestinian population.

A second concern is that the court and its judges, elected by the member states, would act on the basis of political rather than legal motives. This concern is amplified given the lack of checks and balances to oversee the workings of the ICC. Dealing with the Jewish settlements, for example, opens the door to the question of PA territories and sovereignty over land used for Jewish settlements. Therefore it may be that any political bias (claimed to have first been observed in the formulation of the article that defines the transfer of the population of an occupying nation to the occupied territory, even if voluntary, as a war crime, because of pressure applied by Arab nations) would have serious implications for Israel's territory. But one could also claim that an act seen as politically motivated could lead to the delegitimization of the young court and become a pyrrhic victory. Thus the court may want to avoid taking action that could seem to be politically motivated and thus besmirch its reputation. The same goes for the court handling political-territorial disputes.

Conclusion

Because the PA joined the ICC, Israel is concerned, and rightly so, about finding itself under investigation by the Office of the Prosecutor, although it is itself not a signatory to the Rome Statute. As an ounce of prevention

is worth a pound of cure, it is important to take precautionary measures to make sure this does not happen. To that end, it is important that Israel cooperate, whether openly or behind the scenes, with COIs investigating events occurring in Israel. Such cooperation is the critical way to present Israel's stance. It seems that currently, there is no declared cooperation between Israel with the ICC, and Israel avoids cooperating with investigations such as the COI. Given the sway that such reports are expected to have on the Office of the Prosecutor in beginning an investigation, it is necessary to reexamine this policy. The lack of cooperation is liable to be an obstacle toward proof of the justness of Israel's actions and toward obstruction of the impetus to prosecute Israelis. If, in the past, this had purely diplomatic implications, today, after the PA ratified the Rome Statute, there is real cause for concern that Israeli politicians and military personnel might be prosecuted for criminal actions.

Alongside the disputed articles in the Rome Statute, there are legal tools available to block the court's intervention, such as the principles of complementarity and gravity. Thus, in presenting the Israeli stance,[48] it may be that these criteria will not be met and a balanced view of the events under investigation by the honorable international bodies will emerge. Presenting the Israeli stance would improve the outcome of the examinations and investigations, and consequently Israel's image in the world as well.

At the same time, it seems that Israel should not hurry to ratify the Rome Statute, out of concern there will be general claims of Israeli war crimes. The problematics of becoming an ICC member state is particularly obvious with regard to the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as ratifying the statute might signal to the ICC that Israel accepts its jurisdiction to discuss political issues Israel has yet to decide.

Therefore, outright Israeli cooperation with investigating bodies and use of the legal tools noted in the Rome Statute may balance the international arena currently biased in favor of the Palestinians who use the court's authority to affect world public opinion. To be sure, Israel makes tremendous effort, including legal effort, to handle the difficulties posed by institutions such as the court.[49] But it seems that more can be done. It is necessary to strengthen the court system and cultivate it as a tool of critical and balancing international cooperation, because at this time lawfare is no less important than the kinetic battle itself.

Notes

1 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, art. 5, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.183/9 (1999) (henceforth: the statute), Article 25.

2 "Israel and the International Criminal Court," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://goo.gl/4osrK0.

3 This chamber oversees the preliminary examination and the decision to begin or end an examination of the event at the preliminary stage.

4 International Criminal Court, Office of the Prosecutor, https://goo.gl/yXobfs.

5 The court has no independent enforcement mechanism and relies on the help of its member nations.

6 Uganda, Congo, Darfur (Sudan), Kenya, Libya, the Ivory Coast, the Central African Republic, Mali, and Georgia. Trials are being conducted with four defendants from the Ivory Coast, the Central African Republic, and Congo.

7 Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, Guinea, Iraq (British soldiers in Iraq), Nigeria, the PA, ships registered in Comoros, Greece, Cambodia, and Ukraine. Ukraine is not a member state but gave the court the jurisdiction to examine its state starting in November 2013 (the start of the conflict with Russia) without any time limits attached; International Criminal Court, "Report on Preliminary Examination Activities 2015," https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/OTP-PE-rep-2015-Eng.pdf.

8 Libya and Darfur in Sudan.

9 In the Ivory Coast, Georgia, and Kenya.

10 IDF, Training through Technology Unit, "IDF Spokesman: The Flotilla Incident," IDF YouTube Channel, July 12, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8pGSKUbe7Y&feature=relmfu.

11 UN SC/9940, "Security Council Condemns Acts Resulting in Civilian Deaths during Israeli Operation against Gaza-Bound Aid Convoy, Calls for Investigation, in Presidential Statement," UN Website, May 31, 2010, http://www.un.org/press/en/2010/sc9940.doc.htm.

12 E.g., the Palmer Committee, established by the UN secretary general. See "Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Inquiry on the 31 May 2010 Flotilla Incident," September 2011, http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/middle_east/Gaza_Flotilla_Panel_Report.pdf.

13 International naval law states that a ship bearing the flag of a state is an extension of that state.

14 "Situation on Registered Vessels of Comoros, Greece and Cambodia," International Criminal Court, November 6, 2014, https://goo.gl/D7uR8H.

15 Not manifested in the case of the MV *Mavi Marmara*. The prosecutor examines the considerations of justice in part on the basis of the gravity of the act, the victims' interests, and the specific circumstances of the suspect. The prosecutor does not have to establish her considerations of justice in order to open an examination and, in fact, so far no examinations have been rejected on that basis.

16 In several articles, the Rome Statute provides the UN Security Council with a far-reaching mandate affecting the ICC's jurisdiction and the scope of its activities, even though the court is an independent body.
17 Though a state can agree to retroactive jurisdiction, as the PA did when it applied to become an ICC member.
18 Office of the Prosecutor (OTP), "Report on Prosecutorial Strategy," September 14, 2006, p. 5
19 ICC-01/13-AnxA, 06/11/14.
20 ICC-01/13-51, 06/11/15.
21 E.g., High Court of Justice 9733/11, "MK Dr. Michael Ben-Ari versus the Attorney General."
22 "Implementation of the Investigation Policy Related to the Naval Flotilla on May 31, 2010," website of the Military Advocate General, http://www.mag.idf.il/940-he/Patzar.aspx; the report of the Military Advocacy to the Turkel Commission, p. 84, http://www.mag.idf.il/sip_storage//FILES/9/949.pdf.
23 See footnote 15.
24 "Situation in Palestine," International Criminal Court, https://goo.gl/ypeCNr.
25 UNGA, 29 November 2012; Resolution 67/19. Status of Palestine in the United Nations (doc.nr. A/RES/67/19).
26 International Criminal Court, "ICC Welcomes Palestine as a New State Party," https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1103&ln=en.
27 According to Article 126, 60 days must pass after the statute is signed before it takes effect in practice.
28 Article 12(3) of the statute. This is the day after the three teenagers were abducted in the summer of 2014.
29 Called "The Conflict in Gaza between 7 July and 26 August 2014" in the report of the preliminary examination.
30 Report of the preliminary examination, pp. 14-16.
31 IDF Blog, "Operation Protective Edge," https://www.idfblog.com/operationgaza2014/.
32 The IDF's calculations about the number of Palestinian civilians killed are much lower than the data in the UN office for humanitarian coordination. See Gil Cohen, "The IDF's Version: In Operation Protective Edge, 761 Palestinian Civilians were Killed − Half the Number Determined by the UN," *Haaretz*, June 15, 2015.
33 According to the IDF Spokesman.
34 Military Advocacy, "The Military Advocate General's Decision on Irregular Incidents during Operation Protective Edge − Second Update" (henceforth: MAG decision), http://www.mag.idf.il/163-6957-he/Patzar.aspx.
35 Excepting incidents of looting. See Military Advocacy, "MAG Decision − Fourth Update," http://www.law.idf.il/163-7350-he/Patzar.aspx.
36 Breaking the Silence, *This Is How We Fought in Gaza: Soldiers' Testimonies and Photographs from 'Operation "Protective Edge" (2014)*, p. 16, http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/pdf/ProtectiveEdge.pdf.

37 Amichai Cohen and Tal Mimran, "Legal Response to the U.N. Report Investigating Operation Protective Edge," Israel Democracy Institute, July 9, 2015.

38 Report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry Established Pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution S-21/1, http://goo.gl/tYggvx.

39 Article 8 of the statute; defined as willful killing, torture, taking of hostages, expulsion, and more, which in fact constitute violations of the Fourth Geneva Conventions, as well as other grave violations of the laws and customs applicable to an international armed conflict.

40 Article 8(2)(viii)(b). Israeli-Jewish migration to the West Bank is considered a violation of the statute.

41 Pnina Sharvit Baruch, "Israel's Response to UN Recognition of a Palestinian State," *INSS Insight* No. 389, December 3, 2012, http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/389.pdf.

42 Israel can claim that an investigation of the issue would stop the political negotiations with the Palestinians that are from time to time renewed and is therefore improper, according to the position of international law, which does not get involved in peace agreements.

43 E Kontorovich, "Israel/Palestine – The ICC's Uncharted Territory" [2013], Journal of International Criminal Justice 979.

44 The issue of continuing crimes in the Rome Statute is under dispute and still unresolved. For a discussion, see Alan T. Nissel, "Continuing Crimes in the Rome Statute," *25 Michigan Journal of International Law* 653 (2004).

45 See Paragraph 100 of the verdict by Chief Justice Aharon Barak in the High Court of Justice 1661/05, the Gaza Shore Regional Council et al versus the Israeli Knesset et al.

46 "The ICC: Jurisdiction and Limits," *Parliament* No. 36, Israel Democracy Institute.

47 Eyal Gross, "The Hague Prosecutor: We Can Investigate and Try Lower Echelons Too," *Haaretz*, May 1, 2015.

48 In May 2015, the Israeli government issued a report describing extensively the factual background of the operation and the efforts made to honor the laws of warfare in its course. But this report, unlike, e.g., the Turkel Commission report, contained mainly informational material about the events and did not include lessons or legal steps to be taken in the future (such as IDF investigations and prosecutions).

49 A unit in the Israeli Justice Ministry deals with issues related to the ICC. In addition, last year, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decided to engage in a dialogue with the Office of the Prosecutor in order to clarify Israel's position, whereby the court has no jurisdiction to deal with Palestinian complaints. See Barak Ravid, "Israel Decides to Change Policy and Begin Talks with the Court in The Hague," *Haaretz*, July 9, 2015.

Israel's Second War Doctrine

Ron Tira

On the shelves of the Israeli defense establishment lie many documents defining Israel's defense concept, most of them classified. The unclassified texts include the seminal writings of David Ben Gurion from the 1950s; a book by General (ret.) Israel Tal (Talik)[1] and the attempt by General (ret.) David Ivri to formulate a defense concept in the late 1990s; summaries authorized for publication from the Meridor Committee report; a book by General (ret.) Prof. Isaac Ben-Israel;[2] and publications describing the classified in-depth draft distributed by the National Security Council[3] (hereafter – the NSC draft). A document entitled "IDF Strategy," signed by the IDF Chief of Staff (hereafter – Strategy 2015), was also published recently. Although Israel's defense concept also concerns routine security,[4] CbW,[5] relations with allies, and other aspects, most of the publications deal with the question of how Israel fights in war, and in an even more focused way, its subjective doctrine for victory in war. These documents paint a clear and fairly consistent picture of IDF strategy and doctrine (at least until Strategy 2015 and the NSC draft, which indicate a change in trend).

However, over the course of the last six major campaigns beyond Israel's borders,[6] the IDF repeatedly operated according to recurring patterns that were inconsistent with the official strategy and doctrine. Indeed, there is a broad common denominator between Operation Accountability (1993), Operation Grapes of Wrath (1996), the Second Lebanon War (2006), Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Operation Pillar of Defense (2012), and Operation Protective Edge (2014). In this article these six campaigns will be referred to jointly as Accountability-rationale campaigns (table 1). This rationale seeks to shape the rules of the game for the behavior of the parties

Ron Tira, author of *The Nature of War: Conflicting Paradigms and Israeli Military Effectiveness*, is a businessman and a reservist in the Israeli Air Force's Campaign Planning Department.

in the routine times following the conflict by striking a blow or causing attrition using firepower, and by applying indirect leverage, while both curtailing the allocation of resources and taking limited risks.

Table 1. Six Accountability-Rationale Campaigns

Name of Campaign	Year	Theater	Enemy	Duration
Accountability	1993	Lebanon	Hezbollah	7 days
Grapes of Wrath	1996	Lebanon	Hezbollah	17 days
Second Lebanon War	2006	Lebanon	Hezbollah	34 days
Cast Lead	2008-2009	Gaza Strip	Hamas	22 days
Pillar of Defense	2012	Gaza Strip	Hamas	8 days
Protective Edge	2014	Gaza Strip	Hamas	50 days

If we were witness to an isolated episode, it could have been claimed that it was a case of individual judgment in a specific instance, or a deviation from the doctrine, which requires investigation (as indeed occurred in 2006). But since Israel and the IDF have adhered to recurring patterns of operation in the course of six campaigns spread over two and a half decades, it appears that no error is involved, but the application of a second war doctrine – overt (because the events of the six Accountability-rationale campaigns are well known), but not officially written or institutionalized. The result is recurrent tension and dissonance due to the prevailing expectations within the IDF and in the public arena, based on the official documents and the divergence from what is prescribed in these official texts.

To be sure, the classical Israeli doctrine was designed first and foremost against invasion by state opponents, while the six Accountability-rationale campaigns were conducted against relatively weak sub-state opponents seeking, in general terms, to inflict damage on the State of Israel through high trajectory firepower from their own territory, rather than seeking to defeat the IDF or capture territory. Furthermore, it can be argued that there is no substantial political-strategic achievement in the Lebanese theater that Israel could realistically have expected to achieve, and consequently the political and strategic goal in Lebanon was essentially negative: reducing the need to deal with it to a minimum. It can also be argued that in the Gaza Strip theater, Israel's goal was to preserve the existing political and strategic situation, not to change it. Thus, together with the attempt in this article to group Israel's military campaigns together according to a

coherent doctrine, the decisions taken in each instance should be identified, taking into account the specific circumstances and distinct contexts of the respective cases.

The reference to the deviation from the classic Israeli doctrine is a statement of fact stemming from the attempt to analyze repeated characteristic patterns of action, and does not necessarily imply criticism. In the main, a decision to launch a large scale ground offensive (which did not take place in any of the Accountability-rationale campaigns) should result from an assessment that such an offensive will make a substantial contribution to achievement of the desired results in the unique circumstances and distinct context of each specific conflict, not out of a reflexive doctrinal commitment.

The Main Idea: Blow or Attrition versus Decision

In none of the six Accountability-rationale campaigns did the IDF aim to overthrow the opponent and reach a military decision; it sought to deliver a blow or to wear down the opponent, and concomitantly apply indirect levers that would put diplomatic mechanisms in motion, which in turn would facilitate a termination of the fighting and allow Israel to achieve its objectives. The IDF did not genuinely pursue a campaign theme aimed at eliminating the opponent's fighting ability or its ability to continue operating according to its plan to inflict damage on the State of Israel. This includes cases in which the official orders spoke of "removing the threat" and so on. Even when ostensibly far-reaching objectives were officially defined, such as "annihilating Hezbollah as an armed organization" and "enforcing the Lebanese government's sovereignty in South Lebanon," the IDF did not actually follow a campaign design that could have achieved these objectives, and it is therefore doubtful whether they can be regarded as true objectives. Similarly, three operations in the Gaza Strip within six years did not remove the threat that reappeared time after time.

While official IDF orders spoke of the need to conduct short campaigns, the IDF did not pursue a campaign theme that could have shortened the campaigns, and it is therefore questionable whether the IDF indeed sought to shorten these campaigns. This is especially true of the Second Lebanon War (in which the time dimension was almost unmanaged, and the decision makers found it difficult to comprehend the effect of time on the home front), and even more so of Operation Protective Edge, in which the prolonging of the operation and attrition of Hamas over time were part of Israel's "genuine" campaign design. Furthermore, in the Second Lebanon War, Operation

Cast Lead, and Operation Protective Edge, there were considerable stages that delayed between the completion of the airpower stage (attacking the targets that were known before the campaign began) and the beginning of the ground operations stage. The ensuing ground operations were of limited scope and were designed according to a rationale of small raids, special operations, general pressure (on the outskirts of Gaza City during Operation Cast Lead), or a specific need (such as neutralizing Hamas's offensive tunnels in Operation Protective Edge). No ground offensives were conducted according to a broader or more ambitious rationale, and no bold, large scale attack took place.

In practice, the IDF's "true" main objective was to cause the opponent more damage (quantitatively and qualitatively) than the opponent caused Israel in the same time span, and in this way to persuade it that the fighting was of no benefit to it, convince it to accept at least some of Israel's conditions for a post-conflict arrangement, and establish deterrence that would postpone the next round of fighting. In some of the campaigns, lines of operations were pursued that incidentally produced indirect leverage, such as evacuating enemy populations from threatened areas, a naval and air blockade, and attacks against dual-use infrastructure employed for both military and civilian purposes. In effect, the IDF "accepted" damage in Israel while simultaneously inflicting damage on the enemy (except for the defensive element in Operation Protective Edge, which deprived Hamas of a substantial part of its offensive capabilities). In other words, the true main idea was to conduct a "parallel" campaign: to "permit" the enemy to carry out its planned campaign against Israel, while in tandem carrying out a campaign that would cause the enemy worse damage.

The Israeli decision maker believed that a modest operational result achieved at a modest cost and risk was preferable to potential for an excellent operational result achieved at high cost and risk.

Overall, the Accountability-rationale campaigns had four stages. The first was a strike with firepower against the bank of targets that were known before the campaign began; this was followed by a stage delaying until the decision was taken to commit ground forces to the fighting; the third was the (usually limited) ground offense stage; and the fourth was the maintaining of pressure until both sides were ripe for a ceasefire.

Why has Israel chosen six times to operate according to such a pattern? Though there is little evidence, the answer may be simply because it could.

Accountability-rationale campaigns reflect a preference for resource management and risk management, rather than risk-taking and a potential high price. The contemporary approach to risk and price is illustrated by the fact that while Operation Focus – the air campaign at the outset of the Six Day War – was considered a spectacular success, despite the fact that 10 percent of the attacking force was either lost or damaged, the airlift that concluded the Second Lebanon War was perceived as less successful, and in fact was halted after a single CH-53 helicopter was shot down. Other considerations may also have caused Israel to act according to this pattern, including the change in the national ethos from a close-knit "mobilized" society to a more extroverted society of affluence, and diplomatic, regional, and international considerations.

It is possible, however, that Israel could have afforded to develop greater sensitivity to losses and to give greater weight to diplomatic considerations because it faced lesser threats; had it faced an existential threat, it could not have afforded this. It can also be argued that Israel chose this pattern as a result of technological progress, which created the possibility of achieving more through standoff firepower. Perhaps, however, Israel was able to achieve much more with standoff firepower because it faced weaker opponents. It is possible that Israel could not have afforded to act according to the blow/attrition through firepower mode had it faced a high-competence opponent that was able to defend its airspace with some degree of success, able to disrupt Israeli intelligence's targeting process or disrupt the functional continuity of Israeli air force bases, or capable of posing a more significant counter-threat that Israel could not afford to sustain.

The Accountability-rationale campaigns also reflect a preference for making significant decisions at a relatively late stage, out of an instinct to avoid commitment to specific (riskier and costlier) lines of operation before it is clear that such lines of operation are virtually inescapable.

In practice, the Accountability-rationale campaigns reveal that the Israeli decision maker believed that a modest operational result achieved at a modest cost and risk was preferable to potential for an excellent operational result achieved at high cost and risk (this, as noted, in addition to facing a situation where in Lebanon, there was no feasibility of a significant political-strategic achievement, and where in the Gaza Strip, Israel was aiming at the preservation of the status quo – in other words, it was doubtful whether an excellent political-strategic change could have been achieved in either theater). Such preferences are possible when Israel faces a relatively weak

sub-state enemy, and has the ability to choose a modest result achieved at modest cost. In the past, given the threat of invasion by an Arab military coalition with an order of battle many times larger than the IDF's order of battle, Israel had no choice other than to take risks and take early action that preempted its enemies. In the six Accountability-rationale campaigns, the threat was a lesser one, and the worst case scenario was not very grave. Indeed, while reality punished Israel heavily for any mistake made in the Yom Kippur War (and the effect of these punishments is still felt today), the punishments inflicted on Israel for mistakes in the Second Lebanon War, Operation Cast Lead, and Operation Protective Edge were minor and quickly forgotten – at least in part. Moreover, what was at stake in the six Accountability-rationale campaigns was not very significant – usually violent negotiations on the precise boundaries of the freedom of violent action to be exercised by the parties in routine times, or an incident that spun out of control (miscalculation) – so that the Israeli decision maker apparently believed, consciously or otherwise, that the ways and means did not have to be of great weight.

The Accountability-rationale campaigns also reveal a change in the attitude to territory: a ground offensive is no longer perceived as an opportunity for pushing the enemy off-balance or seizing territory as a bargaining chip; even the temporary entry into enemy territory is regarded as a liability, not an asset. Thus, out of concern for casualties, loss of public support in Israel, and loss of international credit – and in the absence of an opponent's operational-physical center of gravity at a specific geographic location – the Israeli decision maker refrained from ordering a major ground offensive, and confined himself to standoff fire, combined with relatively small ground raids, special operations, and ground offensives involving minimal friction with the enemy.

Entering the Campaign

In general, Accountability-rationale campaigns were born out of lack of agreement about the sides' freedom of violent action in the "routine" periods preceding them: both the boundaries of the "permitted" violence by Hezbollah or Hamas against the IDF and Israel in routine times and the boundaries of the "permitted" retaliation by the IDF. One of the sides no longer accepted the boundaries of the violence in routine times, and escalated from low intensity (exchanges of violence that are a permitted part of routine times) to medium-to-high intensity in order to conduct violent

negotiations over a redefinition of the boundaries of the permitted freedom of action. The NSC draft states, "The decision on the level of violence during routine times results in not only a slight change in the characteristics in action during routine times, but also [sometimes warrants] a transition to a period of emergency."[7] In most cases, it was Israel itself that adopted an escalatory pattern; hence the question of early warning from the classical Israeli doctrine was irrelevant.

The Second Lebanon War resulted from a border skirmish that spun out of control, with both parties insufficiently aware of the escalatory consequences of their actions (miscalculation). Eventually, however, it also became a contest over the boundaries of the parties' freedom of violent action in routine times. It is possible that there was also some miscalculation on the road to Operation Pillar of Defense, with Israel not understanding the escalatory consequences of killing Hamas commander Ahmed Jabari.

The dynamics leading up to Operation Protective Edge were perhaps the most exceptional and complex of the six Accountability-rationale campaigns. The roots of the conflict lay in the estrangement between Hamas and Iran regarding the Syrian civil war, the estrangement between Hamas and Egypt following the el-Sisi coup, and the failure of the attempt at intra-Palestinian reconciliation, so that from Hamas's perspective, lack of choice pushed it into a war that sought to shatter its isolation and alleviate the economic distress of the Gaza Strip. Operation Protective Edge was the exception that proved the rule, since it erupted because Hamas believed at the time that it had no alternative, rather than because it chose to conduct armed negotiations over the terms of routine times or because of a miscalculation. The exit from Operation Protective Edge was also more complex, because Israel sought to deal a substantial blow to Hamas's military power, but not to detract from its status as the de facto sovereign of the Gaza Strip. Israel may also have sought to preserve Hamas as a counterweight against the Palestinian Authority and as an insurance policy against an internationally imposed settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The singularity of Operation Protective Edge's termination is further discussed below. Nevertheless, many aspects of Operation Protective Edge dealt (not exclusively) with the boundaries of parties' freedom of violent action during the ensuing routine times. In addition, there was

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miscalculation in the operation, because if both Israel and Hamas desire Hamas's continued rule, then Israel too is interested in allowing the Gaza Strip some minimal economic viability; hence an armed conflict fought over Gaza's economic viability is unnecessary.

The Exit from a Campaign

In none of the six Accountability-rationale campaigns did the end state result directly from the military situation. After a sufficient time passed, the two sides reached the conclusion that they had exhausted the measures they were willing to tap (which were not necessarily all the means at their disposal), and that time was no longer working to their advantage, and chose to exit from the conflict. In most of the Accountability-rationale campaigns, Israel's opponents agreed to a ceasefire before it did, and it was Israel that insisted on more time for fighting (Operation Protective Edge was the exception). It is possible that the insistence on additional time resulted from a lack of coherence on the part of Israel, which for some reason waited for a result according to the classic defense concept to emerge (military decision), while it operated according to a pattern of inflicting a blow or seeking attrition, which a priori is incapable of yielding a decisive result. It is possible that coherence on Israel's part could have brought most of the campaigns to an immediate end following the initial air strikes.

Operations Accountability, Grapes of Wrath, Pillar of Defense, and the Second Lebanon War ended with an international termination mechanism leading to clear arrangements (some of which were written) regarding the military rules of the game for the routine times following each of the conflicts. Operation Pillar of Defense also ended in an arrangement for certain economic matters, such as offshore fishing and cultivation of agricultural plots adjacent to the Gaza border. Operation Cast Lead ended in an international termination mechanism, but without a clear arrangement for the ensuing routine period. Operation Protective Edge was exceptional in ending with a diplomatic process that involved mainly the regional players, with limited involvement on the part of the global powers and the UN, which led to some relief of the economic distress in the Gaza Strip.

Perhaps the fact that Israel began to be perceived as a risk-averse and hesitant actor hard-pressed to make early or weighty decisions has had ramifications for more significant regional issues.

The principal characteristic of the termination of most Accountability-rationale campaigns, however, is the difference between the formal arrangements ending them and the reality-shaping factors that emerged from those conflicts. Operation Accountability ended in the Accountability Understandings, which lasted for two years before Hezbollah returned to fire at communities in northern Israel. The Grapes of Wrath Understandings held for a number of years. UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the Second Lebanon War, included an ambitious arrangement resting on an enlarged multinational apparatus with the authority to use force. This resolution, however, was never enforced in reality (for example, the disarming of Hezbollah, the banning of its deployment in South Lebanon, a weapons embargo against Hezbollah, and a ban on Israeli flights in Lebanese airspace), and is in effect a dead letter. UN Security Council Resolution 1860, passed during Operation Cast Lead, also had no effect on reality. The arrangement following Operation Pillar of Defense lasted a short time, and part of it was never implemented. Some elements of the arrangement following Operation Protective Edge were also designed for declarative purposes only, while it was clear to all parties from the start that they would never be implemented (e.g., a port in Gaza, release of prisoners, demilitarization of the Gaza Strip).

What shaped the routine times following the conflicts was therefore not the formal arrangements, but the effect of each campaign, and the cumulative effect of all the campaigns combined – on Israel on the one hand, and on Hamas and/or Hezbollah on the other. The six Accountability-rationale campaigns made the equation between cost and gain in conflicts of this type clear to all the parties involved. The costs of the conflicts were what shaped the rules of the game and the boundaries of the freedom of violent action in routine times. Since these were operations of choice or miscalculations (except for Operation Protective Edge, from Hamas's point of view), and in general the parties were acting in defense of secondary interests, rather than existential or vital interests, the clarifying of the conflict economics (the costs of the conflicts according to the various criteria) perhaps constituted the main shaping factor emerging from these conflicts.

Both sides are somewhat deterred by the prospect of conflicts of this type. The deterrence depends on the context, since an adequate deterrent in the context of a secondary interest is not necessarily adequate for situations in which a primary interest is at stake. Furthermore, the fact that such conflicts have occurred six times means that the deterrence created by

them is limited, even in the context of secondary interests. Hamas and Hezbollah have learned the limits of their power against Israel (according to their capabilities at the relevant times), while Israel has learned the limits of its power – in the same situations in which it operates with partial commitment and without a willingness to incur substantial costs.

Strategy 2015

Strategy 2015 goes a long way to adapt the written doctrine to the practice prevailing over the past 25 years. It explicitly recognizes the question of conflict economics, and distinguishes between a war requiring a substantial mobilization of resources and a readiness to take risks, and an "emergency" (in other words, a limited operation) in which the mobilization of resources and the risks taken are limited. Strategy 2015 accordingly distinguishes between wars that require "a fundamental change in the situation that changes the strategic balance, manifested in the neutralizing of players," and operations in which the political echelon confines itself to "maintaining or improving the strategic situation." In such limited operations, it is sufficient to demonstrate the "uselessness of using force against Israel." The new strategy also distinguishes between a contest against a state enemy and a conflict with a sub-state enemy.

In Strategy 2015, the IDF's objective in a limited operation against a sub-state enemy is reduced to "utilizing military supremacy in order to achieve the operation's objectives as defined by the political echelon" and "inflicting limited and defined damage on the enemy," while the idea of military decision has been confined to the tactical sphere (military decision in "every encounter" with the enemy). Strategy 2015 establishes that a limited operation should "[highlight] to the enemy the magnitude of the potential damage it can expect... and the limited benefit of its action." In the developing context (mainly following Operation Protective Edge), and like the Meridor Committee report and the NSC draft, Strategy 2015 adds the element of defense to Israel's traditional defense concept.

Nevertheless, even in the context of a limited operation against a sub-state enemy, Strategy 2015 still talks about "victory," "eliminating capabilities by destroying enemy forces," and "effective defense against high trajectory weapons," in part by "operational control of a large territory in order to suppress the fire from it." The document states that the principal approach in the IDF is to surprise the enemy, although it can be argued that nothing surprising was executed in the six Accountability-rationale

campaigns (other than in limited contexts or at the low command levels). The document states that even in a limited campaign against a sub-state enemy, an "immediate maneuver" should be carried out, although in the Accountability-rationale campaigns, ground maneuvers (offensives) were carried out late because the decision making echelon sought to delay the (costlier and riskier) ground maneuver as much as practically possible. Or, limited maneuvers were carried out – such that made no significant contribution to achievement of the campaign's objectives – if, indeed, any maneuver whatsoever took place.

It is possible that Strategy 2015 gives excessive weight to a limited conflict with a sub-state enemy, and as result gives too little weight to a conflict against an enemy with robust competences. The balance between preparation for the likely (recurring) scenario and preparation for the risky scenario should be optimized, and it may be that Strategy 2015 leans too much towards the repeating scenario. Even if it is difficult at this moment to outline an imminent conflict against a state enemy with robust competences, this reference scenario must be the guideline for IDF's force buildup.

A Look Ahead to Future Conflicts

It is perhaps understandable why Israel has chosen to act by prioritizing cost-benefit patterns, in other words, achieving a modest result at a modest cost, and to postpone weightier decisions insofar as possible, in situations in which Israel faced weak sub-state enemies whose main capabilities lie in inflicting damage (and which did not threaten to defeat the IDF or to capture territory), and when the interests defended were of secondary importance. It is understandable in contexts in which Israel could afford to sustain damage from the opponent, knowing that the opponent at the same time suffered more substantial damage, without removing the threat or substantially degrading the opponent's ability to make war.

It is risky, however, to apply these preferences beyond such contexts. First of all, it is questionable whether these patterns of operation are relevant to situations in which Israel faces strong opponents whose ability to cause damage to Israel is more substantial, or which are capable of operating effectively against the IDF. Furthermore, a sub-state enemy like Hezbollah acquires new capabilities that can cause more significant damage to the functioning of Israel's military, civilian, and economic systems, which in turn requires a reassessment of the feasibility of acting according to Accountability rationale in the next conflict with Hezbollah. In view of the

qualitative change in Hezbollah's capability to inflict damage on Israel, the ability to conduct an operation in which each side carries out its plan simultaneously for many days and weeks with almost "no interference" from the other side, while concluding which side inflicted more damage on the other only after the dust settles, should be reconsidered. The feasibility of using defensive echelons against Hezbollah's redundant, saturated array of advanced firepower should be revisited. It is possible that in the next conflict against Hezbollah, it will be a mistake to delay and postpone weightier decisions. Decisions should be made early on, and a commitment should be made at an early stage to rapid and bold patterns of operation that incur a substantial risk and cost.

In any case, the IDF must at least maintain its competence to wage war according to the old school. Now that generations of commanders have been schooled to see warfare as not much more than a "technical" process of clearing the bank of targets, however, it is unclear to what extent the senior headquarters understands the full scope of war, which is more complex than merely servicing lists of 14-digit coordinates. It is unclear whether the current IDF culture still fosters the DNA for daring operations (at the campaign level, above the tactical or special operations level), or whether the DNA for risk management dominates at the high command levels. It is unclear whether today there is a commander fit to lead large forces in a bold and rapid surprise ground offensive, to conduct a dynamic battle that has not been planned in advance, and to cover dozens of kilometers in one day. It is unclear whether in the interface between the military and political echelons there is the ability to make early decisions, or whether the current organizational culture virtually mandates delay and making decisions late, and even then only limited ones.

From a broader perspective, it can be asked whether the fact that Israel chose a modest commitment to achieve a modest result six consecutive times has somewhat eroded the cumulative image of Israeli power – among its enemies, allies, and other parties. It is possible that had Israel adopted other patterns of action, it would not have reached a state in which it had to conduct six similar campaigns, or, for the past decade, to conduct Accountability-rationale campaigns on the average of once every thirty months. In at least some cases, such as the Second Lebanon War, Israel embarked on the campaign with the additional goal of sweeping aside the mutual deterrence equation,[8] in other words, improving its freedom of action and thereby reducing that of the enemy. In general, this objective

was not achieved. Perhaps the fact that Israel began to be perceived as a risk-averse and hesitant actor hard-pressed to make early or weighty decisions has also had ramifications for more significant regional issues.

Conclusion: The Second Doctrine

It can thus be argued that since the 1990s, a second IDF doctrine has emerged, and while not official, has served as the principal guide for the application of force – overriding even the language of the official operation orders. Accordingly:

a. The second doctrine applies in conflicts against sub-state opponents capable mainly of causing general damage that Israel is able to tolerate, and that are unable to defeat the IDF or threaten Israel's borders. These opponents use high trajectory weapons fire from deep inside their own territory, and lack an operational-geographic center of gravity (these are widely dispersed opponents). In the six campaigns, Israel did not aim to change the political-strategic situation because it could not or did not want to do so.
b. The conflicts broke out due to disagreement about the characteristics of the "permitted" violence at "routine" times, or due to miscalculation, and constituted violent negotiations over the terms of the ensuing routine period. Israel was usually the one that escalated to medium-high intensity. The interests at stake were of secondary importance (except for the interest of Hamas in Operation Protective Edge).
c. Israel has prioritized cost and risk management, preferring a modest operational result at a modest cost over a chance for a brilliant operational result with substantial risk and at a higher cost.
d. Israel preferred to make late and limited decisions insofar as it was possible, without committing itself to early and costly courses of action, and without committing itself when making a weighty decision was not inescapable.
e. Israel acted according to the rationale of a strike or attrition. It "accepted" enemy action against it (other than the success of the defense in Operation Protective Edge), and did not remove the threat, while at the same time causing greater quantitative and qualitative damage to the opponent and employing indirect leverage to exert pressure.
f. Israel gave preference to firepower, and the ground operations were limited and made a limited contribution. The main value of firepower was in destroying the bank of targets known before the conflict erupted,

and Israel therefore completed most of the damage inflicted on the enemy in the early days of the conflict.

g. Israel was the party that insisted on continuing the conflict, even after its enemies agreed to halt it (except for Operation Protective Edge), thereby demonstrating the incoherence between unofficial doctrine and expectations: it mistakenly waited for a decisive result to emerge, while actually confining itself to inflicting a blow or attrition.

h. The conflicts ended when the two sides concluded that they had exhausted the measures they were willing to use, and that time was no longer working in their favor. They usually ended in an international mechanism leading to an arrangement for the ensuing routine period.

i. Usually, the formal arrangement for the ensuing period did not meet the test of reality, and what in fact shaped the ensuing routine were the conflict's cost-benefit ratios. Both sides were deterred – to a limited extent and temporarily, depending on the context – from conflicts of this type, and therefore accepted restrictions on their freedom of violent action at routine times.

The preparations for a conflict against a high competence opponent, or for a Third Lebanon War, are liable to require Israel to leave its new comfort zone, in which the Accountability rationale prevails, and to force it to act early and boldly, while incurring risks.

Notes

1 Israel Tal, *National Security: The Few against the Many* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1996).
2 Isaac Ben-Israel, *Israel's Defense Concept* (University on the Air, 2013).
3 Gur Laish, "Principles of the National Security Council's Defense Concept – for Routine and Emergencies," *Eshtonot* 10, Research Center, National Security College, July 2015.
4 IDF's jargon for the periods between the wars which is not peacetime as a certain "acceptable" level of violence is common in such times.
5 Campaign between Wars, which is the IDF's jargon for its operations to interrupt or frustrate enemy force buildup and enemy low intensity attacks.
6 In other words, excluding Operation Defensive Shield and other operations in Judea and Samaria.
7 Laish, "Principles of the National Security Council's Defense Concept," p. 36.
8 Winograd Commission, "Partial Report," p. 101.

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