Strategic ASSESSMENT

Volume 20 | No. 2 | July 2017

INSS
המכון למחקרי ביטחון לאומי
THE INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES
TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY אוניברסיטת תל אביב

Strategic
ASSESSMENT

Volume 20 | No. 2 | **July 2017**

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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.

Strategic Assessment is a quarterly publication comprising policy-oriented articles written by INSS researchers and guest contributors. The views presented here are those of the authors alone.

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Strategic Assessment is published in English and Hebrew.
The full text is available on the Institute's website: www.inss.org.il

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Abstracts

Iranian Military Intervention in Syria: A New Approach

Ephraim Kam

Military intervention in Syria is an unprecedented development in Iran's regional behavior and represents several changes. This is the first time that Iran has intervened militarily with significant force in another nation, which is all the more unexpected, as Syria and Iran share no border. The intervention in Syria is a new type of mandate for the Revolutionary Guards, whose ground troops – along with ground troops of the regular Iranian army – are involved in fighting another state. Until now, the Revolutionary Guards were charged with domestic missions, while the regular army was charged with defending Iran's borders. Most of the force sent to Syria by Tehran is not composed of Iranian units, but rather comprises Shiite militias from other nations. This is the first time Iran has cooperated militarily with Russia. Above all, Iran seeks to use its force in Syria to take advantage of the vacuum left by the defeat of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, to try to build a corridor of control and influence that would allow it to move troops and weapons from Iran to Syria and Lebanon. This is a worrisome development for Israel, the United States, Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and other nations.

Keywords: Iran, Syria, intervention force, Revolutionary Guards, Shiite militias, Lebanon

The War in Syria: What Lies Ahead?

Eyal Zisser

Six years into Syria's bloody civil war, the conclusion of the war is still a long way off. Bashar al-Assad's December 2016 conquest of Aleppo – the country's second largest city – with Russian and Iranian support was a significant achievement in the campaign against his rivals. However, since the embers of protest and rebellion continue to burn in the country, the war may well continue for some time. Though not likely, not impossible are the collapse of the regime and the victory of the rebels due to Washington's deepening military involvement in Syria, or, alternatively, Bashar al-Assad's

unnatural departure from the scene. However, over the past year luck appears to have been with Assad, the man whom so many were quick to eulogize. Indeed, he might even emerge from the war with the upper hand.

Keywords: Syria, Russia, Iran, Syrian civil war, Bashar al-Assad

Russia's Army in Syria: Testing a New Concept of Warfare

Sarah Fainberg and Viktor Eichner

Syria constitutes the first battlefield in which the Russian Federation has, in a coordinated manner and on a large scale, deployed and activated a contingent of expeditionary forces, including career soldiers, special units assigned to special operations, military police, military advisors and technicians, and "volunteers." Russia's new involvement model, as applied and tested on the Syrian frontlines, may further boost Russia's offensive and deterrent capabilities, both in its "near abroad" and in any foreign operation it may undertake.

Keywords: Russia, Syria, hybrid warfare, expeditionary forces

China-Iran Relations following the Nuclear Agreement and the Lifted Sanctions: Partnership Inc.

Raz Zimmt, Israel Kanner, Ofek Ish Maas, and Tal Avidan

This article examines China-Iran relations following the nuclear agreement with Iran and the lifting of sanctions, from the perspectives of politics, economics, and security. To this end, it assesses a variety of Chinese interests in the Middle East on both an inter-power and regional level. In the economic realm, many challenges involved in developing the bilateral relationship remain, while in the military and defense realm, the improvement in relations has yet to mature into concrete cooperation or a signed arms deal. As for Israel, China's support of Iran – as manifested in Chinese assistance with Iran's nuclear development and the rescinded sanctions, as well as defense exports and the mutual aspiration to weaken the United States in the global arena – is at odds with Israel's national security interests. Since Israel possesses no direct leverage on China with regard to Iran (and with regard to Chinese diplomacy in general), Israel might turn to the United States in the hope that Washington would become a proxy of sorts, and an indirect lever of influence.

Keywords: China, Iran, nuclear, defense exports

Political and Military Contours of the Next Conflict with Hezbollah

Gideon Sa'ar and Ron Tira

This article analyzes the political and military contours of a future conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, and explores the tension that exists between two levels of analysis: the underlying fundamental political and military data, and the distinct context that is liable to result in escalation. The underlying political and military data reveal that the realistic strategic successes that both sides are likely to achieve in the conflict are limited, and that in an all-out confrontation, both sides will pay a heavy price. These are significant considerations that discourage the outbreak of hostilities, and if a conflict does occur, encourage the framework of a limited conflict. However, the current situation involves the emergence of unusual threats, such as the production of precise missiles in Lebanon and the future deployment of high quality Iranian weapons in Syria. In the distinct context of preventing these threats, there is justification for paying the price of a conflict, which is liable to include the Syrian theater and the Russia factor.

Keywords: IDG, Hezbollah, Iran, Syria, Russia

An Assault on Urban Areas: The Revised Reference Scenario for the Home Front in Israel

Meir Elran and Carmit Padan

The reference scenario for a future conflict against Hezbollah and/or Hamas approved by the Israeli government in June 2016 is bound to affect the home front. The main change to the reference scenario, the first of its type presented and approved as a basis for future preparations, is the far graver threat than that of previous conflicts, manifested primarily by the introduction of more precise high trajectory weapons. These enable adversaries to switch from the previous strategy of "harassment," based mostly on statistical weapons, to a revised strategy of "severe disruption." The difference lies in the scope of launches, and above all, the greater damage resulting especially from what is referred to as the focused "assaults" on urban areas. These are likely to consist of dense barrages fired against urban targets during the first days of the conflict, which are liable to cause unprecedented harm to the population and damage to critical infrastructure. This article examines the existing possible responses to the new reference scenario, and argues that the gap between the developing threat and the

civilian population's current state of preparedness has widened. The article proposes concrete measures to narrow this gap.

Keywords: home front, reference scenario, Hezbollah, Hamas, high trajectory weaponry

The Hamas Document of Principles: Can a Leopard Change Its Spots?

Gilead Sher, Liran Ofek, and Ofir Winter

Hamas's "Document of General Principles and Policies," issued in May 2017, outlines the organization's current ideology. The document intends to resolve tensions between Hamas's traditional philosophy, as put forth in its 1988 Covenant of the Resistance Movement, and the array of practical challenges facing the organization that has ruled the Gaza Strip over the past decade. The document emphasizes the organization's national orientation over its Islamic bent, and aims both to position Hamas as legitimate leadership in the Palestinian and international arena and to pave the way for mending relations with Egypt. However, leaders in Ramallah and Cairo have not rushed to change their attitude toward Hamas, and demand additional concessions from the organization, accompanied by concrete measures. Likewise, the document does not reflect real change vis-à-vis Israel: Hamas refuses to recognize Israel, lay aside its "resistance" weapon, and become a full partner in a two-state solution.

Keywords: Hamas, PLO, Fatah, Egypt, Palestinian Authority, Israel, Gaza Strip

From Supervision to Development: A New Concept in Planning Arab Localities

Rassem Khamaisi

Residential planning and construction is one of the main strategic issues affecting the relations of the State of Israel with its Arab citizens, as well as relations between Arab and Jewish citizens. The common belief in the Arab sector is that the state uses spatial planning as a tool for restricting, controlling, and supervising spatial development in the Arab localities. A restrictive planning regulation has led to a shortage of available land to meet the growing demand for housing with buildings usually found in the Arab neighborhoods. This ultimately results in building without permits, and contributes to violations of the law, leading to tension between the

state and its Arab citizens. The prevailing planning approach has thus spawned distrust and anxiety among the Arab population, and this in turn has strengthened the nationalistic rhetoric relative to the civil discourse. News of demolitions or concern about the demolition of homes in the Arab localities is turning a civil, regulatory, or law enforcement issue into a national issue, which aggravates the already fragile relations between the state and its Arab citizens. Relations between neighboring Jewish and Arab localities or between Jewish and Arab neighborhoods, or Jewish neighborhoods where the Arab population is growing, are sliding toward hostility. This article will examine aspects of the existing planning and supervision concept and the increase in construction without permits and building demolitions, which are liable to disrupt public order, lead to verbal and physical violence, and affect Israel's stability.

Keywords: spatial outline plans, construction without permits, building demolition, planning reform, Arab citizens of Israel

Back to the Czarist Era: Russia's Aspirations, Buildup, and Military Activity in the Arctic Region

Omer Dostri

Climate changes have transformed the Arctic region, rich in natural resources and minerals, into a magnet for different actors, and as a result, into an arena for their struggles. The most prominent state in this context is Russia, which since Putin's rise to power has viewed the Arctic region as a Russian area of strategic influence and has formulated policy documents aimed at actualizing Russian aspirations in the region. To this end, over the past decade Russia has implemented a process of military buildup, including the upgrade, improvement, and increase of its military strength, and has been engaged in military activity that signals its intentions to the various actors involved.

Keywords: Arctic region, Russia, United States, national security, force buildup, strategy, army, diplomacy, deterrence, nuclear

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Supplement

Foreign Policy Think Tanks and Decision Making Processes

Yoel Guzansky and Gallia Lindenstrauss

Israel is home to dozens of think tanks, all seeking to affect the way decisions are taken regarding social and political issues in their respective fields. The growing number of such institutes in Israel reflects a broader global phenomenon of increasing think tank influence. Although think tanks play a particularly central role in the United States, due to specific features of the American political system, their influence in other parts of the world is significant. In view of the many and complex security challenges faced by Israel, the role of think tanks in the Israeli experience demands serious consideration. This paper examines the target audiences for think tanks dealing with foreign policy, the ways in which these institutes affect decision making, and the challenges they face at present.

Keywords: think tanks, foreign policy, security, United States, Israel

Iranian Military Intervention in Syria: A New Approach

Ephraim Kam

Iranian military intervention in Syria, particularly since 2014, is an unprecedented development in the region, and reflects new, significant aspects of Iranian behavior. This intervention affects the future of the Syrian regime and the future of the country overall. It likewise has implications for Iran's military capabilities and its influence in Syria and elsewhere in the region, as well as the capabilities of Hezbollah and armed Shiite organizations with ties to Iran. Similarly, there are implications for Iranian-Russian military cooperation and the future of the struggle against the terrorist groups that are currently active in Syria. At the moment, however, the primary importance of this intervention is the new strategic approach it represents for Iran, which seeks to wield influence and control in an area linking Iran with Syria and Lebanon. For this reason, it is an issue that must command the attention of other countries operating in the region, including the United States, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. This article examines the military and strategic significances of Iran's activity in Syria and its implications for Iranian regional behavior.

Building the Iranian Military Intervention in Syria

Iranian military intervention in Syria's civil war began in late 2011 and early 2012, a few months after the outbreak of the rebellion against the Assad regime. In its first stages, this intervention was conducted with a low profile. Iran provided the Assad regime with financial aid, arms shipments, and equipment to disrupt channels of communication. At some point in early 2012, Iran dispatched a few hundred members of the Quds Force, which operates under the auspices of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, as well as

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members of the Revolutionary Guards themselves and Hezbollah fighters, who helped the Syrian army in consulting, planning, instruction, and training. During this period, these forces were not assigned fighting roles on a significant scale, but rather helped the Assad regime build an armed militia known as the "People's Army" (*Jaysh al-Sha`bi*), consisting primarily of Shiites and members of the Alawite minority. As such, between 2012 and June 2014, under the command of Qassem Soleimani, members of the Quds Force played a central role in assisting the Assad regime, including by supervising the activities of Hezbollah and Shiite militias from Iraq.[1]

The turning point came in mid-2014 following both the appearance of the Islamic State on the scene in Syria and Iraq and the weakening of the Assad regime. Until that point, the relatively few Revolutionary Guards in Syria, deployed in parallel to members of the Quds Force, had served primarily in advisory positions. However, the weakening of the Syrian army, the situational needs stemming from fighting against the Islamic State, and the return of thousands of Iraqi Shiites from Syria in order to fight Islamic State forces in Iraq spurred Iran to seek other ways to assist the Assad regime. The solution was to send thousands of fighters from various organizations to Syria to assume combat positions under Iranian leadership. To be sure, Iran still denies that its forces are fighting in Syria and maintains that they were sent only to play an advisory and instructional role, and at the request of the Syrian government. This denial appears to stem from Iran's interest not to be associated with the murder of civilians in Syria, as well as from the Iranian regime's desire to avoid criticism at home regarding the intervention and loss of Iranian forces in Syria.

Despite the suspicions that have existed between Iran and Russia for generations, the mutual advantages stemming from their military and political cooperation regarding the situation in Syria outweigh the disadvantages.

The building of the Iranian military force in Syria has a number of important aspects. Iran was the only country that sent ground forces to fight in Syria. Although Russia focused on airstrikes in Syria and the United States launched airstrikes in northeastern Iraq, both feared becoming entangled in a ground war and were therefore careful to avoid sending ground forces for combat purposes on a significant scale.

The core leading the Iranian forces in Syria is the Quds Force, which operates two fighting frameworks. The first group consists of Iranian

forces, led by ground force units of the Revolutionary Guards that saw action in Aleppo, among other places. The Quds Force also oversees a smaller group of units of the regular Iranian army – *Artesh* – in combat roles. These units began arriving in Syria in 2016. In April of that year, Iran's deputy chief of staff confirmed that commandos and snipers from the special forces brigade of the regular Iranian army were deployed in Syria. Iranian soldiers were apparently deployed in Syria for short periods while they were integrated with the Revolutionary Guards, as opposed to operating as separate units. Also deployed were units of the *Basij* – a large militia of reserve forces, including hundreds of thousands of volunteers who underwent a lower level of military training and who thus far have been serving as an auxiliary force to maintain the security of the regime, fulfill policing needs, and disperse demonstrations. The group also helps absorb volunteers who are assigned to the Revolutionary Guards. The fact that some 90 members of the Basij were killed in Syria in 2016 is indicative of the fact that they were also used in the fighting itself.[2]

Alongside the Iranian forces operating in Syria under the auspices of Iran are non-Iranian Shiite forces. Most important are the thousands of Hezbollah fighters who were sent by Iran to fight in Syria. However, although Hezbollah has experience fighting the IDF in southern Lebanon, the warfare of that familiar region differs from what is expected of them in Syria – for example, urban warfare, such as the fighting in Aleppo. Hezbollah's role in the hostilities in Syria has undoubtedly improved its operational capabilities. On the other hand, there have been reports of tension between Hezbollah and Quds Force and Revolutionary Guards operatives, apparently stemming from the large number of fatalities in the ranks of Hezbollah, as well as their sense that they are being exploited by the Iranians to fight someone else's war and take part in the destruction of Syria, including the civilian casualties.[3]

The other non-Iranian forces involved in the fighting are Shiite militias that were established by Iran. They include Iraqi militias, some set up by Iran in the last decade and sent to Iraq, and others set up in Iraq with Iranian support after the fall of Saddam Hussein. There are also Afghan and Pakistani militias, which Iran established and sent to Syria for combat purposes. Since 2014, Iran has recruited volunteers from Iran's Afghan and Pakistani communities to fight in Syria in exchange for a salary or for Iranian citizenship or work papers. Most commanders and officers of the Afghan (*Fatemiyoun*) brigade and the Pakistani (*Zainabiyoun*) brigade

are Iranian officers from the ranks of the Revolutionary Guards and were trained either by the Guards or the Quds Force. Each of these brigades contains thousands of fighters.[4] All of the non-Iranian and Iranian forces operating in Syria under the auspices of the Quds Force belong to three regional commands: one is responsible for the sector north of Aleppo, another for the Aleppo-Damascus sector, and a third for the area from Damascus southward.[5]

The number of fighters operating under Iranian auspices has fluctuated over time. In late 2015, the number peaked when forces were dispatched to assist the Syrian regime and Hezbollah in the large ground campaign in northwestern Syria. According to the IDF's Military Intelligence Directorate, 2,500 Iranian fighters were in Syria during this period – some from the Revolutionary Guards and others from the regular Iranian army. Later, their number dropped to 1,500, perhaps as a result of the heavy losses suffered by the Iranian forces, and in the spring of 2017 they numbered 1,000. They were joined by thousands of Hezbollah fighters and approximately 10,000 fighters from Shiite militias, for a total of approximately 20,000 soldiers.[6] Still, in early 2017, the Revolutionary Guards ground forces commander announced that Iran would send additional "military advisors" (i.e., combat soldiers) to Syria as long as this proved necessary.[7] He did not specify whether the forces would be Iranian or provided by Hezbollah and the Shiite militias.

The forces of Iran, Hezbollah, and the other Shiite militias suffered heavy losses that have only increased since the beginning of the ground offensive launched by the Syrian army in October 2015. In November 2016, the chairman of the Iranian Foundation of Martyrs stated that Iranian forces in Syria lost more than 1,000 soldiers. This figure is believed to include the losses sustained by the Iranian forces and members of the Afghan and Pakistani militias that were residents of Iran. Three months later, the same official said that losses among the Revolutionary Guards and the Afghan and Pakistani forces had reached 2,100.[8] Among the Iranians killed were dozens of officers, including high ranking officers with the rank of colonel and brigadier general. The Iranian casualties belonged to different units of the Revolutionary Guards, the ground forces of the regular Iranian army, and the Basij. Presumably the relatively large number of losses among the Iranians and the Shiite militias stemmed from the difficult fighting they encountered in urban environments, their lack of familiarity with the area, and problems of coordination between the different units.

The large number of losses is apparently a sensitive issue for the Iranian regime. Figures associated with the reformist camp in Iran, such as former Iranian mayor Gholamhossein Karbaschi, have opposed Iran's involvement in the fighting in Syria; in turn, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has expressed criticism of their position.[9] The fact that the Iranian fighters account for only 10 percent of all the fighters that Iran has sent to Syria in combat roles may indicate that the Iranian regime prefers for most of the price in casualties to be paid by the Shiite militias and Hezbollah. This sensitivity may also explain Iran's withdrawal of approximately half of the Iranian forces in Syria in the course of 2016, which left the remaining fighting primarily in the hands of Hezbollah and the Shiite militias. At the same time, the regime tends to publicize the names of those who are killed and emphasizes that its involvement in Syria is also in the defense of Iran.

Cooperation with the Russians

Military cooperation with Russia has been extremely important for Iran on both a military and political level. In July 2015, Qassem Soleimani visited Moscow and an agreement was reached whereby Russia would intervene militarily in Syria in coordination with Iran and the two countries would divide the tasks between themselves. Iran assumed responsibility for continuing the ground war, perhaps based on the experience it acquired during its war against Iraq and the experience of Hezbollah. Russia focused on air combat, apparently due to its preference to avoid entanglement in ground warfare and the outdated equipment and insufficient experience of the Iranian air force. Based on this agreement, a joint operations center was set up with representatives of Iran, Russia, the Syrian army, and Hezbollah. This body coordinated the military operations among the four partners, including the attack in the Aleppo region. The airstrikes of the Russian air force undoubtedly changed the situation on the ground, eased the work of the Syrian forces and the ground campaign of the Iranians and their allies, and helped decide the campaign in Aleppo, especially as the Russians had no compunction about launching airstrikes on densely populated areas. However, despite its importance, the Russian air support did not prevent the significant Iranian losses. It is also clear that the Iranians' focus on the ground war tilted the balance of losses against it: the Iranians and their allies suffered more than 2,000 losses, whereas the number of Russian casualties appears to have been extremely low. Iran did not stage any airstrikes, although it did operate unmanned combat aerial vehicles.

Iran's cooperation with Russia likewise involved a number of political aspects. On the one hand, Iran's cooperation with a superpower strengthened it and enhanced its image and its power of deterrence vis-à-vis both the enemies of the Assad regime, and the United States and its allies in the region. Joint Russian-Iranian action also ultimately extricated the Assad regime from its predicament, even if its future is still not assured. On the other hand, Iran discovered early on that Russian goals and considerations regarding the future of Syria and the Syrian regime differ from their own, and that Russia was quick to take on the role as the leading, decisive force regarding developments in Syria. Nonetheless, despite the suspicions that have existed between Iran and Russia for generations, the mutual advantages stemming from their military and political cooperation regarding the situation in Syria outweigh the disadvantages.

The Iranian Approach of Military Intervention

Iran's military intervention in Syria, which has evolved since 2014, constitutes a significant change in Tehran's approach vis-à-vis other countries. Under its Islamic regime, Iran has never sent forces on such a large scale to other countries – especially to a country with which it does not have a common border. Indeed, the movement of reinforcements and provisions requires passage via Iraq, whether by land or by air, which could pose a problem in the future. Moreover, the use of ground forces of the Revolutionary Guards and, to a lesser extent, of the regular Iranian army also constitutes an important change. Thus far, the Revolutionary Guards have been assigned to defend the Iranian regime, suppress internal unrest, and defend Iran from an American or Israeli attack, should one occur. Since the end of the Iraq-Iran War, the Revolutionary Guards have not been sent to fight outside of Iran. The ground forces of the regular Iranian army also appear to not have been deployed to areas of hostilities since the end of the Iraq-Iran War, and thus the deployment of regular army special forces in Syria marks a change in their purpose and status. In the past, Iran had only used its Quds Force to assist its partners in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.[10]

Another important change has been the mobilization of non-Iranian Shiite militias to fight in Syria. Hezbollah's mobilization for this purpose is not surprising, as it has done Iran's bidding since its establishment. What is new here is the recruitment of relatively new militias from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, with Revolutionary Guards officers assigned to raise their level. Clearly the recruitment of these groups is not the function

of a manpower shortage. A country like Iran, with a population of more than 75 million people, can recruit as much Iranian manpower for such militias as it likes. However, Iran is interested in obfuscating its own role as a pillar of the intervention in Syria, while highlighting the fact that the entire Shiite camp in the region is behind the intervention, not only Iran.

The fundamental goal of Iranian military intervention in Syria has been to help the Assad regime extricate itself from the plight engulfing it since 2012, bolster its stability, and survive. In the eyes of the Iranian elite, its ties with Assad are irreplaceable, and his ousting would be an important victory for the United States, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey – all Iran adversaries. Within two years, the elite came to understand that the deteriorating condition of the Syrian regime necessitated not only the provision of military and financial aid but also military forces in combat roles in the internal struggle within Syria. Moreover, it became clear to the Iranians that building a stable arrangement in Syria that ensures the long term survival of the Assad regime could require Iranian forces to remain in the country for the long term.

In the course of the intervention, the Iranians appear to have understood that their activity on the ground could help achieve other goals. First, involvement in the fighting could make an important contribution to the improvement of the capabilities of the Iranian forces. The different branches of the Iranian army acquired significant experience during the eight years of war with Iraq. Following the end of the war in the summer of 1988, however, Iranian forces were not involved in military action, and their combat experience declined. In addition, since the 1990s, Iran has placed an emphasis on its nuclear and missile programs while neglecting, to a degree, to develop its conventional forces. This stemmed from a lack of the financial resources required to develop conventional capabilities in parallel to nuclear and missile capabilities, as well as a reduced need for conventional forces as a result of the eradication of the Iraqi military force following the takeover of Iraq by the United States in 2003. Inter alia, this neglect was manifested in the absence of significant new weapons deals with Russia since the mid 1990s, with the exception of a deal to procure the S-300 air defense system. The intervention in Syria has allowed Iran to assess its doctrine of warfare, provide warfare

Iran is interested in obfuscating its own role as a pillar of the intervention in Syria, while highlighting the fact that the entire Shiite camp in the region is behind the intervention, not only Iran.

training for some of its forces that thus far have had no battle experience, and to operate and coordinate between different frameworks. During the fighting in Aleppo, for example, the joint operations center coordinated the fighting among the ground forces of the Revolutionary Guards and the regular Iranian army, the Basij, Hezbollah, and the Shiite militias, and between these forces and the Russian air force and the Syrian army. For Iran, this was an important opportunity to operate forces from afar. The resulting improvement of Iran's conventional capabilities will begin a new phase after the signing of the major Iranian-Russian arms deal that is currently on the agenda, which will serve primarily to upgrade the Iranian air force.

Second, the Iranian intervention in Syria stands to intensify the threat that Iran poses to Israel, primarily by means of Hezbollah, by further strengthening the organization's military capabilities and extending its front with Israel from southern Lebanon to the Golan Heights. Because Israel has attacked convoys in Syria carrying Hezbollah-bound weapons and sensitive equipment, Iran has built a factory in the Aleppo region of Syria to produce rockets for Hezbollah with the aim of reducing the group's dependence on the provision of weapons from outside the country.[11]

Iran is eager to take advantage of the vacuum left by the weakening of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, in order to create a large region that will be subject to its influence and control. This will give the Iranians access to central Syria, Lebanon, and the Mediterranean Sea.

The third and most important goal has been Iran's desire to use the forces in Syria with ties to Iran and take advantage of the vacuum left on the ground due to the weakening of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, in order to create a large region that will be subject to its influence and control. This will give the Iranians access to central Syria, Lebanon, and the Mediterranean Sea. These areas – which were controlled by the Islamic State at its height – link eastern Syria and western Iraq. It is there where Iran plans to establish two parallel east-west Iranian-controlled corridors of passage from Iran to the Mediterranean Sea, through which it will be able to move troops, weapons, and equipment toward Syria and Lebanon as necessary. The southern, and apparently the primary, corridor is intended to link the Baghdad area and the Damascus area via the Syrian city of al-Tanf, near the tripartite border of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. In the al-Tanf area, a base for US and British special forces is under construction, with the aim of training and aiding local forces with ties to the United States. The

second, northern corridor is intended to connect the Mosul region of Iraq with Raqqa in Syria.

One primary goal of the creation of this area of control on the one hand and the corridors on the other hand is to achieve direct Iranian access to its proxies in the Golan Heights, and in doing so – by means of Hezbollah – to extend its front with Israel from southern Lebanon to the Golan Heights, up to the Yarmouk. To create this space, Iran is liable to build more Shiite militias, and there have been reports of Iranian intentions to build a system of militias to include tens of thousands of fighters, perhaps reaching a total of 100,000 men. Iran may also appeal to the Iraqi government and Kurdish leaders in Iraq and Syria to persuade them to agree to the Iranian plan. The creation of such a space will be meant to help Iran stabilize the Assad regime, prevent local forces associated with the United States from establishing themselves in eastern Syria, and expand its influence in Iraq.

The creation of an area of control and access from Iran toward the Mediterranean Sea may be linked to an Iranian attempt to acquire naval bases on the Syrian coast. This idea was raised publicly by the Iranian chief of staff in 2016, when he stated that Iran was likely to build naval bases in Syria and Yemen. These measures were portrayed by the Iranian chief of staff as possibilities, as opposed to concrete plans, and in March 2017 the deputy commander of the Revolutionary Guards denied that Iran intended to build a port in Latakia, and stated that Iran had no interest in a base in the city.[12] In fact, it can be assumed that Iran is genuinely interested in port services along the Syrian shore. This would provide it with a permanent maritime arm in the Mediterranean Sea and allow it a military presence near Israel, and also produce a deterring threat to Israel in the event of a confrontation between the two countries. Such a presence would enable Iran to transport weapons and other equipment to Hezbollah without being dependent on ground or air passage through Syria, Iraq, or Turkey, and could also serve intelligence needs. On the other hand, Iran appears to be in no hurry to take action in this direction as long as the fighting in Syria continues, and especially as long as it has no solution to the primary problem posed by this measure: the establishment of a base that is so remote and isolated from Iranian territory that securing it would prove problematic and expose its forces to attacks by its adversaries in the event of a confrontation.[13]

At the same time, establishing a region of Iranian influence in western Iraq and eastern Syria and a corridor toward the Mediterranean Sea presents

Iran with problems. To be sure, the route of the corridor passes through an area in which Iran has allies, as the Iraqi flank is partially controlled by Iraqi Shiite militias and the Iraqi government, which are under Iranian influence, and the Syrian flank is partially controlled by forces with ties to the Assad regime, including Hezbollah. The problems relating to the creation of the corridor, however, appear to be overshadowing the opportunities. A significant part of the corridor will pass through Syrian Kurdistan, and the Syrian Kurds have ties to the United States and oppose the entry of Shiite militias into their territory.

Much more significant is the position of the US government. The Trump administration has already classified Iran as the chief threat in the Middle East, with one of its primary manifestations being its regional activity. US Secretary of Defense James Mattis has announced that the United States is conducting an effort to prevent another enemy – in implied reference to Iran – from entering the territories that are vacated by the Islamic State, and has warned the Shiite militias against approaching the border in the al-Tanf region. Indeed, since May 2017, al-Tanf has become a focal point of the armed clashes between the US air force on the one hand, and the Shiite militias and the Syrian army on the other hand. These clashes have been over control of the key areas of southeastern Syria that could serve the corridor from Iraq to Syria. The United States, for its part, has invested efforts in establishing territorial contiguity under the control of allied forces, with the aim of creating a north-south running wedge that extends from Turkey, via eastern Syria, to the Jordanian border. It was in this context that American forces attacked a convoy of the militias in the al-Tanf area and shot down two Iranian UAVs, as well as an Iranian plane that attacked a Kurdish force near Raqqa.[14]

Assessment

From Iran's perspective, the use of Iranian forces and Shiite militias for combat purposes in Syria is an important test case. The Iranian force sent to Syria was not relatively large, and the Shiite militias that accompanied it, with the exception of Hezbollah, possessed limited combat experience. However, the key to their future is the extent to which the Iranian regime regards the experiment as successful, and the Iranians appear to regard the success in saving the Assad regime from collapse and improving its overall condition as a positive outcome. Without a doubt, the Iranian and Shiite forces have paid a heavy price in losses. However, in addition to

the improved situation of the Syrian regime, the Iranian forces and the Shiite militias have also gained important experience in the use of forces and in warfare and have generated a chance – albeit one that still needs to be tested – to create a region of control and influence in the area between Iran and the Mediterranean Sea. If this is indeed how the Iranian regime regards the outcome of this test, it is likely to continue building a larger and better established intervention force in light of the experience it will gain in advance of future contingencies.[15]

Iran's intervention in Syria was carried out under unique circumstances. The Assad regime is more important to Iran than any other regime, which justifies its intervention in the fighting and the cost of doing so. The Iranian and Shiite forces were also sent to Syria to fight the Islamic State; the United States and other countries are likewise interested in weakening the organization. Another contributing factor was the opportunity to initiate cooperation in the fighting with Russia and increase its threat against Israel. Such considerations will not necessarily emerge from crises that develop in other countries, and therefore Iran will not automatically be quick to intervene militarily in other countries, except in specific circumstances that afford it particular benefits. Still, the very construction of a large intervention force, and the Iranian effort to create a region of Iranian control and influence between Iran and the Mediterranean Sea – if successful – should concern and challenge other countries, including the United States, Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, particularly as Iran has already built itself a deterrence capability based on its large missile array. It is also still possible that Iran will make use of such a force in other countries, such as Iraq, Lebanon, or Yemen, under circumstances that endanger critical Iranian interests.

Iran's success is by no means certain. In Syria, there is always a possibility of developments that will overturn the state of affairs to Iran's detriment. Iran's intention to build a region of influence and control in eastern Syria and western Iraq is already encountering military countermeasures by the United States. The Iraqi government, Turkey, Shiite elements in Iraq, and the Kurdish leadership in Iraq may also refuse to cooperate with the Iranians, making it more difficult for them to succeed in their efforts to shape western Iraq as part of their region of influence.

The most important scenario is the possibility of a military confrontation between the United States and Iran. The United States has already struck at Iranian units and Shiite militias in eastern and northern Syria. It has

also warned Iran against entering the areas that had been controlled by the Islamic State. On the other hand, reports indicate that the US Secretary of Defense and some senior officials in the US military have reservations about expanding the confrontation, unless Iran attacks US forces. For its part, Iran has not yet responded to these American warnings, perhaps because it estimates that expanding the confrontation is not in its interest. Also operating in the region is Russia, which apparently supports the Iranian measures and even announced that it would shoot down all aircraft flying west of the Euphrates. Still, it is not clear how far Russia will go in this context, and it is doubtful whether it will actually take action against American aircraft, as doing so could mean risking a deterioration of the situation. In this complicated state of affairs, the possibility that at the moment appears most likely is that the United States will continue striking at Iranian and Shiite forces when it believes they are endangering its forces.

Finally, the implications of the Iranian military intervention in Syria present Israel with a complex balance sheet of risks and opportunities. On the one hand, the presence of Iranian and Shiite forces close to Israel, and Iran's building of an intervention force, creates the risk of deterioration in the area. Equally important is that Hezbollah may pose increased risks to Israel. Hezbollah does not appear to be interested in a confrontation with Israel at the present time, as the bulk of its efforts are currently focused on the Syrian arena, where it has sustained significant losses. However, it has emerged from its involvement in Syria with increased combat experience and an enhanced capacity to use large fighting frameworks. The threat posed by Hezbollah will increase in the event that with Iranian assistance, it succeeds in building a broader front against Israel, extending from southern Lebanon into the Golan Heights. On the other hand, the presence of Iranian forces in close proximity to Israel could expose them to Israeli strikes in the event of a confrontation. The Trump administration's uncompromising position regarding Iran may also help Israel, due particularly to the fact that it regards Iranian regional activity as one of the most serious threats emanating from the Islamic Republic. If Iran does in fact develop a new approach to military intervention and new capabilities in this area, the mutual interests of Israel and other countries in the region that are concerned by the Iranian approach – as well as their interest in dialogue with one another – will also be enhanced.

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The War in Syria: What Lies Ahead?

Eyal Zisser

Six years into Syria's bloody civil war, the conclusion of the war is still a long way off. Bashar al-Assad's December 2016 conquest of Aleppo – the country's second largest city – with Russian and Iranian support was a significant achievement in the campaign against his rivals.[1] For Assad, however, victory remains beyond reach, at least for now. The embers of protest and rebellion continue to burn and may once again flare up to the point of posing a threat to the regime in Damascus, particularly if the United States decides to deepen its involvement in the crisis in Syria. Hence Moscow's efforts to promote a political settlement in conjunction with Iran, Turkey, and in the future, possibly also Washington, and in this framework establish protected zones (areas of de-escalation) in Syria and perhaps even divide the country into regions of influence among the different regional and international actors. Such a process, the Russians hope, will enable them to extricate themselves from the Syrian entanglement after achieving half of their aim – preserving Assad's rule or securing a replacement that is acceptable to Moscow, albeit within only part of the Syrian state.

The military achievements of the Syrian regime during the final months of 2016, and the United States' deepening involvement in the crisis, especially if it intensifies, reinforce the impression that in the months and years to come, the war in Syria will continue at low intensity, particularly in the friction-laden areas between the territories under the regime's control and the territory under rebel control in the western part of the country (continued hostilities). At most, it will be possible to achieve a weak settlement based on the current map of the country, which is split between rival forces (de facto partition of the country). However, it is not impossible that in the long run, it will be the Syrian regime, under the leadership of Bashar al-Assad

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or a replacement found for him that will ultimately emerge from war with the upper hand and once again rule Syria (decision and victory).

The War in Syria: Protest, Revolution, Civilians, and Jihad

Since it erupted in March 2011, the civil war in Syria has seen ups and downs, as well as a dramatic turning point. At times it appeared that Assad's defeat was a fait accompli, and that his fall was days or at most only a few weeks away. At other times, it seemed as if he was only a step away from achieving decision and victory.

In retrospect, it is clear that until the Russians and the Iranians arrived in September 2015 to fight on Syrian soil, the war was moving in only one direction – in favor of the rebels and against the regime.[2] Assad's army was exhausted and weakened, and lacked the requisite reserves to fight the rebels, let alone defeat them. The Russian and Iranian involvement in the fighting, however, changed this trend. The "Chechen model" that the Russians employed in Syria – involving the air and artillery bombardment of large areas with the aim of breaking the unity and the fighting spirit of the rebels and of deterring, and perhaps even driving away the civilian population supporting them – enabled the regime and its allies to take the initiative and seize control of a number of outposts and key positions in northern, central, and southern Syria.[3]

To pursue this course of action, the Russians needed a few dozen planes and combat helicopters and tens of thousands of Iranian soldiers, Hezbollah fighters, and Shiite volunteers, who were recruited by Iran from throughout the Middle East and engaged in ground warfare as the air effort proceeded. Unlike the rebels, the regime forces, and particularly the Russians, conducted their fighting in accordance with a comprehensive strategic view and with the ability to transport troops and employ air forces. This enabled them to win battle after battle and to achieve decision at specific locations – a success that was primarily concerned with breaking the momentum of the rebels and eroding their achievements.[4] In tandem, the inaction of the Obama administration deprived the rebels of the hope for a victory aided by the Western powers.[5] However, it also became evident to the Russians that the forces they had sent to Syria would not be sufficient to achieve a quick decision in the war.[6]

Every attempt to analyze the course of the war in Syria and to anticipate what may happen in the future must take into account two fundamental and contradictory aspects of the situation. On the one hand is the steadfastness

of the Syrian state system under the leadership of Bashar al-Assad – the man, the dynasty, and the members of the Alawite sect whom he represents, as well as other elements within Syrian society that constitute the basis of the regime (members of minority religious sects, and Sunni elites and members of the middle class) and the institutions of the Syrian state, led by the army and the government and security agencies. This state system has displayed surprising and noteworthy strength and resilience. Rather than collapse, as it did in Libya and Yemen, it has continued to function, albeit in a limited capacity and with the ever increasing assistance of Iran and Russia. More importantly, these elements continue to constitute a core for possible recovery and the reestablishment of the Syrian state at the end of the war.

As a result of its military successes in the course of 2016, the Syrian regime now controls one quarter of the area of the country. The area in question is known as "vital Syria" or "useful Syria" (*suriya al-mufida*), and includes all of its important regions: the strip connecting Daraa in the south to the capital city of Damascus, the cities of Hama and Homs in central Syria; Aleppo in the north, and the coastal area – the stronghold of the Alawites. This strip is home to more than half of the state's original population (approximately 13 million out of a total population of 25 million), and Syrian state institutions continue to operate there. The state continues to pay the salaries of its employees and to maintain (albeit with difficulty) a functioning framework for education and health systems, and most importantly, for the supply of food and essential provisions. In addition to its military successes, the Syrian regime has managed to achieve a valuable demographic victory: the intentional and systematic "ethnic purification" or "cleansing" of Syria of approximately one third of its population, the vast majority of whom are Sunni Muslims from rural areas and the periphery, the principal home of the rebels and where the rebellion erupted.[7] Some 19 million inhabitants, and perhaps even fewer, remain in Syria as a whole, with Sunni Muslims accounting for approximately half, as opposed to 70 percent of the population prior to the eruption of hostilities. As a result, the Alawites and members of other minority groups such as Druze, Kurds, and Christians are in a decisive demographic position.

Along with the consolidation of the regime in western Syria, the Islamic State has been marginalized and has lost many of its strongholds in northern Iraq and eastern Syria. It may manage to continue operating as an active guerilla group in the heart of the Syrian and Iraqi desert from which it

emerged (like its offshoot in the Sinai Peninsula), but its attempt to establish a functioning political entity appears to have failed. The question that remains is whether its territory in Syria, around the cities of Raqqa and Deir ez-Zour and in the Syrian desert, will fall into the hands of the Sunni Arab rebels, who enjoy Turkish support, or those of the Syrian regime or Shiite militias operating under Iranian patronage. Tehran aspires to establish a land corridor from Tehran to Damascus and Beirut, by means of Baghdad and eastern Syria. In June 2017, the Americans repeatedly attacked advanced forces of Shiite militias and the Syrian army attempting to seize control of parts of the Syrian desert up to the border with Iraq, beyond which pro-Iranian Shiite militias are located. Perhaps the Kurds (the Kurdish Democratic Union Party), who receive US aid but maintain an open channel of communication with Moscow and Damascus, will be the ones to succeed the Islamic State.[8] Incidentally, the Kurds have proven able to establish an autonomous framework in northern Syria. However, in light of the regional and international circumstances – i.e., Turkish and Iranian resolve to prevent the establishment of a Kurdish state in Iraq or Syria – it is unclear whether they will be able to continue to maintain this entity in isolation from the Syrian state, in the event that the latter manages to get back on its feet.[9]

On the other hand, against the ongoing vitality of the regime is the intensity of the protest and the rebellion, which has proven to be deeply rooted and widespread. The rebel camp relies on the extensive support of significant portions of the country's Sunni population. This support is nurtured by hidden but entrenched feelings of hatred and vengeance against the Alawite hegemony in the state; by the desire for revenge against the regime's attempt to use force to suppress the rebellion; and finally, by the religious radicalization that has transformed significant segments of the Sunni population in Syria in the shadow of the recent developments in the country, and that may even have started prior to their onset.

The rebels are still active in almost all parts of Syria and continue to attack straggling forces of the Syrian regime and inflict painful blows.[10] They are also continuing to maintain a presence in the areas around the capital city of Damascus, in the south and north of the country, around Hama and Homs, and north of Aleppo. The Idlib stronghold in northern Syria remains under their control, as do considerable portions of the country's eastern region (the Jazeera region). They continue to enjoy Turkish patronage, although only in northern Syria, and in the future may earn Jordanian

patronage in southern Syria.[11] The turn in American policy implemented by the Trump administration has provided them, for the first time in years, with the hope of not only surviving the war but perhaps also of receiving substantial American military aid in their struggle against the regime. However, their weak point remains their inability to unify their ranks and develop an effective political and military leadership, as well as their continually intensifying dependence on external aid.

Examination of the different fronts in the war reveals that close to 300,000 fighters are operating on the side of the regime. They include 125,000 soldiers of the Syrian army or what remains of it, another 100,000 fighters belonging to local militias that have been recruited from the elements of Syrian society that support the regime, Alawites and Druze alike, and close to 50,000 foreign fighters: members of Hezbollah, fighters of the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, and Shiite volunteers that were recruited by Iran in neighboring Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. This is an impressive number on paper, but only some actually belong to the combat echelons (as opposed to the logistical and administrative echelons), and they are spread throughout the country as garrison forces, lack mobility, and most significantly, do not possess sufficient manpower to defend the territory they hold, not to mention to defeat their opponents.

The rebels have close to 150,000 people fighting on their side in numerous separate groups. Approximately 90,000 rebels belong to large radical Salafists fighting forces such as the Fateh al-Sham Front (formerly the al-Nusra Front), Ahrar al-Sham, and Jaysh al-Islam. Half, and perhaps even more today, are concentrated in the Idlib province, and the rest are scattered among the Damascus region, southern and central Syria, and around Homs and Hama. A few thousand rebels belong to a few dozen smaller radical groups. The rest of the rebels belong to a few hundred local groups, some of which were set up on a local basis and are actually tribal militias or militias defending the villages or towns of their members. Some have recently devoted themselves to the Syrian regime or, alternatively, abandoned the areas in which they reside and moved to the Idlib province, which is under rebel control. This province may become either a graveyard of the revolution or a starting point for its renewed conflagration by means of rebellion, like the Kandahar province in Afghanistan. Also significant are the approximately 30,000 Kurdish fighters in Syria (Syrian Democratic Forces) who do not constitute an integral part of the rebel camp and are not fighting the army of the regime at all. Finally, there is the Islamic State,

whose ranks consist of a few tens of thousand of fighters operating primarily in eastern Syria and northern Iraq.[12]

Two conclusions emerge from this survey. The first is that after six years of bloodshed, neither of the sides fighting in Syria possesses the ability to defeat its adversaries on its own, achieve victory, and bring the war to an end. Both sides are exhausted, lack strength, and find it difficult to simply remain standing. Between these two camps stand most of the Syrian population – that is, those who still remain in the country. This population has displayed indifference and is concerned only with their daily struggle to survive and ensure a basic existence for themselves, their families, and their communities. The second conclusion is that the war in Syria is no longer a war of the Syrians alone. The involvement of foreign forces in the fighting is now fueling it and causing it to continue, and may also determine its outcome. This explains why the involvement of the Russians and the Iranians proved to be so influential and why the possible intervention of Washington in the future could counterbalance this intervention.

This situation invites speculation regarding the way the war in Syria is liable to end and the future that can be anticipated for the country:

a. *Decision and victory*. In this scenario, the Syrian regime survives the war and emerges from it with the upper hand, or at least maintains stable control over the core of the Syrian state: the strip stretching from Damascus northward to Aleppo, and from there to the Syrian coast. The rebel camp is marginalized, loses its external sources of support, and disintegrates until it ceases to constitute a force of significance and political and military influence. Such a success would allow Bashar al-Assad and his regime, when the time is right, to reestablish control over the territory of the state. This process would take a number of years, as the regime would require time to build up strength and, most importantly, recruit the manpower reserves it currently lacks. Presumably many of the refugees that have fled Syria will not return to the country, which means that the remaining population is likely to be more compact and easier for Assad to control – both in terms of its sectoral make-up and its socioeconomic character. This scenario is of course based on the assumption that Russia and Iran continue to throw all its weight behind Bashar al-Assad's regime, while the United States continues resolutely to denounce him but remains hesitant to translate this position into action, keeping its moves focused and geographically isolated in the

country's eastern region (the Jazeera region and the Syrian desert), in the name of its fight against the Islamic State.

b. *Continued hostilities*. Without a decision the fighting in Syria will drag on and continue to destroy the country, even though Assad continues, under Russian and Iranian patronage, to maintain control of parts of the core of Syria, home to most of the population. This control, however, will continue to be weak and fragile, and threatened by the occasional but never-ending blows inflicted by rebel groups. These groups will continue to operate on the fringes of the regions under Assad's control and maintain a presence in the rural and peripheral regions located far out of the regime's reach. The rebellion and protest will therefore continue to burn as an ember that could easily be ignited and engulf Syria as a whole. The solution that the Russians are attempting to advance may result in such a scenario, as the protected zones in which the rebels are concentrated are liable to turn into centers of resistance to the regime.

c. *De-facto partition of the country*. As part of a settlement supported by all the involved regional and international actors, Syria will be divided into zones in which these actors maintain presence, influence, and control. The east (the Jazeera region and the Syrian desert) will constitute a Kurdish and Sunni Arab region under American patronage. The north will constitute a Sunni Arab region under Turkish patronage. The western part of the country will be under the control of the regime under Russian patronage with an Iranian presence. And the south will be a Sunni-Arab region under Jordanian and American patronage. Such a division may result in Syria's transformation into a weak federation of autonomous regions, which will be able to continue to exist as long as they contain a foreign presence and continue to enjoy external support. On the other hand, Syria's partition into state entities of sectoral character will be difficult to implement. Most regions of the country are home to a mixed population, and this is certainly true of the important urban centers: Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. In addition, the areas inhabited by a few sects in Syria, such as the Druze Mountain and the Alawite mountains, lack the capacity for independent existence – particularly on an economic level.

d. *Collapse of the regime and the state system and seizure of the state's territory by rebel groups*. This scenario, which appears unrealistic today, could nonetheless materialize if the United States deepens its involvement in Syria, and in light of the fact that the Syrian regime continues to bleed,

is exhausted, and lacks the manpower reserves necessary to defeat its opponents. The collapse of the Syrian state would lead to power struggles between the different rebel groups, and in the immediate term the groups that are Islamic in character would enjoy the upper hand. Although not certain, the urban Sunni element – the middle class and the elites in the major cities – would hopefully succeed, in the distant future, in reestablishing a Syrian state entity and containing the different rebel groups within it.

At this juncture, a resolution of the Syrian crisis through peaceful means, as opposed to a compromise settlement that the Russians are likely to attempt to concoct that will amount to the almost complete surrender of the rebels, does not appear to be a realistic possibility. The rebels will presumably refuse to integrate into a state system under Assad's authority, and Assad, for his part, will likely not agree to any arrangement that will endanger the future of his rule and the rule of the dynasty he leads. After all, Assad did not drag his country through six long years of war and bloodshed, and cleanse the country of approximately one third of its population, only to be defeated in democratic elections.

In conclusion, after six bloody years, little remains of the Syria over which Assad and his adversaries have been fighting.[13] The conquest of Aleppo in December 2016 was ostensibly a turning point in the battle for "vital Syria," which was supposed to herald Assad's victory in his battle for survival. However, it has again become clear that the war has a dynamic of its won, and that currently hanging in the balance are not only the fate of Bashar al-Assad, his regime, and the Syrian state, but also the outcome of the struggle for regional hegemony waged by Iran and the Sunni camp under Turkish and Saudi leadership. Also at stake is the fate of two parallel and ostensibly contradictory processes that have been initiated by Putin and Trump: restoring Russia and the United States to their former glory in the regional and global arena.

The war is likely to continue for some time, and the currently unrealistic scenario of the regime's collapse and rebel victory cannot be ruled out. Deepening US military intervention in Syria, or, alternatively, Assad's unnatural departure from the arena, could fundamentally change the reality in Syria. However, in the course of 2016, and especially during the final months of the year, luck was on the side of Bashar al-Assad – whom many were quick to eulogize at the outset of the rebellion.

The developments in Syria suggest, therefore, that the war in Syria will continue without decision into the foreseeable future, and that the country will continue to constitute a focal point of instability for the region as a whole (the continued hostilities scenario). In an effort to contain the crisis, a settlement could be advanced that divides Syria among the fighting parties and their patrons from abroad (de facto partition of the country). However, in the long run, Bashar al-Assad may survive the war, emerge with an upper hand, and maintain secure control over the core of the country. If that occurs, all that will remain will be to wait and see whether this core can ultimately serve as a basis for renewed growth of a Syrian entity similar to what collapsed upon the outbreak of the Syrian war in the spring of 2011 (the decision and victory scenario).

Notes

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and the lack of a desire to maneuver on the ground in Syria [i.e., to use ground forces on a large scale] – on the part of Hezbollah, the Russians, and the Iranians... [In such a situation,] I see no way of achieving decision or a settlement in Syria." See Yoav Zeitun, "Senior IDF Officer: Iran has Lost its Hegemony in Syria," *Ynet*, April 19, 2017, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4950997,00.html.

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Russia's Army in Syria: Testing a New Concept of Warfare

Sarah Fainberg and Viktor Eichner

Russia's surprise military entry into Syria on September 30, 2015 brought Russia's main objectives and endgame in the Syrian battlefield to the world's attention. Questions arose about the impact the operation would have on Moscow's relations with global and regional powers involved in Syria, primarily the US, Iran, Turkey, and Israel. Other debates focused on the nature and capability of the Russian military power showcased in Syria. In a matter of weeks, Russia tilted the balance of forces on the ground in favor of Assad's faltering regime. A few dozen fighter jets and a new air base in the Latakia province, combined with the existing naval base in Tartus and the introduction of surface-to-air missile systems S-300 and S-400, created new military constraints for other stakeholders in Syria, including Israel.

Beyond speculations about Russia's strategic aims in Syria, what is its specific modus operandi on the ground? This article focuses on a lesser-explored aspect of Russia's presence in Syria: the new and diverse expeditionary forces engaged on the Syrian frontlines alongside Russian regular armed forces – the Aerospace Forces (VKS) and the Navy. Syria represents the first battlefield in which the Russian Federation has, in a coordinated manner and on a large military scale, deployed and activated a contingent of expeditionary forces including career soldiers, special units assigned to special operations, military police, military advisors and technicians, and "volunteers." Among them were veterans from the first and second Chechen "operations," the Georgian war, and the Ukrainian crisis, as well as a significant number of Sunni Muslim fighters from the North Caucasus, primarily from Chechnya. Some forces were deployed

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The authors would like to thank Karen Waserstein, an intern at INSS, for her research assistance.

to Syria as early as July 2015, two months before Russia's official entry into the Syrian conflict. With the accelerated buildup of Russia's military presence in Syria in late August-September 2015, Russian intervention forces grew incrementally.

In contrast with previous military operations in the North Caucasus and Georgia, and in the aftermath of its swift annexation of Crimea, Russia has tightly supervised and coordinated its contingent of expeditionary forces in Syria, testing and upgrading a new involvement model that might be employed in any new "near abroad" or foreign operation.

Testing the Expeditionary Force Command on the Syrian Frontlines

The deployment of expeditionary forces in Syria alongside the regular forces of the Aerospace and Navy is integral to Russia's new concept of warfare and reflects the latest and ongoing restructuring of the Russian Federation's armed forces. Framed as "new generation warfare" (or "hybrid warfare" by Western standards), Russia's new concept of war, like Western military doctrines, favors the use of special and mobile intervention forces. As articulated in 2013 by Russia's Chief of General Staff Valerij Gerasimov,[1] the novel, critical role of special operations and special purpose forces is a consequence of the 21st century's changing rules of war. Since the distinction between "peacetime" and "wartime" has been blurred, states now resort to more flexible, swift, and highly specific military operations. Therefore, the role of non-military means (or soft power) including the "broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other measures" has grown considerably, gradually making "frontal engagements of large formations of forces...a thing of the past." According to Russia's Chief of General Staff, warfare has witnessed the increased "use of military means of a concealed character," including actions of informational warfare and of special operations forces, making special operations and special purpose forces more appealing to states wishing to conceal or disavow their military involvement. Partly due to new technological possibilities of command and control systems, mixed-type forces acting in a "single intelligence-information space" play a bigger role than ever before. The boosted use of special operations and special purpose forces also illustrates Russia's shift toward a new warfare economy: the use of limited or minimal military means that can generate a maximum effect. In Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014), and Syria (2015), Russia embraced quite a minimalist warfare approach by maintaining a small density of ground forces, and

training and equipping proxies on the ground as an available and highly efficient extended military network and as an amplifier of conventional military strength.

As a matter of fact, Gerasimov insists less on the hybridity of non-military and military means to conduct modern warfare than on the new ratio that Russia has established between the use of military and non-military measures: 1 to 4. While non-military measures, including information warfare, cyber warfare, and propaganda, represent the greatest value (4), military measures and the use of kinetic force (1) assume a secondary position, accounting for only one fifth of Russia's warfare efforts and tapped in certain stages of conflict, primarily to achieve success in its final stage.[2]

Russia's new warfare approach was mirrored by organizational reforms in the Russian Federation's armed forces. Since President Putin's rise to power, Russian armed forces underwent extensive structural reform, in which special operations and special purpose forces proliferated across military and non-military organizations. Spetsnaz, the first to be established after WWII, soon formed the elite unit of Soviet military intelligence (GRU). In post-Soviet Russia, Spetsnaz, an umbrella (and overstretched) term designating a wide array of elite forces or of regular forces assigned special tasks operating on behalf of the Russian Federation's security complex (*silovye struktury*), compensated for the provisional deficiencies of the regular armed forces.

Even though they are both often referred to as Spetsnaz, special operations forces and special purpose forces do not correspond to the same units in the Russian security complex, as they belong to different branches and hierarchies and conduct different missions. Nor can Spetsnaz be equated with the Western and in particular the US use of the term Special Operations Units. The term "Spetsnaz" (abbreviation for "special purpose force") is now applied to different special units of a large array of governmental and military structures, including Military Intelligence – GRU; the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs; the security forces of FSB (domestic intelligence service) and SVR (foreign intelligence service); the Russian police; and the whole armed forces. Later, special operations and special purpose forces received a boost under Defense Minister Anatolij Serdyukov (2007-2012), who embarked on a vast program of modernization in 2008.

The Russian Federation addressed not only the poor organization and coordination of Russia's security agencies, but also the lack of an encompassing special operations command able to defend Russia's interests

within and beyond its borders on a timely fashion. The idea of uniting all the sub-units of Russia's intervention forces into one integrated structure under a single leadership was born during the war in Afghanistan. However, the project only saw light in the aftermath of the first and second Chechen operations, which illustrated the dire need for coordination among the troops and security structures of the Russian Federation.[3] Partly based upon the US example of a single command system of special forces (the US Special Operations Command created in 1987), Russia established its new Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (SSO VS RF) in 2009; they became operational in 2013.

In contrast to different Spetsnaz units that comprise separate groups of professionally trained militaries, Russia's new SSO VS forms a highly mobile and coordinated army group incorporating numerous special elite units, designed for the completion of special missions inside and outside Russia.[4] Komandovanie SSO (KSSO), a command structure directly under the Chief of General Staff of the Russian Federation, singlehandedly leads the SSO VS. Since their establishment, Russia's SSO were involved in counter-terrorist operations in the North Caucasus, in the Crimean crisis (the "polite" or "little green men"), and in the military operation in Syria.

A Complex of Expeditionary Forces

Russia's military intervention in Syria has some distinctive characteristics. Since the war in Afghanistan (1979-1989) it is the first military operation conducted beyond the post-Soviet space. In Syria, Russia uses its armed forces beyond its "near abroad" and acts as a global power instead of as a simple guarantor of its regional interests. After Russia was prevented from entering the US-led Western military coalition in Syria, it arose as the leader of an alternative military coalition and has been involved in an all-out confrontation with a web of challenging enemies. Initially in a challenge to the US-led coalition, Russia has combined diplomatic involvement, military operations, and humanitarian aid, and has striven to create an efficient coalition against the Islamic State and other radical Islamist groups including Iran, Assad's Syria, and Turkey.

Second, the deployment of troops to Syria is official. The Russian Federation has even resorted to public celebrations of its special forces in Syria. In 2015, February 27 was declared by presidential decree as the "Day of the Russian Special Forces." Since that day, Russia's Ministry of Defense has circulated videos showcasing the professional training,

determination, and military successes of Russian elite forces inside Syria.[5] Such celebrations convey a positive image of Russia's elite units and help promote Moscow's Syrian operation within Russia. However, the official character of Russia's deployment of forces does not prevent Moscow, like any other state deploying intervention forces, from concealing the number of casualties and their functions. Also, unlike the brief 2008 Georgian War, and in a much clearer and explicit way than the Ukrainian case, the Syrian battlefield comprises an official military training camp for Russia. Syria serves as a live exhibition and test of Russia's latest military equipment and is used – as President Putin publicly acknowledged in late December 2015 – as an extensive and useful training ground for Russia's elite forces. These forces practice a wide variety of exercises, ranging from intelligence gathering to counter-terrorist elimination operations, without putting additional constraints on the already pressured defense budget of the Russian Federation.[6]

Third, Syria is not a "boots on the ground" operation. Russia is not involved in large scale combat and assault operations with regular armed forces. Rather, it has relied on a combination of its regular forces (Aerospace and Navy), its expeditionary forces, and a network of allies and proxies, including the Syrian regular army, Shiite militias, and minority combatants, such as the Kurds. Combining these forces on the ground provides Russia with an additional advantage in domestic political terms, since casualties among proxies do not have an effect on public opinion, and that mutes potential criticism of Russian involvement. By contrast, the relatively high number of casualties among Russian conscripts and soldiers during the First and Second Chechen wars was traumatic among the Russian public.

Little open information about Russia's military personnel in Syria is available, yet a combination of official and alternative sources – the Russian Defense Ministry's "Air Force Group in Syria" and "Bulletin of the Russian Defense Ministry on Ceasefire Observation" web entries;[7] the Syrian pro-Assad *al-Masdar* newspaper; the Russian web platform *Conflict Intelligence Team*;[8] the Instagram account of Ramzan Kadyrov, head of the Chechen Republic;[9] and situation reports provided by the US Institute for the Study of War (ISW) – enables us to build a tentative profile.

Based upon those sources and others, several categories of forces can be identified. The first category is the regular armed forces: the Aerospace Defense Forces (VKS), the Naval Infantry (and in particular the elite 810th Marine Regiment of the Black Sea Fleet), and artillerymen, including

elements of the 120th Separate Artillery Brigade, which in early 2016 were spotted on a "Novorossiya-Syria mission."[10] Initially the deployment and equipment of these troops was limited and seemed insufficient to defeat Syrian rebels or reconquer some territories under rebel control, but their presence helped deter any Syrian rebel attack on Russian military bases.

The second category includes the expeditionary forces, with several sub-categories of special operations and special purpose forces. The first is the new Special Operations Forces (SSO), which includes a variety of special operations and special purpose units coordinated by the Chief of the General Staff.[11] Various reports indicate that among the Spetsnaz forces spotted in Syria were the GRU-Spetsnaz (Military Intelligence), SVR-Spetsnaz (Foreign Intelligence Service), FSB-Spetsnaz (Federal Security Service), and the 431st Naval Reconnaissance Brigade. Other Spetsnaz forces allegedly deployed since April 2017 in Syria include the USSR Spetsnaz, a group of Muslim fighters originating from Central Asia, South Caucasus, and North Caucasus (including the Muslim Turan battalion, which was established around Hama).[12] In addition, the Zaslon force of the SVR (Foreign Intelligence Service) was allegedly present in Syria in the summer of 2015.[13]

The special operations and special purpose forces' core missions include battlefield reconnaissance (designating air and artillery targets, mostly based upon information from the Syrian army), protection of the Hmeymim airbase at Latakia and the Tartus naval facility, and pinpoint assault operations aimed at tilting the balance of forces in favor of the regime. During the December 2016 battle for Aleppo and the second Palmyra offensive (January 13-March 4 2017), Russian SSO (Special Operations forces) were called to fight against Islamist groups, coordinating their fight with the Russian Air Force and suffering casualties. The SSO's role in the assault and combat operations was made official in February 2017, when Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu praised their "high efficiency in Syria."[14] There is no information on the exact number of special operations and special purpose operatives sent to Syria. According to some sources, Spetsnaz from different units numbered some 230-250 in Syria at the peak of their deployment.[15] In contrast, the USSR Spetsnaz is likely to be a larger body, with reports providing an estimation of 800-1200 men engaged in Syria since April 2017.[16]

The second sub-category of intervention forces includes units of the Military Police of the armed forces of the Russian Federation (VP VS

RF). They are a structure established in 2011, inspired by the US model, and placed under the authority of the Ministry of Defense. A battalion of Russian Military Police, including Chechen and Ingush fighters, was deployed to Syria in the winter of 2016 to help conquer Aleppo. Initial reports estimated that around 500 Chechens were deployed, while others suggested a total of 300-400.[17] The number of Ingush who joined in February 2017 is reportedly also roughly 300-400.[18] The Ingush soldiers' mission went beyond guaranteeing Russian airgroup security. Their tasks included manning checkpoints, distributing aid, and coordinating the defense of pro-government strongholds with regime forces.[19] The Military Police received another critical task in May 2017: guaranteeing the security of the newly declared de-escalation zones across Syria, which triggered additional deployments of Military Police forces from Russia to Syria.[20] Especially useful to Moscow are the Chechen and Ingush fighters, who constitute an elite ground personnel of Sunni Muslim men (who often learned Arabic and, in some cases, the Syrian dialect) on the Syrian battlefield.

The third sub-category of forces involves paramilitary personnel, among them Russian engineers involved in the reconnaissance and clearance of minefields at different sites in Syria. On March 16, 2017 a detachment of the International Demining Center of the Russian Armed Forces arrived in Palmyra and undertook an operation in historic parts of the city. According to Russia's Defense Ministry, over 150 specialists and 17 units of special equipment came to Syria.[21] Other para-military personnel include Russian military doctors, and by January 2017, medical specialists from the Central Military District provided medical assistance and aid to more than 5,000 civilians.

The fourth (non-official) sub-category includes "volunteers" who operate in Syria on a private and informal basis. Some signs indicate that among them are military contractors operating on behalf of private military companies (PMCs that are nonetheless forbidden under current Russian legislation). In addition, some of them were allegedly awarded military medals or posthumous decorations such as the Order of Bravery.[22] According to the investigative Russian newspaper *Fontanka* (whose reliability is questioned by Russian officials), Russian mercenary battalions were deployed in Syria two years before official Russian intervention began.[23] A first unit, the Slavonic Corps, joined in 2013 with a mission to protect Bashar al-Assad and Syria's oil facilities. When some of the Corps' members defected to rebel groups, the unit was quickly recalled to Russia and its leaders were

sentenced to jail. They were replaced by another group, the OSM, under the leadership of Dmitry Utkin, also known by his nom-de-guerre, Wagner. A neo-Nazi, Wagner was a former member of the Spetsnaz who renamed the group PMC Wagner and in June 2017 was added to the US Department of Treasury's sanctions list for his alleged actions in Ukraine.[24] The group has been spotted in Syria since 2013. It is registered in Argentina, but has its training camp in Molkino, Russia, where it hosts the GRU's 10th Special Forces brigade.[25] *Fontanka* reports that the group was spotted in Crimea in May 2014, in Luhansk, and since the fall of 2015, in Syria. It had nearly 1,000 members in 2016.[26] It was reportedly involved in the Palmyra offensives of March 2016 and of January 13-March 4, 2017, where it suffered casualties. In addition, the Wagner group has allegedly cooperated with the Russian company Evro Polis, which is supposed to receive a 25 percent share of oil and gas produced on lands recovered from the Islamic State by Russian military contractors. The Wagner group may thus advance another Russian agenda in Syria: securing natural resources deals for Russian companies.[27]

Many of the fighters, military personnel, and "volunteers" in Syria had previously served in Ukraine, and in some cases were directly transferred from Ukraine to Syria.[28] The exact number of troops deployed remains classified. Non-official estimates vary, in part due to the frequent rotation of troops between Russia and Syria. As early as November 2015, US officials reported that the Russians had increased their field staff from 2,000 to 4,000. According to the Qatari newspaper *The New Arab*, from September 1 to October 31, 2015, Russia allegedly deployed 8,000 troops to Syria – a number possibly inflated due to the strong anti-Assad line of the outlet.[29] In September 2016, statistics of the Russian Central Electoral Commission provided a fairly reliable glimpse of Russia's general ground presence: 4,571 Russian citizens voted in Syria – 193 ballots were handed out in Damascus; the other 4,378 were in portable voting boxes elsewhere (Russian official sources maintain that all servicemen in Syria voted).[30]

The withdrawal of troops announced by President Putin in March 2016 and January 2017 may in fact have had a public relations dimension: each announcement was to close a chapter of the Syrian campaign, show military and political gains, and suggest a phase-based, gradual military campaign, rather than an indefinite military presence devoid of a long term strategy.

The activities of Russian ground forces offer insight into Russia's lesser known goals in Syria, beyond saving Bashar al-Assad's regime and conducting anti-terrorist operations against the Islamic State, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham,

and other radical Islamist groups. A Russian ground presence establishes facts on the ground and secures the Russian Federation's informal zones of influence in Syria. The deployment of the Chechen battalion in Syria in late 2016 (and especially its participation in the storming of Aleppo) enabled Moscow to counterbalance the stronger position of pro-Iranian forces and secure Russian presence in certain areas of Aleppo.[31] Furthermore, Chechen forces allegedly protected Syrian Kurdish units from the Turkish army, in order to ensure a power balance in the north part of Syria.[32] In late March 2017, speculation arose about the deployment of Russian troops to the Cindires district of the Afrin province, which allegedly resulted from an informal agreement between the Kurds and Russia.[33] In addition, the deployment of Chechen, Ingush, and other Sunni Muslim and Arabic-speaking fighters to Syria is part of a new Russian charm offensive vis-a-vis Syria's Sunnis and the Sunni world at large. Head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov became the leader of the public relations policy in Syria, where he undertook several large scale humanitarian and reconstruction projects, including the restoration of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo after its destruction by the Islamic State.[34]

Conclusion

Russia's military involvement in Syria was supposed to be short lived and limited to air operations and arms deliveries to the imperiled Assad regime. Yet Russia, like other global and regional stakeholders, has sent hundreds of expeditionary forces to the Syrian frontlines, partly as a result of changes in Russian warfare conceptions and the reorganization of its armed forces. The Syrian battlefield permitted Russia to undertake the first large scale and coordinated activation of its upgraded intervention forces, whose experience in the field is liable to boost Russia's military power and image. Russia's ground personnel in Syria help portray Russia as an agile military power and as a provider of efficient military support in other hotspots across the Middle East and even North Africa. Speculation about the deployment of Russian special operations forces and military advisors to an air base in western Egypt near the border with Libya in March 2017 may be the first manifestation of this phenomenon.

Russia's intervention forces are not yet a game changer per se on the Syrian battlefield. In addition, the duration of their stay and their ultimate purpose in Syria remain unclear, as Russia needs to define the next stages of its diplomatic and military involvement. However, they have played a

role in Russia's main achievement in Syria – the preservation of Assad's regime – by guiding airstrikes, upgrading Assad's capabilities, and giving them a boost in the critical Aleppo and Palmyra offensives. Russian forces may play a role in monitoring and safeguarding the de-escalation zones established in the northern, central, and southern parts of Syria in a Russian-Iranian-Turkish memorandum in early May 2017. On July 7, 2017 Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated Russia's intention to deploy its Military Police as a security guarantor in the southern de-escalation zone in Syria (at least at an initial stage) following President Putin's first meeting with US President Trump.[35] Russian forces can help defeat the remaining rebel strongholds across Syria – also one of Russia's critical objectives.

Russia's "men of war" have been instrumental in crystallizing the Russia-led military coalition in Syria. They have helped transfer Russian military technologies and know-how to the forces of the Shiite axis in Syria, a dimension of Russian involvement (especially in the southern area) that creates a need for deeper Russo-Israeli dialogue and further understandings between Jerusalem and Moscow. In early May 2017, Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu made it clear that Israel may accept the de-escalation zones as a general principle, as long as they do not serve as bases for Hezbollah and Iran.

Ultimately, Russia's ground personnel may help preserve its zones of influence in Syria against the ambitions of allies and competitors, including Iran and Turkey. The presence of Russian intervention forces, especially those of a deniable character, can help secure Russia's long term presence inside the Syrian state in whichever formula it may emerge following a putative and still elusive political settlement.

Notes

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China-Iran Relations following the Nuclear Agreement and the Lifted Sanctions: Partnership Inc.

Raz Zimmt, Israel Kanner, Ofek Ish Maas, and Tal Avidan

In January 2016, just a few days after the IAEA concluded that Iran had fulfilled its obligations under the JCPOA, which in turn led to the lifting of sanctions, Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Iran for an official state visit, as part of a visit to the Middle East that began in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Xi Jingping was the most senior Chinese figure to visit Iran in the past 14 years and the first international leader to do so since the imposition of sanctions. Yet despite official statements by both countries regarding bold friendship, willingness for economic cooperation, and an effort toward strategic cooperation, questions remain regarding the actual nature of the relations between China and Iran and their prospects for future development.

With the signing of the nuclear agreement and the lifting of sanctions against Iran, China and Iran regard their relationship as one that holds much economic, political, security, and strategic potential. Officially, China has never issued a policy paper regarding Iran, but in an open letter signed by Xi published in the Iranian press on the eve of his visit to Tehran in January 2016, the Chinese President wrote that China views Iran as a country abounding with natural resources and manpower that is at a critical stage of industrialization and modernization. According to the letter, implementation of the JCPOA would result in new opportunities for growth in China-Iran relations.[1]

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From a strategic perspective, China regards Iran as a possible partner in the Middle East and Asiatic arena. Were China to decide to increase its influence in the Middle East, Iran could assist in promoting Beijing's geostrategic interests.[2] From a geographic perspective, Iran constitutes a link to both the Middle East and Europe and is thus important to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In this sense, it is in China's interest for Iran to serve as a stabilizing force in the Middle East, as China is in need of a stable Middle East in order to realize its economic aspirations. Iran (like Israel) is also a founding member of China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Moreover, in China's eyes, Iran constitutes a counterweight to Sunni radicalism and the terrorism that accompanies it.

For Iran, China is likewise a strategic partner that wields influence in the international system, which could help restore Iran to the international community. Beijing could also help strengthen Iran's political and military status in the region as a counterweight to the influence of the United States. Indeed, the two countries share a desire for change in the world order in their favor, at the expense of the United States. Significantly, Iran is the only regional power in the Middle East that is not a party to an alliance of some kind with the United States.

The close relations between China and Iran on the one hand, and between China and Saudi Arabia on the other hand, should trouble both Tehran and Riyadh, which are sworn enemies. It is difficult to assess whether in the China-Iran-Saudi Arabia triangle, China prefers one of these two countries over the other.

As the object of sanctions and restrictions that have grown more severe over the years, the Iranian government has been forced to seek alternative partners in order to maintain its economy and trade and provide for its population. It found such a partner in China. During the period of sanctions, China was a significant trading partner for Iran, particularly in the energy sector. Following the lifting of sanctions, Iran viewed China as a potential strategic partner to assist it in pursuing its goals in the international arena. Today, Tehran regards China as a trade partner that possesses the ability to help extricate Iran from its ongoing economic crisis, as well as a vast market for the export of energy and inorganic minerals. Thus while the thrust of Iranian efforts following the implementation of the nuclear agreement and the lifting of sanctions has been directed at European companies, Iran has also sought to preserve and further develop its economic relations with China. China is a particularly attractive partner for Iran due

to its willingness to provide assistance without stipulating any conditions pertaining to human rights or the Iranian political system.

The Bilateral Relations

Iran established diplomatic relations with China in 1971, when China joined the UN and received a seat on the Security Council. Although at the start of the 1979 revolution Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini regarded China as an enemy, Iran's political isolation ultimately resulted in improved relations with China, which peaked during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), when China was the only power that agreed to sell arms to the Iranian regime (although it sold weapons to Iraq as well). After the war, during the process of reconstruction, the government in Tehran, under the pragmatic leadership of President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, took action to strengthen Iran's relations with China. During the 1990s and the early 2000s, Chinese aid to Iran was manifested in the supply of arms, as well as the transfer of technical knowledge pertaining to the development of weapon systems, aid for its nuclear program, and the construction of civilian and energy infrastructure.

On the level of the world powers, relations between China and Iran were heavily influenced by the relations between Beijing and Washington. From China's perspective, the United States is more important than Iran, and over the years, Beijing has been willing to pay a financial and political price to side with Washington over Tehran. For example, as part of its efforts to improve its relationship with the United States, in 1997 China reduced its support of Iran's nuclear program.[3] In addition, in accordance with US sanctions, the scope of oil bought by China from Iran dropped by approximately 23 percent. Although abstaining from economic sanctions is a declared principle of Chinese policy, in this case China cooperated with the sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States. China's willingness to respect America's policy led to the cancellation of trade deals with Iran and a crisis of trust between Beijing and Tehran. In April 2014, after the Chinese delayed the transfer of funds and technology, Iran cancelled a deal worth $2.5 billion for the development of an oil field in Azadegan.[4] These examples illustrate the economic price China has been willing to pay in consideration of its relations with Washington. Still, despite its cooperation with the sanctions regime, China made some exceptions, such as in the purchase of oil from Iran. It also continued to conduct transactions with Iran, albeit on a more limited scale.

On the regional level, China ostensibly pursues a policy of neutrality, whereby it maintains proper and impartial relations with a variety of actors, including some who are clear enemies of others. The close relations between China and Iran on the one hand, and between China and Saudi Arabia on the other hand, should trouble both Tehran and Riyadh, which are sworn enemies. It is difficult to assess whether in the China-Iran-Saudi Arabia triangle, China prefers one of these two countries over the other. Above all, however, China's interest is in a stable Middle East that will allow the full utilization of the region's economic resources. In this spirit, in March 2017, as part of its effort to ease tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, China offered to mediate between them and stated that Beijing was willing to help bridge the gaps existing between the two countries.[5]

In light of the power struggles between Tehran and Riyadh that have intensified in recent years, Iran is likely not pleased by China's closer relations with Saudi Arabia, particularly in the military and defense realms. Nonetheless, the importance that Iran ascribes to its relations with China has as a rule prompted it to refrain from displaying its dissatisfaction with Beijing's relations with Riyadh.

Economics

In the economic realm, China invests in Iran's energy sector and other civilian sectors, such as transportation infrastructure and urban infrastructure. During Xi Jingping's visit to Iran, the two countries agreed to reach a level of $600 billion in trade within the coming decade. However, in 2015, the annual trade cycle between the countries stood at $33.8 billion, with Chinese exports to Iran accounting for $17.8 billion and Iranian exports to China accounting for $16 billion. It is difficult to imagine how the aggregate trade cycle between the two countries could reach $600 billion within one decade, especially since the Iranian market has only just started its recovery from a long period of economic sanctions.

Since the JCPOA was signed, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has worked to attract as much foreign investment to Iran as possible. Whereas until the lifting of sanctions China was Iran's major and almost exclusive economic partner and therefore enjoyed trade benefits that were not always optimal from Iran's perspective, the period following the lifting of sanctions has been characterized by global competition over the Iranian market reopened to Western and other actors, with an emphasis on companies from Europe and the Far East. Moreover, in the years of the sanctions,

Iran grew displeased with the dependence it developed on low quality consumer products from China (and the Chinese arrangement of trading consumer products for energy), and this has resulted in a drive to develop alternative markets in Europe and East Asia. In addition, in order to rebuild its economy, Iran has put greater emphasis on technological imports, as part of the deepening of its economic cooperation with the nations of the world. The fact that Iran prefers European technology has made the development of Iran's relationship with China more difficult.

Yet while many believed that following the JCPOA Western countries and global corporations would rush to invest in Iran, in practice, the situation proved to be more complicated. First, many companies have been wary of taking the risk of violating some of the remaining sanctions imposed due to Iran's involvement in terrorism and human rights violations, as well as the secondary American sanctions that were not lifted as a result of the nuclear agreement. Second, the United States has continued to limit Iran's relations with global financial markets in order to limit the use of dollars in transactions between Iran and foreign companies. Also, structural failings in the Iranian economy, including corruption, the weakness of the private sector, and the excessive involvement of semi-government bodies such as the Iranian Revolutionary Guards have delayed the return of European companies to the Iranian economy. In this way, there are currently internal and external obstacles to the expansion of foreign investment in Iran.

The Nuclear Realm

According to the RAND Corporation, China has been a significant partner in the development of Iran's nuclear program over the past three decades.[6] Between 1984 and 1996, China provided Iran with critical assistance in the establishment of a nuclear technological center in Isfahan, the training of nuclear engineers, and the mining of uranium. Between 1998 and 2002, China supplied Iran with UF6, which was used for centrifuge tests by the Kalaye Electric Company in Tehran. In contrast, and in addition to its reduced its support for the Iranian nuclear program beginning in 1997, China, as part of the P5+1, played a significant role in the negotiations over the nuclear agreement.

Yet despite the Chinese government's cooperation with the sanctions, there is evidence of ostensibly private Chinese businessmen having provided assistance to Iran in the field of missiles, primarily in the transfer of technology and knowledge.[7] For example, in March 2017, the US State

Department imposed sanctions on six Chinese companies and three Chinese individuals for assisting Iran in the development of its missile program through the transfer of sensitive information. The report, however, does not provide a clear account of the scope and nature of Chinese assistance.[8]

Security

The security cooperation between China and Iran has advanced in slow, relatively modest steps. Despite reciprocal statements and an array of common interests, there has been no evidence of any new arms acquisition deals in practice – not even on paper.[9] There has also been no evidence of any significant military and security cooperation beyond the level of diplomacy. However, an initial indication of military cooperation was reported on June 18, 2017, in the form of a joint military exercise conducted in the eastern Strait of Hormuz. Among other vessels, the exercise involved one Iranian destroyer and two Chinese destroyers.[10]

The year 2013, when Xi Jingping and Hassan Rouhani took office, marked a warming in the security relations between the two countries. In May 2013, Iran made a port visit at Zhangjiagang near Shanghai, and in September 2014, two destroyers of the Chinese fleet made a port visit at Bandar Abbas in Iran.[11] Moreover, after two decades with very few visits by senior members of the countries' military and defense systems, two such visits took place in 2014 alone. And in October 2015, approximately three months after the JCPOA was signed, Admiral Sun Jianguo, deputy chief of the Joint Staff of the Chinese army, visited Tehran.

The reciprocal visits of these senior officials reached a high point in November 2016, when Chinese Minister of Defense Chang Wanquan paid a visit to Tehran. During his visit, his Iranian counterpart Hossein Dehghan related to the development of long term defense and military relations between the countries as "an ultimate priority in the security diplomacy of the Republic of Iran." During the same visit, the Chinese Minister of Defense met with the Iranian chief of staff, and the two officials announced the establishment of a joint commission of the general staffs of both armies to establish closer defense ties and signed a cooperation agreement in the fields of training and anti-terrorism warfare.[12] These statements, however, have yet to mature into concrete cooperation.

China and Iran have a rich history of defense trade. From the outset of relations between the two countries, Iranian interest in Chinese defense industry products focused primarily on the ballistic realm. In the early

1980s, Iran purchased a small quantity of weapons and the license to manufacture them on Iranian soil, and over time the Iranian defense industries improved the Chinese technology. In this way, between the 1990s and the mid-2000s, Iran produced hundreds of Noor and Tondar anti-ship missiles, which are actually upgraded versions of Chinese C-801 and C-802 missiles.[13] Houthi rebels in Yemen, who are supported by the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, reportedly launched Nasr and Tor missiles, also local versions of Chinese missiles, at United Arab Emirates vessels operating off the coast of Yemen as part of a Saudi-led coalition.[14] Moreover, some Iranian-developed weaponry has been placed at the disposal of Hezbollah and Hamas. For example, in the summer of 2006, during the Second Lebanon War, the Israeli warship *INS Hanit* was hit by what appears to have been an Iranian version of a Chinese C-802 missile fired at it from the Beirut coast. During the war, Hezbollah also fired Chinese manufactured 122 mmType-81 cluster rockets at civilian areas in northern Israel.[15] In 2011, aboard the vessel *Victoria*, IDF forces discovered six missiles, based on the Chinese C-704, that were intended for Hamas.[16]

Defense relations between China and Iran are not conducted in a vacuum. Indeed, China is in competition with Russia, which is currently Iran's largest arms supplier. According to SIPRI, in the decade that preceded the imposition of sanctions, Russia supplied approximately 70 percent of all the weapons that Iran imported.[17] The total value of the deals that were signed by the two countries from 1990 through the end of the previous decade stood at approximately $4.5 billion (figure 1), double the value of Iran's transactions with China during the period in question.[18] Iran's defense transactions vis-à-vis Russia differ from those concluded with China, and in contrast to the Iranian improvements made to the Chinese weapons systems, Iran has only rarely developed or produced weapons based on Russian technology. This, however, is not indicative of the lack of an Iranian desire to acquire advanced weaponry, as deals between Iran and Russia worth tens of billions of dollars continue to be woven.

There is no evidence of any new arms acquisition deals in practice between China and Iran – not even on paper. In contrast, deals between Iran and Russia worth tens of billions of dollars continue to be woven.

A number of other conditions are also delaying Tehran's movement toward Beijing in the realm of arms acquisition. First, under the JCPOA, the export of advanced offensive weaponry to Iran is restricted for five

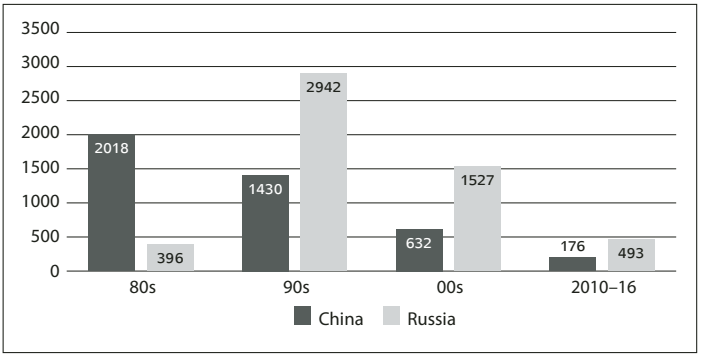

Figure 1. Chinese and Russian Defense Exports to Iran (in millions of dollars)

Source: SIPRI; this data does not include the final quarter of 2016 (which has not been published yet)

years, between the signing of the agreement and the end of 2020. Under the agreement, all sales of significant conventional weapon systems (such as tanks, cannons, missile systems, and fighter planes) or related components and services are subject to the approval of the UN Security Council, which are to consider each case on to its merits. This means that both China and Russia must present any arms sales to Iran to all members of the Security Council for their approval, including the United States.[19]

The second hurdle delaying the sale of Chinese weapon systems to Iran is China's export policy and the supply of the Chinese defense industries, which are still no competition against other exporters. Although China's weapons exports constitute the third largest in the world (after the United States and Russia, which occupy first and second place, respectively), most of its exports as of 2012-2016 were intended for states with close relations with China (Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar), who are able to purchase more advanced weaponry, such as submarines, fighter planes, cruise missiles, and tanks. Moreover, China still has not completed the development and production of the advanced technological weapon systems that are in high demand around the world, such as stealth fighter planes, high precision missiles, and long range air defense systems.

From a conventional military perspective, Iran relies on its outdated military abilities. Therefore, the Iranian army could theoretically show great interest in a number of modern Chinese technological developments, particularly in the naval realm. One of the major concerns in the West is

that the Iranian army will pursue a systemic Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2AD) approach in the Gulf.[20] Iran, which aspires to counterbalance the American presence in the Gulf and guarantee itself a secure outlet to the Indian Ocean, could employ the Chinese strategy and technology that is currently employed in the East and South China Sea.

According to the US Defense Department, Chinese anti-access strategy (known as ASCEL – Active Strategic Counterattacks on Exterior Lines) has the highest competitive military potential vis-à-vis the United States and is capable of undermining the United States' traditional military advantages – that is, given that the Chinese army has worked hard on the development of a large number of mid-range advanced ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, combat submarines armed with advanced systems, long range air defense systems, electronic warfare, fighter planes, and more.[21] In light of Iran's interest in Chinese missile development and warships, there is the possible danger of the adoption of a strategy of using them, initially against forces of the United States and the Gulf states, and subsequently against Israel.

Farzin Nadimi of the Washington Institute has estimated that Iran could ask China to purchase advanced maritime vessels, such as the 052 destroyer or the C-28A frigate (which is armed with advanced anti-ship missiles and advanced surface-to-air missile), the 054A, or others. Nadimi also maintains that the two countries could resume cooperation in the realm of anti-ship missiles, if China is willing to provide Iran with a number of items from the advanced generations of these missiles, including, for example, the CM-302 and the CX-1, which have ranges of up to 300 km.[22]

However, whereas advancement in the realm of weapons development and acquisition has been slow and limited, on the level of defense strategy Iran has been interested in pursuing diplomatic and humanitarian Chinese involvement in the Middle East, which would complement Russian involvement and counterbalance that of the West and the United States. At a number of opportunities in the course of 2016, President Rouhani urged China to play a more significant role in Syria and Yemen. During their first meeting in Tehran in January 2016, Rouhani stated that he had discussed with his Chinese counterpart the issue of cooperation in fighting terrorism and the provision of mutual aid to countries that are targeted by terrorism, including Syria and Yemen. During a side meeting

> Israel-China relations have focused primarily on the economic realm, and Israel has not been able to translate their development into changes in Chinese policy regarding disconcerting diplomatic positions.

with the Chinese Vice President at an international conference later that year, President Rouhani again called on China to become involved in the region's crises, particularly in the provision of humanitarian aid to Syria and Yemen. China's positions in the Syrian and the Yemeni context serve to strengthen Iran's regional position and preserve Iranian interests.

Recommendations for Israel

China's support for Iran and Iranian positions – which has thus far been manifested in assistance with nuclear development and repercussions of the sanctions regime, as well as defense exports and the mutual aspiration to weaken the United States in the global system – poses a threat to Israeli national security, both regarding relations between the world powers and on the regional level. Although China is engaged in relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel in parallel, in practice it has helped strengthen Iran in the military realm and other troubling areas, such as the evasion of sanctions, the advancement of its nuclear program, and the promotion of arrangements in Syria along Israel's border.

In the management of its ties with Israel on the one hand and Iran on the other hand, as in its triangle of relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia, China has succeeded in maintaining relations with both countries, which are in conflict with one another. Israel, for its part, possesses no significant leverage over China to change this situation. Israel-China relations have focused primarily on the economic realm, and Israel has not been able to translate their development into changes in Chinese policy regarding disconcerting diplomatic positions. Nonetheless, in the context at hand, Israel must resolutely express to the Iranians their concerns regarding Iran's destabilizing regional policies and its efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. At the same time, it must also seek out indirect levers of influence.

One source of leverage through which Israel could attempt to influence Chinese policy is the United States. Israel would do well to consider the possibility of leveraging its relations with the United States as a means of pressuring China to reduce its relations with Iran. This would undoubtedly be a complicated and sensitive course of action, as it would involve US-Chinese interests around the world, spanning the breadth of both powers' activities and interests (economic, climate-related, defense-related, and others). However, it is an issue that must be raised and assessed in Israel's strategic dialogue with the United States.

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Political and Military Contours of the Next Conflict with Hezbollah

Gideon Sa'ar and Ron Tira

The purpose of this article is to analyze the political and military contours of the next conflict with Hezbollah. The article addresses the following principal points:

a. The weight to be given to the distinct context of the hostilities, against reliance on "generic" insights and "automatic" activation of contingency plans.
b. The question whether to set objectives for the conflict of a political and "positive" nature (that is, an attempt to shape political reality by means of military conflict), or, based on considerations of realism and limitations of power, to set objectives merely of a military and "negative" nature (such as limiting Hezbollah's force buildup and deployment).
c. Three new elements that to a certain degree shape the contemporary arena: Hezbollah's buildup of precision weapons capability; the deepening military presence of Iran and Hezbollah in Syria, and the blurred borders between Lebanon, Syria, and Iran; and the entry of Russia into Syria.
d. The contemporary arena is marked by a heightened challenge to Israel by Iran and Hezbollah, including by way of Iran's military buildup on Syrian soil and the construction of facilities for the production of precision weapons on Lebanese soil. The picture can be seen as an attempt by Iran and Hezbollah to reach a strategic balance with Israel, or even to gain the capability to launch a strike that will cause significant damage to critical (military and civilian) systems in Israel.

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These processes increase the probability of a spiraling escalation, leading ultimately to war. Israel is exceptionally vulnerable to attack by precision weapons, as on the one hand it is an advanced Western country dependent on sophisticated technologies, and on the other it is small, with very concentrated infrastructures and very little redundancy. Thus Israel must define red lines, including Hezbollah's acquisition of precision weapons, and particularly the manufacture of precision missiles on Lebanese soil, as well as the future deployment to Syria of high impact Iranian weapon systems (such as advanced surface-to-air missiles, coast-to-sea/coast missiles, and precision surface-to-surface missiles), and be prepared to move forward in an escalation process – as much as is necessary – to foil these buildups.

e. According to the current operational concept and force structure of both Israel and Hezbollah, there is strong linkage between the extent of the damage that will be caused to Hezbollah and the price to be paid by Israel for causing that damage. In fact, there is a kind of symmetrical equation between the depth of damage to both sides in the event of hostilities. This ratio is a consideration for preferring a "limited" conflict (setting limited objectives to be achieved at limited costs) over a "full" all-out conflict. Yet it also means that the IDF must develop the capability to weaken the linkage between the extent of damage to Hezbollah and the price paid by Israel for inflicting the damage, in areas such as operational concepts, force buildup, and intelligence.

Fundamental Analysis vs. the Particular (Unknown) Context of the Future Conflict

All military conflicts can be analyzed at two levels: the "fundamental" level – basic underlying characteristics of the relevant system, where the rate of change is slow; and the distinct context in which a conflict breaks out (who started it, what are they trying to achieve, under what circumstances), which is dynamic and changes rapidly. The context of the next conflict with Hezbollah is currently unknown, so the analysis is by definition limited. However, one can discuss the system's fundamental characteristics and a range (although partial) of possible contexts of future hostilities, and the role and method of ascertaining the distinct context when fighting actually breaks out. Of course it is possible to argue that until the context is ascertained there is no point in a "generic" analysis of the fundamental level. However, the "generic" analysis is indeed important, as it involves

learning and creates shared knowledge and language between the various military ranks, and between the political and military levels. To paraphrase Eisenhower, a plan based only on the fundamental level is not sufficient, but the planning process provides valuable shared understanding.

The differences between Operations Pillar of Defense and Protective Edge illustrate the importance of identifying the distinct context of each event – though both were against the same opponent, occurred in the same theater, and took place within less than two years. During Operation Pillar of Defense Egypt was led by the Muslim Brotherhood and during Operation Protective Edge by the el-Sisi regime; the former operation focused around shaping the rules of the game for the ensuing "routine" period and around fairly secondary economic issues (such as fishing and farming land close to the border), while Protective Edge was characterized by the extreme isolation of Hamas and the question of its economic survival. The significance of the isolation and economic distress of Hamas gradually became clearer toward spring-summer 2014, and it is possible that an analysis conducted long before would have been unable to disclose the distinct context of Operation Protective Edge. This is one example of the importance of changing contexts, and the need to highlight the distinct context before making decisions that shape the conflict.

It is impossible to assess the distinct context of the next conflict with Hezbollah, but a look at the recent past reveals the rapid changes in the contexts with potential for escalation: from Hezbollah's force buildup by means of supply lines passing through Syria, to its force buildup on Lebanese soil (including the manufacture of high quality weapons), to efforts by Hezbollah and Iran to expand their force deployments in Syria. There are changes in context as to Russian indifference vs. reservations about actions attributed to Israel, and apathy vs. aggressiveness by the Syrian regime toward reports of breaches of Syrian sovereignty by Israel. The context is affected by the changes in the self confidence and boldness of members of the "axis" (Iran, Hezbollah, and their allies), and the degree to which the axis is invested in other fronts and is not interested, or for that matter, free to seek, an additional front with Israel. It is also affected by changes in the international legitimacy of the Alawite

> Hezbollah's existing capabilities in the field of improved-precision weapons are already creating a new level of threat, and alongside its proven capability for waging a campaign of attrition, the organization could now inflict a qualitative blow.

regime, Hezbollah, and Iran, inter alia as a result of the unfolding of Syria's civil war and developments regarding the Iranian nuclear project.

Hezbollah is an organization with a complex identity – part Iranian proxy and part independent grassroots representative of the Lebanese Shiites. In some contexts it should be seen as an arm of Iran, and in others as an important shareholder in Lebanon. The specific context is also derived from its degree of self confidence or the extent to which it is challenged within the internal Lebanese political system. A conflict could break out due to a miscalculation, a failure in strategic communication, or uncontrolled escalation. The future conflict could also break out in a different distinct context, which cannot yet be predicted – but it will be essential to define it in real time.

In every distinct context the parties will compete to achieve objectives and end states derived to a large extent from that context. Consequently, all policy planning as well as military strategy and campaign planning must be adjusted to the context (rather than making decisions based on a "generic" fundamental analysis or "automatically" activating contingency plans).

The Contemporary Context

The distinct context changes continually, and identifying it is one of the most important tasks once the fighting starts. At the time of this writing, three issues shape the dynamics in the theater, although clearly they will not necessarily determine the distinct context of the next conflict.

The first issue is Hezbollah's buildup of improved-precision and precise weaponry.[1] A Kuwaiti newspaper, which interviewed an aid to the commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps,[2] noted that Iran has erected factories for the manufacture of high quality weapons on Lebanese soil. The head of Israel's Military Intelligence directorate also confirmed that Iran is setting up the infrastructure for the production of precision weapons in Lebanon.[3] Precision weapons represent a new level of high quality threat because of their ability to disrupt and even shut down certain civilian and military systems for lengthy periods of time, and to cause billions of dollars of damage. This is not just "more of the same" vis-à-vis the statistical weapons, and it could lead to an unacceptable threat for Israel. Israel is developing offensive and defensive countermeasures to the precision weapons threat, but such a response is not hermetic, and a certain percentage of precision missiles may still reach their targets.

In certain senses Israel is unusual in its vulnerability to precision weapons, as on the one hand it is a Western country with advanced critical infrastructure, and on the other hand, it is a small country with concentrated critical infrastructures and little redundancy. Regarding electricity generation in Israel, for example, out of a capacity to generate about 17,600 MW of electricity, 28 percent is installed in only two sites (with 10 cumulative production units – turbines, for example). The six largest electricity generating sites in Israel (including private ones) account for 51 percent of the national capacity for electricity generation (using only 26 production units).[4] Thus the threat represented by even a small number of precision missiles that breach Israel's countermeasures and strike critical systems, such as electricity generation, could be unprecedented. The picture is similar with regard to other critical systems, such as national electricity management; natural gas infrastructure; sea water desalination (only five facilities[5] supply about half of Israel's drinking water); and many other examples from civilian and military fields.

The transfer of precision weapons to Hezbollah via Syria is operationally complex, and according to foreign publications, Israel has managed to reduce such transfers significantly. Under the current rules of the game, however, Israel refrains from attacking in Lebanon, and attacking production facilities of precision weapons on Lebanese soil allegedly contradicts these rules. Yet for Israel, such production may represent a dangerous loophole in the rules. Therefore, Israel must define a red line regarding Hezbollah's precision weapon capability, with the emphasis on its production in Lebanon, and be ready to move forward on an escalation process – as much as necessary – to prevent Hezbollah from acquiring such capability. Due to the underlying characteristics of the political and military environment, it is possible that Hezbollah and Iran will accept the new Israeli red line after mutual escalation but before reaching the threshold of war, but nevertheless due to the unique nature of the precision weapon threat, Israel must be prepared to escalate even as far as full war in order to thwart Hezbollah's precision capability buildup. The significance of this threat must be highlighted in the public arena and in discussions with relevant governments, and thus legitimize Israel's preventive efforts.

Hezbollah's existing capabilities in the field of improved-precision weapons are already creating a new level of threat, and alongside its proven capability for waging a campaign of attrition, the organization could now also inflict a qualitative blow. Dealing with Hezbollah's high

quality firepower could become the main characteristic of the next conflict in three ways – before (as the "casus belli"), during (as a defining operational characteristic), and after (the strategic objective and as a matter for post-conflict understanding) – and reinforce the existing drive to shorten hostilities as far as is practically possible.

The second issue that characterizes the contemporary context is the entry of Iranian forces to Syria. Deployment of military systems with Iranian personnel on Syrian soil (particularly the possibility of future deployment of high performance systems, for example, advanced air defense systems such as the S-300, coast-to-sea/coast missiles, and precision missiles) could create a new qualitative level of threat and increase the asymmetry in the reciprocal strategic and operational accessibility between Iran and Israel. Therefore, Israel must examine whether to define a red line of Iranian military buildup in Syria, and if so, be prepared to advance in escalation as far as is necessary in order to prevent such buildup.

Growing Iranian military presence in Syria could force Israel to look at the Syrian and Lebanese theaters as one whole. Israel will have to consider whether to continue accepting Iranian activity via its proxies and covert forces, and operate against these proxies – or to act directly against Iran.

These military buildups by Iran and Hezbollah – in Syria, and the production of high quality weapons in Lebanon – could mark the start of a new era as to the degree the axis challenges Israel, and could be seen as an attempt by Iran and Hezbollah to create a symmetrical strategic equation with Israel, if not more than that, i.e., achieving the capability to inflict significant damage to critical military and civilian systems in Israel. Indeed, it is possible that the temporary and partial suspension of the Iranian nuclear program is incentivizing what looks like an attempt to reach a strategic balance against Israel in other spheres (to some extent as compensation for suspension of the nuclear program), resulting in a dynamic of escalation. These processes could very well put the regional system at a crossroads, and raise the probability of war.

If Israel refrains from foiling these processes of force buildup, in a future conflict it might face high quality Iranian weapons on Syrian soil and precision weapons held by Hezbollah. That would be a turning point in the underlying, fundamental characteristics of the system and a change of basic assumptions regarding the conflict.

The third issue that could affect the distinct context is the military involvement of Russia in Syria[6] and its complex relations with the Alawite

regime, Iran,[7] and Hezbollah. This is significant because any hostilities on Israel's northern border could include or spill over into Syria for a range of reasons. Iran and Hezbollah are positioning military assets in Syria, and those could turn against Israel in the event of a conflict in Lebanon. Israel itself could initiate action against the Iranian forces or Hezbollah in Syria, in the context of shaping the rules of the game to limit the deployment of such forces (for example, preventing an Iranian presence on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights, or preventing the positioning of high quality Iranian weapons such as S-300 surface-to-air missiles in Syria). As the operational cooperation among the constituents of the Iranian axis tightens and as they increase their activity in Syria, so the probability rises that in the distinct context of the future conflict the entire axis (and not only Hezbollah) will be defined as the enemy, and fighting will take place on several fronts. In a conflict that includes the Syrian theater, Israel could break out of the symmetry equation regarding the depth of damage inflicted to both sides, which exists in fighting restricted to Lebanon alone. Israel will still pay a similar price for the conflict, but its impairment of the other side will be measured not only in terms of exacting a price but also in terms of changing the strategic reality (something that is apparently less achievable in Lebanon). Contrary to the Lebanese case, Israel has the ability to pose a real threat to the Alawite regime, and to degrade the forces defending it significantly. An extension of the fighting to Syria, and in certain cases fighting in Lebanon that projects into Syria, could interfere with Russian attempts to stabilize its own order in Syria.

Therefore, Russia could try to limit Israel's political, strategic, and even operational freedom to act. At the same time, Russia is a new element affecting the conduct, restraint, and deployment of all parties, the nature of any possible settlement in Syria, and the possible termination mechanisms for ending a conflict. Russia's new role in the arena could both coerce Israel and enable it to achieve political and strategic objectives using short, limited, and gradually escalating applications of force, combined with political dialogue with Russia and the United States – and it is possible that in certain circumstances such a framework should be the defining idea of Israel's concept for fighting in this arena.

In its six previous campaigns (from Operation Accountability to Operation Protective Edge), Israel acted in a more or less similar way[8] and with varying degrees of success. Even when Israel made mistakes, the price of such mistakes was tolerable in strategic terms. But the entry of improved-

precision weapons and the entry of Russia could fundamentally change the characteristics of the next conflict, so that it will not be the "seventh in a row." It is possible that Israel cannot allow itself to delay taking decisions, as it had in the past, and the price of error will be far greater.

The Political-Strategic Objective of the Conflict

The basis for the political-strategic framework of the conflict is the context-dependent decision about who is the enemy and what Israel wants to gain from it in the conflict. The obvious enemy is Hezbollah, but Israel can also define the enemy as the Lebanese Republic, a contention that is increasingly valid as Hezbollah becomes the main shareholder in Lebanon.[9] The enemy could be defined as the Iranian-Hezbollah axis and the Alawite regime – and this intensifies as the Shiite axis expands its ambitions to establish itself in Syria.

In certain circumstances it is possible to define an "addressee" of the conflict that is not an enemy, mainly when the military action is also intended to influence international processes such as a settlement in Syria or the post-conflict reconstruction of Lebanon. Such an "addressee" could be a power or elements in the international community that influence the shaping of the arena. One of the unknowns in the equation, at least in the immediate context of hostilities on Israel's northern border, is the lack of clarity regarding the position of the Trump administration – to the extent that it has already formulated its position – and the degree of Israel's ability to offset restrictions that Russia will try to impose through coordination with the United States.

Alongside openness to the unknown future distinct context, a "generic" analysis of the fundamental level reveals constraints that frame the possible political-strategic framework, including defining the enemy and the objectives of the conflict.

It will be difficult for the Lebanese Republic to influence Hezbollah's conduct, and the main rationale for attacking Lebanon derives from its status as a Hezbollah asset, in order to activate termination mechanisms, or in an attempt to influence post-conflict reconstruction. However, Lebanon should not be attacked in the hope that it will restrain Hezbollah. There are valid points for making demands of Lebanon in public diplomacy, particularly as Hezbollah increases its involvement in the Lebanese army, in order to achieve international legitimacy should an attack on Lebanon be deemed necessary.

An understanding of the fundamental level and recognition of the limitations of power and limitations of feasibility reveal that there is only a limited range of "positive" and achievable objectives that Israel can hope to attain from Hezbollah and from Lebanon. While the purpose of an armed conflict is always political, in many contexts it is hard to find a political objective that is both meaningful and achievable at a reasonable cost, and that is the reason for the basic lack of value that can be found in an Israel-Hezbollah military conflict. Israel's main realistic wills are "negative" (and military) – preventing or limiting force buildup, restricting deployments, and preventing hostile activities that are intolerable in routine times[10] (in other words, shaping the rules of the game).

Of course, it is possible to propose an objective of annihilating Hezbollah and changing the internal Lebanese political map, but it is doubtful whether this is realistic; certainly not at a tolerable cost. Even at end states of an intensive, extended conflict, the Shiite population will remain significant in Lebanon, and Hezbollah will still be its representative. Hezbollah will remain an armed and adversarial organization; Iran will rebuild its military force, and at least in certain senses, its combat capabilities after Iranian rehabilitation will be no less than before the conflict. However, there are two possible achievable "positive" objectives: first, severing or at least interfering with the geographical-physical passageways between the Alawite area of Syria and the Shiite area in Lebanon, thereby reducing the access and freedom of action of the axis. Second, it may be possible to use political tools to affect the question of who will reconstruct Lebanon after a conflict. But the Israeli interest in reconstruction of Lebanon by a player such as Saudi Arabia, if such an interest exists, does not justify initiating a war, and should only be a positive side effect of a conflict that erupted in a different context.

Most of Hezbollah's immediate and realistic wills regarding Israel are also "negative": preventing Israeli interference with its efforts to build its force and with its deployments (with respect to Iran, preventing Israeli attempts to restrain its penetration of the region, and of course deterring Israel from acting against Iran, for example in the nuclear context). Hezbollah appears to seek the destruction of Israel or at least to gain Sha'ba Farms, but these are not achievable objectives. At deeper levels, the Shiite axis is interested in outlining a Muslim-Israeli fault line and leading the "resistance," and thus blurring the Shiite-Sunni fault line, but this interest will reach the level of an actual desire in an intensive and immediate war only in extreme cases.

Therefore, at the fundamental level, both sides have only modest "positive," vital, and achievable wishes from one another (for example, there is no valuable asset that both sides want – as both Israel and Egypt perceived Sinai and the Suez Canal in 1973). Therefore both sides should have large question marks over the cost-benefit ratio of a high intensity conflict. This is an important stabilizing and restraining factor.

Israel's objectives in a future conflict will be derived first and foremost from what it wants to achieve in the distinct context (such as, for example, preventing Hezbollah's buildup of certain qualitative edge capabilities or preventing deployment of high quality Iranian weapon systems in Syria), but a review of the fundamental data reveals a few "generic" objectives that could be applicable in many contexts: postponing the following conflict, shaping the rules for the routine times that will follow the conflict, increasing deterrence with respect to Hezbollah and third parties, undermining the attractiveness of Hezbollah's war paradigm (use of rockets and missiles hidden among the civilian population), preserving Israel's relations with its allies, and creating the conditions to reduce Iranian involvement in the post-war reconstruction of Lebanon, as well as imposing new and enforceable restrictions on the freedom of access of the Iran-Alawite-Hezbollah axis.

Challenges for the Military Plan

Military strategy and the campaign plan itself are clearly derived from the distinct context in which a conflict breaks out, the definition of who the enemy is and what Israel wants to obtain from the enemy in the conflict, the preferred exit strategy, and the synergy with the planned political effort.

But on the tentative assumption that the next conflict in Israel's north will be mainly against Hezbollah and will be fought primarily on Lebanese territory, the "generic" analysis of the fundamental layer provides practical insights in many contexts. An examination of the order of battle and operational concept of both sides shows that at present, there is strong linkage between the depth of damage to be inflicted on Hezbollah and the military and civilian price to be paid by Israel for inflicting that damage. In other words, there is some symmetry in the price and the damage to both sides during any conflict between them – and in the case of an all-out conflict, this mutual damage will be significant.

In its conceptual material,[11] Israel sometimes stresses the need to realize military superiority by reaching military decision. This means negating the enemy's ability or will to fight in accordance with its planned paradigm.

Hezbollah was deliberately constructed according to the model of a high redundancy firepower echelon, alongside a ground defense echelon, with both echelons being decentralized, composed of autonomous "fighting cells" that are hidden mainly in populated areas, and deployed deep into Lebanon. This model is intended to make the organization relatively resilient in face of attempts to negate its capability to continue fighting. It is doubtful whether there is already capability for a "fast and elegant" move to deprive Hezbollah of its will or ability to fight, so reaching a military decision against it involves annihilating large swathes of combat elements spread over large and primarily populated areas. Such annihilation is possible, but it requires extended fighting, will exact a considerable military, political, and civilian price, and involves significant risks.

Consequently, Israel's main military effort – in terms of intelligence, force buildup, and campaign planning – should be aimed at weakening the linkage between the depth of damage to Hezbollah and the civilian and military price that Israel pays. The military effort should be directed at developing Israel's capability to strike more deeply at Hezbollah, while reducing the price to a tolerable level within the range of expectations of Israel's decision makers, and all within a defined, short period of time. The military effort should also be aimed at dealing with the qualitative capabilities built by Hezbollah since 2006, starting with its ground raid capability, through unmanned aerial vehicles, cruise missiles, coast-to-sea/coast missiles, surface-to-air missiles, all the way to cyber capabilities.

A study of the fundamental level also shows that even extended fighting will not yield Israel or Hezbollah a "positive," valuable political achievement or dramatically change reality (unless the distinct context of the conflict dictates otherwise), and therefore it is possible that both sides have a shared interest in reducing the cost of hostilities. It can also be assumed that in nearly every situation, when sufficient time has passed after the conflict, Iran will rebuild Hezbollah and the latter will retain its political standing in Lebanon and at least some of its fighting ability.

It is possible that the distinct context of the conflict will justify a large military move to negate Hezbollah's will or ability to fight. But at least the "generic" (non-contextual) analysis shows the following: (a) there is a symmetry of sorts of mutual damage in a conflict; there is a need for an extensive annihilation of Hezbollah's fighting elements in order to reach a military decision, as well as a price linked to the depth of that annihilation; (b) it is hard to identify a "positive" and valuable political objective that

can realistically be achieved in such a military campaign; and (c) it seems that when sufficient time has passed, Iran will in any case rebuild at least some of Hezbollah's capabilities. Consequently, there is little point in an extensive conflict framework, and it is better to be satisfied with "limited" contours, in other words an effort to achieve limited goals at limited costs and risks. To the extent that this is feasible and subject to an Israeli decision, it is worth examining and prioritizing limited conflict contours before deciding on an extended war format. The contour of the conflict and its cost must be optimal and not necessarily maximal, given the distinct context, the objectives, and the cost.

The IDF has been hard pressed to impose a quick termination in some of its recent campaigns (Operation Protective Edge is the latest and most prominent example), and the political echelon must demand that the military echelon – even before fighting breaks out – explain how the execution of its plans will create the conditions for the termination of hostilities. Specifically, military planners must explain why they assess that the intended firepower plan or ground offensive will create such conditions, if and when Hezbollah wants the fighting to continue (this question is less relevant when both sides want a quick termination).

As a starting point for the analysis, Israel can presumably maximize the achievements of its firepower in a short time at the commencement of fighting, when the gap between its own achievements from firepower vis-à-vis Hezbollah's achievements from firepower will peak. (This working assumption could change as Hezbollah acquires precision fire capabilities, and in the future could achieve greater symmetry in the quality of its firepower.) Contrary to firepower, a ground offensive (maneuver) requires considerable time. In many cases a "small" maneuver can make a modest contribution to the campaign's objectives, while a "large" maneuver requires time, resources, considerable costs, and risks – and is mostly beneficial if it is completed. However, in specific contexts such as preventing Hezbollah and Iran from establishing themselves in the Syrian Golan Heights, activating termination mechanisms, or affecting the use by the Iranian axis of passageways between Lebanon and Syria, it is possible that even a "small" maneuver could be of value.

As another starting point for the analysis, it can be assumed that there is a direct link between the duration of the conflict and the civilian and military price to be paid by Israel. Prolonged fighting, or the addition of a ground offensive to the firepower attack, could narrow the gap in the

balance of costs between the sides. Therefore, when looking at possible additional campaign stages, a "large" maneuver, or extra time, the military planner must prove that the additional time and effort is justified in terms of cost/benefit, the distinct context, and achieving the strategic objective.

In the Second Lebanon War, it was possible to remove much of the threat Israel faced, at the time mostly from short range rockets, by means of an orderly ground offensive into South Lebanon. This was not done in 2006, and in the framework of implementing the lessons learned, emphasis was placed on the need for a ground offensive, and the relevant capabilities were reinforced. But since 2006 the nature of the threat has changed, and the ground offensive that was relevant in 2006 would probably not achieve the same benefit today – at least in terms of removing the threat. Thus it is imperative that the purpose of a ground offensive be defined explicitly, in view of the changes in the fundamental level since 2006 and taking account of the distinct context of the next conflict.

The military plan must include a number of possible exit points, which will allow a review of the option of ending the conflict while achieving the desired goals, without the need to continue to the next stages of the plan. It is important to explore in real time whether or not Israel and Hezbollah have a mutual interest in limiting the intensity of the conflict and not deteriorating to all-out war. Accordingly, it is important to monitor Hezbollah's conduct, its campaign framework, and its pronouncements. The military plan must also include the option of mutually-limited hostilities in time and intensity, with windows of time to investigate this option.

Termination Mechanisms

The desire to shorten the conflict, the assumption that the maximization of the achievement from firepower is already reached in the first few days (an assumption that may change in the future), the premise that the conflict will aim to achieve military decision, and the time required for the operation of termination mechanisms mean that the termination mechanisms must be put into action as soon as the main strategic objective is achieved. This sometimes happens in the early stages of the conflict, even if there is no "victory picture" to be "shown" to the public in Israel. The possibility that the next conflict in Israel's north will take place on several fronts and also involve Syria should give rise to new termination mechanisms, including those that can be activated early and quickly.

Identifying the relevant and most effective termination mechanism in the distinct context of the conflict must be done early in the discussion between the political and military echelons, before fighting starts, and at the latest, as soon as hostilities break out. In many cases, Israel should strive for a termination that does not include a written agreement, because of the additional fighting time needed to achieve a written agreement, and also because of its minor practical benefit (for example, Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the Second Lebanon War, and is not enforced).

Preparing the Narrative in Advance: Military, Political, and Public Perspectives

A significant part of the feeling of missed opportunity that accompanied the IDF's recent campaigns derived from the inconsistency between the messages from the political and military leaderships and their actions. In at least some cases, correct actions were perceived as incorrect or unsuccessful, because Israel's narrative was not consistent with its actions. For example, Israel expressed its expectation of achieving a decisive victory, but no line of operation was taken that could achieve such an outcome. Sometimes, Israel failed to stop a campaign at the optimal point due to the lack of a political, public, or military narrative to explain such a move.

The next conflict will be considered a success if Israel achieves its strategic objectives in the distinct context. Yet a "generic" analysis of the fundamental data provides a basis for assessment that the conflict will be evaluated as successful if Israel manages to stop certain processes of Hezbollah's force buildup and some of Iran's attempts to penetrate the arena, as defined in advance, and international legitimacy is gained for post-conflict continuation of the efforts to prevent Hezbollah's force buildup; if freedom of action and of access by the Iran-Alawite-Hezbollah axis is somewhat limited; if Iran is excluded from Lebanon's reconstruction; and if Israeli deterrence is strengthened and can further postpone the following conflict. This is in addition to Israel successfully bringing the fighting to an early conclusion, with significant damage to Hezbollah, keeping any damage to Israel to tolerable levels as defined in advance, and without causing friction with Russia that exceeds the working assumptions of the planning and approving echelons.

However, the next round of fighting will presumably not end "elegantly." Israel will not necessarily be the one to fire the last shot, Hezbollah will likely not "capitulate" and will continue to build up its capabilities, and

Hezbollah presumably will continue to promote the narrative of its own "victory." This is an "advanced," mature, and not glorious narrative, which must be prepared in advance. To create coherence on the Israeli side, such a narrative should be introduced in advance to Israel's political, military, and public arenas.

Notes

1 The difference between the two is in their Circular Error Probable (CEP) level.

2 "Kuwaiti Daily: Missile, Arms Factories Built By IRGC In Lebanon Have Recently been Handed over to Hizbullah," *al-Jarida*, March 11, 2017, https://www.memri.org/reports/kuwaiti-daily-missile-arms-factories-built-irgc-lebanon-have-recently-been-handed-over.

3 Gili Cohen, "Head of General Intelligence Confirms: Hezbollah is Setting up a Military Industry in Lebanon Based on Iranian Know-how," *Haaretz*, June 22, 2017.

4 The Israel Electric Corporation Ltd., "Periodic Report for 2016," which can be downloaded from the TA Stock Exchange site at: http://mayafiles.tase.co.il/rpdf/1087001-1088000/P1087060-00.pdf.

5 Water Authority, "Israel's Desalination Plants," http://www.water.gov.il/Hebrew/Planning-and-Development/Desalination/Pages/desalination-%20stractures.aspx.

6 Amos Yadlin, "Russia in Syria and the Implications for Israel," *Strategic Assessment* 19, no. 2 (2016): 9-26.

7 Ephraim Kam, "Will Russia and Iran Walk Hand in Hand?" *Strategic Assessment* 19, no. 2 (2016): 41-51.

8 Ron Tira, "Israel's Second War Doctrine," *Strategic Assessment* 19, no. 2 (2016): 143-56.

9 Assaf Orion, "Hezbollah and Lebanon, in Aounian Terms: One and the Same?" *INSS Insight* No. 902, February 27, 2017.

10 "Routine times" are, in IDF jargon, periods that are neither high or mid-intensity conflict nor peace.

11 *The IDF Strategy*, Office of the Chief of Staff, August 2015, and Gur Laish, "Main Points of the Security Concept of the National Security Council – in Routine Times and Emergencies," *Eshtonot* No. 10, Research Center, National Security College, July 2015.

An Assault on Urban Areas: The Revised Reference Scenario for the Home Front in Israel

Meir Elran and Carmit Padan

The principal security threat to Israel from its two main adversaries today – Hezbollah and Hamas – consists of high trajectory weaponry aimed at civilian targets. According to *The IDF Strategy* (2015), the IDF's new challenges include "an increase in the threat of fire on the home front (characterized by: capacity, accuracy, warhead size, survivability), and an attempt to pose a strategic threat to national vulnerable sites and the national economy."[1] In the framework of the discussions between the security authorities and civilian agencies, a special effort has been made in recent years to define the reference scenario[2] for the home front, in order to create a common language that can characterize the security threats as a basis for appropriate civilian preparedness. This important and innovative measure culminated in the formulation of the reference scenario by the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA), which was presented to the Ministerial Committee on National Security Affairs on June 15, 2016.[3] Following approval, adapted versions of the reference scenario were distributed to the government ministries, local authorities, and other civilian agencies for the purpose of calibrating the actions aimed at promoting readiness for a security emergency.

The reference scenario deals with a long list of threats to the home front. Prominent among these is the scenario presenting the defense establishment's revised perception of "the assault." This is portrayed as a robust attack by a large scale barrage of high trajectory explosives against

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selected targets in Israel, designed to cause unprecedented disruption to the civilian home front and the economy as a whole. It appears that the prevailing assessment in the security establishment is that Hezbollah and possibly also Hamas will strive to concentrate their efforts so as to transform the assault and its impact from that of "harassment," as was the case in previous conflicts, to "severe disruption" to the home front in Israel.

This article will discuss the "assault" scenario,[4] analyze its significance for the home front, assess the existing inadequacies in Israel's preparedness to stand up to this revised scenario, and present recommendations for system-wide action.

The "Assault" Scenario

The composite scenario includes diverse security components – some of them not different from previous conflicts characterized by the launching of high trajectory weapons. The main innovation concerns new features of what is termed an "assault" that might take place simultaneously on the northern and southern fronts.

The "assault" scenario suggests, presumably on the basis of evidence concerning the enemy's improved military capabilities, that Hezbollah might adopt a revised offensive strategy in the next conflict. As Hezbollah has significantly enhanced its rocket and missile buildup, which is believed to have increased tenfold over the past decade, it is presently assumed that the organization can be more aggressive in a future war, based also on its combat experience in the Syrian civil war and on its own lessons from the Israeli military buildup and experience in the recent rounds of conflict.

The main components of the scenario can be summed up as follows:

First, the next conflict on the home front could emerge from one theater, in either the south or north, or from both theaters simultaneously. It might break out unexpectedly, without warning or orderly preparations, and possibly continue for up to several weeks.

Second, the more severe attack will come from Hezbollah, which is expected to focus on the Israeli home front, perceived as the weakest and most sensitive link in the Israeli systemic chain. Hezbollah's high trajectory enhanced capabilities enable it to widen the scope of targets from Israeli civilian population centers to essential targets, such as civilian installations (seaports and airports), critical infrastructure (such as power production facilities), and military assets, especially air force bases and concentrations of ground forces.

Third, Hezbollah's main offensive force will continue to consist of high trajectory weapons, which now number up to approximately 130,000 rockets and missiles – including several thousands of medium range and several hundred long range weapons.[5] Also included are an unknown number of short range rockets with exceedingly heavy warheads, capable of causing severe damage.[6] In addition, according to the testimony of the former Home Front commander, Major General Yoel Strick, Hezbollah has guided missiles with significant precision capability, enabling it to strike individual targets, amounting to 0.9 percent of the total number of explosives expected to hit Israel (in other words, many hundreds, and possibly thousands of precise missiles).[7] To this impressive order of battle one should also add unmanned aerial attack vehicles (UAVs) with explosive payloads, shore-to-sea missiles, and offensive cyber warfare capabilities.

Fourth, this arsenal enables Hezbollah to attack Israeli targets simultaneously by two complementary modes. The first is the bombardment with short and medium range rockets with low statistical accuracy (these make up to 95 percent of Hezbollah's arsenal), mainly for harassment purposes. Hundreds of these missiles are likely to be launched continuously on each day of fighting. The second mode might take the shape of an "assault" – the focused launching of dense barrages aimed at a limited number of Israel urban population centers and civilian critical assets. This mode of attack is expected to consist of hundreds of rockets, launched in barrages, probably toward two or three urban areas, particularly in the north, with a possible preference for the densely populated Haifa Bay area, where critical infrastructure facilities are located. The "assault" is expected to take place early in the conflict, possibly as a surprise attack, designed to paralyze the targeted urban area, challenge the IDF's active defense systems, and cause numerous fatalities and wide property damage, so as to affect the public routine and morale. Heavy damage to critical infrastructure might seriously disrupt the emergency routine and the economy's ability to recover fast. Another round of "assault" may possibly occur in later stages of the conflict.

> The prevailing assessment in the security establishment is that Hezbollah and possibly also Hamas will strive to concentrate efforts so as to transform the impact of the assault from "harassment," as was the case in previous conflicts, to "severe disruption" to the home front in Israel.

Fifth, the expected "assault" is designed not only to cause serious demoralization and chaos in Israel and furnish "victory pictures," but

also to undermine the Israeli public capacity and willingness to stand up to the challenge. This in turn might impact negatively on the resolve of the decision makers concerning the political outcome of the conflict.

Sixth, at the same time, pinpointed short range ground attacks are considered possible against Jewish communities close to the Lebanese border, in order to expand the scope of the threat quantitatively and qualitatively, and enhance the expected "victory pictures."

By and large, the new "assault" scenario adds likelihood and gravity to the expected military threat, based on Hezbollah's existing and emerging capabilities on the one hand, and the apparent weaknesses of the home front in Israel on the other hand. The IDF has vastly improved its intelligence, offensive, and defensive capabilities to thwart the threat. Yet since the level of civilian readiness has lagged behind, future processes to further enhance preparedness are necessary to lessen the damages and their social and political consequences

The Significance of the "Assault" Scenario

The best way to analyze the revised scenario is in the context of Israel's experience in four previous conflicts with Hezbollah and Hamas, all of which were based on the challenge of various types of high trajectory weapons. In principle, the new version of the scenario constitutes a significant addition to the kinetic threat the Israeli home front has experienced in the past, which can be summed up as follows:

a. Despite its distinct military advantage, the IDF did not succeed in defeating its enemies and halting the threat of the high trajectory weapons to the home front.
b. The IDF's ground offensive maneuvers were limited in scope, and led to no substantial military achievements. Most Israeli military offensive activities were based on massive firepower, carried out principally by the air force.
c. Both Hezbollah and Hamas succeeded in maintaining a rather stable level of high trajectory weapon launchings during the entire campaign, at an average rate of 120 statistical launchings per day. Less than one quarter of these was effective to any degree.
d. When Israel's active defense became operational, it proved to be a significant factor in limiting the threat and consequently the damage, hence reducing the sense of anxiety among Israelis and expanding the leadership's capacity for political maneuvering.

e. As the overall impact on the home front in terms of casualties and property damage has been quite low, the level of preparedness of the civilian response systems have been proven to be sufficient. At the same time, the level of anxiety and confusion among the Israeli public, as reflected mostly in the media, was greater than the actual damage. Still, large numbers of people abandoned their homes in the areas that came under heavy attack.
f. The level of social resilience among the Israeli public, as reflected in bouncing back and recovery after the military campaigns, was high.[8]
g. In general, the Second Lebanon War and Operation Protective Edge, despite the questions relating to their conduct, have contributed thus far to Israeli deterrence.

The general picture regarding these military rounds is mixed and not particularly encouraging, considering the balance of power between the IDF and its non-state enemies. Added to this picture is the double layer of the revised scenario: the major expansion in the quantitative, but also qualitative kinetic capability of Israel's enemies, and the "assault" scenario based on these extended capabilities. Against these significant developments stand the improvements in Israel's military capabilities, primarily those of the order of battle (limited in comparison with the needs) of the active defense system Iron Dome.

The IDF formalized and published its military response doctrine to the non-state threat in the form of *The IDF Strategy*, which focuses on the use of offensive massive ground forces and airborne extensive firepower,[9] designed to achieve clear military successes in the shortest time possible. It is not known how the adversaries will interpret this publically attested offensive doctrine, or the repeated statements made by the military and the political leadership concerning Israel's determination to use its military power to achieve a clear victory in the next conflict.[10] It is also not clear whether these declarations will indeed be fully carried out, which will naturally depend on the unknown circumstances of the next conflict. On the defensive side, the IDF holds that most of its assets will be harnessed first for necessary military operational continuity, then at the defense of the national critical infrastructure, and only in third place stands the mission of securing the population centers.[11] At any rate, the expected "assault" scenario could well represent a major challenge for the home front in the next conflict, as stated by senior functionaries who are responsible for constructing responses to these issues.[12]

Under these circumstances, how will the home front operate in the next conflict, according to the revised scenario? The general picture can be assessed through several prisms. First, most of the threats depicted in the new scenario have already materialized in the previous conflicts with Hezbollah (2006) and Hamas (2008-2014), but these are expected to widen significantly in the next round, possibly by up to tenfold. In other words, there will probably be many hundreds, up to about 1,000 launchings each day of fighting. Even if these attacks involve mostly statistical armaments, posing mainly "harassment," they are liable to become a major "disruption."

Second, the extent of the expected damage in targeted towns, in the framework of the "assault," will be much graver than Israeli localities have experienced in the past. The number of civilian fatalities will be much higher (estimated at several hundred during the next war).[13] The scope of evacuees is expected to be very high, even in comparison with the Second Lebanon War.[14] Severe damage is liable to be caused to critical infrastructure, with significant grave ramifications for the civilian and possible military routine. Major disruptions in electrical supply, domestic and international transportation, communications, and health, welfare, and education services are expected, accompanied by substantial disturbances in the labor market.

Third, the ability to withstand the expected burden on the first response agencies – the Home Front Command, Israel Police, Magen David Adom, the fire fighters, hospitals, local authorities, and other parties, including non-governmental organizations – will likely be more limited. Previously, these agencies were called upon to respond to the damage mostly in a sequential format, hence the rescue, evacuation, and aid operators were able to move from one event and theater to another in time. In a future scenario of multiple simultaneous attacks, the challenge will be much graver. The forces will be insufficient to provide reliable services, and the IDF will have to allocate reserve forces, with inferior professional training.

Fourth, the public's level of anxiety will probably be higher than in the past, which could adversely affect its behavior. The media, especially the digital social media, will contribute its less than supportive share, which will not help calm the public, which will need reliable information and guiding instructions. This is expected to become a major challenge in the effort to establish an "emergency routine" during disruptive circumstances.

The Level of Preparedness for the New Challenges

The new scenario establishes a very high threshold for the security threats to the home front. The fact that staff work has progressed and the new scenario has been formulated, presented to the cabinet, confirmed, and subsequently distributed among the official agencies in the government and in the local authorities has generated movement in the right direction. Priorities have been dictated for the allocation of means to the local authorities whose risk threshold is now classified as higher. On the less positive side, the heads of the local authorities who in the past did not pay serious attention to emergency preparation are not expected to alter their indifference and invest more in the needed preparedness. By and large, it appears that the new reference scenario has so far not led to a substantive change in home front readiness, which the head of NEMA recently characterized as "medium plus," and as one that requires additional investments in various fields.[15] As in the past, each government ministry involved in the matter is responding at its own pace and in accordance with its own concept of the importance of systematic investment in emergencies, in comparison with other urgent needs. The familiar pattern in Israeli bureaucracy persists, which tends not to allow for systemic and structured planning, while the political leadership is not giving emergency preparedness the necessary priority. Moreover, it was decided to disseminate the reference scenario – and particularly the section dealing with the "assault" – only to the governmental echelon and that of the mayors, but not to the public at large, in order to avoid panic while highlighting the enemy's threats. Some of the mayors did distribute parts of the information to residents, but only on a selected basis, not sufficient for the purpose of raising public awareness. The information did reach the media, but the little that was communicated publicly did not make any substantial or lasting impact. The public remained indifferent, and therefore has not been active in preparing itself for the consequences. As a result, there has not been any real advance in readiness on the personal or family level. Memory of the previous conflicts faded, and along with it, some of the knowledge accumulated about what should be done in an emergency.

> While the threat is not existential, another round of conflict, especially if it is prolonged, entails heavy casualties and extensive property damage, and has a serious negative impact on public morale, will constitute a severe strategic blow to Israel.

A prominent example highlighting the limited preparation on the home front for the "assault" scenario is the subject of mass evacuation of civilians from communities under rocket attack. As in the past, civilians can be expected to leave their homes on their own initiative and on a large scale during a conflict, and certainly in the areas attacked in the "assault." The numbers will probably be much higher than those of the Second Lebanon War, estimated to be close to one third of the population in the north.

The lessons of Operation Protective Edge in the summer of 2014 have reshaped the thinking within the establishment on the crucial issue of mass evacuation during a protracted attack against civilian communities, and generated a change in the IDF approach. While in the past the prevailing trend was to oppose mass evacuation, or at least to not encourage or approve and budget it, senior voices in the IDF have recently legitimized[16] evacuation of civilians from the area of conflict in communities close to the border. Accordingly, the defense establishment has agreed to prepare for such an eventuality. New plans have been devised to facilitate the evacuation of civilians from 93 small communities, and evacuation sites around Israel have been selected and prepared.[17] Additional evacuation plans are in various stages of completion.[18] The common denominator of these plans is threefold: first, they deal with a relatively small number of evacuees, and only in the border areas; second, implementation of the existing plans is contingent upon a political decision, which in the past was not taken, probably for reasons of traditional ethos and possibly budget constraints; third, there are no plans for mass evacuation of civilians from large urban centers at a distance from the border, which are liable to suffer serious damage in accordance with the new scenario of the "assault." Mass evacuation without pre-established organization during a security emergency will pose a major challenge and will harm the public morale, especially in a protracted conflict. This will have negative consequences for social cohesion and resilience, and therefore on the public view of the conflict, the government, and the role of the IDF.

The establishment's limited attention to the question of mass evacuation in the next conflict reflects the prevailing government approach to the entire spectrum of emergency management of the home front. In other words, the professional echelon is taking important steps to provide an adequate response to diverse issues, but the general status of preparedness remains insufficient and does not correspond to the official forecasts of the threat. This gap between the predictions and the response requires

systemic treatment at all levels, including the public at large. Much work remains to be done.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Formulation of the reference scenario for the home front and its approval by the Israeli cabinet is an important step in the promotion of Israel's readiness for an emergency. This is also a significant achievement for the National Emergency Management Authority. At the same time, it appears that the positive progress has exposed the widening gap between the growing threat to the home front and the response it requires.

To what degree the reference scenario will actually materialize in the next conflict cannot be known in advance, while the IDF offensive and defensive action will likely have a direct impact on the dimensions of the threat. Nevertheless, the "assault" scenario clearly highlights what is expected for the home front in the next conflict with Hezbollah and/or Hamas, reflecting the possibility of a major increase in the level of the threat. Against this increase, there is no sufficient progress in the level of the Israeli civil response. While the threat is not existential, another round of conflict, especially if it is prolonged for several weeks, entails heavy casualties and extensive property damage, and has a serious negative impact on public morale and does not end with a clear achievement for Israel, will constitute a severe strategic blow to Israel.

The IDF is apparently laboring to promote its military capacities to achieve victory in the next conflict. The civilian sector must likewise make the needed progress in its capacities to deal with the threat to the home front. This is a more difficult task, due to the great complexity of the civilian challenges. Failure in the test of the revised scenario, particularly in standing up to the risks of the "assault," will have a negative impact on the outcome of the next conflict, as well as on the level of the IDF military achievements.

An urgent national effort is now required in order to adapt the civilian response to the challenges posed by new scenario. Parallel action is necessary in a number of fields:

a. It is necessary to formulate a general and agreed security doctrine for the home front in Israel as a basis for legislation and other measures that will define the goals, tasks, and responsibility for managing preparation and conduct before and during the future conflict.
b. Binding regulation is needed to enforce the authority of the National Emergency Management Authority over the various government

ministries in all matters pertaining to preparations for an emergency, manmade or natural.

c. Systemic national long term support and assistance must be rendered to the local authorities that are incapable of taking care of their needs in matters pertaining to preparations for and management of an emergency.
d. Ongoing information dissemination to the public concerning the challenges involved in the revised scenario for an emergency should be guaranteed. This is necessary for enhancing the level of preparedness on the personal and family level and in order to make individuals responsible for the security and safety of their homes and families.
e. A national long term plan for home front preparedness must be drafted, and include targets, timetables, benchmarks, and budget allocations, while a system of regulation, enforcement and supervision of the emergency response agencies must be devised.
f. There is no alternative to the prime minister and the Ministerial Committee for National Security Affairs as the principle governors for managing national manmade and natural disasters. Past experience has proven that such active leadership results in clear progress and actual achievements.

These requirements are essential but difficult to achieve. Unless they are carried out, the gap between the growing threats and the response to them cannot be narrowed. The risk of an outbreak of another conflict between Israel and Hezbollah and Hamas is eminent. The damage it might inflict on the home front is expected and known. Relying exclusively on the IDF's offensive and defensive capacities will not ensure the required level of security of the home front. Systemic and continuous preparation of the different facets of the home front can significantly reduce the extent of the damage – in casualties, infrastructure, and communities – and help Israel overcome its enemies in the next round of fighting. In order to succeed, the general public and the relevant institutions on the civilian front must be equal partners to the IDF on the military front. The government must assume tight and active overall responsibility for the two overlapping fronts.

Notes

1 *IDF Strategy*, August 2015, Chapter 2, Section 4B, p. 11. See English translation at https://www.idfblog.com/2015/11/23/idf-strategy/.

2 "Reference scenario" is a term used by the IDF to define a possible scenario for which a response is to be devised in advance. The "reference scenario"

should be regarded as a decision based on a reasonable assessment defining the level of the threats and attacks for which the enterprise and emergency teams will prepare in order to provide a response, not a precise prediction of what will occur.

3 Israeli Cabinet Resolution B/120: "The composite reference threat and the composite reference scenario for the home front shall constitute the basis for preparing a work plan by the government ministries that will be drawn up in accordance with the instruction of the National Emergency Management Authority in the Ministry of Defense, and with its aid."

4 In its raw form, the scenario is a classified document. The content of this article is based exclusively on published media sources and the authors' understanding with respect to what is known.

5 The organization has 130,000 rockets of various types: Grad missiles with a range of up to 40 kilometers, Fajr missiles with a range of up to 75 kilometers, Iranian-manufactured Zelzal missiles with a range of up to 200 kilometers, Fateh and M-110 missiles with a range of 250 kilometers, and Syrian Scud missiles that cover a range of 700 kilometers. For particulars on the matter, see "The Red Line: The Weapons the IDF Cannot Accept in Lebanon," *Mako*, May 7, 2015, http://www.mako.co.il/pzm-magazine/Article-1e5eefb304f2d41006.htm.

6 These are relatively short range Burkan rockets with especially heavy warheads weighing 200 and 500 kilograms. See the discussion in *Rotter.net*, http://rotter.net/forum/scoops1/89047.shtml.

7 Interview with outgoing Home Front Commander Major General Yoel Strick in Yoav Limor, "The Next War Will be Different," *Israel Hayom*, February 9, 2017, http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_article.php?id=40419.

8 For example, see Meir Elran, Zipi Israeli, Carmit Padan, and Alex Altshuler, "Social Resilience in the Jewish Communities around the Gaza Strip Envelope during and after Operation Protective Edge," *Military and Strategic Affairs* 7, no. 2 (2015): 5-31, http://www.inss.org.il/publication/social-resilience-in-the-jewish-communities-around-the-gaza-strip-envelope-during-and-after-operation-protective-edge/.

9 *IDF Strategy*, chapter 3, nos. 16-17.

10 For example, Defense Minister Liberman: "What should be clear to everyone is that as far as we are concerned, the infrastructure of the Lebanese army and Lebanon and the infrastructure of Hezbollah are the same thing." See "Liberman Changes Approach – and Names New Objectives for the Next War in Lebanon," *Walla*, March 13, 2017, http://news.walla.co.il/item/3047744, and Liberman at the 10th INSS Conference, January 2017: "The next war in Gaza will continue until victory."

11 *IDF Strategy*, chapter 3, no. 20.

12 Interview with Strick, in Limor, "The Next War Will be Different."

13 The number of fatalities is liable to reach 350-500. See Lilach Shoval, "The IDF Presents: This is What the Next War Will Look Like," *Israel Hayom*, September 15, 2016, http://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/413323.

14 The Home Front Command is preparing for approximately 750,000 evacuees, ibid.

15 Amir Buhbut, "Information from Sensors and Satellites: The IDF Revolution in Warning Civilians in Wartine," *Walla*, June 5, 2016, http://news.walla.co.il/item/2967388.

16 For example, former Southern Command commander Major General Sami Turgeman said, "I personally think that evacuating the population is a victory for Hamas, and we were therefore in no rush to use this tool. This proved to be a preconception. A distinction should be made between a regular emergency and an emergency... in the next campaign, evacuation will be necessary and unavoidable, and together with the Ministry of Defense, we are devising an organized plan for evacuation in cooperation with the local authorities and communities, because a poor evacuation can cause more damage than benefit," in Naama Engel Mishali, "GOC Southern Command: Hamas is not Sbang and Over," *NRG*, May 11, 2015, http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/694/222.html.

17 This plan, called "A Safe Distance," encompasses 16 local authorities with 64 communities in the north and 29 communities in the south, not including Kiryat Shmona and Sderot. According to the plan, it is believed that it will be necessary to evacuate and absorb 70 percent of this population, amounting to 54,000 people. The addition of Sderot and Kiryat Shmona adds approximately 38,000 more people. See Michael Rotenberg, "Safe Distance," *Davar Rishon*, July 13, 2016, http://www.davar1.co.il/24220/.

18 On the "Motel and Guest House" plan, see draft document at http://www.health.gov.il/Subjects/emergency/preparation/DocLib/nehalim/3_1.pdf, and Tomer Simon, "My House is (no Longer) My Fort – On Evacuating the Population in Israel in Emergencies," January 1, 2017, http://ready.org.il/2017/01/population-evacuation-in-emergencies-in-israel/ for particulars.

The Hamas Document of Principles: Can a Leopard Change Its Spots?

Gilead Sher, Liran Ofek, and Ofir Winter

Concurrent with changes in the Hamas leadership – Yahya Sinwar replaced Ismail Haniyeh in the Gaza Strip and Haniyeh himself replaced Khaled Mashal at the head of the Hamas Political Bureau – reports in the Arab media began to appear in early March 2017 about the upcoming dramatic publication of a document that would constitute a revision of the Hamas Covenant. Exactly one month later, the Lebanese website al-Mayadeen (associated with Hezbollah) published a complete, albeit unofficial, version of the new document. On May 1, 2017, with much fanfare, outgoing Hamas Political Bureau chief Khaled Mashal announced the "Document of General Principles and Policies" at a press conference in Qatar.

The debate sparked by the document has focused on Hamas's willingness to recognize a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders and the disavowal of its connection with the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Commentators wondered whether the content of the document indicates a material change in the organization's views, or whether it is merely a softening of the language and a cosmetic revision of existing ideology for political needs in the Palestinian theater, foreign relations with the Arab world, especially Egypt, and the quest for international legitimacy.

This article addresses these questions, while analyzing the political and historical background of the document's publication, the differences between it and the original Hamas Covenant, and its reception in the Palestinian Authority and Egypt. What emerges is that the Document of General Principles was designed to improve the organization's standing without it having to disavow its principles, and was therefore received in

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both Ramallah and Cairo with suspicion and skepticism. Similarly, the document reflects no real change toward Israel: Hamas is indeed willing to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders as a temporary stage in the struggle to free Palestine "from the river to the sea," but it refuses to recognize Israel, relinquish the resistance weapon, and become a full partner in a permanent settlement based on the principle of two states.

Historical Background

The Hamas victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006 accorded the organization a new status, and raised the question of compatibility between the ideological vision presented in its Covenant and the concrete political reality that emerged over the years. Hamas has transformed from a political and military resistance group constituting an opposition faction to the PA, which carries the banner of violent resistance to Israel, to a ruling political party. The international community, however, continued to regard it as a terrorist organization, and the Middle East Quartet posed three conditions for Hamas's becoming part of the legitimate political game: recognition of Israel, a halt in terrorism, and acceptance of previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.[1]

While the Quartet conditions prompted initial reflections in Hamas regarding the compatibility of the Covenant with the new circumstances in the organization, the conditions were rejected outright. Hamza Ismail Abu Shanab, a son of one of the Hamas founders and former leaders in the Gaza Strip, made it clear in February 2006 that the organization would not retreat from its principles, including non-recognition of Israel and adherence to the armed struggle. In an article on the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades website he explained, "Hamas is showing openness towards the world, but will not bargain over basic principles." The "dream of the Quartet," as he put it, i.e., recognition of Israel by Hamas, would not be realized, and Hamas would continue to regard Israel as "an enemy to be eliminated."[2] Shanab and others explained this obstinacy as the organization's commitment to realize the wishes of the Palestinian people, which had democratically chosen the "path of resistance," and its loyalty to its ideological goals. For this reason, "The victory in the elections in itself does not constitute a goal; it is one of the means of freeing the land and achieving justice."[3]

The adherence to the principles of the Covenant remained intact, even when the organization took over the Gaza Strip in June 2007 and became

the sole responsible ruling group there. The revolutionary euphoria that brought the organization to power, however, has faded over the past decade. The security closure imposed by Israel and Egypt, the political isolation in the regional and international theaters, the geopolitical upheavals in the Arab world, the prolonged internal Palestinian rift, the suspension of democratic mechanisms, and especially the cost in human life and damage to property of three military conflicts with Israel have generated growing distress, frustration, and despair in the Gaza Strip and detracted from the organization's popularity. The fall of the Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt in July 2013 and the damage caused by Operation Protective Edge brought into question the congruence between Hamas's ideological vision and its ability to cope with the political, economic, and governmental challenges. Senior Hamas leaders realized that it was necessary to widen the space available for pragmatic maneuvering. According to statements by Khaled Mashal and Ahmad Yusuf, Hamas decided as early as 2013 to draw up a platform reflecting the ideological and structural developments that the organization had undergone since its inception, particularly in the past decade. Hamas thus began a thorough and precise discussion of the platform's particulars, which would be adapted to the actual policy pursued.[4]

The internal discussions held by Hamas about the revision of the Covenant dealt with finding a formula that would maximize the organization's political profit at a minimal symbolic cost. Senior Hamas leaders realized the need to adopt a new rhetoric that would make it easier to handle the range of challenges, without abandoning the organization's ideological doctrine or principles. During the discussions, some Hamas members called for non-substantive semantic revisions on issues such as the distinction between Hamas's attitude toward Jews and the conflict with the Israeli occupier, restraint regarding anti-Semitic statements, and a focus on unifying elements in Palestinian society, rather than divisive ones.[5] Others in Hamas, on the other hand, argued that any change that does not involve a breach of ideological principles will in any case not satisfy the West, and will be of no benefit to the organization. They warned that a change in the Covenant would lead to internal friction, be interpreted by its enemies as weakness, and invite further pressure from the international community and Israel.

> The new document's changes from the original Hamas Covenant were designed to increase the organization's room for maneuver, help it reach political agreements with Fatah, and improve its regional and international image.

The compromise proposal raised and eventually adopted was leaving the Covenant unchanged, while at the same time publishing a revised vision with a new name that could be amended periodically as needed.[6]

The Hamas Covenant and the Document of General Principles: A Comparison

The Document of General Principles therefore does not replace the Hamas Covenant, but contains four principal changes: (a) less use is made of Islamic religious concepts; (b) focus is on the Palestinian national element within the organization's identity; (c) a distinction is made between the hostile attitude toward Israel and the Zionist enterprise and tolerance for Jews as a religious community; (d) willingness is expressed to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, although without recognition of Israel, foregoing of the liberation of all of Mandatory Palestine, or concession of the right of return.

These changes were designed to increase the organization's room for maneuver, help it reach political agreements with Fatah, and improve its regional and international image. From Hamas's perspective, they help portray Hamas as a legitimate national liberation organization that differs from Salafı jihadi terrorist movements that rely solely on a violent religious revolutionary vision.

The rhetorical changes giving priority to a Palestinian national orientation over an Islamic orientation are clear in many clauses of the Document of General Principles. The very first article defines Hamas as "a Palestinian Islamic national liberation and resistance movement. Its goal is to liberate Palestine." While Islam determines Hamas's "principles, objectives and means," the wording chosen reflects a retreat from article 2 of the Hamas Covenant, which defines the organization as a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Palestine.[7]

The reduced use of religious discourse is also reflected in Hamas's attitude toward Palestine and the means to liberate it. In article 2, the Document of General Principles defines Palestine as "an integral territorial unit" extending "from the River Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean in the west," similar to the definition in the secular Palestinian National Charter of the PLO (article 2).[8] This article refrains from describing the Palestinian territory as (holy) Islamic *waqf* land for all Muslims (as stated in article 11 of the Hamas Covenant). It rather chooses to focus on the

unique "expulsion and banishment of the Palestinian people from their land," which constitutes a key element in the Palestinian national identity.[9]

"Resisting the occupation with all means...at the heart of these lies armed resistance, which is regarded as the strategic choice"; this is defined in the document (article 25) as "a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws." The following article emphasizes Hamas's refusal to restrict the resistance weapon, while at the same time emphasizing the flexible management of its use during periods of escalation and lull, without detracting from the "principle of resistance."[10] In contrast to what appears in the Covenant (in articles 12 and 15, for example),[11] "resistance" is not described as a personal religious duty applying to every Muslim; the commandment of jihad is mentioned only once (in article 23, compared with seven times in the Covenant), and the emphasis is more on conducting the struggle than on winning it. The demand for protection of the resistance weapon apparently reflects an effort to achieve internal Palestinian, and possibly also Arab and international, recognition of Hamas as a legitimate armed resistance force that can continue operating as a sovereign military force in the framework of the PA (similar to the Hezbollah model in Lebanon).

The Document of General Principles defines the Palestinian people as "one people" (article 6), the Palestinians as "Arabs who lived in Palestine until 1947, irrespective of whether they were expelled from it, or stayed in it" (article 4), and Palestinian identity as "authentic and timeless; it is passed from generation to generation" (article 5). The focus on the Palestinian people is related to an attempt to design a national rhetoric that appeals to a broad common denominator. The document recognizes the PLO as the national framework of the Palestinian people in the Palestinian areas and outside it, in prominent contrast to the 1988 Covenant, which criticizes the PLO's secular character and insists on separation from it as long as it does not mend its ways (article 27). According to the Document of General Principles, the PLO is the umbrella organization of the Palestinian leadership, and "should therefore be preserved, developed and rebuilt on democratic foundations so as to secure the participation of all the constituents and forces of the Palestinian people" (article 29).[12] By

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recognizing the PLO, Hamas is expressing its wish to participate in the Palestinian decision making process.[13]

The document does not include any concession on the liberation of all of Mandatory Palestine, let along recognition of Israel. In contrast to the Covenant, however, it reflects willingness to accept the "the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital along the lines of the 4th of June 1967" as "a formula of national consensus" (article 20). There is in fact little new in Hamas's support for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank first, as an intermediate stage on the way to achievement of the strategic goal – the liberation of all of Palestine. Over the years, beginning in the late 1980s, the movement's leaders, including Ahmad Yassin, Mousa Abu Marzook, and Khaled Mashal, raised similar ideas for a long term ceasefire (*hudna*) in exchange for a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders.[14] Putting this idea into the document was designed as a compromise formula with Fatah, reflecting a willingness to accept a Palestinian state with temporary limited borders in order to set the stage for Palestinian unity.[15]

Another conspicuous change in the document aimed at the international community is the abandonment of the anti-Semitic rhetoric that permeates the Covenant, such as a description of the struggle in Palestine as a "struggle against the Jews," the use of analogies between Zionism and Nazism, and the mention of myths about the Jews controlling the world and plotting along the lines of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (in the introduction and in articles 20, 31, and 32). The document makes it clear that the "conflict is with the Zionist project, not with the Jews because of their religion" (article 16), and that anti-Semitism is a local phenomenon connected with the history of Europe (article 17).

This semantic refinement, however, does not blur the legal, moral, and historical negation of the very existence of Israel. The Zionist enterprise is described as a "racist, aggressive, colonial and expansionist project based on seizing the properties of others; it is hostile to the Palestinian people and to their aspiration for freedom, liberation, return and self-determination" (article 14). The Zionist enterprise is also described as a threat and danger to the security and interests of the Arab and Islamic nation (article 15). The international decisions, starting with the Balfour Declaration, and including the British Mandate and the UN Partition

It is doubtful whether popular Palestinian opinion regards the document as a prelude to change.

resolution, are rejected as fundamentally null and void (article 18). The Oslo Accords, the security cooperation with Israel, and the diplomatic process in general are all portrayed as a device for violating Palestinian rights, and as a means of eliminating the Palestinian problem – and therefore as unacceptable (articles 21 and 21).

These positions contradict the official positions of the PLO,[16] and in proclaiming them, Hamas is denying the very idea of international recognition as a basis for the legitimacy of the establishment of Israel. This is a negation in principle of the attitude of the PLO and PA toward negotiations for establishing a state in the 1967 borders in the framework of a peace settlement with Israel. Furthermore, even without recognition of Israel, Hamas's consent to the establishment of a state in these borders is contingent on three conditions that make it totally impractical: the return of the refugees to their homes, insistence on the liberation of all of Mandatory Palestine from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, and adherence to armed resistance as a strategic choice.

Ambivalent Responses in the PA and Egypt

The Hamas Document of General Principles was directed first and foremost at the PA and Egypt. Hamas regards the mending of its relations with these two entities as essential for attaining internal and regional legitimacy, and for escaping the isolation and strategic plight it has suffered since the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt in July 2013. The initial responses of these two players show an ambivalent attitude.

Ostensibly, the document was received positively by the Palestinian leadership. Fatah Central Committee member Jibril Rajoub found a positive change in it, since Hamas hereby recognized the aspiration to establish a Palestinian state in the June 1967 borders, and accepted the need for a national partnership under the PLO. In his remarks, Rajoub also mentioned the differences of opinion between the two sides, but noted that Hamas represented part of the Palestinian people, and said that a political solution should be reached with the organization on the basis of the document.[17] Fatah spokesperson Usama al-Qawasma and PLO executive member Ahmad Majdalani also welcomed the Hamas approach that is closer to the position of PLO, Fatah, and other Palestinian parties, but added that some of the articles in the document are vague and argumentative.[18]

And indeed, the Palestinian Authority is still very suspicious about Hamas's intentions, and demonstrates a tough, even hostile, stance toward

it. On the eve of the document's publication, Abbas decided to freeze salary payments to officeholders in the Gaza Strip, and demanded that Hamas surrender control of the Gaza Strip to the PA. Abbas made it clear that if Hamas did not comply with the demands, he was likely to carry out one or more of the following decisions: casting Hamas as an insurgent or terrorist organization; freezing the transfer of funds to the Gaza Strip, including those allocated for health, electricity, water, and social services; freezing all of Hamas's money on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip; and demanding that banks and economic institutions halt all activity in the Gaza Strip. Initial steps in this direction indicate that the Palestinian leadership is determined to weaken Hamas.[19] Continuation of the pressure by the PA is expected to present Hamas with two problematic alternatives: accepting the Palestinian leadership's conditions as they are, while demonstrating weakness in the Palestinian theater and beyond it, or refusing the conditions and embarking on a head-to-head struggle against the PA – or another round of violence against Israel.[20] In any case, as of now, the Document of General Principles has not succeeded in preventing a widening of the internal Palestinian rift and the growing separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

It is also doubtful whether popular Palestinian opinion regards the document as a prelude to change. Public opinion surveys conducted over the past two years have shown that most of the Palestinian public does not believe in the ability or desire of the two sides to achieve national unity.[21]

Another target of the document, and perhaps even the main one, is Egypt. The tension between Gaza and Cairo since the Muslim Brotherhood was driven out of power in the summer of 2013 exacted a heavy price from Hamas, and deepened its political and physical isolation. The el-Sisi regime regards Hamas as a security threat to the stability of Egypt in general and Sinai in particular, due to Hamas's ideological affinity with the Muslim Brotherhood and its operational links to Salafı jihadi groups in Sinai. The regime accused the organization of providing assistance for attacks against the Egyptian army, and of assassinating the Egyptian general prosecutor in July 2015. Against this background, Egypt escalated its struggle against the smuggling tunnels used by Hamas for economic and civilian purposes, and the movement of people and goods at the Rafah border crossing was restricted.

During the rapprochement talks held throughout 2016-2017, one of the conditions posed by Egypt for an improvement in its relations with Hamas was the organization's official severance from the Muslim Brotherhood

movement and a rapprochement with the pragmatic Sunni axis, at the expense of the Shiite axis led by Iran and the Islamist axis led by Qatar and Turkey. The Document of General Principles contains several articles aimed at Egypt, headed by the omission of the affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood appearing in article 2 of the Hamas Covenant (although without explicit severance from the parent movement). In this vein, article 37 of the Document of General Principles states that Hamas "opposes intervention in the internal affairs of any country. It also refuses to be drawn into disputes and conflicts that take place among different countries," a sign of the neutrality the organization has imposed on itself with respect to involvement in relations between the Egyptian regime and its foreign and domestic rivals. Article 13, which inter alia concerns the refusal to settle the refugees outside Palestine,[22] was interpreted in Cairo as a positive signal, given the growing anxiety in Egypt about being asked to allocate territory in Sinai for the Palestinian state.[23]

The Egyptian government has not responded officially to the Document of General Principles, but spokespersons and publicists associated with the regime have displayed three distinct stances toward it. The first is sympathetic and regards the document as proof of a decline in the status of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt. This attitude sees a pragmatic line whose potential should be tested. The second is skeptical and reserved, pointing out that the document is replete with double meanings. This attitude therefore expresses concern that its adoption by Hamas is tactical, opportunistic, and superficial, and is not a reliable, profound, and strategic change in policy and doctrine. The third attitude constitutes a compromise between the two previous attitudes, and calls for judging Hamas by its actions.

The sympathetic attitude holds that the document reflects a historic turning point in the Hamas positions, and prepares the ground for supporting a political settlement on the basis of the 1967 borders, renewed integration in the Palestinian political system, and agreement on relations with Egypt.[24] Official spokespersons stated that Hamas understood that its affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood damages its relations with Egypt and the Palestinian cause itself, and therefore decided to disavow it.[25]

Several publicists in establishment newspapers held that Cairo should respond to the outstretched hand from Hamas. As they see it, the document shows the organization's wish to be considered "part of the regional and international solution," thereby according Egypt an opportunity to regain its leading status, while doing its part in the efforts at achieving reconciliation

between Fatah and Hamas and in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.[26] There were also some who were quick to see the document as a historic admission by Hamas, and by Palestinians in general, that the realistic path of peace designed by Sadat – which until now was subverted, defamed, and censured – was justified.[27]

Other supportive references by official Egyptian sources of the Document of General Principles concerned internal political issues, headed by its negative consequences for the Muslim Brotherhood, the enemy of the regime. The Egyptian religious governmental institute of Dar al-Ifta described the omission of Hamas's affiliation with the parent movement as "a new loss on top of the Muslim Brotherhood's losses in recent years," requiring a reassessment of the latter's subversive policy toward Egypt.[28] Interestingly, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was also divided in its responses to the document between a conservative trend, which warned against the pragmatic slippery slope on which Hamas is liable to find itself,[29] and a reformist trend, which saw Hamas's ability to demonstrate ideological flexibility and adapt to the changing circumstances in a positive light.[30]

In contrast to these attitudes, a number of Egyptian MPs and columnists in the Egyptian establishment press doubted the reliability of the document and the shifts that it presents, holding that Hamas had adopted these changes only for opportunistic and tactical reasons.[31] In this context, it was argued that Hamas had failed to go the extra mile that would have made it possible to qualify it as a partner in the peace process, because it had implicitly adhered to the old formula of a long term *hudna*, while retaining the unrealistic idea of liberating Palestine from the sea to the river.[32] *Al-Ahram* Deputy Editor Muhammad Abu al-Fadl pointed out that the document was replete with internal contradictions, including recognition of the 1967 borders without recognition of Israel, interest in a political solution along with preservation of the resistance weapon, and silence on the affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood yet continued adherence to the ideological framework of the parent movement. According to al-Fadl, Hamas had tried to paper over internal contradictions in order to bridge internal differences and appease different target audiences, but it "would not be able to fool all of the people all of the time," and would sooner or later have to make historic decisions on the fateful issues on the agenda.[33]

A third Egyptian attitude, derived from the previous skeptical outlook, holds that the burden of proof is on Hamas, in view of the cloudy nature of the Document of General Principles. The various "tests" posed to Hamas in

the Egyptian establishment press included concrete measures on regional and bilateral issues, such as acceptance of the Arab Peace Initiative, recognition of a political settlement in the 1967 borders, respect for Egypt's role in the peace process, non-intervention in inter-Arab conflicts, an end to the internal division with Fatah and the formation of a Palestinian unity government, concession of its rule over the Gaza Strip as a separate political entity, submission of maps of the tunnels leading to Egypt on the Gaza Strip border and a commitment not to build new tunnels, and termination of support for and involvement in terrorism.[34] These Egyptian conditions are detailed, and some of them are even more stringent than the Quartet's conditions, which Hamas has consistently rejected since 2005.

Conclusion

The Hamas Document of General Principles presents a revised interpretation of the organization's policy, based on resolving the tension between its traditional approach, as reflected in the 1988 Hamas Covenant, and the array of practical challenges that Hamas has faced over the past decade. The document emphasizes the organization's national orientation at the expense of its Islamic orientation, focuses on unique Palestinian narratives, and emphasizes the national struggle against the "Zionist enterprise," instead of against Jews. It constitutes a tactical stage in the development of Hamas's official rhetoric, but is not enough in itself to signal a material change in the organization's strategy.

The document reflects Hamas's aspiration to be included as a legitimate actor in the Palestinian theater, and to pave the way for mending its relations with Egypt. It seems, however, that the leaders in Ramallah and Cairo are in no hurry to settle for the rhetorical flexibility offered in the document, and are demanding additional concessions from the organization, accompanied by concrete measures. Both Ramallah and Cairo are aware of Hamas's dire straits, and have clarified to Hamas the choice between political pragmatism and adherence to inflexible ideological principles. Until now, Hamas has insisted on holding both ends of the stick, and has refused to decide between the two difficult alternatives facing it: conceding the way of resistance in exchange for internal reconciliation, regional openness, and international legitimacy, or alternatively, loyalty to the traditional line at the expense of aggravating its isolation and the resulting internal and external crises.

As for Israel, the cosmetic changes that the new document reflects in comparison with the Covenant are not enough to challenge the concept that Hamas is an obstructive factor that has not abandoned incitement, violence, and terrorism, and for which the struggle to eliminate Israel constitutes an integral key element. From Israel's perspective, Hamas is the sovereign in the Gaza Strip for all intents and purposes, and is therefore, even if indirectly, an address. Israel should assess Hamas's policy in the practical sphere, and decide whether the pragmatic space in which the organization is ostensibly willing to move makes it a possible partner for political settlements, based on accepted international parameters. The criteria for the quality of the change in the organization's position were, and remain, acceptance of the Quartet's conditions, together with other conditions, led by investment of international funds in reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, instead of a military buildup; termination of weapons smuggling to the Gaza Strip; and demilitarization.

This should not prevent the Israeli government from continuing humanitarian measures toward the Gaza Strip, easing the movement of people and goods, and eventually, facilitating reconstruction, contingent on a long term security lull and a halt in the organization's military buildup. However, more extensive arrangements in the future will require from Hamas more than just a vague document susceptible to multiple interpretations.

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From Supervision to Development: A New Concept in Planning Arab Localities

Rassem Khamaisi

The Or Commission (2003), which examined the disturbances of October 2000, found that planning, construction, and land policy was one of the main factors in the housing and development shortage in the Arab localities that lay in the background of the events. More recently, the demolition of fifteen homes in Umm al-Hiran on November 29, 2016 and the demolition of eleven homes in Qalansawe on January 10, 2017 coincided with the promotion of Knesset legislation aimed at tightening the supervision over construction. This amendment, based on a report written by Deputy Attorney General Erez Kaminitz,[1] provided administrative tools for handling construction without a permit[2] for the purpose of creating a suitable deterrent mechanism to reduce the phenomenon: it was argued that there is an urgent need to confer authority for supervising and demolishing buildings without any requirement for a hearing in the judicial system. This amendment was of great concern in Arab public opinion, and was among the main topics on the Arab public agenda. It is perceived as part of several bills that the Knesset has already passed designed to harm the Arab population and restrict its civil sphere as individuals and as a collective. At the same time, the government voted to adopt the recommendations of the 120-Days Team[3] concerning the promotion of residential planning and provision of land for the Arab population. These recommendations were also included in Cabinet Resolution No. 922 in December 2015 on the five-year plan for development and regulation of public space in the Arab localities, including the promotion of planning and construction issues.[4] Yet despite this decision and the measures already taken to implement it, skepticism

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continues as to whether governments in Israel are indeed committed to redress grievances of the Arab population, eliminate discrimination, and promote development of the Arab localities.

One of the critical tests for the Arab sector of the state's seriousness in implementing the development plans for Arab localities involves a change in concept, practice, and implementation for planning and building in response to the Arab population's growing and changing needs. This must be a material change, as opposed to action merely to prevent the demolition of buildings and the regulation of building without a permit. This article shows that the existing planning concept and its implementation do not provide a solution for the necessary planning and building for the Arab localities, and result in the phenomenon of building without a permit, ongoing anxiety about demolitions, and continued lack of trust on the part of the Arab population toward the government's policy. This article proposes ideas for a change in approach, dialogue, and administrative implementation tools aimed at easing tensions in the planning and building sphere on the national (state and citizens) and inter-communal (Jewish and Arab localities) levels and within the Arab and mixed localities themselves. The essence of the proposed approach involves the transition from a concept of supervision to a concept of development, meaning that spatial outline and detailed planning should not be mainly a tool for supervision and control, but a development tool that contributes to the quality of life and provides an extensive supply of solutions for diverse populations. The article also refers to the strategic significance of the issue for Israeli society as a whole.

The Problems with the Existing Planning Concept

Spatial planning in Israel is challenged by policy developments shaped by the government's political orientation and by the socioeconomic changes in various localities in Israeli society.[5] As an element of public administration, spatial planning is reflected mainly in the distribution of spatial/land resources through the assignment or denial of planning rights.[6] Land resources are distributed by creating boundaries for development, while planning designs the space according to the goals of the public system.[7] The public system's priorities are reflected in government decisions, decisions by planning authorities, and the outline plan.[8] The outline plan, which determines land zoning, reflects the balance of power in society and the ethnic relations within it.[9]

Since the founding of the State of Israel, planning has aimed to disperse the Jewish population, establish new Jewish localities and villages in the Galilee and the Negev, and create state-supported development opportunities for the Jewish population and Jewish localities, including in areas with existing Arab localities. These Arab localities, however, received no attention in development policy; on the contrary:[10] they were perceived as hindering the development of Jewish localities in the outlying areas. This planning concept, driven primarily by territorial aims, was implemented through local outline plans designed to obstruct the expansion of Arab localities and their illegal construction. It intended to encourage further construction within the Blue Line established in the local outline plans, including for the purpose of urbanizing the Arab localities, adding to the area zoned for construction, and reducing the territorial contiguity between them.[11] Territorial contiguity was prevented by devising a jurisdictional measure that placed areas with Arab localities in the jurisdiction of Jewish regional councils. State-owned areas around the Arab localities were also included in the jurisdiction of Jewish local authorities. The jurisdictional boundaries map, which was drafted according to political and municipal considerations,[12] created an obstacle to outline planning for Arab localities.

As part of the restrictive planning concept, national and district outline plans were prepared[13] with rules that impeded, or at least did not grant, quality development opportunities to existing Arab localities. In other places, they ignored the existence of Arab buildings, and even Arab villages.[14] Some of this disregard was deliberate, with the aim of concentrating the Arab population, especially the Bedouin, in the Galilee and northern Negev. Some resulted from development that lacked coordination between planning and the existing situation. This lack of coordination was a major factor in what is referred to as "illegal construction;"[15] it consists mainly of incompatibility, or contradiction between planning that makes it impossible to obtain building permits and the needs of the population that continues to expand. This incompatibility still exists, especially in the northern Negev, as well as in some of the localities with plans, albeit approved, that do not take into account the existing situation and future needs, such as in the case of Qalansawe.

Lack of Local Planning Preparation

The centralized planning policy did not meet the needs of the Arab population, which after the establishment of the state was transformed from

a majority to a minority subject to majority rule – a rural population living mainly in outlying areas and small localities with a traditional patriarchal society relying on agriculture for a livelihood. The Arab population began to grow, multiplying from 160,000 in 1950 to 1.8 million in 2016. The built-up area thereby spread beyond the borders delineated by the planning institutions, and expansion occurred without development planning. The bulk of construction in the Arab localities took place on privately owned land, while migration to cities was limited. This gave rise to a growing demand for space for residential development, infrastructure, and public buildings, with a prominent trend toward urbanization in the Arab community. Since the planning did not match the needs or the nature of the localities' development, there were many disparities between the actual and the approved, which in most cases lagged behind development.

The local Arab authorities that began to develop were weak and lacked administrative and budget capabilities to manage planned development or develop suitable and alternative community planning to the establishment planning. At the same time, the planning institutions did not put planning and building in the hands of the local authorities. In most cases, planning was still conducted by local and district committees appointed by the government ministries, which constituted the arm for implementing government policy. Only four of 84 Arab local authorities function as local planning committees; all the rest are subject to district committees.

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The lack of authority and responsibility of Arab local authorities limited their involvement in community planning. It also exacerbated their protest against the planning institutions, particularly when the Arab local authorities elected to represent their residents lacked the power to influence the planning and approval processes. In addition, the prolonged planning period prevented the local authority from identifying with district planning, alienated the local authority from the process, and made the authority reluctant to implement it. Instead, the local authority took the residents' side against the planning establishment. This situation detracted from the legitimacy of spatial planning as a tool to ensure the quality of life and development of the public area. It created a climate of support for building without a permit.

The residents, especially private landowners, perceived planning as an establishment tool intended to restrict them; some perceived the planning, land regulations, and the issuing of building permits as a means of institutional control related to land expropriation. Needless to say, the issue of expropriation of land also had a negative impact on the preparation and approval of outline plans, and cultivated an anti-planning attitude among a considerable number of the Arab residents. Some of the landowners rejected the planning restrictions established in the outline plans, especially those with allocations for public needs, including road planning.[16] The distinction between institutional decisions to develop infrastructure for the needs of the Arab population and those having a negative impact on the community, which include planning restrictions, land expropriations for the construction of national infrastructure, and the establishment of Jewish localities, is therefore rather limited. These decisions sparked strong opposition among a majority of the Arab population. This oppositional discourse did not make enough of a distinction to facilitate a local planning concept that would constrain building without a permit. The anti-planning ethos was thereby strengthened, and in part had the effect of greatly restricting enforcement of building plans. This is not the place to debate the accuracy of this narrative, which imbued a sense of alienation among the Arab population, was reflected in the Arab community's behavior toward administrative decisions, was understood to be a transient situation, and was affected by the political climate. In any case, the situation was marked by a lack of initiatives for alternative planning and Arab participation in formulating suitable planning as an alternative to aggressive opposition and general rejection of institutional planning.

The Arab objection to outline planning was also accompanied by political views disputing the legitimacy of outline planning as an administrative tool for zoning. The contradiction between planning and implementation, combined with a lack of initiative and acute anxiety, translated into the exclusion of Arabs from planning at the national and district levels and minimal representation at the local levels. These phenomena led to the perception of planning as a restrictive tool and outline plans that do not adequately plan the community's space, therefore contributing to the growth of building without a permit. The result was planning from above designed to serve the institutional land policy and promote urbanization, while in effect reducing the area zoned for development. From below, a prevailing attitude in Arab society featured unawareness and unwillingness

to recognize the importance of planning as a tool for protecting its interests and facilitating conditions for a better quality of life and a proper public space. The interface between these two developments caught the mostly rural Arab population, which was undergoing a process of urbanization and had its own social and cultural regulations, in the midst of a socio-political rift, and turned the outline planning process into a formidable obstacle.

The conflicts and contradictions between policy planning from above and the grassroots needs of the population created faulty planning in the Arab community, and fostered the growth of building without a permit on a large scale. The result is estimated at some 10,000-50,000 buildings without permits,[17] followed by fines for unauthorized construction and building offenses and demolitions of residential buildings. The frequency of this occurrence among the Arab population has profound consequences for the sense of civil affiliation and the willingness to participate in the campaign for comprehensive equal citizenship that the state should be promoting. To be sure, building without a permit also exists in Jewish localities, but the establishment's attitude differs on the basis of national affiliation. Building without a permit among the Arabs is perceived by the governmental system as a national issue and a threat to the state's resources. Building without a permit among the Jewish population, on the other hand, is perceived as a civil offense that should be met with economic penalties.

Committees for Dealing with Construction

Awareness by the state's institutions of the fundamental problems in planning and building among the Arab population led to the establishment of many public committees designed to clarify the reasons, consequences, and ways of eliminating or reducing building without a permit. Building without a permit and the demolition of such buildings are not new, and first occurred in an Arab community as early as 1955. Many public commissions have been established since then.[18] A review of the work of these commissions indicates that the primary motive for their establishment was building without a permit, regarded as a strategic problem of law and order, and a desire to preserve territory seen as essential to the state, including national infrastructure, and prevent damage to national and local development processes resulting from depletion of the state's land resources. Almost all of the commissions recommended promotion of outline plans for the Arab localities as a key to solving the problem of building without a permit, and enhanced supervision and penalties. The prevailing assumption was that

stronger supervision, monetary and criminal sanctions, and demolition were factors deterring people from building without a permit.

Of the many commissions, the public commission known as the 120-Days Team stands out. The recommendations of this commission were based on inter-ministerial work in cooperation with some Arab professionals in economic development of the public sphere in an effort to narrow gaps and create different solutions for the diverse Arab population. This team was more aware than previous public commissions of the distinction between applying an overall planning and spatial policy and forming an appropriate response to a unique population in order to promote practical solutions for it. The 120-Days Team's recommendations, which were endorsed by the government and provided the basis for Cabinet Resolution No. 922 (2015), are still undergoing the test of implementation. On the other hand, the recommendations of the Kaminitz Commission, some of which were based on 120-Days recommendations, focused on the specific problem of supervision and demolitions and put it at the forefront, culminating in an amendment to the main Planning and Building Law from 1965.[19] This amendment returns to the idea of supervision and penalties as a leading tool in dealing with building without a permit. This concept apparently assumes that implementation of the reform in the Planning and Building Law requires decentralization of the planning system, including the delegation of authority and responsibility to the Arab local authorities as well, so that they will be involved in the planning of the community and in supervision of building.[20] The amendment to the law was thereby designed to help both the state and the local authorities supervise building, together with developing planning solutions – a goal that has yet to be realized.

The Development Concept and its Implementation

Since the early 21st century, changes have taken place in the approach, substance, and activity in planning construction in Israel. These changes are part of the reform in planning policy and national planning tools, including for the Arab localities.[21] Over the past decade, a change occurred in the promotion of local outline plans in the Arab localities, which began with a plan in the framework of a project for preparing an outline plan for 34 localities. At the same time, preparation of outline plans began in the framework of clusters of localities, and a process of preparing overall outline plans for some of the Arab localities. These plans reflect a change in the Planning Authority's concept for the Arab localities, quite a few of which

have also begun to realize the importance of planning in the development of their localities, finding solutions for the problem of building without a permit, and limiting the cases of home demolitions. This change generates an infrastructure for reform in planning the Arab community, including the areas that are being added for development, while at the same time re-planning the built-up area, including development of the public space. The background to the change consists mostly of the transition from a rural pattern to an urban one. There is also a new generation of the heads of local authorities, which seeks to provide its citizens with an advanced basket of services similar to that enjoyed by Jewish localities. At the same time, a middle class is arising in the Arab localities, and is contributing to better awareness and greater willingness to promote development plans among the Arab population.[22]

Despite these important changes, the local Arab leadership remains aware of the internal obstacles relating to private landowners and their willingness to make land allocations for public purposes. At the same time, there are also the obstacles of the district and national outline plans that preserve areas in opposition to the Arab localities' development needs. Another problem is the long time required for drawing up plans, while in the meantime a new situation is created that includes building without permits, which was not taken into account in the new plan.[23]

The local leadership must devise a new concept that dispenses with the narrative portraying the outline plan as a means of control, restriction, and empowerment of the supervisory authorities. The new discourse should regard the outline plan as a community development tool that regulates and facilitates development.

The intense demand for housing is liable to explode at any moment. The shortage of residential planning is causing an increase in the number of people without homes, delays in marriage, increases in land and housing prices, growing emigration outside the localities, and a severe shortage of public space, including non-standard roads and public spaces. This situation perpetuates the lack of trust and anxiety among the younger generation, the immediate consumer of the existing planning that does not meet the test of the rapid developments in the field. The lack of compatibility between the planning and the needs, and delays in issuing building permits continue to result in building without a permit that is threatened with demolition. This affects the social and political atmosphere, and creates underground currents that feed the

tension between Arab citizens and the state. Restrictive outline planning and supervision constitute a key factor in the growth and perpetuation of separation and spatial tension between Jews and Arabs. The same is true of the supervision and monitoring concept for development of the Arab localities, including restriction and limited opportunities for development.

The enforcement and punitive policy, including administrative demolition orders for buildings constructed without a permit, which is part of the reform embodied in Amendment 116 to the Planning and Building Law, is not an adequate way of dealing with planning and development in the Arab localities, including in the Negev and ethnically integrated cities, where most building is without a permit. Together with, and even prior to carrying out the enforcement policy, which aggravates the tension among the Arab population, it is necessary to alleviate the distress and remove the obstacles to the supply of housing, while making an effort to strengthen the local leadership, so that it will take responsibility for planning and development.

In order to deal with the change in concept, especially the emphasis on supervision and territorial considerations, development planning is necessary that focuses on functional considerations, reflecting the fulfillment of human needs, spatial fairness, and overall equality. There is an immediate need to promote planning that allows development, will shorten approval processes for plans, and promote detailed planning simultaneously with outline planning processes. Such a process requires flexibility in national and district outline plans, the inclusion of existing construction in the new plan, and a suspension of demolition orders for buildings. This also requires agreement between representatives of the Arab population, including Knesset members, local authority heads, and representatives of political groups on the one hand, and representatives of the state on the other. This will facilitate the suspension of demolition orders for buildings erected without a permit for an agreed period for the purpose of drawing up a roadmap as part of implementing the new five-year plan for planning and development in the Arab localities.

> To the Arab population, planning and building are connected to the existing tension with the state. The state's task is to ease this tension by reorganizing the map of local authorities and the distribution of land resources for planning and building.

The local leadership must devise a new concept and new discourse that dispenses with the narrative portraying the outline plan as a means of

control, restriction, and empowerment of the supervisory authorities. The new discourse should regard the outline plan as a community development tool that regulates and facilitates development. The local leadership in the Arab localities should be awarded more authority and responsibility for planning and development in their localities. Exercising this authority begins with the reform of Amendment 101 and Amendment 104 of the Planning and Building Law, whose substance will be decentralization of planning decisions from the national and district level to the local level.[24] Implementation of the reform is delayed, however, as a result of inadequate preparation and willingness to carry out the reform and grant more responsibility to the local authorities. Strengthening the local authorities and enhancing their management and planning capabilities constitute essential infrastructure for the new planning concept. For the sake of achieving this reinforcement, professional and budget resources should be made available to the local authorities in order to carry out the decentralization policy contained in the reform.

Conclusion

The question of land and construction in the Arab sector in Israel is at the heart of the tangled and sensitive web of relations between the state and the Arab public. In many ways this issue is the most challenging and critical of the many issues for this complex relationship, and is threatening to destabilize Israel and the fabric of relations between the Arab minority and the Jewish majority. A possible collision between two dangerous trends is emerging. One is the need to introduce order into building in the Arab localities as a result of population growth and development, the expansion of initial needs, and placing construction at the head of the demands of the state made by the Arab public and leadership. The other is the growing tendency of the government, together with the initiation of important positive measures, such as the five-year plan for development of Arab society, to impose tougher penalties for building offenses, aggravated by the extremely slow pace of the necessary regulatory processes on all aspects of construction. This issue must be resolved soon, not only for reasons of civil considerations for minority needs, but also in order to prevent escalation and disaster.

The outline planning among the Arab population is a professional tool of public policy designed to regulate land use and the distribution of physical resources. As a strategic resource, traditional statutory spatial

planning divides resources, and thereby creates discrimination between Arab and Jewish localities. It also constitutes an important factor in the emergence of building without a permit, and a means whereby the state deals with this phenomenon through penalties and demolition, which aggravates the tension between the state and its citizens. On the other hand, promotion of a development plan that facilitates social and economic progress is likely to reduce the existing tensions. To the Arab population, planning and building are not isolated from the existing tension between the Arab sector and the state. The increased demand for housing and the development needs aggravate the tension between the Jewish and Arab local authorities. The state's task is to ease this tension by reorganizing the map of local authorities and the distribution of land resources for planning and building.

According to current projections, it will be necessary to provide housing solutions for approximately 300,000 Arab households by 2040.[25] Unless a concept of positive development planning emerges and materializes, many of these households will search for housing opportunities in nearby Jewish localities. Others will have to build without a permit, which is liable to generate social tensions that could assume a nationalistic and even violent nature. New systemic strategic thinking for devising a spatial policy is therefore required in order to prevent tensions and provide a solution for the diverse legitimate needs of the various localities in Israeli society. There is reason to assume that a systemic solution is possible, but it can be achieved only through a measured dialogue between the state and its Arab minority, which must recruit its leadership and encourage it to think objectively for the sake of promoting the interests of Arab society. This is a common interest of the state and all its citizens. Balanced formulas should be found, and the sooner the better. On a positive note, there are important and influential parties both in the government and among the Arab leadership who recognize the common interest and need, and who are acting jointly to promote it, including in regulation and building. This is an important indication of the chances of real progress toward a necessary, appropriate solution.

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Back to the Czarist Era: Russia's Aspirations, Buildup, and Military Activity in the Arctic Region

Omer Dostri

The importance of the Arctic area has increased significantly over the past decade, due particularly to geological changes in the region stemming from global warming. According to different estimates, melting polar icecaps have created not only significant dangers for coastal countries and cities but also opportunities and possibilities such as new trade routes and access to oil and gas resources.[1]

The dissolution of the Soviet Union was followed by a change regarding the Arctic region, as it evolved from an arena of military wrestling between the world's two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, to an area symbolizing cooperation and reconciliation through the construction of stability between Russia and the West. With Vladimir Putin's rise to power, however, Moscow's policy toward the region became more belligerent and aggressive, with the aim of projecting military and political power and restoring Russia's image as a world power.

From Moscow's perspective, the Arctic region holds great significance, stemming from political benefits in the realms of economics, diplomacy, and security. Accordingly, Russia has military interests in the region, reflected in the establishment, usage, reinforcement, and upgrading of strategic assets there. Russia maintains that its strengthened military presence in the Arctic region is designed to protect revenues and economic interests. However, different scholars and public leaders have expressed doubts about these claims and regard Moscow's behavior as an integral element of Russia's overall strategy of raising its level of belligerence toward the West,

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as reflected in the war in Georgia, the conquest of the Crimean Peninsula, and Russian involvement in eastern Ukraine.[2]

Russia's Aspirations and Interests in the Arctic Region

More than half of the Arctic coast and 40 percent of the land lying beyond the Arctic Circle, areas that are home to 42 percent of the region's overall population, are part of Russian territory.[3] A sense of belonging to the region, given its own geographical location and the region's geopolitical position in general, has led Russia to view the area as a strategic region of great national importance.

Russia's national interests in the Arctic region stem from three primary factors: the search for new sources of energy to preserve the country's status as a global energy power; control over territory, some of which has a historical connection to the Soviet Union or the Czarist empire, out of a desire to overcome the trauma of the collapse of the Soviet Union; and a desire for international recognition as a world power.[4]

According to Russia's strategy from 2008 regarding the Arctic region, Russia seeks "to maintain the role of a leading Arctic power" and as such, has a number of multidimensional national interests in the region.[5] Russian aspirations in the Arctic region are focused on national political sovereignty, economics, and the military, and are based primarily on a number of strategic documents that have been formulated by the Russian government.

Political-Security Aspirations

The Russian Arctic region has been allotted a special place in Russian security strategy. Since the 1950s, industries and infrastructure elements related to Russian nuclear deterrence have operated in the region, primarily for the facilities on the Kola Peninsula. In addition, the Russian Arctic region ensures access to the Atlantic Ocean and is therefore essential to the Russian navy for its international missions. This aspect has been especially significant since Russia lost a number of ports in the Baltic Sea (Paldiski in Estonia) and the Black Sea (Sevastopol) as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, Russia has managed to restore its control of the Black Sea following its conquest of the Crimean Peninsula.[6]

In April 2000, Putin delivered a speech on the deck of the icebreaker in Murmansk in which he said that Russia was in need of "a state navigation policy" and that the areas in the north constituted Russian resource reserves and were therefore "an important factor for ensuring the state's

security."[7] Indeed, the shrinking of the North Pole and the melting of the polar icecaps in the Arctic region have enabled Russia to acquire new maritime transportation routes. The North Sea and the western routes provide Russia with an opportunity to control the shorter route between North America, Europe, and Asia.[8] In addition to new shipping routes to make strategically important areas in the region and the world more accessible and shorten the time it takes to reach them, Russia intends on using the new shipping routes for internal political purposes, such as connecting the eastern and western parts of the Federation and decreasing the distance between them.[9] Russia has also announced its intention to plan an air route in the region.

Above all else, the strategic importance of the Arctic region for Russia stems from its maritime nuclear bases that are located there. Russia's nuclear deterrence remains an important element of its security policy and is also a symbol of Russia's status as a major power.[10]

Economic Aspirations

Russia regards the Arctic coast as an important source of natural resources, a vast potential trade route, a significant fishing area, and a future facilitator of income growth through exhaustive use of oil and other resources; tax revenues produced by the passage fees for maritime transportation along the North Sea route; and the provision of infrastructure and services along the route.[11]

According to the assessments of the United States Geological Survey, the Arctic region contains gas deposits that are equivalent to 412 billion barrels, constituting 22 percent of the world's remaining oil and gas reserves.[12] In addition to oil and gas, the Arctic region also contains significant reserves of precious stones and metals, such as gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, magnesium, nickel, platinum, and diamonds.[13] While the ice in the Arctic region is currently retreating, Russia's economic aspirations are coming to rely increasingly on mineral and natural resources in the region. Russia already enjoys economic advantages in the Arctic region, with 20 percent of its GDP and its exports being produced north of the Arctic Circle.[14]

The Russian Arctic region currently produces most of Russia's gas and oil resources (95 and 70 percent, respectively), and Russian geologists have discovered approximately 200 gas and oil deposits in the Russian Arctic region. Large deposits located in the Barents and Kara Seas have been designated for future development. The Russian Arctic region is also

currently the site of 99 percent of all diamond production in the Russian Federation, 98 percent of all platinum production, more than 80 percent of all nickel production, and 90 percent of all magnesium production.[15]

Historic Aspirations

Russia has been an active player in the Arctic region since the fifteenth century, and the present competition with other coastal nations in the region is a reemergence of past rivalry. During most of Russia's existence as a state, and especially during the twentieth century, the Arctic region was important in Russian national policy.[16] It is thus a significant element in Russia's reassertion of national identity and pride, as well as its leading role in the world.

The Arctic territories constitute 25 percent of Russia's land area and contain a disproportionately large share of the state's natural resources. They held strategic importance during the Cold War, when the Arctic region was the closest point between the Soviet Union and the United States.[17] In the Soviet era, an industrial base was established in the Russian Arctic region, including gas and oil production, pipe systems, electrical power plants, nuclear power plants, and extensive transportation infrastructure (train tracks, roads, air strips, and ports).[18]

The region also commands a significant presence in Russian culture. Russian North Pole researchers, particularly groundbreaking Soviet scholars from the 1930s who led the research on this region, were well respected and received significant public acclaim in Russia, unlike in other countries in the world. Since the seventeenth century, Russian researchers have set out to navigate the northern coasts of their country. The Northern Russian Delegation of the early eighteenth century was one of the largest scientific delegations of the period in scope and in number.[19]

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Russia's subsequent weakness, the 1990s and 2000s witnessed the onset of a significant decline in Russia's military presence and assets in the Arctic region. Even today, after its military buildup and the upgrading and establishment of new military assets in the region, Russia is still currently at a lower stage than it was during the Soviet era.[20]

The Doctrinization of Russian Aspirations

Russia was one of the first Arctic countries to formulate a strategic document for the region, and its national policy in the region is based primarily on

two documents produced by the Russian Federation since the beginning of the millennium. On June 14, 2001, the Russian cabinet authorized a draft document titled "Foundations of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic," which described Russia's major national and strategic interests in the region. Seven years later, Russia completed its development of a strategic document that was approved on September 18, 2008 by then-President Dmitry Medvedev as a roadmap for the years 2008-2020. Unlike the draft of the Russian policy document for the Arctic region released in 2001 that focused on military issues, the final document approved in 2008 contained more flexible and pragmatic sections and expanded on most of the civil national issues.[21]

The goals of Russian policy in the Arctic region derived from national interests. These goals include:

a. Fulfillment of Russia's need for strategic resources; defense and preservation of state borders in Russia's Arctic region; achievement of more comfortable operational conditions in the region, including assistance by means of important warfare capabilities of the Russian armed forces.
b. Preservation and protection of the natural environment of the Arctic region.
c. Establishment of a united information space in the Arctic region.
d. Implementation of scientific research for the accumulation of knowledge.
e. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Russia and the countries bordering on the Arctic region, based on international conventions and treaties to which Russia is a party.[22]

On February 20, 2013, Russian President Vladimir Putin approved the Arctic Region Development Strategy of the Soviet Union – an update of the strategy document that was published in 2008. The new document focuses on the Russian Arctic region, whereas the 2008 document focused on the Arctic region as a whole. In practice, the new document attests to the fact that Russia failed in the task it took upon itself for the years 2008 through 2010 in the previous document and that it needs to identify more realistic goals for the future.[23]

The latter document relates to international dimensions – such as Moscow's intention to demarcate the borders of the Arctic region through legislation and the submission of a new petition to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf – as well as Russia's emphasis on the need for international cooperation in areas such as the

survey and exploitation of natural resources, environmental protection, and preservation of the culture of indigenous populations. However, like its predecessor, the strategic document of 2013 emphasizes Russian sovereignty over the Russian Arctic region and the northern shipping routes, and calls for safeguarding the state's national interests in the region. In addition to the changes reflected in the new document, Russia acknowledges its lack of the resources and technology required to exploit the natural resources in the Russian Arctic region and its need for foreign investment and technological assistance for the purpose of development.[24]

Implementation of Russia's Arctic Doctrine

Diplomatic and Political Activity

To achieve its aspirations in the Arctic region, Russia has taken significant action in recent years in the civil and diplomatic realms. In 2011, Moscow applied to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf based on scientific claims, with the aim of extending its exclusive economic zone from 200 nautical miles to 350 nautical miles (approximately 648 kilometers). Although by doing so Russia was the first country to submit information to the Commission, the Commission rejected the request after finding it to be invalid and asked Russia to beef-up its scientific and geological claims. Russia continued to attempt to convey its legal claims in the Arctic region, including using established channels such as the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea and the International Maritime Organization. In an effort to extend its exclusive economic zone, Russia submitted a revised application on August 4, 2015.[25]

In addition to its need to complete the submission of its claims to the Commission, Russia has at its disposal another diplomatic option: the submission of claims to the Court of Maritime Law. This claims process, however, can last 10-15 years, raising the concern that Russia will ultimately lose patience, deviate from its responsible maritime policy, and begin taking unilateral measures.

Military Actions and Exercises

On August 2, 2007, Russia responded to the decision by the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf to reject its application to extend its area of control in the Arctic region. A research task force, consisting of a nuclear icebreaker accompanied by two submarines, was sent to the Arctic region to collect a soil sample from the Lomonosov Ridge – an area

that is the subject of territorial claims on the part of Russia, Denmark, and Canada. The sample was intended to prove that the ridge was actually part of Euro-Asia. During this undertaking, which was the subject of extensive media coverage, the task force planted the Russian flag on the ocean floor in the Ridge region. On the same occasion, Arthur Chilingarov, who was then deputy speaker of the lower house of the Russian parliament and a former well known Soviet polar researcher, declared that "the Arctic is ours, and we should demonstrate our presence."[26]

This event reflected the significance in Russian eyes of the Arctic region, which has become a major region of advancement for the Russian military. According to Russian military doctrine from 2014, the Russian army is committed to the defense of Russian national interests in the Arctic region.[27] In order to achieve these aims, Moscow attributes great importance to evaluating and upgrading the military capabilities of the Russian navy and the Russian air force. The series of extensive military exercises over the past few years appears to have been intended for this purpose.

In early March 2014, the Russian army conducted an exercise that involved the dropping of hundreds of Russian paratroopers over Kotelny Island in Northern Sibera in what was described as the largest paratrooper drop ever carried out in the region by the Russian military.[28] Two months later, in May 8, 2014, Moscow conducted its largest military exercise since the demise of the Soviet Union. The exercise included a simulated nuclear attack using submarines, bombers, and surface-to-surface missiles and was supervised by Putin from Russian Defense Ministry headquarters in Moscow. In the course of the exercise, intercontinental ballistic missiles were launched from the Barents Sea.[29]

In March 2015, Russia carried out an extensive military exercise in the Arctic region. The exercise lasted five days and involved the participation of 80,000 troops, 220 fighter planes, 41 ships, and 15 submarines.[30] On June 2, 2015, the Russian navy conducted an exercise involving nuclear forces in international waters beneath the North Pole. The exercise focused on "hazard and threat detection" but also included the launching of missiles, submarines, navigation maneuvers, and ice patrols.[31] In November 2015, it was reported that Russia had conducted a successful test launching of two ballistic missiles by submarines in the White Sea off of Russia's northwestern coastline.[32]

In addition to these military exercises, the Russian air force has flown a number of sorties close to the countries of the Arctic coast. In 2014, Norway

intercepted 74 Russian fighter planes along its coastline, reflecting a 27 percent increase from 2013. In March 2015, Russia conducted a military air exercise over the Barents Sea that lasted a number of weeks and included simulations of the destruction of enemy missiles and aircraft. The Russian sorties were typically flown adjacent to the coastline of North America and remained in international airspace, without entering the airspace of Canada or the United States. In addition, the number of Russian flights adjacent to the Arctic islands of North America and the eastern and western shores of the northern Pacific and Atlantic has been less than the number of flights made by NATO forces adjacent to the Russian Arctic region or to Russia's borders in Europe.[33]

Most of the photographs taken during the interceptions of the strategic Russian bombers by American and Canadian planes indicate that the Russian planes were flying at an altitude that did not allow concealment of their identity or activity. The photos indicated that the Russian bombers were not armed. With the exception of a few instances, the Russian bombers were also not escorted by fighter planes, making them easy targets for interception by the United States and Canada.[34]

This information offers a different perspective on Russian activity and suggests that Russia is neither interested in confrontation nor a policy of aggression, but is rather using airspace for the purpose of mutual deterrence, the conveyance of messages to countries of the region, and maintaining the capabilities of the Russian air force.

Building the Russian Force in the Arctic Context

On March 28, 2014, shortly after the Russian invasion of the Crimean Peninsula, Putin delivered a speech at the Kremlin before senior Russian security officials, and stated: "Next is the further development of the combat personnel of our armed forces, including in the Arctic."[35] On April 7, 2014, Putin met with Russia's Federal Security Service personnel and urged them to "continue the development of border infrastructure in the Arctic region."[36]

In recent years, Russia has been working toward military buildup in general, and the Arctic region has not been the only area where it has projected aggression. The number of Russia's deployed nuclear warheads and launchers has increased significantly since 2013, as has the number of deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles, ballistic submarine missiles, and heavy bombers.[37] In addition, Russia is building three icebreakers,

one of which will be the largest in the world, with the aim of filling out its fleet of icebreakers.

Russia has also restored and rebuilt six military facilities in the Arctic region, including its Arctic Trefoil base on the island of Alexandra Land, which is intended to be used for personal survival training for a period of one and a half years. Moscow's largest base in the Arctic region is North Shamrock, located on Kotelny Island in the eastern Siberian Sea, which holds 250 soldiers equipped with air defense systems. Russia is renovating air strips and radar stations on four other islands in the Arctic region, and is moving new surface-to-air missile systems and anti-ship missile systems into the region. It has established two special brigades in the Arctic region, which is something that even the Soviet Union did not do, and is already planning to establish a division with the aim of defending the Arctic coastline.[38]

An important factor is the Northern Fleet, whose four missions were defined by the defense minister as: defending the strategic forces of the Russian fleet; defending economic interests in Russia's northern regions; defending the safety of shipping; and pursuing the interests of Russian foreign policy.[39] The Northern Fleet is the strongest of the four fleets of the Russian military. It has been allocated most of Russia's submarines, including some capable of carrying ballistic missiles and armed with cruise missiles. It has also been allocated Russia's largest aircraft carrier, *Adpatrol miral Kuznetsov*, and its largest battlecruiser, *Pyotr Velikiy*.[40]

Since 2011, Russia has implemented a plan for the upgrading and modernization of the Russian fleet. This modernization effort follows years of Russian neglect of its naval buildup, and Moscow is planning to build 100 warships. This joins the rehabilitation and improvement of existing ships, with an aim of extending their use.[41] In December 2014, Russia inaugurated a new military headquarters designed to coordinate all the Russian military forces operating in the Arctic region.[42] Russia has increased the number of marines assigned to the Northern Fleet by a third, to bring it up to the size of the other brigades.[43] In addition, Russia has established an Arctic Joint Strategic Command with the aim of coordinating operations among all Russian military forces operating in the region.[44]

Conclusions

Since Vladimir Putin's rise to power in Russia, the Russian Federation has made the Arctic a region of national priority. This process has been

conducted as part of Putin's efforts to restore Russia's status as a world power and the country's historic role associated with Czarist Russia and Soviet power during the Cold War. Russia also seeks to take advantage of the region's vast natural resources and geopolitical positioning, as well as the opportunity to significantly improve its access to shipping routes and communications media and to bring the country's eastern and western regions closer together.

Prioritization of the Arctic region has led Moscow to pursue, in addition to bilateral and multilateral diplomatic cooperation with the countries of the Arctic region, undertaking a broad civilian and military buildup and increasing the special military activities along its northern borders and in the Arctic Ocean. Russia's military buildup, activity, and provocation of its Arctic neighbors, in addition to Moscow's determination in recent decades to employ military means when the need arises, indicates that Russia seeks to achieve as extensive control as possible of the Arctic region, even if at the expense of other coastal states in the region that are advancing similar claims.

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Supplement

Foreign Policy Think Tanks and Decision Making Processes

Yoel Guzansky and Gallia Lindenstrauss

An important though perhaps less familiar element in government decision making processes is linked to the work of think tanks. Israeli think tanks, like their counterparts elsewhere, seek to influence – whether directly or indirectly – decision making within government agencies.

Think tanks are especially prominent in the United States, in view of special features of the American political system, and in particular the turnover in thousands of personnel when a new government assumes office. However, the influence of think tanks is also increasing in other areas of the world. Their number is growing steadily, and there are currently dozens of think tanks and research institutes active in Israel seeking to influence policy on matters of society and politics, particularly foreign affairs and security.[1] Some have links to universities; others are independent. Among the most prominent are the Institute for National Security Studies, the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Research, the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern & African Studies, the Institute for Policy and Strategy, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, the Rubin Center for Research in International Affairs, the Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies – Mitvim, the Forum for Regional Thinking, the Center for the Renewal of Israeli Democracy – Molad, the Institute for Zionist Strategies, and the Israel/Palestine Center for Research & Information

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– IPCRI. In addition, since foreign affairs and security matters touch on so many areas, other institutes have contributed to decisions made over the years. Prominent in this regard are the Israel Democracy Institute, on issues concerning the interface between security and democracy; the Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, regarding the issue of Jerusalem in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; and Reut Institute, which was among the first to focus on the phenomenon of delegitimization.

This paper seeks to clarify the nature of the target audiences of Israeli think tanks dealing with foreign policy; how they influence decision making, if such influence can be measured; and the nature of the challenges they face at present.[2]

Background

A classical definition of think tanks is that of Yehezkel Dror, who presents them as "enclaves of excellence in which groups of multidisciplinary scholars and professionals work full time on main policy problems."[3] Troy calls them "universities without students."[4] Another definition is that of James McGann, who heads the University of Pennsylvania project that rates think thanks worldwide; he defines them as "organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis and advice on domestic and international issues in an effort to enable policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy issues."[5] The term "think tank" was first used in the 1950s to refer to bodies such as the Rand Corporation, but the phenomenon predates the label. The first think tanks can already be found in the 19th century in England and in the early 20th century in the United States.

Think tanks are institutions, usually non-governmental, that seek to influence the policy of various government agencies. In most cases they function as an auxiliary source for shaping policy and making decisions, in response to the difficulty of government entities to digest huge amounts of information, often in limited amounts of time. In order to separate the "urgent" from the "important," government agencies are generally forced to prefer what is "urgent." Think tanks can balance this tendency because they are able to prioritize the "important" over the "urgent." Moreover, government agencies, both civilian and military, sometimes prefer to outsource some research projects, whether as original research or as the continuation of research work already done by them, in order to obtain a

second opinion. Think tanks are sometimes an alternative, accessible source of knowledge for government agencies; they also play an important role in reinforcing the link between civilian society and government.

The central role of think tanks over the years has been to identify, analyze, and assess issues, and offer suggestions and recommendations to optimize how they are handled; to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and knowledge; and sometimes, as is common in North America – though less so in Western Europe and Israel – to provide either an interim position for people waiting to take office with a change of government or a "second career" for outgoing officials. Think tanks are generally known for their long term analyses that rise above the immediate, short shelf life "products" that are usually at the center of the public agenda and command much media focus. How and to what extent think tanks exert influence at various stages of policy formulation is a function of the resources at their disposal, the access that researchers have to the people that shape policy, and sometimes the institute's own ideological bent and the degree to which it matches the line taken by the government.

Many organizations may claim the title, but not all think tanks are the same. Within the think tank category there are a host of sub-categories, including party/ideology-based, governmental, independent, and academic. This range is sometimes the result of developments relating to the context and history of each country, but can also derive from other sources. For example, the use of government funding for research institutes in authoritarian regimes could be an attempt to create a misleading impression of signs of civil society or alternative voices in that country.[6] Another way for authoritarian regimes to influence decision making is through contributions to an existing institute, or even the establishment of a dedicated institute, usually in the United States and in Western Europe, to promote their interests and objectives. This is particularly noticeable in the activities of some of the Gulf states in Washington, D.C.[7] In academic think tanks, which are closer to the model of "research institute," the staff is dominated by university faculty members; this in turn influences the availability of researchers and research products, which lean more toward historical and/or theoretical papers. These institutions are not designed to serve the government, although in several cases they have produced high level officials. These institutes are designed first and foremost to serve the academic world, and thereby indirectly stimulate the public debate on issues within their purview.

Part of the reason for the proliferation of think tanks is that the government system is unable, and sometimes unwilling to deal with many subjects. Think tanks can also help train senior officials for civil service. What sets many think tanks in Israel and elsewhere apart is the mix of people with practical experience and academics from various disciplines, with a range of political views, which helps professional institutes (as distinct from those that were established to promote certain ideological perceptions) to maintain impartiality. As the same time, this heterogeneity can be a weakness, as it can hinder cooperation between the researchers.

How Do They Influence?

A central question is how to assess the influence of a think tank. There are cases where decision makers have talked explicitly about the contribution of think tanks. For example, in 1998 MK Yossi Beilin stated that "without the conditions created by these organizations, we would never have achieved the Oslo Accords and the understandings on a permanent agreement,"[8] inter alia thanks to the platforms provided for meetings behind the scenes and ideas raised by think tanks. Another case where there is broad agreement regarding the influence of think tanks was their contribution to the re-formation of American strategy in Iraq and the surge in 2007.[9] Nonetheless, in most cases an assessment of the influence and performance of think tanks is far from simple. Think tanks compete with the views and objectives of other players in the arena, so it is doubtful whether one institute can claim credit for any changes in policy.

Sometimes the notion of "influence" actually connotes "exposure." The number of publications (books, articles, commentaries, and opinion pieces), the number of followers and posts on social media, and the number of conferences are, on the face of it, one way of estimating an institute's influence. However, there is not always a direct link between the degree of exposure and the degree of influence.[10] While media exposure creates the impression that a particular think tank plays a central role in shaping policy, this does not necessarily mean that the positions of its researchers have any influence on the decision makers or the public in general. Sometimes the opposite may be true: greater visibility may be achieved at the expense of credibility and intellectual seriousness.

There are a few other indicators for assessing the influence of think tanks, for example, the closeness of its head and the team to decision shapers and decision makers (in the case of institutes engaged in national security,

for example, this means closeness to the various security and intelligence agencies). The team's abilities and background are also significant, and practical background in the areas studied can help in accessing the relevant sources of knowledge, while enhancing the prestige of the researchers. Finally an institute's financial strength and its source of financial support are sometimes linked to its prestige and influence.

Overall there is tension between the desire to influence decision makers and the public discourse, and the drive to write succinct, incisive, and relevant articles and reviews that will arouse public interest, while also retaining the respect of the academic/professional community. Some of the principles that guide academic writing are different from those that guide policy-oriented writing. This is mainly due to the differing needs of government agencies and their ability to benefit from the research. For example, if the text is too long, high ranking government officials will rarely read it, and at best, they will delegate the reading to a lower grade assistant.

In many cases access to decision makers or the opportunity to engage them is limited. Even when the think tank reaches decision makers, these individuals generally prefer that their links with think tanks remain discreet, in particular, recommendations with respect to any matter currently on the agenda. It is hard for a think tank to publicize the fact that it is advising people in government, and it certainly will not disclose the spirit of its recommendations, in case it loses its audience's trust. There is also structural tension between dealing with long term issues, which can be expected to affect the future of a nation, and the attempt to adjust output to the immediate requirements of those who define policy, and the desire of the think tanks to be involved in what is happening in the "real world" and create "user friendly" material.

What wields more influence on government agencies – internal thinking processes or external thinking processes? This depends on the nature of the organization and the issue at hand. On the one hand, if the organization decides that it wants to deal with certain issues and asks its staff to prepare papers, it will probably give these papers priority. In contrast, when an external element makes a suggestion, if the subject is not high on the decision maker's agenda, the suggestion could well be ignored. At the same time, however, think tanks sometimes have considerable influence precisely because they are outside the establishment.

The nature of the political system in the United States and the fact that its senior officials are replaced when a new president takes office, leads

to a situation where American think tanks are ahead of their colleagues worldwide in terms of influence on decision makers. By the end of the 20th century many American think tanks had changed their orientation, and moved from the "universities without students" model to becoming active players in the political game. A more conservative view of the role of the think tank states that it should indicate possible courses of action and not itself determine the preferred option. This is possible for those think thanks that do not want to take part in the political debate and shy away from any ideological identification. Today, some think tanks bear their political allegiance with pride. For example, the Heritage Foundation contributed to policy shaping in the Reagan era, while the Center for American Progress (CAP) became a source for liberal thinking and was very helpful to Barack Obama's election campaign. Indeed, during the Obama campaign one of the heads of CAP said, "We don't claim to be objective."[11]

Avenues of influence for think tanks include:

a. "Influence from within" – government officials with former think tank experience bring the expertise they developed in the earlier stages of their career.
b. Consulting and short term questions. Researchers, whether by temporary appointment or participation in ad hoc task teams, can influence the processes of shaping policy and making decisions.
c. External influence – by disseminating knowledge in the form of publications and conferences, in such a way that experts are not involved in the daily work of government officials but try to enrich their knowledge from the outside.
d. The existence of forums in the framework of think tanks that constitute a "neutral space" for government officials, where they can come and discuss issues, hear various opinions, and obtain a broader perspective in their field of activity.

Challenges Facing Think Tanks in the Current Era

Globalization, technological changes, and the rise of social media have increased the competition for the attention not only of the public but also of decision makers. Think tanks compete in a crowded arena, where consultants, lobbyists, NGOs, the media, and individuals seek to compete with think tanks products.[12] Notwithstanding this growing competition, think tanks are often perceived as a more credible source and as consistent providers of insights.[13] At the same time, in order to compete in the "market

of ideas," and in addition to maintaining their status and academic presence by publishing professional books and papers, think tank researchers are often required to maintain a presence on social media and blogs.

There is an inherent tension between dealing with long term issues, which are expected to affect the future of the country and society, and the attempt to tailor products to the immediate requirements and needs of policymakers, and in fact to maintain some kind of lobbying activity to realize them.[14] However, in order to produce succinct position papers – often the recommended length is no more than two pages – there is a need for basic research on the subject. Moreover, in most cases think tanks also want to influence both the public discourse (whether as a means of influencing the decision makers, or as an end in itself) and the academic discourse, and for that purpose they require more extensive research. In the past think tanks put more emphasis on the number of books and policy studies they produced; today for some think tanks the emphasis has become an attempt to identify significant changes, whether in policy or in legislation, as a result of their activity.[15] Changes in how think tanks see themselves have a direct effect on how their researchers prioritize the various tasks they are expected to perform.[16] Shifting requirements turn the think tank team into "multifaceted individuals who are part scholar, journalist, marketing executive and policy entrepreneur."[17] The relative advantage of think tanks in the past was their ability, based on their freedom from pressures of time, to think about and discuss issues in depth. According to McGann, "Increased competition, donor expectations, the 24-hour news cycle and the expectation to respond to politics" will place a strain on think tanks.[18] Today they are also required to produce their insights more quickly, to the extent that the Heritage Foundation, for example, decided to put the emphasis on "quick-response policy research."[19] As the think tanks turned into entities that respond to short term needs of policymakers and the media, they lost some of their relative advantage. Because of the focus on the speed of the response (which sometimes comes at the expense of depth), the think tanks have given up some of their ability to provide an independent and well-founded point of view in their field of interest.

A think tank operates in a context that abounds with contradictions and pressures. The head of the institution must, on the one hand, satisfy those who donate funds to support the activity. On the other hand, it must be free from external influences and maintain its independent status – unless they have knowingly decided to represent a particular ideological line. Due

to changes in the world of philanthropy, think tanks today receive more individual donations for specific projects rather than general funding from charitable foundations.[20] Short term funding might challenge the independence and the innovation of think tanks. Donors who only fund specific projects that are important to them may force think tanks to avoid risky experiments and new directions in research and to stop some of the thinking "outside the box."[21] It also reduces their ability to conduct interdisciplinary research.[22] And due to their growing influence, think tanks are required to be more transparent about their sources of funds, which for some think tanks is a problem. In this context, in 2016 following a press investigation, an alleged link was found between commercial companies in the field of security who donate to leading think tanks in Washington and some of the publications of those think tanks, which in effect were used to promote the commercial interests of the companies involved.[23]

Challenges and Opportunities for Foreign Policy and Security Think Tanks in Israel

Since the 1990s the number of think tanks in Israel has multiplied. Aizencang-Kane attributes this to the weakening of the large political parties, the rapid development of the third sector, the proliferation of pressure groups that become NGOs and operate under the guise of research institutes, and the fact that think tanks are a channel of influence for philanthropic elements.[24]

Think tanks are flourishing in Israel, even as they encounter many of the dilemmas faced by their overseas counterparts. However, there are also aspects unique to the Israeli context. On the face of it, because of the general public's extensive interest in foreign and security issues, there is more room for think tanks to try and communicate their insights. In fact, the tendency to relate to many subjects as sensitive security matters somewhat limits their scope for influence. The dominant position of the security establishment in Israel, which also poses problems for the activities of the Foreign Ministry and the National Security Council, restricts the space for think tanks. Former and current members of the Knesset complain about the lack of knowledge in the Knesset on foreign and security affairs, in spite of their centrality to the work of the legislators. Think tanks can try to change this situation by holding briefings for Knesset members and their assistants, speaking to the Foreign Affairs & Defense Committee, maintaining closer ties with the Knesset's Research & Information Center, and issuing more frequent invitations to members of the Knesset to take

part in their regular activities. In the Israeli context, the coalition-based political system is also characterized by suspicion and lack of basic trust between senior officials, who often prefer external research as long as it is perceived as unbiased.

Compulsory military service in Israel means that some of the researchers in think tanks can potentially influence the army's tactical and strategic thinking, at least during their reserve duty.[25] At the same time, while in the military, they are exposed to the same processes of indoctrination that can lead to fixed patterns of thinking. At least in the past more attention was paid to Middle East experts in comparison to researchers from the disciplines of political science and international relations, thanks to their familiarity with Arabic and also to the perception that they understood the "mentality" of the other side better than policy shapers and decision makers.[26] Now policy shapers and decision makers recognize the enormous complexity resulting from globalization processes and changes following the Arab uprisings, and the need to extend their attention to disciplines and subjects that were not previously studied. In principle, therefore, they are more open to studies from think tanks that deviate from the narrow view of the field of security. The issue of the peace process and the need to maintain links with countries that do not officially recognize Israel has over the years opened up some room for advancing back channels by promoting Track II initiatives with similar institutions in other countries. These channels are very important in the Israeli context and may include political dialogue on bilateral and regional issues, academic and professional analysis of areas where there are shared interests, and the creation of informal frameworks that include elements from the political and government system.

Conclusion

Think tanks straddle academic and government institutions, engage in basic research and policy formulation, and seek to bridge two distinct worlds. The challenge they face is therefore to generate reliable output that has a long shelf life, like an article in an academic journal, but at the same time is accessible, like a newspaper article. Think tanks have various privileges, and apart from the fewer time constraints to which researchers are subject (compared to decision makers), they are supposed to be freer of limits on their thinking. Compared to people in the government who are engaged in matters of national security, in most cases they are freer from security sensitivities and problems of classified material. Adopting elements of the

American model of the "revolving door" and more frequent movement of experts from think tanks to the centers of shaping policy and decision making, and vice versa, could help to improve the decision making process in Israel, even if an improvement in the process does not necessarily yield an improvement in the quality of decisions. Such movement between different worlds stimulates thinking and contributes to both sides: think tanks benefit from the experience of people who come from the corridors of power, while they in turn are exposed to different opinions while free of the constraints that accompany jobs in the civil service.

In order to exert influence more effectively, think tanks must maintain and develop their existing research base, exploit their knowledge base in order to influence the public discourse, and use the contacts of their researchers with their colleagues in government in order to promote ideas. Sometimes government entities invite experts in their fields to discussions on specific matters in order to help them formulate policy, but it is important to develop a more systematic method for encounters with policy shapers and decision makers, who can make use of think tanks from the stage of identifying and defining problems, all the way to finding solutions. Greater emphasis on this two-way contact will be fruitful for both parties. Think tanks can derive benefit from the contact with government elements not only in order to influence, but also in order to learn. It is this interaction that often makes think tanks unique and distinguishes them from university research institutions.

Notes

1 According to the *2016 Global Think Tank Index Report*, there are 58 think tanks in Israel, which makes Israel twentieth in the world in the number of think tanks. See http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=think_tanks.

2 Since 2013 the Institute of National Security Studies has conducted an annual discussion on the issue of think tanks, as part of a series of similar discussions taking place all over the world initiated by the Global Think Tank project. The meetings have been attended by representatives of many of Israel's most prominent institutes in the field of foreign policy and security, and inter alia this paper reflects some of the insights to emerge from the sessions.

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