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Deterrence of Palestinian Terrorism – The Israeli Experience: A Critical Analysis

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Executive Summary

The object of this study is to analyze the Israeli successes and failures in deterrence or compellence of Palestinian non-state terrorist actors – specifically Fatah and Hamas – since October 2000. Both of these organizations acted in the context of a dysfunctional quasi-state – the Palestinian Authority and were strongly linked to outside forces which have had a restraining or agitating effect on them: Jordan and Egypt on one hand, and Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria on the other hand.

The foremost question in regard to these organizations is: did Israel have a clear doctrine or policy of deterrence vis-à-vis the Palestinian terrorist organizations, or was Israeli policy exclusively directed at prevention, disruption and pre-emption of terrorist attacks. A conclusion of this study is that Israel never did formulate a comprehensive doctrine for deterrence of terrorism. Nevertheless, there existed a conventional wisdom among Israeli security leaders, that much of the preventive and pre-emptive steps that were implemented had a temporary and tactical deterrent effect. In the face of Israeli pressure, Palestinian leaders did seem to weigh the launching of terrorist attacks according to a cost-benefit calculus, that an Israeli reaction may neutralize any benefit from those attacks. Israeli security experts tended to characterize this as "operational prudence" on the part of the terrorist leadership, rather than deterrence. This calculus was not due to the mere threat of force but rather to the real application of force and the fear that the force may be reapplied.

The susceptibility of the Palestinian terrorist organizations to Israeli pressure can be linked to a number of relevant characteristics of Palestinian society and of the organizations themselves: societal factors, leadership, relations with patron states, ideological factors and modes of reception, interpretation and assessment of Israeli deterrent signals and of other relevant information:

1. **Societal Factors** – The Palestinian "civil society" has little weight in the balance of power and the influence of the members of the legislative is limited. The indigenous Palestinian economic oligarchy also had limited influence over terrorist related policies (financial support of terrorist groups directly by Arafat, terrorist planning by Hamas, PIJ and even lower level Fatah activists). Therefore, while the Fatah oligarchy was harmed by economic pressures as result of the Intifadah, they took their toll mainly from the indigenous WBG population and did not have a critical influence on the existential interests of that oligarchy. Consequently, Israeli attempts to deter terrorist leaders from acts of terrorism by economic pressures on the "host" populace were doomed to failure.

2. **Leadership** – the Fatah leadership has been concentrated since 1993 in the area of the West Bank and Gaza, reducing the traditional dichotomy that used to exist in Palestinian politics between the "interior" and "exterior" leaderships. For most of the period, Yasser Arafat had been the sole main source of authority in Fatah, the PLO and the PA, and therefore, the ultimate decision maker to whom all attempts to persuade or dissuade were directed. The total identification of the "Palestinian national interest" with his own personal interest made deterrence of Fatah and the PA contingent on Arafat believing that relief of the pressure would apply to himself as well. Hamas, on the other hand remained split between an "interior" and "exterior" leadership, with clear predominance to the latter. This predominance of the "exterior" leadership grew after the killing of Sheikh Yassin

and Abd al–Aziz Rantisi. Without a clear and authoritative leader in Gaza, the weight of "exterior" leadership, does not feel the pressures of the population in the West Bank and Gaza with the same intensity that local leaders do, grew. This trend reduced the responsiveness of the organization's terrorist organs to Israeli pressure, which naturally was applied to the "interior" leadership and its constituency.

3. **Relations with "patron states"** – Ostensibly, the Palestinians are susceptible to the pressures of "host" or "patron" states. The weakness of the "host state" (the Palestinian Authority") and its dependence on the charity of the Arab states provides the donor states with a potential leverage over it, while the integration of the different Palestinian organizations in the PA makes them a party to that dependence. There is however no single "patron" of the Palestinians that can be targeted for indirect deterrence of Palestinian terrorism in general. Before the Oslo accords, the PLO was heavily dependent on the Arab Gulf states for its financing. Therefore, these countries could theoretically serve as conduits for indirect pressure on the PLO. However, during the Oslo era, the financial dependence of the PA on the Gulf States diminished due to the western support and the economic assets of the West Bank and Gaza which began to be exploited by the Fatah oligarchy. Hence, utilization of economic pressure on Arab "host" states became less relevant as a lever over the PA. As for Hamas, Israeli calculations regarding pressure on Syria and Iran had to take into account broader interests and the price of possible confrontation with those countries.

4. **Ideological factors –** Fatah was founded as a secular nationalist organization and remained relatively pragmatic in its political maneuvering. As a movement which raised the banner of the "independent Palestinian decision" and claimed the title of the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people", Fatah/PLO was largely autonomous in development of ideology. Over the years, Fatah developed a pragmatic approach towards the "armed struggle", moving it from the status of "the only means to liberate Palestine" to "the main means" and finally "one of the means along with other forms of struggle". This shift provided the Fatah leadership with the ideological justification to reach agreements with Israel. Hamas, on the other hand, is tied with an ideological umbilical cord to the dominant Islamic sources of authority which are accepted by the "mother movement" – the Muslim Brotherhood. This bond is even stronger than in other movements, since in contrast to most other MB type movements, which had their own "national" spiritual leaderships, Hamas has never had an indigenous authoritative spiritual leadership that could rule on matters of Islamic principle. Strategic issues, therefore, have to be referred to spiritual guides who are not necessarily synchronized with the pressures on the Palestinians in WBG.

5. **Threat Assessment** – The Palestinians in general have a better collective acquaintance with Israel than any of its other Arab neighbors and tend to have a more realistic assessment of Israel's capabilities and constraints. However, significantly for the efficacy of Israeli deterrence, the Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza tend to hold a more realistic view of Israel's interests and possible policies than their colleagues from the PLO in Tunis or the "exterior" leadership of Hamas in Damascus – the former carrying perceptions from the past and the latter heavily influenced by the perceptions of Damascus and Tehran. In any case, in both cases, the strategic assessment which drives decisions on terrorism is not in the hands of the more pragmatic "interior" leadership.

The conventional wisdom in Israel has been that terrorist organizations cannot be effectively deterred, but should be fought until extirpated. Nevertheless, the Israeli defense community did believe from time to time that it had achieved a modicum of deterrence – local and transitory – towards certain organizations. This was achieved – when achieved – through a combination of deterrence by prevention and periodical demonstration of force.

A major finding of the study relates to the efficacy of targeted killings – not only as preventive, disruptive and pre-emptive actions, but as an enhancer of Israel's deterrent image. Targeted killing of top and medium level leaders has been a central instrument in Israel's arsenal in the struggle against Palestinian terrorism. While the suicide bombers themselves could not be deterred, it was believed that their recruiters and handlers could be. The logic that that targeted killings not only do not deter but feed a "cycle of violence" was never accepted within the Israeli security community. Rather it was believed that a leadership with a sense of impunity feels unconstrained in preparing terrorist attacks, whereas the perception of Israeli "intelligence dominance" manifested by the killings induced an atmosphere of fear and caution which was translated into less terrorist activity. Some Israeli intelligence chiefs saw these operations not as disruption alone but as a form of "tactical deterrence" deriving from inducing "operational caution".

The Palestinian civil society was the first to call for a "rational" assessment, according to which continuation of the terrorist policy would be counter-productive to the Palestinian interests, and therefore should be ceased. A study of terrorist attacks and intelligence on planning of attacks since 2000 shows that at times that Israel was engaged in wide-scale proactive actions (particularly targeted killings), there was a decline in alerts deriving from intelligence on planned attacks and the number of actual attacks also declined. Furthermore, periods of these actions can be directly linked to the willingness of Hamas to consider a "cease-fire" (*hudna*) or "quiet" (*tahdiya*). . On the other hand, unsuccessful targeted killings – particularly those which resulted in politically inconvenient consequences for Israel, such as large numbers of Palestinian civilian casualties or international censure – frequently had an adverse effect on deterrence.

Two other factors seem to have played a significant role in the formation of Israel's deterrent image in the eyes of the Palestinian leadership: the identity of the incumbent Israeli leadership; and the backing that Israel was perceived as receiving from the U.S. Thus, after the election of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister (February 2001) and the terrorist attacks of 9/11, there was a growing perception in the PA that enhanced the credibility of Israel's deterrence, due to: Sharon's reputation; the change in the western world's tolerance towards terrorism since 9/11. The Palestinian conclusion was that the domestic and international constraints on Israel's retaliatory actions had weakened. The result was Arafat's call (16 December, 2001) for a cease fire, after which the number of weekly terrorist attacks steadily declined.

Probably one of the more well know sustained efforts on the part of Israel was the "siege" on Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah, from March 2002 until his death in November 2004. Some Israeli decision makers believed (or claimed to believe) that this pressure would convince Arafat, who still had broad control over the various Fatah factions and apparatuses, to rein them in. At the same time, Israeli pressure was

employed towards the "Palestinian Authority" as an entity, on the assumption that Arafat would perceive the damage to PA interests as detrimental to himself. Ultimately, these pressures did not produce the desired effect. Most Israeli security experts believed at the time that Arafat still had the ability to impose a cessation of terrorism; however, Arafat perceived the siege as part of a personal vendetta of Ariel Sharon against him and viewed any concession to Israeli pressure as a contribution to a greater Israeli scheme to depose him.

While a Palestinian perception of Israel's deterrence seemed to have grown among the Palestinian civil society and leadership, the fragmentation of the PA and the various organizations precluded translation of that perception into a pragmatic response on the ground (restraining terrorism) to the Israeli pressure. This situation exacerbated during the "twilight" of the Arafat era, and after his death. Arafat's own policy of "controlled chaos" eventually downgraded his own ability to control the multi-polar system he himself had created. Despite a growing conviction on the part of Arafat's successor, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and in the Palestinian civil society that the cost-benefit calculus of the policy of terrorism had been negative, this awareness had no institutionalized ways to influence the people with guns. As a result, a strategy of deterring the terrorist elements through indirect pressure on the "host" society was doomed to failure.

The election of the Hamas government in February 2006 was seen by some in Israel and in the international community as a potential blessing in disguise. According to one theory, it would provide Hamas with "something to lose" that could be used as leverage for deterrence and compellence and ultimately to wean it away from its policies of terror. This did not come to pass. Israel succeeded in imposing international sanctions on the Hamas government. However, the indirect pressure on the "constituency" of the Hamas "interior" leadership had little effect. There was no doubt that the political representatives of Hamas within the WBG were "deterred" and would have preferred to lower the level of violence. As in the case of Fatah, however, the more pragmatic elements did not have authority over those responsible for terrorism. Their support and directions came from the "exterior" leadership, which was not a party to the perceptions of the local leadership and did not feel the pressure that the local populace was under. The radical "exterior" leadership's cost-benefit calculations were different: the prospects of an Israeli re-occupation of the West Bank and Gaza were viewed from Damascus as a precipitating event that could overturn the blanket support that Israel was enjoying from the U.S; it would also remove some of the international pressure from the patrons of the "exterior" leadership – Syria and Iran. Consequently, Israeli efforts to create a new deterrence equation with the Hamas government seemed to have failed. Only after half a year of fighting (since the abduction of an Israeli soldier in an infiltration in June 2006) has the exterior leadership begun to accept the demands of the "interior" for a cease fire.

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Preface

The object of this study is to analyze the Israeli successes and failures in deterrence or compellence of Palestinian non-state terrorist actors since the beginning of the decade. Two milestones that have influenced Israeli deterrence and define this period are the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 and the outbreak of the second Intifadah in October of the same year. The study is based on relevant references to cases and incidents in previous periods.

Since the second Intifadah, Palestinian organizations posed the primary terrorist threats to Israeli security. This threat encompassed a wide variety of sub-categories of organizations:

1. Highly organized and institutionalized terrorist organizations, such as the Fatah Tanzim, the "Martyrs of al-Aqsa Brigades" and the "Popular Resistance Committees" which originates in the ruling political party (Fatah) of the Palestinian Authority and continued to enjoy political, organizational and financial links with it and directly with the PA security apparatuses;
2. Opposition organizations within the PA with both a terrorist and a social-political infrastructure such as Hamas, with various levels of leadership – spiritual (Sheikh Ahmad Yassin), political (Abd al-Aziz Rantisi) and military (Yehya 'Ayash, Muhammad Deif) within the Palestinian territories and strong roots in the populace;
3. Pure terrorist organizations without a social or political infrastructure, which acted as proxies of Iran (such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, PLFP/GC of Ahmad Jibril). These organizations had no real political leadership within the Palestinian territories and were effectively run from Damascus and Tehran.
4. Residual Marxist organizations with historic leaderships who had already achieved longevity (PFLP, DFLP) and which still had sporadic terrorist activity, however remained involved on the political level within the PA and had achieved a certain legitimacy.

This study deals with the first two organizations – **Fatah** and **Hamas**. These two actors differ from one another though they both act in the same environment of a dysfunctional quasi-state – the Palestinian Authority. Both are strongly linked to outside forces which have had a restraining or agitating effect on them: Jordan and Egypt on one hand, and Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria on the other hand.

The methodology of this study is based on analysis of events and series of events which exemplified Israel's attempts to deter these organizations. The concepts used in this study are borrowed from modern theories of deterrence. These however tend to focus on the relationship between states and on the high end of potential conflict: confrontation between regular armies or nuclear conflict between states. These theories naturally overshadowed traditional descriptions of coercion – deterrence and compellence – which have existed since time immemorial for deterrence relations between states and between states and non-state (insurgents, guerillas, terrorists). The asymmetric relationship between a state (Israel) and non-state terrorist organizations renders state-to-state doctrines of deterrence unsuitable to many cases. The asymmetry however differs from case to case. The degree of state-like attributes of the organization, or the links between such an organization and a state with state-type

interests has a significant influence on strategies that can be implemented to coerce that organization.[1]

This study will also distinguish between **strategic** and **tactical** deterrence. Israel has succeeded in maintaining the former vis-à-vis neighboring states through both high-end conventional capabilities on the ground and in the air and through an assumption by those neighbors of an Israeli non-conventional capability. Deterrence of terrorist organizations however has been based – when it existed – mainly on **tactical deterrence** through day to day actions which add up to an ever-shifting perception of the object of deterrence regarding Israel's resolve to act against it. This perception is laden with cultural and psychological overtones and passed through overlapping prisms of history, culture, language, ideological axioms, modes of transmission and reception of information on the "other" and finally, the psyche of the leadership of the party to be deterred, identification of the decision makers with the interests which are threatened and the dynamics of threat assessment within that leadership. All of these must be assessed in order to arrive at a proper discussion of deterrence.

The study analyzes the threat that Palestinian terrorist groups posed to Israel since the Oslo accords in 1993. The paper will deal with the questions:

1. What was the nature of the threat that the Palestinian groups – Fatah and Hamas – posed to Israel?
2. Did Israel have a clear policy of deterrence and signaling deterrence and was this policy consistent throughout different governments?
3. What was the image of Israel's capability/willingness to respond to provocations in the eyes of those groups and the Palestinian Authority? To what extent were those images situation-dependent or linked to a specific group of Israeli leaders?

This analysis is the background for analysis of case studies in which Israel's deterrence towards Palestinian terrorism groups was tested, either by Israeli initiatives or by Israeli reactions (or lack of) to escalation of terrorist attacks. These case studies will be according to the following key subjects:

1. Political and military background of the event: what was the threat posed by the Palestinian group, what motivated it at that specific time to act.
2. The events on the ground – what happened and what forms of deterrent signals – direct and indirect, military and diplomatic – did Israel employ?
3. Intentions and perceptions of the parties towards the events.
4. What was the outcome – did Israel achieve its goals of deterrence or did the deterrence fail?

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[1] The most salient of these attributes are: level of leadership command and control and the existence of a vertical hierarchy; a social agenda and responsibility towards a given population; control over territory; methods of financing; purely national agendas or trans-national/ religious agendas. These attributes can explain many of the differences between the roads taken by different terrorist organizations – from national movements such as the IRA to transnational religious ones such as al-Qa'ida.

The Threat of Hamas and Fatah to Israel

Fatah

Fatah was the backbone of the PLO and of the PA since the Oslo accords. It represent a case of a non-state actor with political and organizational links to the PA and close links to the moderate Arab states with which Israel maintains some leverage. Fatah is not a homogenous movement, but is composed of a multitude of streams and lines of command:

1. On one hand, it contains a political stream, of which the present Chairman, Mahmoud Abbas is representative, which has come to eschew the use of terrorism and strives to achieve the goals of the movement through the political process and direct negotiations with Israel;
2. On the other hand, it contains a number of "subsidiary" organizations such as the Tanzim, Martyrs of al-Aqsa Brigades and the "Popular Resistance Committees", which are both in internal opposition to the first and use terrorism against Israel as the means to achieve their goals.
3. In the middle, the Fatah and Palestinian Authority security apparatuses controlled by Fatah (under Mohammad Dahlan, Jibril Rajoub, the "Presidential Security", formerly "Force 17" et alia) have been intermittently involved in terrorism.

Since the second Intifadah Fatah and its affiliates (Popular Resistance Committees, Tanzim, etc.) have been active in terrorism against Israel, using the same means employed by Hamas. The Palestinian Security apparatuses have also been involved in terrorist attacks or in support of such attacks by Fatah.

The organizational link between the three streams of Fatah pose a dilemma to Israel's attempts to deal with the terrorist manifestation of the movement. Attacks on the terrorist infrastructure affect the other two streams of Fatah and weaken them insofar as they are perceived within the movement as collaborating with Israel and being incapable of preventing the attacks. In terms of deterrence, it is clear to Israel that Mahmoud Abbas does not have to be deterred from terrorism but compelled to use whatever military force he has at his disposal to impose his rule – first on the other elements of Fatah and then on Hamas.

Hamas

The Hamas is essentially the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. The ideological sources of the organization are drawn directly from the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas sees itself formally as part of that organization. The link between Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhoods in Jordan and Egypt remain strong, and in the former where the Muslim Brotherhood is based on a large Palestinian constituency and has many Palestinians among its leaders, it is claimed that Hamas has, in essence, taken over the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood.

Hamas has been since the first Intifadah the main terrorist threat to Israel, overshadowed over the last years only by the increased involvement of Hezbollah in terrorism within Israel and WBG. Hamas is a case of an organization which acted both as a terrorist organization vis-à-vis Israel, and as a grass roots domestic opposition within the PA, which, like Hezbollah in Lebanon, integrates political,

social and military-terrorist agendas. Like in Fatah, One can find in Hamas various streams; a "political wing" inside the WBG area, which is ideologically and politically Hamas but is not directly involved in the organization's terrorist activities, the military cells of the organization in WBG ("The Martyr Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades") and the "outside" Hamas, based in Damascus, which in itself is composed of different streams and persons affiliated with different external forces (Syria, Iran) and is involved in directing both the political activity and the terrorism of the organization in WBG.

The founding of Hamas in late December 1987 was actually forced upon the movement by unfolding events: The Intifadah, which erupted in Gaza spontaneously, and for over a week had no leadership, while MB rank and file participating in it pressured the movement to take charge of the uprising; the rising star of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad organization, which was inspired by the Egyptian jihadists and the Iranian revolution, had no time for the MB's long term project of Islamizing society, and whose anti-Israeli operations gained it popular support and put the MB on the defensive; and the fear that the PLO could take the leadership of the Intifadah and defeat the MB in the struggle for control of the Palestinian cause. Hamas was set up as an armed resistance organization separate from the MB's da'wah and social activities, in order to protect the latter from Israeli retaliations, but with Hamas' growing importance in the Intifadah, it gradually became the core of the movement, and the older structure dealing with da'wah and social work became subservient to it. The publication of Hamas' Charter in August 1988 formalized its ideological transformation[2].

To subvert the Oslo Accords and the process of its implementation Hamas followed a double- pronged strategy. First, it escalated its terror activities against Israel, in order to face the PLO with a no-win dilemma: If it acted against the terrorists it would be discredited on the Palestinian street for collaborating with the occupation, and if it did not- it would cause a crisis with Israel. The escalation of terror was also designed to strengthen the opposition of Israelis to the Oslo process. Secondly, Hamas sought to undermine the legitimacy of the PLO and the Palestinian Authority (PA). Hamas stopped short, however, of openly confronting the PA, fearing its retaliations against its social and da'wah institutions[3].

As a Muslim Brotherhood type organization, the jihad of Hamas is directed against Israel as the "occupier" of Palestine. Hamas therefore does not target other Muslim regimes and during most of its history had usually refrained from actions that might precipitate a civil war among the Palestinians. As such, Hamas differs from the jihadi organizations in the Muslim world that usually target the "heretic" Muslim regimes and see their fall as a prerequisite for the Muslims to gather the strength necessary to fight Israel and the West.

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[2] Meir Litvak, "Hamas: Islam, Palestinian Identity and Jihad", in Meir Litvak (ed.), Islam and Democracy in the Arab world, Tel-Aviv: Kav Adom, 1998 (in Hebrew), pp. 148-153.
[3] Ibid, pp. 165-167.

Relevant Aspects of Leadership

Fatah

<u>Sources of Authority and Control</u>

For a generation Yasser Arafat had been a central figure in Palestinian politics – both symbolic and in practice. As a symbol, Arafat represents in his people's eyes a series of national achievements for all Palestinians: independent Palestinian representation, international support and the struggle against Israel. However, at the same time, he symbolized the "sector" of the refugees of 1948, epitomized in the demand for the "Right of Return". The dependence of the WB/Gaza public on his leadership meant that these "sectorial" demands became incorporated into the political agenda of conventional political opinion in the West Bank and Gaza.

During the Arafat era, he remained the sole main source of authority in Fatah, the PLO and the PA. Hence, he was perceived as the ultimate decision maker to whom all attempts to persuade or dissuade were directed. The total identification of the "Palestinian national interest" with his own personal interest made deterrence of Fatah and the PA contingent on Arafat believing that relief of the pressure would apply to himself as well. Without that assurance, indirect pressure on the PA and the Palestinian public was not effective (see case study "the siege of Arafat", p. 35)

Arafat's death created a vacuum of authority that Palestinian society lacked the tools to fill and a subsequent decentralization of authority. Arafat's authority was implemented through both soft power (his position as the "father" of the Palestinian movement, financial levers and control of the Palestinian media and "street") and hard power (assassination of opponents). Until his death, there was virtually no opposition to his authority as such.

Arafat's successor – Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) – could not benefit neither from Arafat's personal status, nor from his control of financial or military levers. Decision making under Abu Mazen, became, therefore, collective, consensual and decentralized, in sharp contrast to the centralist and individualist mode of Arafat's time. **Clearly, this shift had an effect on Israel's ability to deter Fatah/PA terrorism; whereas in the past Israel could focus on an individual leader, it now had to find a way to influence complex interactive processes between a large number of individuals and coalitions.** As Abu Mazen's regime weakened, the number of relevant individuals and groups grew and the complexity of Israel's task grew with it. This was evident during the events of "Summer Rain", when Israeli understandings with Abu Mazen had no effect on Fatah/Tanzim elements.

<u>Societal Factors</u>

The Palestinian leadership has been characterized in almost all the organizations by a dichotomy of the predominant "outside" leadership (the historic PLO/Fatah leadership that emerged in Jordan, Beirut and Tunis, or, in the case of Hamas, the members of the "political Bureau" in Damascus) and the subordinate "inside" leadership in the West Bank and Gaza ("graduates" of the first Intifadah and Israeli

jails). In Fatah, this distinction is roughly commensurate with the distinction between an "old guard" and a "young guard". Only few of the "founding fathers" of Fatah have survived, and none of them is of leadership stature or influence on the power bases which come close to that of Arafat (Abu Mazen and a few members of the Fatah Central Committee remain).

During the first Intifadah, the WB/Gaza gave birth to "local heroes" who were seen as authentic representatives of their public's interests and it seemed as if a local narrative was developing which could set aside the insoluble "Problem of 1948" . An important sector among these is that of the "prison graduates" of the secular mainstream, who enjoy a great deal of public admiration both as people who have recently suffered for the cause and also as people who are relatively clean (in contrast with the incumbent PA leadership).

The formal Palestinian democracy, however, as embodied in the legislative and the secular civil society (Academics, secularists and the business sector, who aspire to a society closer to that of Israel than to neighboring Arab models) is weak. **The Palestinian "civil society" has little weight in the balance of power and the influence of the members of the legislative is limited. This trait of Palestinian society is essential for an understanding of the efficacy (or lack thereof) of pressuring the leadership's ostensible "constituency" as a means to achieve indirect deterrence.** The weakness of the intelligentsia and the civil society was manifested throughout the various case studies, when Palestinian publicists warned that the continuation of policies of terrorism was counter-productive to Palestinian interests, but their warnings had little or no effect on the "people with the guns".

There has always been a difference between the "outside" and the "inside" in terms of interests, vulnerable assets and levers of influence. The constituency of the former is mainly the refugee population in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria and it tends to represent the goals of that population – return to pre-1948 Palestine. **The "external" leadership does not feel the pressures of the population in the West Bank and Gaza with the same intensity that local leaders do, and therefore, has not been as susceptible to pressures aimed at deterrence. However, this leadership – in both the historic PLO before the Oslo Accords and in present-day Hamas – has been predominant in the "inside-outside" relationship by dint of its control of financial assets and political links with the Arab world.**

Since the Oslo accords, the young "WB/Gaza leadership itself has had no "national leadership". While the first Intifadah did give rise to a cooperative leadership, which encompassed the whole area, these leaderships were weakened by the Oslo accords and the "import" of the PLO leadership. Arafat's own policies along with Israeli security measures, primarily cutting the WB off from Gaza and the closures within the WB, contributed to the fragmentation of the area.

Relationship with the "host state"

The Fatah leadership, since the Oslo Accords had been the leadership of the "host state" – the Palestinian Authority. Consequently, the "state" interests of the PA - particularly the main economic sectors which were dominated by the "exterior" Fatah oligarchy - were inherently linked to that oligarchy. **However, throughout the**

Arafat era, this economic oligarchy had limited influence over terrorist related policies (financial support of terrorist groups directly by Arafat, terrorist planning by Hamas, PIJ and even lower level Fatah activists).

Fatah also played a "democratic" political role in the PA as a political party in the PA parliament. However, public expectation that the PA would postpone elections indefinitely – and failing that rig them – tempered any sense of accountability to the electorate on the part of the Fatah oligarchy. **While economic pressures as result of the Intifadah were known to the Fatah oligarchy, they took their toll mainly from the indigenous WBG population and did not have a critical influence on the existential interests of that oligarchy.**

<u>Patron States</u>

Until the Oslo accords the PLO and Fatah were heavily dependent on patron states from which they received financial, military and political support. Foremost of these states were Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and – from time to time – Syria. However, the PLO support of Iraq in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 demonstrated the weakness of the financial leverage of the Gulf States over the PLO. During the Oslo era, the financial dependence of the PA on the Gulf States diminished due to the western support and the economic assets of the West Bank and Gaza which began to be exploited by the Fatah oligarchy. **Hence, utilization of economic pressure on Arab "host" states became less relevant as a lever over the PA.**

<u>Ideological Factors</u>

Fatah was founded as a secular nationalist organization and remained relatively pragmatic in its political maneuvering. The original Fatah ideology raised the "armed struggle" to the level of a sacrosanct principle which cannot be put aside. Over the years, Fatah developed a pragmatic approach towards this principle, moving it from the status of "the only means to liberate Palestine" to "the main means" and finally "one of the means along with other forms of struggle". **This shift provided the Fatah leadership with the ideological justification to reach agreements with Israel, including formal renunciation of terrorism (armed struggle). It also allowed Fatah to justify taking steps against its own terrorist elements in the light of the "Palestinian national interest".**

<u>Development of Intelligence Assessment and Image of Israel</u>

The Palestinians in general have a better collective acquaintance with Israel than any of its other Arab neighbors and tend to have a more realistic assessment of Israel's capabilities and constraints. The Hebrew press is avidly followed by the Palestinian intelligentsia and plays an important role in the intelligence assessment of the Palestinian leadership. In addition, the Fatah leadership at almost all levels maintains close and constant relations with Israelis – including at a senior level – many of whom are keen to serve as commentators of Israeli defense policy for their interlocutors.

Significantly for the efficacy of Israeli deterrence, the "inside" and the "outside" differ in their comprehension of the Israeli side. In general, the Palestinians from the

West Bank and Gaza tend to hold a more realistic view of Israel's interests and possible policies than their colleagues from the PLO in Tunis. It is noteworthy that "former prisoners", who were mentioned above, are frequently more moderate or pragmatic than their colleagues, especially those from Tunis. This may be attributed to the fact their knowledge of Hebrew and their first hand acquaintance with the complexities and sensitivities of Israeli society. In general, the "younger generation" of leaders is less centralist and hierarchic, and hence more "democratic" than their predecessors.

The leadership outside of WBG does not necessarily share the perceptions of the Palestinians in WBG; their perceptions of Israel often seem closer to those of Iran, Syria and Hezbollah than to those of their compatriots in the WBG. Therefore, the relatively accurate perceptions of the Palestinians in close contact with Israel (the "inside") are not necessarily shared or accepted by the leadership "outside". This dichotomy did not disappear with the importation of the PLO leadership to WBG after the Oslo accords; the "Tunis" leadership continued to view Israel in a more "ideological" way.

In any case, during the Arafat era, the "intelligence assessment" process was almost totally in the hands of Arafat himself. There is little evidence that he sought or received advice from those who had a better knowledge of Israeli politics than his. It may be construed that much of Arafat's decision making in the face of Israeli attempts to deter him from terrorist policies derived of his tendency to exaggerate the Israeli constraints and to ignore the power of Israeli public opinion in the face of increasing terrorism.

Hamas

Sources of Authority

Spiritual and political authority in Hamas is closely linked with the organization's self-image as a "branch" of a larger body – the Muslim Brotherhood Movement and the Islamic world in general. From the beginning Hamas was a merger of two distinct branches of the Muslim Brotherhood: the West Bank branch of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood; and the Gaza "Mojama'" which grew out of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. While the two branches grew together since the first Intifadah, the religious and social affiliations of their members remained distinct. Consequently, the dichotomist paradigm of an "interior" leadership (or even two "interior" leaderships) vs. an "exterior" leadership – each with its own particular interests, constraints and constituencies – is particularly relevant for Hamas. As noted above, this dichotomy was the cornerstone of the tension that existed before the Oslo accords between the (exterior) PLO and the (interior) WBG leaderships.

Whereas Fatah (and the PLO) was relatively autonomous in the ideological plane, and had only to defer to the nebulous concept of the "Arab consensus", as represented in ambiguous resolutions of Arab summits, **Hamas is tied with an ideological umbilical cord to the dominant Islamic sources of authority which are accepted by the "mother movement" – the Muslim Brotherhood. Furthermore, in contrast to most other MB type movements, which had their own "national" spiritual leaderships, Hamas has never had an indigenous authoritative spiritual leadership that could rule on matters of Islamic principle;** Even when Hamas's

founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was alive, the movement deferred to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo and Amman and the scholars in Mecca and the Gulf (such as Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi). Those scholars' rulings on matters of jihad do not demonstrate high levels of sensitivity to the needs of the Palestinians for stability and pragmatic political solutions.

The interior-exterior dichotomy also impacts the political plane. **The Hamas leadership in the West Bank and Gaza must also defer to the external leaders of the movement whose place of residence and ties to Syria and Iran also distance them from the day to day concerns of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza**.

Within this context, the deaths of the founder of Hamas , Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, his successor, Dr. Abed al-'Aziz Rantisi and the "Engineer" Isma'il Abu Shanab left the organization within WBG with neither a leader, nor an established procedure for choosing one. The existence of an "outside" leadership, which constituted the official "political office" of the organization also added to internal dissonance. Nevertheless, Sheikh Yassin was the unchallenged leader of the unified organization. Upon his death the "outside" leadership' led by Khaled Mash'al, tried to impose its hegemony by having Rantisi named as the leader of the Hamas in Gaza alone. Rantisi was strong enough to withstand the outside pressures, but he left no natural successor in either the West Bank or Gaza.

Without a clear and authoritative leader in Gaza, the weight of outside influences on the various factions of the organization has grown. These influences are not limited to the Hamas leadership in Damascus. They include Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood leaders in Egypt and Jordan. Hamas never really had an authoritative religious leadership, and has always relied on the authority of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders in these two countries. This dilemma was compounded by the fear of further Israeli targeted killings, the disconnection between elements of the organization in the West Bank and Gaza, on one hand and communication difficulties and differences with the leadership in Damascus on the other hand, uncertainty regarding an Israeli unilateral disengagement and regarding the relations with the PLO/PA, American pressure on the Palestinian security chiefs not to co-opt Hamas in security arrangements or in any future structure of the Palestinian Authority.

<u>Relations with the "Host" State</u>

The elections in the Palestinian Authority in February 2006 which brought Hamas to power in the governmental branch of the PA (the Presidential branch remained in the hands of Fatah) changed the nature of the relationship between it and the PA, in a manner somewhat analogous to that which existed between Fatah and the PA beforehand.

Hamas' landslide victory came as an unpleasant surprise to its leadership, who would have preferred wielding influence over a Fatah-based PA. They were well aware that power comes packaged with responsibility and accountability for acts of terror perpetrated from the territory of the PA and their consequences: Israeli reprisals, economic sanctions, and subsequent hardships for the Palestinians.

Nevertheless, the damage to the Hamas constituency did not deter Hamas from continuing terrorism; the decision making process on terrorism took place far from Gaza and the "political" branch of the organization which was concerned of ramifications for its own standing with the populace had no actual influence on terrorist policy.

<u>Patron States</u>

On the practical level, the Hamas government fared no better than the Fatah in controlling the "ground". **Control over the terrorist cells of Hamas – to the extent that it exists – is not by the political figureheads in the PA government but by the organization's external leaders, who receive their political, organizational, and financial support from Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.** All of these have a vested interest in fanning the flames of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. By those means, they would garner Arab popular support and create an atmosphere of crisis between Israel and the Palestinians that, along with the problems in Iraq, would tie the hands of the United States in dealing with any of them.

<u>Ideological Factors</u>

On the ideological level, Hamas is committed to the ultimate destruction of the State of Israel. This tenet of the Hamas ideology is embedded both in the Hamas Covenant and in current declaration by its leadership inside and outside the Palestinian territories. Palestine, however, in the eyes of Hamas is not Palestinian national territory (the Muslim Brotherhood ideology rejects the "artificial" division of Dar al-Islam to national states) but a "Muslim Waqf (inalienable property of the Muslims in general, administered by religious authorities for the public good). Hence, the Palestinian people alone do not have the right to compromise on Palestine or to give up part of it to Israel.

The Hamas differs ideologically from secular organizations in its religious attitude toward Israel as a "Jewish" state. Unlike the secular ideology of Fatah that takes pains to distinguish (albeit artificially) between "Zionists" who are the enemy and "Jews" who are allowed to live in liberated Palestine under certain circumstances, the ideology of Hamas focuses on the perfidy of the Jews; Hamas religious texts are replete with verses from the Qur'an and *Hadith* denouncing the Jews *per se* and demonizing them.

This uncompromising nature of the Hamas ideology constrains the organization's ability to manage a pragmatic policy towards Israel. The fact that Israel has already signed accords based on mutual recognition with the predecessor of the Hamas government placed the latter between a rock and a hard place; it cannot accept those accords, the opposition to which was its banner for over a decade; at the same time, it cannot ignore the principle of continuity of government as that would undermine the very legitimacy of its rule and provide Israel with a pretext to re-occupy the territories.

<u>Development of Intelligence Assessment and Image of Israel</u>

The Hamas assessment of Israel differs greatly from the "interior" and "exterior" components of the organization. The former has, as noted above, a clear and sober view of Israel's strength and willingness to wield its power. The "exterior" leadership however – which is that which orders terrorism – draws much of its assessment from its patrons – Iran, Syria and Hizballah.

The absence of a high level Hamas leadership in WBG that can command the respect of the exterior leadership renders much of the perceptions of the "interior" leadership irrelevant to deterring terrorism.

Israel's Deterrent Policy towards the Palestinians

The debate in Israel over deterrence of Palestinian terrorism has been overloaded with political and emotional overtones. **The conventional wisdom in Israel has been that such organizations cannot be effectively deterred, but should be fought until extirpated.**[4] Consequently, the politically sensitive aspect of dealing with terrorism in Israel precluded any official doctrine of deterrence, as that would imply acceptance of the assumption that those organizations cannot be eradicated. Some former officials pointed out that the predominance of the military and security sectors in counter-terrorism hindered the development of such an integrated policy.

Nevertheless, the Israeli defense community did believe from time to time that it had achieved a modicum of deterrence – local and transitory – towards certain organizations. In many such cases, the deterrence was said to be achieved by demonstration of power. These can be divided into two main categories:

1. **Proactive – even offensive measures** – included targeted killings (known in Hebrew as "focused disruption") of key terrorist planers and leaders (both in the territories and, according to international media, abroad), arrests inside Palestinian population centers and even wide-scale military actions such as the "Defensive Wall" operation (March-May 2002). Other focused acts for deterrence of the Palestinian organizations included the surrounding of Arafat's compound in Ramallah and occasional incursions into the compound to strengthen the declarations regarding the possibility that Israel may even expel Arafat from the WBG. While the primary motivation of the use of force was operational in the context of disruption of terrorism, the corollary of deterrence, when it emerged was added value. It is noteworthy that unlike Lebanon, where Israel was constrained from acting while Hezbollah built up its own deterrent arsenal, Israeli CT policy in WBG has been one of constant disruption through day to day operations to arrest wanted terrorists and to confiscate arms. While these actions were not intended as a deterrent per se, they have had a deterrent effect. The leadership of the Palestinian organizations, finding itself under pressure has refrained for different periods from terrorist attacks in order not to give Israel an excuse to step up its security activities.
2. **Preventive security measures** which made movement and communication difficult for terrorist activists. These included:

   - Defensive security, travel restrictions, closing of passages to Gaza closures and road blocks as both security measures and as means to bring popular pressure to bear on the leadership. These steps too were usually taken as disruptive tactics, intended to cause the terrorist organization to postpone an attack or to change its plans in a manner that would facilitate disruption..
   - Punitive measures such as demolition of houses of terrorists, expulsion (from Gaza to the West Bank and vice versa) etc.

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[4] Such a position was evident in interviews with a number of members of the Knesset Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee. The immediate response of one former chairman of the committee, for example, to the question of the study was: "Deterrence is relevant to states. Terrorist organizations have to be eradicated".

- Economic and political pressure on the populace through curfews, closures, etc. It was believed that such pressure would result in petitions of the local leaders to the "warlords" within the Palestinian territories and to the operators outside to lower the level of tension – even temporarily – to enable the lifting of the Israeli sanctions.

The efficacy of the proactive measures in disruption and deterrence of terrorist leaders can be proven. A study of terrorist attacks and intelligence on planning of attacks since 2000 shows that **at times that Israel was engaged in wide-scale proactive actions (particularly targeted killings), there was a decline in alerts deriving from intelligence on planned attacks and the number of actual attacks also declined.** While part of this decline is due to disruption (if the activist who is planning an attack is killed or arrested, he cannot plan it or carry it out), the conclusion of this study is that these actions also reduced the motivation of the leaders to plan attacks out of fear of an even more massive Israeli reaction and with the intention to lay down until the storm blows over. From that aspect, these activities did achieve deterrence.

The relevance to deterrence of preventive security measures that cause suffering to the population, though, has been widely debated in both public and professional circles in Israel. The belief that suffering of the populace that results from Israel's counter-terrorist measures can serve as leverage on the leadership was also behind Israel's "Grapes of Wrath" operation against Hezbollah in 1992 and played a role in the Israel-Lebanon war of 2006. Israeli CT activity against the Palestinian organizations has always been curtailed by Israel's obligations as the occupying power in the WBG territories and internal Israeli public opinion. **The fact that Israeli public opinion has been an open book to the Palestinian organizations has reduced the efficacy of these operations as deterrent acts.**

Nevertheless, it was believed that dispatchers and handlers and their operators and ultimately the top operational, political and spiritual level of the organizations can be deterred. This deterrence can be achieved by sustained disruption and destruction of the infrastructure of those organizations, including targeted killings. It was believed that such actions, though they were motivated by the need to disrupt terrorism, had a cumulative deterrent effect, since the price of planning attacks (loss of infrastructures and field operatives on a wholesale scale) was exorbitant for the benefit that those attacks were achieving. Although Israeli direct action against terrorists have been criticized both by from within Israel and by the international community, this has not inhibited Israel from targeted killings when the opportunity arises. The fact that there is no immunity or political circumstances in which Israel is deterred from acting serves in itself as a potent deterrent.

The Arafat Era

In the years prior to the Oslo accords, Israel's deterrent image was at its acme; Israel had demonstrated its "long arm" (1987) in reaching Tunis and killing Arafat's deputy and head of the "Western Sector" of Fatah, Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad). The first Intifadah had all but fizzled out and Israel had come out of the first Gulf war with tangible gains (the Madrid conference and US backing for the PLO not taking part in it). At the same time, the PLO leadership was at an all-time nadir; Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states had boycotted Arafat, the PLO was in serious cash-flow problems and

the leadership had lost much of its influence in the West Bank and Gaza to a burgeoning local leadership. The diminished status of the PLO also played a role in enhancing Israel's deterrent image in its eyes.

During the Arafat era in the Palestinian Authority, Israel saw the PA as responsible not only for terrorism perpetrated by Fatah and its own security apparatuses but also for attacks performed by Hamas. **Therefore, much of the effort to deter Fatah by way of pressure or threats towards the PA (and Arafat personally) was also intended to have an indirect deterrent effect on Hamas.**

A senior Israeli who was involved in the managing of the relations with the PA during the Arafat period claimed[5] that **Israel had no strategy of deterrence towards Arafat. The strategy was to entice Arafat to renounce terrorism and to dismantle the terrorist apparatuses by a vision of future benefits that would derive from the success of the Oslo process.** Arafat's refusal to these incentives was both ideological and strategic in essence; on the ideological plane, he could not forego the "armed struggle" or see those involved in it as "enemies of the state", while on the political level he believed that only by constant terrorist pressure by Hamas (as Arafat's "alter ego") and the maintaining of the Fatah as a "strategic reserve" for future terrorism, would Israel make future concessions. This view is today largely accepted by many Israelis who were involved in the process at the time.

The period of the second Intifadah (2000 onwards) was fraught with Israeli attempts to persuade Arafat to desist from encouragement of terrorism. **The Israeli threats of retaliation during the first few months of the Intifadah seemed not to have had much credibility in Palestinian eyes.** It is however of interest that this changed after the election of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister and after the terrorist attacks of September 11th in the U.S. According to Israelis who followed the Palestinian scene at the time, **Arafat's call of 16 December to refrain from terrorism was motivated by his final understanding that 9/11 had tipped the scales in Israel's favor: it had caused a fundamental change in the western world's tolerance towards terrorism; Israeli reactions to Palestinian terrorism would be viewed more sympathetically;** the U.S. action against Afghanistan overshadowed any Israeli action against the PA and gave Israel a relative free hand. In addition, from mid November, public opinion polls in Israel indicated that the Labor government would not be returned and that Arafat's historic nemesis, Ariel Sharon may be elected as Prime Minister, with a mandate to deal with the violence of the Intifadah. This assessment of Arafat regarding Israeli developments and international support for a firm Israeli reaction to terrorism enhanced Israel's deterrence and brought him to attempt to lower the level of terrorism. **In fact, after Arafat's call of 16 December, the number of weekly terrorist attacks went down from 100 to 79 and then to 40 and even to 20.** This continued until 14 January when Israel killed the Fatah activist leader, Raid Karmi, after which the number of attacks went up again.

Probably one of the more well know sustained efforts on the part of Israel was the "siege" on Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah, which effectively imprisoned him there until his illness and death and put pressure on the PA security

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[5] Interview with Maj. Gen. (rtd) Danny Yatom, 20 September 2006.

apparatuses. Some Israeli decision makers believed (or claimed to believe) that this pressure would convince Arafat, who still had broad control over the various Fatah factions and apparatuses, to rein them in. This belief went further than the side-benefit of deterrence that was expected from the disruptive actions; it implied that direct personal pressure on the top leadership can serve as compellence and change the policy of that leadership on terrorism.

Ultimately, this did not materialize; Arafat withstood the pressure for reform and cessation of terrorism until the end, rejecting pleas by his colleagues in the historic leadership of Fatah to change the policy in order to force Israel to relieve its pressure.[6] The Israeli strategy did result in protracted negotiations over the terms for freeing Arafat. **However, ultimately it did not produce the deterrent or coercive effect that it was intended for.** Inasmuch as pressure did result in commitments on the part of Arafat to restrain Fatah terrorist activities, these commitments were given only in order to satisfy international (US and UK) and Arab (Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia) pressure and to fend off a direct threat to the interests of the leadership and were not the result of public pressure. In any case they were never fulfilled.

At the same time, the Israeli military and security leadership debated whether or not Palestinian terrorism was a "bottomless pit" or one with a floor, and if the latter, how close Israel was through its policy of disruption to reaching that floor. The former view was espoused by Military Intelligence, while the latter adopted by the Director of the Israel Security Agency (Shin-Bet), Avi Dichter. The former view lead to the conclusion, as it was formulated by the Chief of Staff, Moshe (Bugi) Ya'alon, that Israel had to "burn into the Palestinian and Arab consciousness" that terrorism does not pay[7]. This goal called for building a "Blocking Wall" that would demonstrate to the terrorist organizations that their efforts to cause significant damage to Israel are in vain, on the one hand, and directing measures towards the Palestinian population (detailed above) in order to induce it to put pressure on the Palestinian organizations to put an end to terrorism against Israel, on the other hand.[8]

None of these steps achieved the desired goal of deterrence or compellence either. A number of reasons for the failure of these policies during the Arafat era can be noted:

1. Arafat's personalized authoritarian rule and focus on his personal interests– when petitioned by Fatah leaders to restrict the terrorist activity of Fatah and to crack down on Hamas in order to lower the Israeli pressure, Arafat refused, on the grounds that any concession he would give would only be used to increase the pressure upon him and eventually depose him.[9] **Israeli pressure was employed towards the "Palestinian Authority" as an entity, on the assumption that Arafat would perceive the damage to PA interests as detrimental to himself,**

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[6] A senior Fatah leader narrated a meeting with Arafat a month before his hospitalization. He had begged Arafat to at least tactically accept some of the Israeli and American demands. Arafat's reply was that "as long as I am under siege, you will all be under siege and all of Palestine will be under siege". Personal communication to SB.
[7] Ya'alon interview with Ari Shavit, 30 August, 2002.
[8] Personal communication with Gen. (rtd) Amos Malka, former Director of Military Intelligence.
[9] See reference 7.

however this classic deterrence calculus of cost-benefit apparently did not apply; Arafat's frame of reference was personal and not collective. His main interest was his own personal survival as head of the PA, and perceived any concession to Israeli pressure as a contribution to a greater Israeli scheme to depose him.

2. Arafat conducted a strategy of "controlled chaos". The intention behind that was he and only he would be able to rein in the anarchy that he encouraged, thus preserving his indispensability. This policy eventually downgraded Arafat's own ability to control the chaos he himself had generated. **Since deterrence is predicated on the existence of a command structure that can translate the leadership's sense of being deterred to the ground, the chaotic decentralization that took place in the PA and \Fatah made such translation difficult.** This difficulty was compounded by the fragmentation of the Palestinian society which made it virtually impossible to find a deterrent or incentive that would operate equally on all – or even most – factions. **Any act that would create a deterrent for one group would encourage another one to inherit its place by initiating further acts of terrorism.**

3. The level of violence inherent in Palestinian society since the first Intifadah – and more so since the second one precludes influence of the "public" over the various factions. **Members of the public who may eschew the culture of violence or did not want to pay the price for it did not have the confidence in their security from the military groups necessary to protest or act against them. This characteristic of the "host society" neutralized the potential of indirect deterrence through threats to the interests of the "civil society"**

The Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) Era

Some of these reasons faded with the demise of Arafat. Others however remained permanent factors of the Palestinian theatre. The Arafat policy of laiser faire, and creating controlled chaos eventually created a multi-polar terrorist space in the West Bank and especially in Gaza with no one "address". Whilst Arafat was at the helm, he could conceivably have used his personal influence and financial perks to rein in the various groups. Since his demise, there is no individual person in the PA with enough succulent carrots and hard enough sticks to influence the plethora of warlords who have taken over the Palestinian scene.[10] **The result was that Abu Mazen lacked the control over the field elements in Fatah that Arafat had, and therefore, even were he to agree to be "deterred" he had no leverage for transferring this deterrence to the "warlords" of Fatah, and even less to Hamas.**

Consequently, the death of Arafat and the election of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as head of Fatah, the PLO and the PA denied Israel of much of the former levers of deterrence over Fatah. Not only did he himself lack the power to respond to Israel's pressures, but **the very fact that he – and not Arafat, whose international credibility had been tarnished – was the target of Israel's deterrence restricted the levers that Israel could wield.** This was not due to international pressure alone;

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[10] The situation has been likened by one senior Israeli intelligence officer to deterrence of organized crime as opposed to small non-organized criminals. The former is much easier, once a clear picture of the "godfather's" interests is drawn. In the case of the latter, there is no way to develop a comprehensive policy of deterrence that would apply to hundreds of autonomous warlords.

Israel had an interest in perpetuating and enhancing the leadership of Abu Mazen (like Fouad Siniora in Lebanon), whose positions on the peace process are more likely to allow for re-engagement in negotiations in the future.

The Hamas Government

The election of the Hamas government in February 2006 was seen by some in Israel and in the international community as a potential blessing in disguise. **According to one theory, it would provide Hamas with "something to lose" that could be used as leverage for deterrence and compellence and ultimately to wean it away from its policies of terror. According to this theory, internal pressures of the Palestinian public, in dire need of respite from violence and of a pragmatic relationship with Israel, would result in a gradual moderation of the Hamas ideology and reduce its propensity for a terrorist policy and Hamas will find itself forced to implement changes in its radical ideology and terrorist policies.[11]**

This did not come to pass. The Hamas leadership itself would have preferred wielding influence over a Fatah based PA, free of public accountability and possible loss of public support due to Israeli responses to acts of terror perpetrated from the territory of the PA. It knew that, even if it wanted to, it would not fare better than the Fatah in reining in the multitude of warlords and imposing a central authority on them. The events of summer 2006 proved that it is not the political figureheads of Hamas in the PA government who control the terrorist infrastructure but rather the organization's external leadership. The latter receives its political, organizational and financial support from Syria, Iran and radical elements in Saudi Arabia and is much less susceptible than the local leaders to pressures of the population.

Targeted Killings and Arrests of Political Leaders

Targeted killing of top and medium level leaders has been a central instrument in Israel's arsenal in the struggle against Palestinian terrorism. Its efficacy in achieving a clear-cut result is not debated. The debate within Israel and between Israel and some of the western countries related to possible counter-productivity of these acts insofar as they increase the motivation of the targeted organizations to take revenge. **The fact that many terrorist attacks in Israel were attributed by their perpetrators to be revenge for the killing of some figure by Israel contributed to the sense that targeted killings not only do not deter but feed a "cycle of violence". This logic however was never accepted within the Israeli security community. The conventional wisdom in this community has been that a leadership with a sense of impunity contributes to the scope of terrorist planning, whereas a leadership which has to dedicate most of its operational resources to hiding and evading targeting will be less involved in actual terrorist planning.**

Retaliation against leaders continued to be seen in Israel as a major means for deterrence of future terrorism. According to most Israeli intelligence chiefs

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[11] This attitude was raised in Israeli security circles after the elections, though did not gain much currency.

interviewed in this project, the goal of these operations was not disruption alone but deterrence.[12] A number of historic examples were cited in this context:

1. The series of killings of the Fatah/Black September terrorists who had been involved in the Munich Olympics massacre of 5 September 1972[13] was viewed by Israel not only as retribution but as projecting a message of deterrence by demonstration of both intelligence dominance, resolve and operational capability of a "long arm" far from Israel's borders.[14] The end result of these operations was, in fact, that Fatah ceased for a long period of time to perform international terrorism and "Black September" (the pseudonym of the "Unified Security" apparatus of Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyyad) ceased to exist. The decision to refrain from international terrorism was formalized in a decision by the PLO in 1974 and reiterated a number of times since.

2. At the end of the 1980's Fatah renewed its involvement in international terrorism against Israel by the killing of Israelis in Larnaka (25 September 1985) and Barcelona (two Israeli sailors found dead after having been tortured for days on 8 October 1985) and the hijacking of the Achille Lauro (October 7 1985 – PLF/Abu Abbas under Fatah auspices). **The bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunis (1 October 1985) brought Fatah (Yasser Arafat) to the conclusion that the price of international terrorism is too high and to commit himself in the "Cairo Declaration" (7 November 1985) to a cessation of such acts.** In fact, in the wake of the Israeli retaliation and international pressure after the Achille Lauro affair, Fatah again ceased international terrorism. **The Israeli bombing of Tunis served not only as direct deterrence by punishment but also as indirect deterrence towards the host country – Tunis.** Unlike Lebanon which did not have the capability to impose its will on terrorist organizations in its territory, the Tunisian authorities began to put pressure on Arafat after the bombing.

At the beginning of the second Intifadah, the Palestinian organizations and Fatah in particular could assume immunity for its political leadership that was involved in terrorist activity and Israel would only act against the field operatives. This assumption contributed to the sense of impunity of those leaders, and hence to the image of diminished Israeli deterrence. It was based on: the outcome of the Khaled Masha'l affair (see case study no. 1), when Israel was compelled to provide the antidote to save Khaled Masha'l's life, to release Sheikh Ahmad Yassin from jail and to guarantee his safety in Gaza; Israel's de facto policy of refraining from hitting political level leaders; domestic Israeli considerations in the light of the links between the Palestinian political leaders and influential Israelis; and the assumption that international pressure would constrain Israel from acting against political figures.

This policy changed gradually during the Intifadah. Israeli introduced a policy of targeting high echelon Palestinian leaders as well as low echelon "ticking bombs" in

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[12] Interview with Shabtai Shavit, Danny Yatom and others.

[13] Operation "Spring of Youth" (Aviv Ne'urim) in April 1973 effectively put an end to Fatah international terrorism, though Israel allegedly continued the targeted killings of those who were involved in the Munich massacre after that.

[14] Interview with Shabtai Shavit (former Head of ISIS –Mossad), and lecture by Avi Dichter (former Head of ISA) on 29 December 2005 at Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Peace Watch # 533. http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2427

order to disrupt not only the bottom end of the terrorism chain (the "ticking bombs") but the key links at the top of the chain. From 2001 onwards, Israel implemented a comprehensive policy of targeted killing of top and medium level leaders involved in terrorism. These encompassed the whole range of Palestinian organizations – from the PIJ and Hamas to Fatah and the PFLP. **It was believed that such actions, though they were motivated by the need to disrupt terrorism, had a cumulative deterrent effect, since the price of planning attacks (loss of infrastructures and field operatives on a wholesale scale) was greater than the benefit that those attacks were achieving.[15]** The climate of international understanding for Israel's predicament in the face of suicide terrorism was a key factor in the decision to implement this policy.

A working hypothesis of Israeli counter-terrorist policy was that deterrence worked differently on different organizations. Therefore, an undeclared "price list" was worked out.[16] As a result, though figures such as Tewfiq Tirawi,[17] Jibril Rajoub and Arafat himself were clearly involved in terrorism, they were not targeted by Israel. This immunity was less clear regarding the leftist organizations, the level of "permitted targets" was higher in the case of Hamas and the distinction between political and military-terrorist levels was almost non-existent regarding the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

The scale however changed as Palestinian violence grew. Israel allowed itself then to raise the price of involvement in terrorism for each category. The following cases exemplify this shift:

1. Dr. Thabet Thabet (31 December 2000) – Thabet had been involved in dialogues with Israeli peace movements but since the Intifadah began to organize terrorist activity. His killing indicated that links with Israelis would not provide immunity to people involved in terrorism.
2. **Abu Ali Mustafa (PFLP) —** On 21 August 2001 the Secretary General of the PFLP, Abu Ali Mustafa was killed in his headquarters in Ramallah by a precision guided missile fired from a helicopter. Israel claimed that Mustafa has been in the course of preparing a large-scale terrorist attack. The attack was perceived by Palestinians as a new stage in the confrontation with Israel. Rather than seeing the killing as an Israeli signal of deterrence, Palestinian intellectuals called stridently for adoption of more violent policies, including pursuit of the "enemy" (naming

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[15] This is the conclusion – in retrospect – of a number of senior interviewees. It is doubtful though that in the heat of the action, that such "strategic" considerations were thought out systematically. The Israeli political and military leadership was faced at the time with the need to prove to the citizens of Israel that they are doing all that can be done to prevent and pre-empt terrorism. The slogan "Let the IDF win" (i.e. remove political constraints from the IDF command) which the right wing raised also put pressure on the leadership to demonstrate a willingness to employ military action and to show that Israel had not foregone its traditional defense strategy of pre-emption.

[16] From discussions with a number of former senior officials.

[17] One expression of the differentiation between organizations was that Tewfiq Tirawwi, despite the clear intelligence that he was involved in terrorism, kept open channels of communication with the ISA (Shin-Bet) at high levels and no attempt to kill him was made. Israel's actions towards him (and others in Fatah) remained on the level of restriction of movement and denunciation.

Israeli and American targets) "everywhere" (a common Palestinian euphemism for terrorism outside of the borders of Israel and Palestine).[18]

3. The killing of Ra'id Karmi (14 January 2002) – Raid Karmi was involved in a number of terrorist attacks. He survived an earlier attempt to kill him in September 2001. Karmi was the leader of the Fatah "Al-Aqsa Brigades" in the city of Tul Karem. After he was killed, Fatah members claimed that he had frozen plans for terrorist attacks on the orders of Arafat and due to the pressure that Israel had imposed.[19] This has never been confirmed, however, during the period between 9/11 and the killing of Karmi, there had been a certain lull in terrorist attacks by Fatah. There is no evidence that this resulted from Israeli pressure, and some analysts claim that it was the result of the events of 9/11. In the wake of this killing there was a spate of revenge attacks which eventually led up to what was called "Black March"[20]

4. The arrest of the Fatah leader and member of the PA legislative council, Marwan Barghouti (April 2002). This arrest again served to emphasize that even members of the Palestinian legislature and those who had close connections with Israelis were not immune.

5. The siege on Arafat's Ramallah Headquarters (the Moqata'ah) in April 2002 where Arafat remained prisoner until he fell ill and died in 2004.

6. The killing of Salah Shehadeh (22 July 2002) by a one ton bomb on his headquarters which caused many civilian casualties. Israel responded to the criticism by warning that anyone around a person who is involved in terrorism may be hit.

7. The killing of Sheikh Yassin (22 March 2004) and then his successor in Hamas, Abd al-Aziz Rantisi (17 April 2004). In these killings, Israel indicated that all levels of the Hamas leadership were "fair game". The killing of Sheikh Yassin was particularly instructive as it indicated that Israel will no longer honor the agreement under which it freed him and allowed him to return to Gaza.

Israel's intentions in all these killings were both preventive and deterrent. It was believed – a belief which later proved itself – that decapitation served not only a disruptive goal but also induced an atmosphere of fear and caution which was translated into less terrorist activity. The different targets listed above also served to transmit different messages. For example, the fact that Abu 'Ali Mustafa was also a political figure did not accord him immunity. Similarly, Thabet had been involved in dialogues with Israeli peace movements but since the Intifadah began to organize terrorist activity. His killing indicated that links with Israelis would not provide immunity to people involved in terrorism even if they were also involved in contacts with Israelis. The killing of Salah Shehadeh also sent a signal that the proximity of innocent civilians will not accord immunity.

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[18] Article of Hani Habib, Al-Ayyam, 27.8.01; Article of d. Ahmad al-Majdalani, al-Ayyam, 29.8.01; Articles of Talal Ocal and abdallah Awwad, al-Ayyam, 30.8.02; Articles of Ashraf al-Ajrami and Rajab Abu Saraya, al-Ayyam, 31.8.01

[19] See Ofer Shelah, Raviv Druker, Boomerang, kishlon hamnhifut ba–Intifadah ha–shniya (Boomerang – the failure of leadership in the second Intifadah), Keter, Tel Aviv, 2005.

[20] March 2002 – 135 Israelis were killed in terrorist acts in one month. This period precipitated the "Homat Maghen" operation (29 March–10 May).

Finally, the killings of Sheikh Yassin and 'Abd al-'Aziz Rantisi were intended to demonstrate that Israel would no longer honor its commitment to King Hussein after the Mash'al affair not to harm Yassin. By extension, this message was meant to warn Mash'al as well. Israeli statements after the killing of Yassin and Rantisi that the targeted killings of leaders of Hamas will continue virtually paralyzed the Hamas leadership in Gaza. The top echelon of the organization has gone deep underground and is rarely seen in public. Though the organization announced that it has chosen a new leader to replace Rantisi, but will not declare his name (and even published an official denial to the reports in Israel that Mahmoud al–Zahar had been nominated), well placed Palestinian sources have reported that the group has not succeeded in nominating one of the top leaders. The compromise was that the leadership will pass in rotation between Mahmoud al-Zahar, Isma'il Haniyya and Sa'id A-Siyam every six months in this order. The secrecy regarding who is leading the organization disrupted the chain of command within the organization.

A study that was performed by Israeli defense experts focused on the deterrent value of the targeted killings. The study found a steep decline in the number of Israeli casualties from suicide attacks immediately after the "Defensive Wall" operation in April 2002. This, of course can be attributed to the disruptive value of the operation: the fact that Israeli forces had re-entered the Palestinian cities for the first time since the Oslo Accords and were performing wide-scale arrests and uncovering of weapons and explosives. However, the number of attempts to perform suicide attacks continued to rise. These statistics may indicate that the efficacy of the Israeli disruption and not deterrence (i.e. a decline in motivation for fear of the price) was the reason for the decline in successful attacks. The percentage of attacks that were disrupted rose after "Defensive Wall" from 20%-40% up to 80% of the attempts. The decline in the chances for success of a planed attack did not seem to have a measurable effect on the motivation of the planners.

However, from the summer of 2003, this changed. From the second quarter of 2003 there has been a steep decline in the number of suicide bombing attempts, and not only in the number of successful attempts. This can be attributed partially to the security fence. 130 km of the fence was already in place and operational by July 2003. There is ample proof from interviews with terrorist planners and would-be suicide bombers, that the barrier forced them to put energy into ways to circumvent it and reduced the ease of planning a terrorist attack.[21] In June 2003 the Palestinians began to offer a "tahdiya" (temporary cease fire). Israeli experts viewed this offer as a direct result of the deterrent effect of the concerted campaign of targeted killings.[22]

However, it seems that the fence was not the only element that reduced the number of attempts to send suicide bombers into Israel. **The conclusion seems to be that the targeted killings were instrumental in reducing the motivation for preparing attacks.[23]** From the beginning of 2003, the strategy of targeted killings had changed. Whereas, until "Defensive Wall", it had been used as a purely defensive tactic – *in extremis* – when the target was clearly defined as a "ticking bomb", from 2003

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[21] http://www.intelligence.org.il/eng/var/samaria_12_03.htm
[22] Based on almost all the interviewees in the project.
[23] The data and analysis is taken from an unpublished study prepared by Brig. Gen (res) Dr. Itshak Ben-Israel entitled "Dealing with Suicide Terrorism – the Israeli Case" (Hebrew)..

onwards, Israel adopted a strategy of targeting critical individuals for the "production line" of the suicide bomber industry.

This policy was based on the assumption that without the command level of recruiters, handlers and "engineers" (those who prepared the explosive vests), the willingness of the potential suicide bombers could not come into play. **While the suicide bombers themselves could not be deterred, it was believed that their recruiters and handlers could be.[24]** This was evident in various cases in the beginning of the Intifadah, in which the IDF succeeded in surrounding a hiding place of senior activist who preferred to surrender themselves, rather than to fight to the death.[25] Such activists who were asked why they did not blow themselves up with the Israeli soldiers explained that there are those whose destiny is to become martyrs and those who have the expertise to prepare the martyrs.[26] Whether their lack of enthusiasm to become martyrs was due to natural aversion towards such an eventuality or because of their professed commitment to the cause, the targeted killings caused them to take precautionary measures and ultimately to reduce the scope of their operations.

The targeted killings also demonstrated Israel's "intelligence dominance" in the field, which in itself had a deterrent effect. A Hamas directive to activists from that period warns them that "the Zionist enemy has succeeded in assassinating many of the brother fighters, and that is at a time that we are in need of every pure fighter…the electronic spy planes do not leave the sky of Gaza, the many (Israeli) eyes on which the task has been placed do not slumber and the Apache helicopters are ready with missiles and waiting for an opportunity. You are under close surveillance 24 hours a day. You are a target for assassination every day and every hour…"[27]

On the other hand, unsuccessful targeted killings – particularly those which resulted in politically inconvenient consequences for Israel, such as large numbers of Palestinian civilian casualties or international censure – frequently had an adverse effect on deterrence. This was evident in the case of the Mash'al affair (case study no. 1) and a number of botched attempts to kill the commander of the Hamas Izadin Qassam group in Gaza, Mohammad Dif. In the first case, Hamas knew that Israel's failure had purchased Mash'al an "insurance policy" against future Israeli attempts to kill him; in the second, Hamas knew that Israel would continue to attempt to kill Dif, who was responsible for the death of hundreds of Israelis, whether he refrained from terrorism at that point or not.

In the first stages of the targeted killings, the Palestinians regarded them as a failure of Palestinian defensive measures rather than an Israeli success, and they called for the adoption of a list of defensive steps.[28] Some Palestinian "civil society"

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[24] This was the explicit position of the ISA.

[25] Cases like Abdallah Barghouti, Ibrahim Hamed and Muhanmad Abu Ouda (Hamas "engineers" who were responsible for the death of tens of Israelis) Amjad Ubeidi (PIJ) and Marwan Barghouti (Fatah) who had dispatched suicide bombers for the Tanzim.

[26] Interview in jail with a "bomb maker" done by

[27] Hamas document in the Malam (Center for Special Studies of the Israeli Intelligence community).

[28] Article of Hani Habib, al-Ayyam, 27.8.01; Article of Ahmad al-Majdalani, al-Ayyam, 29.8.01; Article of Abdallah Awwad, al-Ayyam, 30.8.01

publicists saw them as a clear expression of Israeli military and intelligence dominance, that the Palestinians should take into account. The killings were also perceived as an Israeli attempt to provoke the Palestinians to retaliate by more terrorism, thus justifying what they perceived as PM Sharon's policy of reducing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to an equation of "security and terror". Their conclusion therefore was that the Palestinians should formulate a single, coordinated strategy, which would include the stopping of the suicide attacks.[29] This school of thought argued that a "quality" terrorist attack by Hamas will not deter Israel, since the latter will have the upper hand, militarily, whereas adoption of a paradigm of non-violent resistance would have a better chance of promoting the Palestinian national goals.[30]

The argument that the targeted killings served a clear deterrent role is supported by the debate within the Palestinian leadership both in the PA and abroad regarding a "*hudnah*" (cease-fire).[31] This concept went through a number of stages:

1.   In January 2004, under the impression of Israel's campaign of targeted killings, Abdel Aziz Rantissi offered a 10-year *hudnah* in return for complete withdrawal from all territories captured in the Six Day War, and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Rantissi justified the offer by the difficulty to liberate all of Palestine at this stage.
2.   In June 2004, after the killing of Sheikh Yassin and Rantisi, Hamas declared a unilateral "*hudnah*". Israel agreed informally to restrict military action to "ticking bombs" – terrorists on their way to attacks. The "*hudnah*" lasted for a period between one month (with Jihad and al-Aqsa Brigades) and two months (until 8 August with Hamas). The *hudnah* was a clear indication of the effects that proactive Israeli counter-terrorism activity had on the Palestinians. In this case, almost all channels of deterrence were involved; direct action against the organizations and targeted killings of the leaders, which brought them to the need for a breathing spell, pressure of the host quasi-state (the PA) and of surrounding states (Egypt), and finally public pressure from the Palestinian public.

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[29] Article of Muhannad abd al-Hamid, al-Ayyam, 23.4.04
[30] Article of Hani al-Masri, al-Ayyam, 27.3.04
[31] The idea of a "*hudnah*" was raised by the spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin as early as 1993, when he distinguished between "peace" or "reconciliation" (*sulh*) with Israel, which he rejected, and a ceasefire or truce (*hudnah*). S*ulh,* is a term used in Arabic in the context of reconciliation between tribes or families and cancellation of pending pretexts for vengeance. It is usually perceived as having a stronger legal and obligatory sense than the alternative word – *salam*. The concept of *hudnah* is drawn from Islamic sources and is a classic outcome of deterrence. Hudnah is a temporary cease fire, which the Muslims may agree to due to a period of weakness. It must be restricted in time and while it is maintained, the two sides do not engage in military hostilities, however continue to prepare for the next engagement. In Islamic history, the concept is associated with the Hudaybiya Treaty which the Prophet signed with the Tribe of Quraysh in the year 628. The treaty was signed for ten years and stipulated the conditions under which the Muslims could enter Mecca, unarmed, for the annual pilgrimage. The treaty was broken by the Muslims two years later. The Hudaybiya Treaty was a classic accommodation by Mohammad, who even agreed to drop the title "Prophet of Allah" in the text in the face of the Meccan deterrence. In the Palestinian context, the concept of *hudnah* was revived by Yasser Arafat, who compared, in a speech in South Africa to a closed Muslim audience, the Oslo Accords to the Hudaybiya Treaty, implying that this "*hudnah*", like Hudaybiya can be rendered null and void if the circumstances arise. While this comparison did not augur well for the peace process, it did shed light on the effects of Israeli deterrence on Arafat; he had expressed his acceptance of Israeli dominance and deterrence at this stage.

3.	After the election of the Hamas government, the concept of the *hudnah* morphed into a "*tahdiyah*" (form the same root – meaning "quiet" or "calm" without the Islamic overtones of the Hudaybiya Treaty. The "*tahdiyah*" is perceived as a moratorium on terrorist attacks inside Israel whilst continuing the launching of rockets. In the light of the decline in successes of attacks inside Israel, the proposal is, in fact, formalization of the limitations that exist in any case on the terrorist activities of Hamas.

4.	In the wake of the Israeli operations (including continuous targeted killings) from June 2006 onwards in response to the kidnapping of the Israeli soldier, Gilead Shalit and the shelling of the border town of Sederot, Hamas again called for a cease fire (*tahdiya*) and declared a unilateral cease fire which it succeeded in preserving despite violations on the part of Fatah forces (apparently linked to Hizballah)

Indirect Deterrence

Ostensibly, the Palestinians are susceptible to the pressures of "host" or "patron" states. The weakness of the "host state" (the Palestinian Authority") and its dependence on the charity of the Arab states provides the donor states with a potential leverage over it, while the integration of the different Palestinian organizations in the PA makes them a party to that dependence. Throughout the Intifadah, Israel saw the various offshoots of Fatah as more susceptible to pressures imposed on the PA due to their vested interests in the PA

There is however no single "patron" of the Palestinians that can be targeted for indirect deterrence of Palestinian terrorism in general. For Fatah and the PA, the moderate Arab states were perceived in Israel as potential levers for restraining the terrorist organizations. Deterrent messages were frequently sent through Egyptian and Jordanian intelligence channels and the same channels added their own interpretations, frequently in order to deter the Palestinians from terrorist activities.

On the other hand, for Hamas (and PIJ), Iran and Syria were – and still are – seen as "patrons" with indirect responsibility for the terrorist attacks of those organizations. Both have vested interests in fanning the flames of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as a means to garner Arab popular support and anti-Americanism and to create an atmosphere of crisis between Israel and the Palestinians that, along with the problems in Iraq, would tie the hands of the US in dealing with either of them.

Israel has regularly accused **Syria** of hosting, financing and providing logistic support for Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, in addition to the traditional pro-Syrian groups (PFLP/GC – Ahmad Jibril et alia). Furthermore, in the wake of terrorist attacks with clear links to the Hamas or PIJ infrastructure in Damascus, Israel has issued, from time to time, veiled warnings that Syria may pay the price of its hospitality. However, throughout the almost five years of the Intifadah, Israel has retaliated against Syria only once. This was on October 4, 2003, when Israel attacked a Islamic Jihad training camp at Ein Al-Sahab near Damascus, in retaliation for an attack on a restaurant in Haifa which was directed from Damascus. Syria did not react militarily to the attack. This attack however did not induce any change in Syria's behavior and was not repeated. Israel's dilemma was clear; any military action has the potential of igniting an all-out war with Syria. Consequently, the Syrian regime has no reason to be deterred by Israeli threats, which it can assess both rationally empirically, have no cover.

Case Studies

Attempt to Kill Khaled Mash'al (1997)

Background

During 1996-1997 Hamas was involved in a series of suicide bombings in Israel. The bombing of 30 July 1997 in Mahaneh Yehudah in Jerusalem brought PM Netanyahu to the decision to target a senior Hamas leader outside the WBG area.

The decision to target a senior Hamas figure outside the WBG area was due to the absence of any significant targets inside WBG. At the time, the only relevant senior figure was the spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin – who was in Israeli jail.

Events on the Ground

On September 25 1997 Israeli Mossad agents intercepted the head of the Hamas "political bureau" Khaled Mash'al in Amman and sprayed poison into his ear. Mash'al fell ill, however, two of the Israelis involved were caught by the Jordanian security and two others took refuge in the Israeli embassy in Amman. After protracted negotiations between Israel and King Hussein, the Israelis were freed in return for providing the antidote for the poison (which saved Mash'al's life), freeing Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, who was in Israeli jail and guarantees to allow Yassin to return to Gaza.

Intentions and Perceptions

The decision to act against "a top-level Hamas leader" was an attempt to achieve deterrence by punishment through demonstration of Israel's "long arm", while maintaining plausible deniability to fend off any adverse political consequences.[32]

Critics of the operation[33] claimed after it failed that even had the operation succeeded, and Mash'al had died of an unknown disease, the chosen method was contradictory to deterrence; Mash'al would have died a "natural death" with no apparent links to Israel. While conspiracy theories may have naturally attributed his death to Israel, they alone would not have created the deterrent image that Israel desired. However, the planners of the operation saw it in the context of Israel's traditional policy of ambiguity vis-à-vis decapitation operations abroad, even when the Israeli hand was evident (for example, the killings of Abu Jihad, head of the "Western Sector" of Fatah in 1987 and of Fathi Shikaki in 1995, which were never formally acknowledged by Israel but were perceived as having played a deterrent role within the context of Israel's "counter-terrorism ambiguity").

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[32] According to a senior Israeli intelligence figure who was involved in the affair.
[33] Senior political figures and former intelligence officials.

Outcome

The attempt to achieve deterrence vis-à-vis Hamas had backfired. The failure of the operation tied Israel's hands both in respect to areas of operation (King Hussein extracted a commitment not to act on Jordanian soil in the future) and in respect to certain individuals (Mash'al and Yassin received a *de facto* "insurance policy" against Israeli assassination, which stayed valid for years).

Nevertheless, some Israeli intelligence veterans argue that the very sophistication of the operation, even though it failed, served to prop up Israel's deterrent image. The very image of a capability to deliver a "silent killer" which, had the agents not been caught, no one would have known its origin enhanced Israel's image. This image was conjured up later when rumours were spread surrounding Arafat's death by an imperceptible Israeli poison which causes a "natural looking" death.

Operation "Defensive Wall" (Homat Maghen)
Background

The Intifadah which broke out in September 2000 escalated during the second half of 2001. For over a year and a half of the Intifadah, during which Israel had refrained from military initiatives inside the Palestinian authority. During this period, the Palestinian Authority had been actively involved in encouraging and even financing and directing the terrorist attacks by Fatah and its own security apparatuses, and had allowed Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad to operate freely in both the West Bank and Gaza. A short period of de-escalation took place after Arafat's declaration of 16 December but the terrorist attacks began to re-escalate during the month of February 2002 (according to some, due to the targeted killing of Fatah leader, Ra'id Karmi). This escalation reached a peak in a terrorist attack on a Passover supper in the Park Hotel in the city of Netanya (27 March 2002).

Events on the Ground

Operation "Defensive Wall" (*Homat Maghen*) was launched in the wake of the attack on the Park Hotel on March 29, 2002 and officially ended on May 10, 2002. About 30,000 reserve soldiers participated in the operation both for active fighting and for missions of search and destroy of terrorist infrastructure.

The operation was held in the Palestinian territories (Area A), and it included the main cities and dozens of villages and refugee camps. The main battles were held in Ramallah, the governmental capital of the PA, where Arafat stayed; in Nablus, the stronghold of the Palestinian resistance, and in Jennin, a principal center for terrorist organizations operating in the West Bank, and a place where the most intense battle took place.

A notable event was the siege of Yasser Arafat's compound (Al-Muqatta'a), and the seizure of Marwan Barghouti, the head of the Fatah supreme committee in the WB, and leader of the military wing of Al-Aqsa Brigades.

Intentions and Perceptions

The ostensible goal of the operation was to ""enter cities and villages which have become havens for terrorists; to catch and arrest terrorists and, primarily, their dispatchers and those who finance and support them; to confiscate weapons intended to be used against Israeli citizens; to expose and destroy terrorist facilities and explosives, laboratories, weapons production factories and secret installations" [34] and to verify that the terrorist infrastructure will not be revived after Israel pulls out. [35] According to Israeli press reports at the time, it was also aimed to demonstrate to the Palestinian leadership the national and personal price for the continuation of terror.[36] **However, in cabinet discussions on the eve of the operation, it seemed to senior cabinet members that Prime Minister Sharon was bent on destroying the Palestinian Authority as an entity, and not in transmitting a deterrent message, to which the Palestinian leadership could acquiesce and save itself.[37]**

The Israeli restraint until "Defensive Wall" had fed an assessment in the PA that Israel would continue to act defensively and would refrain from entering the Palestinian territories (Area A). The Palestinian reasoning behind this was not completely foreign to a central trend in Israeli political circles. According to a former senior cabinet minister, the cabinet held 7-8 meetings to discuss the reaction to the growing threat of terrorism from the PA. It was clear that the option of deterrence was contingent on the continued existence of the PA as a "state" which can be pressured. The alternative option was one of disruption, which called for the total destruction of the PA. In the second case, Israel would have to increase its military presence in the West Bank and Gaza almost to a pre-Oslo level[38].

According to senior Israeli intelligence officials, there was, at the time of the operation, ample evidence that Arafat and the Palestinian leadership were surprised by Israel's reaction.[39] There were even those among the Palestinians who perceived the operation as the third disaster of the Palestinians after 1948 and 1967's disasters.[40] The Palestinian public and leadership was shocked by both the military impact of the operation and its political implications. It was perceived as an "earthquake", a total destruction of the Palestinian Authority and its institutions, without any discrimination between the Palestinian factions and without according immunity to any Palestinian individual. Israeli PM Sharon was perceived as unpredictable and a person whose actions are beyond imagination.[41] The siege on Arafat's headquarters and the destruction of all the buildings in his compound except the one in which he himself resided came as a total surprise to the Palestinian leadership and created a sense of disorientation; its basic assessment of Israel's behavior had turned out to be wrong. This was expressed in hysteric transmissions from Arafat's headquarters and concern that Israel, having crossed the red line of "invasion" of the PA and siege of

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[34] http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Archive/Spokesman/2002/אפריל/Spokesman6326.htm
[35] Haaretz, 31.3.02
[36] Haaretz, 31.3.02
[37] private communication from former Minister Dan Meridor.
[38] Interview with Dan Meridor, former Minister in charge of Intelligence in the Office of the Prime Minister.
[39] Interview with former MI and ISA officials. Haaretz, 31.3.02
[40] Haaretz, 26.4.02
[41] Article of Talal Ocal, al-Ayyam, 22.4.02.

Arafat's headquarters is no longer predictable and may even attempt to kill Arafat himself. This perception of Israel's "unpredictability" led to the capitulation of Jibril Rajoub and his men to Israeli forces that besieged his headquarters in Ramallah on April 1st.[42]

Outcome

Operation "Defensive Wall" resulted in a number of positive outcomes, from Israel's point of view:

1. **On the operational level,** the operation resulted in the near disarming of the PA security apparatuses and dismantling of a significant portion of the terrorist infrastructure in the territories through killing/arrest of activists, demolition of caches and capture of large quantities of weapons and ammunition. In addition, the operation generated important intelligence, which on the one hand revealed Arafat's role in conducting terror, and on the other hand gave relevant information for disruption of planned attacks. The operation resulted in a substantial reduction of the number of suicide bombings within Israel's borders, during the operation and after it. [43]
2. **On the political level** – the very symbols of the PA, including Arafat's compound – were destroyed, and Arafat was put under isolation and siege. The security apparatus and the administration infrastructure were also severely harmed, and damage in hundreds of millions of dollars was incurred by the PA.
3. **On the Perceptional level – The operation succeeded in reconstructing, in some measure and for a short period of time, the Israeli deterrence that had been eroded during the first phases of the second Intifadah, and especially following Israel's restraint after a series of suicide attacks in the first months of 2002.** This was the result of:
   A. Transfer of the "front" of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from the Israeli to the Palestinian cities.
   B. Termination of the erstwhile "immunity" of the areas under full administration of the PA (Area A).
   C. Israeli use of massive force, simultaneously in different parts of the WB, in spite of hostile coverage by international media and even American pressure, indicating that the external constraints on Israel that the Palestinians had depended on were weaker than they imagined.
   D. The absence of any political move after the operation demonstrated that the use of terror against Israel in order to force her to give political concessions might be counterproductive.
   E. Palestinians assessment that Israel's goal was to substitute Arafat with an alternative leadership (similar to the South Lebanon Army – SLA –

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[42] Haaretz, 11.4.02

[43] While in January and February and March 2002 the number of Israelis who were killed in terrorist operations climbed from 16 and 32 to 121 respectively, in April the number was reduced to 59, and in May to 32.[43] Israeli MI sources assessed that following the arrests of activists and especially the arrest of Marwan Barghouti, the operational potential of terrorist networks had been seriously downgraded: in Jennin – up to 90 %; in Nablus and Ramallah – 80%; and in Tul-Karem and Qalqiliya – 60%. The Hamas suffered the most severe damage.. Haaretz, 21.4.02

which operated in the "Security Area" in South Lebanon), to destroy the Palestinian economy and to eliminate the Palestinian resistance.

F. The United States was perceived as having supported Israel and allowed it a free rein during the operation. In spite of the perceived erosion in the international support for Israel following the fighting in Jennin, Palestinians assessed that Israel does not feel any constrains on it, as long as the US supported it.

G. The fact that the majority of the WB Palestinian population were born after the 1967 war, and in this operation they felt for the first time the brunt of the IDF military superiority.[44]

The scope of the Israeli reaction caused some Palestinians to raise doubts about the cost-effectiveness of "armed struggle" (e.g. terrorism). Some recognized that the suicide attacks in Netanya, and later another suicide attack in Rishon Le-Tzion (May 7, 2002) caused great damage to the Palestinian cause; wreaked devastation in the WB, eased the way for PM Sharon to implement his policies by uniting a radicalized Israeli public behind him, and presented Israel as a victim of the Palestinian terror.[45] Consequently, among Palestinian intellectuals a discussion ensued which entailed "de-mystification" of the armed struggle. It was referred to a "tool like other tools", that must not be regarded as sacred; it should be employed, according to some Palestinian analysts to gain "specific goals" and the Palestinians should not delude themselves that they hold the the necessary military power to defeat Israel even on a limited scale.[46]

These achievements however were short–lived. During June 2002, the number of Israelis who were killed by Palestinian terrorist actions climbed again to 53.[47] In mid July, a new wave of terrorist actions erupted.[48] This situation required further efforts of Israeli forces, in the next months (Operation "Unrelenting Way"). In retrospect, by June, Israeli Chief of Staff, Shaul Mofaz admitted, in a session of the Knesset Foreign and Security Committee, that "Defensive Wall" had failed.[49] A few months after the operation the Israeli assessment was that the success of the operation had been only partial; it had not included the entire PA territory and succeeded in reaching only part of the infrastructure and wanted terrorists. Israel had to deal with a Palestinian public opinion campaign regarding the battle in the Jenin refugee camp and Israeli analysts began to ask whether the operation had not been counter-productive in terms of Israeli deterrence. [50]

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[44] Haaretz, 24.4.02 One of the Palestinian journalists assessed that the operation was a historic move aimed to teach the third generation of the Palestinians (those who were born after the Six Day War) a lesson about the Israeli irresistible strength and power. Article by Hussein Hijazi, al-Ayyam, 11.5.02.
[45] Article of Mamdouh Nofal, al-Ayyam, 12.5.02.
[46] Article of Samih Shabib, al-Ayyam, 10.5.02.
[47] Haaretz, 23.6.02
http://www.pm.gov.il/PMO/Communication/IsraelUnderAttack/terrorAttacks.htm?Page=19
[49] Haaretz, 30.6.02
[50] http://www.ynet.co.il 10.04.02
Yediot Aharonot 21.04.02; 24.04.02
Ben Tzedef, Evyatar, "Haomnam Homat Magen?", Nativ, 5 (100), September 2004, pp. 34-39

Operation "Unrelenting Way" (Derekh Nekhushah)

Background

Operation "Unrelenting Way" was launched on 22 June 2002 as follow up of "Defensive Wall". In contrast to the first operation, which was based on a de facto re-occupation of Palestinian cities, and the use of massive power, "Unrelenting Way" was based on constant incursions into the Palestinian territories, curfews, targeted killings, arrests, destroying of terrorist's infrastructure, confiscation of documents, and deepening the security and intelligence apparatus in the area.

Events on the Ground

Operation "Unrelenting Way" was launched on 22 June 2002 as follow up of "Defensive Wall" and in the wake of several suicide operations inside Israel.[51] The operational concept was to wage a low-intensity war against the terrorist organizations by unrelenting "surgical" operations and not to be involved in the wide-scale operations which are picked up by the media and used to bring pressure to bear on Israel (as in the case of the fighting in Jenin).

The operation combined reoccupation of the urban centers and the refugee camps that surrounding them, with systematic house-to-house searches that were under the PA control. The Israeli forces used new tactics including UAV's for surveillance and target acquisition missions.[52] The IDF's entrance and activities in the main cities in the WB did not face substantial resistance.[53] Many leaders of the terrorist organizations and especially Hamas, were killed or arrested, and for the first time there was not a "wanted number 1" in the list of wanted terrorists in the WB. On July 22, Salah Shehadah, the leader of the military branch of Hamas was killed by bombing by an Israeli F16 jet. Arafat claimed that his death foiled a near-to-conclude agreement for ceasefire.[54]

In the wake of the success of the operation, the IDF decided in the beginning of July to conduct a "differential" security policy, diluting forces in areas where complete calm will prevail, and where there were no terrorist alerts.[55]

Intentions and Perceptions

The Israeli goal in operation "Unrelenting Way" was to continue the momentum of the "Defensive Wall" operation and to stop the wave of terrorist attacks that erupted after the initial lull following "Defensive Wall". The concept behind the operation was based first and foremost on a strategy of unremitting disruption of terrorist infrastructure in order to reduce the capabilities of the different organizations

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[51] Including central places like Herzliya, Petach-Tiqva and "Hagiv'a Hatzarfatit" ("French Hill") in Jerusalem (September 11,18,19 respectively).
http://www.pm.gov.il/PMO/Communication/IsraelUnderAttack/terrorAttacks.htm?Page=20
[52] Jane's Intelligence Review, September 2002, pp. 20-22
[53] Haaretz, 26.6.02; 28.6.02
[54] http://www.nrg.co.il/online/archive/ART/323/235.html
[55] Haaretz, 11.7.02

on one hand, and to force them into a clandestine mode of operation that would consume much of their operational energies.

At the same time, there were those in the IDF and ISA who saw the reduction in terrorist activity after "Defensive Wall" not only as resulting from disruption, but also as a potential revival of Israeli deterrence. The renewal of terrorist attacks after a certain period was seen as deriving from a Palestinian assessment that the international pressure on Israel (in the wake of the Palestinian claims regarding a "Jenin massacre") had caused Israel to scale down the operation and that it would refrain from further wide scale operations in the near future. Therefore, "Unrelenting Way" was seen in the eyes of those who believed that deterrence of Palestinian terrorism was possible as a means to refute such an assessment and to revive the initial Palestinian sense of Israeli threat that was perceived during "Defensive Wall".

Outcome

The military influence of "Unrelenting Way" was limited in scope and time. It brought about an initial pause in the terrorist attacks until mid July, when a new wave of terrorist actions erupted.[56] **This pause was not due to any revival of Israel's deterrent image but rather due to a combination of systematic targeted killings, continuous attacks on terrorist infrastructure, improved tactics and techniques and improved intelligence that came from interrogation of prisoners and systematic document exploitation.** Nevertheless, the operation improved Israel's ability to disrupt terrorist operations for a long period of time, brought about a reduction in "quality" terrorist operations and a focus on the organizations on attacks in the West Bank instead of inside Israel, as before.

But the systematic and continuous pressure of Israeli forces on the Palestinians through the operations "Defensive Wall" and "Unrelenting Way" had important political effects as well, which may be perceived as enhancement of deterrence – not towards the principle object that Israel wished to deter – the Fatah and Hamas leadership – but rather the Palestinian "civil society" and the intelligentsia in the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian "al–Ayyam" daily (represent Fatah and the PA) began to propose a re-assessment of Palestinian strategy in the wake of what was perceived as a far-reaching shift in Israeli strategy in the wake of the terrorist attacks.[57] It argued that under these circumstances, the Palestinians must, before dealing with the question whether to resist the Israeli occupation or not, carry out a comprehensive change and revision of Palestinian politics, that will "respond to the interests, the requirements and the needs of the Palestinian People"[58] and "re-define the Palestinian goals and the means to achieve them, in order to ease the Israeli reactions to the Palestinian resistance, and to curb the outburst of bloodshed".[59] It recognized that the policy of "pursuing the actions against Israel until its elimination" would guarantee that the cycle of violence will continue endlessly, without any prospects for victory and would even bring about a new Palestinian "Nakbah"

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[56] http://www.pm.gov.il/PMO/Communication/IsraelUnderAttack/terrorAttacks.htm?Page=19
[57] Article of Abdallah Awwad, al-Ayyam, 23.6.02
[58] Article of Abdallah Awwad, al-Ayyam, 14.7.02
[59] Article of Muhannad Abd al-Hamid, al-Ayyam, 16.7.02

("holocaust").[60] Therefore, while there was no recommendation to put an end to the Intifadah (unthinkable in terms of Palestinian politics), it was suggested that the Palestinians discuss a reform and means of resistance that could bring about achievements and solutions[61] and could realize the national goals in the shortest way and with minimum of casualties.[62]

The Palestinian mood was noted by Israeli intelligence and perceived as a cumulative positive result of the "Defensive Wall" and "Unrelenting Way" operations in creating a new "cost–benefit" calculus among the Palestinians which contributed to Israeli deterrence. This, it was assessed, was the result of the combination of President Bush's negative attitude towards Arafat, increasing criticism of his policies by both Palestinians and Arab countries and the virtual reoccupation of the WB by IDF gave rise to a debate within the Palestinian public regarding the cost-benefit of terrorism against Israel in general and suicide bombings in particular. Palestinian intellectuals began to speak openly about the linkage between the sorry state of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and the fact that the Israeli military actions causing that state were a reaction to Palestinian behavior and not an independent Israeli policy to subjugate them. Even Hamas leaders appeared to become aware of the public's mood – an awareness that led to statements of Hamas leaders about their readiness (August 2002) to consider "*hudnah*" (ceasefire for a long, but limited period).[63]

The sense that the wave of terrorism had caused a shift in Israeli public opinion in favor of retaliation and had silenced the Israeli "left wing" brought the Fatah to attempt to return to the theatre of Israeli public opinion. The "Haaretz" newspaper (widely read among the Israeli elite and left wing) even published an open letter from the Fatah and the Tanzim to Israelis, calling to end the occupation, while saying that the terrorist operations have changed both Israeli and Palestinian societies and declaring that "we will do our utmost to put an end to the attacks on Israeli citizens".[64]

Operation "First Rain" (Geshem Rishon)
Background

The Israeli disengagement from Gaza was accompanied by far-reaching deterrent declarations, regarding a severe Israeli retaliation if any terrorist attack would come out of Gaza after the disengagement. This message was transmitted in copious statements by the Israeli political leadership and in direct field-level contacts with the Palestinians. The Israeli legal interpretation of the disengagement was intended to contribute to the image that Israel now had less constraints in operating against

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[60] Article of Hani al-Masri, al-Ayyam, 3.8.02
[61] Article of Ashraf al-Ajrami, al-Ayyam, 19.7.02
[62] Article of Abdallah Awwad, al-Ayyam, 20.7.02
[63] Haaretz, 10.7.02 quotes a senior Military Intelligence officer. See also http://www.nrg.co.il/online/archive/ART/330/576.html, articles in the Palestinian press include a series of announcements published in Al-Quds" newspaper during end of June and July, in which various Palestinians (most of them from the Palestinian elite) called the designers and perpetrators of the violent operations inside Israel to reconsider their way because of the damage it cause to the Palestinian themselves. Haaretz, 24.6.02
[64] Haaretz, 30.7.02

terrorism in Gaza, since it would no longer be viewed as the "occupying power" in Gaza according to international law.

The disengagement was conceived by PM Ariel Sharon in 2004 before the death of Arafat and presented by him at the Herzliya Conference of December 2004. The declared rationale of the plan was that in the absence of a Palestinian leadership with both the willingness and the authority to hold serious peace negotiations, Israel will have to define its borders on its own. The disengagement was completed on September 12, 2005, during which the Palestinian organizations were relatively restrained. Similar to the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in May 2000, the disengagement was viewed not as deriving from an Israeli desire to promote a final settlement, but rather as a victory of Hamas terrorism. This image boosted the support of Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank.

Events on the Ground

During a "victory march" in Gaza after the disengagement, a Qassam rocket fell and exploded, killing an injuring a number of Palestinians. The Hamas accused Israel for firing it and started launching Qassam rockets against the border town of Sederot.[65]

Operation "First Rain" began on September 23, 2005 and ended on October 1, 2005. It included troop concentrations, deployment of M-190 artillery system near Gaza; air attacks on infrastructure and activists of the organizations involved in Qassam launching; targeted killings; full closure on the Gaza strip; a demand from the PA to immediately act to stop the terror activity against Israel; Psyop operations (including but not only distribution of leaflets and creation of "booms" by Israeli combat aircrafts); and also a demand from the PA to further deploy forces in the North of the Gaza strip, in order to prevent further launching of rockets.[66]

Intentions and Perceptions

The immediate rationale for the operation was to put an end to the heavy Qassam attacks on western Negev. But the operation had two additional goals: to hit the infrastructure of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and to decrease the support of the Palestinian public for them.[67] Israeli PM Sharon declared (September 25, 2005), that Israel will put an end to the launching of rockets from the Gaza Strip "by any means" and would strike at the terrorists, their equipment and wherever they find shelter, using all "appropriate measures" while maintaining the policy of trying not to cause civilian casualties.[68]

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[65] http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART/988/001.html
[66]Haaretz,25.9.05;http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3148026,00.html;
http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/001/132.html ; http://news.walla.co.il/?w=//785617
[67] Haaretz, 30.9.05
[68] http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Archive/cabmeet/2005/09/govmes250905.htm;
http://www1.idf.il/DOVER/site/mainpage.asp?sl=HE&id=7&docid=45896.HE

Outcome

The operation triggered a self examination among the Palestinians. One Palestinian journalist in al-Ayyam argued that the Palestinians erred in assuming that the Israeli pullback from the Gaza Strip was a Palestinian victory and liberation, and in "flexing their muscles" (the firing of rockets at Sederot).[69] In another article he argued with the Palestinian conventional wisdom and warned that entering a war when the Palestinian side is the weaker one is equal to suicide action.[70] Therefore, The conclusion was that is essential to return to cease fire.[71] Another journalist took a position that "the better part of valor is discretion", pointing at the Israeli restraint during the first Gulf War as a model and arguing that that the local, regional and international conditions give Israel unprecedented opportunity to carry out a unilateral solution which will eliminate the Palestinian problem with all its aspects and that the Palestinian attacks on Israel were playing into its hands.[72]

This sense that the Palestinians had overplayed their hand found its way into the strategic thinking of the Hamas leadership in Gaza. A turning point in the operation was the killing on September 25, of one of the military leaders of PIJ in Gaza strip.[73] **Two hours after his killing, Hamas leader in Gaza Strip Mahmoud Al-Zahar declared that his organization will stop the launching of Qassam on Israel, and that his organization is obliged again to security calm, until the end of 2005.** [74] In this case it appears that the heavy and continuous pressure of Israel both in the military and the psychological spheres directly led to a change in Hamas attitude, at least for a certain period of time.

The Siege of Arafat (April 2002–December 2004)
Background

The siege on Arafat's Ramallah Headquarters (the Moqata'ah) had been imposed in April 2002, during the "Defensive Wall" operation. Arafat remained there as prisoner, until he fell ill and died in France in November 2004.

Events on the Ground

The "siege" continued until Arafat's departure for medical treatment in Paris in October 2004. During this period, Israeli forces continued to encircle Arafat's headquarters, which were incrementally reduced to the few rooms in which Arafat and a few wanted terrorists resided. Israel's demands for the surrender of those terrorists were transmitted to Arafat, but at no stage was there any serious negotiation for his release. During this period, Israel provided food and all necessities to Arafat and his staff, but gave wide publicity to the fact that nothing could take place between the walls of the moqat'ah without Israel knowing.

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[69] Article of Samih Shabib, al-Ayyam, 26.9.05.
[70] Article of Samih Shabib, al-Ayyam, 30.9.05
[71] Article of Ashraf al-Ajrami , al-Ayyam, 26.9.05
[72] Article of Hani al-Masri, al-Ayyam, 27.9.05.
[73] http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART/988/559.html
[74] Haaretz, 26.9.05 ; http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/000/582.html

Intentions and Perceptions

The policy of besieging Arafat was widely debated in Israel both publicly and in security circles. It was however clear to most Israelis – and to Arafat[75] – that the "siege" (a Palestinian term, intended, to evoke image of the sieges of Beirut and Tripoli which Arafat succeeded in extricating himself form) was not intended as pressure that Arafat could remove through concessions, short of ceding authority over the PA. From that point of view, it was neither an act of deterrence nor compellence. One senior Israeli defined it as "revenge – pure and simple".[76]

Outcome

The "siege" caused great Palestinian frustration over the Arab's impotence and lack of political weight in the international arena, and from the total backing that Israel receives from the US.[77]   It was perceived by the Palestinians as another expression of the inability to deter Sharon. The common knowledge at that time was that Israel was aware of the fact that Arab and international reaction to the "siege" of Arafat, will not exceed their reactions to Israel's previous – and more extensive – military operations against the Palestinians.[78]

This feeling of frustration and helplessness, accelerated Arafat's de-legitimization. Bu mid 2004, the growing conventional wisdom among the Palestinians and in the Arab world in general was that "General Arafat", as he liked to refer to himself, was (to paraphrase Macarthur) "fading away" and that they were already witnessing the twilight of the "Arafat Era". This perception had an immediate effect on the behavior of the Palestinian "body politic". Arafat's name began to be freely mentioned as the main source of corruption. A manifest signed by "The Reformist Stream" (*al-Tayyar al-Islahi*) published on the Al-Aqsa Brigades website and attributed to supporters of Dahlan heaped abuse on all members of the Fatah Central Committee, called for its dissolution and for the immediate holding of the 6th general conference of Fatah[79]. Meanwhile, in a scathing interview Fatah veteran and Central Committee member, Rafiq al–Natsheh declared Arafat's regime "a rule of corruption", "a dictatorial authority, a band of thieves and a masquerade".[80] Al–Natsheh was perceived as voicing both sentiments of Saudi Arabia, where he had served as head of the PLO office and of his own local constituency in Hebron, where the al-Natsheh clan aligned itself with Hebron clan of assassination–attempt–victim Nabil Amre (former Arafat aide who dared to criticize him and was attacked, leaving him with his leg amputated).

With the dam gates of direct Palestinian criticism of Arafat open, the Arab press joined the wave of criticism. The possibility of reform under Arafat's rule had ceased to be seen as a feasible option. The U.K. based Palestinian journal, *al-Haqa'iq* (the

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[75] In mid 2004 a senior aid to Arafat related to S. Bar that Arafat had told him that he knew that as long as Ariel Sharon was PM, he would not leave his Ramallah headquarters alive.
[76] Brig. Gen. Yaacov Amidror
[77] An article of Samih Shabib, Al-Ayyam, 14.1.02.
[78] An article of Ashraf al-ajrami, Al-Ayyam, 22.4.02
[79] Copy of the manifest, undated and without signature.
[80] al-Haqa'iq, 27 July, 2004

Facts) affiliated with Bilal al–Hasan (the brother of Fatah Central Committee member, Hani al–Hasan) served as a forum an anti-corruption and anti-Arafat campaign. The left–wing Jordanian journalist Shaker al-Jawhari (former editor of *al-Arab al-Yawm*), counted the obstacles that "the corrupt Ra'is" had placed to prevent any progress on reform, concluding that elections under such circumstances would only serve to renew Arafat's legitimacy, and thus would be counterproductive since, in the spirit of Lord Acton, "absolute corruption has no legitimacy".[81] The Jordanian "establishment" also entered the fray; former Chief of the Royal Court and Minister of Information, Adnan Abu Odeh,[82] accused Arafat of having adopted and clinging to a governance style of most Arab regimes – yes-men and one-party rule – and, at the same time, not understanding his historic role and not realizing that "Israel … has already won the day in the Intifadah... (and is engaged in) a mopping up operation by a victor, not a continuation of the battle, as some believe it to be…".

Operation "Summer Rain" (Geshmei Kayitz) (June 2006)
Background

By summer 2006 it appeared that Hamas was torn between two strategic orientations.

1. A pragmatic school, represented by the "interior" leaders, mainly Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah, which more attuned to the needs of Hamas as government to attend to its population, whose economic and living conditions in general were deteriorating. This part of Hamas sought reconciliation with al-Fatah, pushed for a national unity government, and probably was willing to go along with the Egyptian proposal that the Hamas government accept the Arab Peace Initiative of March 2002 as a means of meeting the international demand that Hamas recognize Israel. That orientation was reportedly supported by Hamas West Bank leaders as well as by leading Hamas prisoners in Israel.

2. A radical branch, headed by the "external" leader, Khaled Mashal, and supported by the movement's armed wing, "'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades" and by several key figures in the movements leadership in Gaza, which rejected the idea of a unity government with Fatah and saw an opportunity to overthrow the age old Fatah dominance in Palestinian politics. Whereas right after the legislative elections its leaders saw no contradiction between the movement remaining an armed resistance movement and its pursuit of the political and diplomatic tracks as a government[83], by summer they argued that it was impossible to reconcile being a government with being a resistance movement and advocated that Hamas leave the government and return to the armed struggle. The reasoning behind this thinking was that Hamas would benefit from the dissolution of the PA, in order to force Israel to go back to direct and open occupation[84].

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[81] *al-Haqa'iq*, 19 August 2004
[82] Daily Star, 18 August 2004.
[83] Khakid Mash'al interview on al-'Arabiyyah, March 6, 2006, www.alarabiya.net,Articles/2006/03/07/21753.htm.
[84] Muhammad Abu Rumman, "Man Yarsum Mustaqbal hamas?", www.alghad.jo/?article=4567, August 30, 2006; Muhammad Yunis, "Hamas Amama Thalath Khiyarat", al-Hayat, May 30, 2006.

In Israel, the newly elected government of Ehud Olmert had come to office in a coalition between the newly formed Kadima party (founded by Ariel Sharon who suffered a stroke) and the Labor party headed by its new Head, Amir Peretz. The platform of both parties was based on promoting the peace process, and if that proved impossible due to the absence of a Palestinian partner, unilateral "convergence" – dismantling Jewish settlements in parts of the West Bank and unilaterally determining Israel's borders with the Palestinians. The new government had to deal immediately with a growing threat from the Qassam rockets in Gaza and came under criticism from the right that it was not firm enough in dealing with the threat.

Events on the Ground

On 25 June a team of terrorists composed of members of Hamas, "The Popular Resistance Committees and "Army of Islam" opened fire on Israeli troops on the border. During the exchange of fire, infiltrated Israel through tunnels that were dug in advance, emerged near an Israeli outpost, opened AT fire on an tank, killed two soldiers. One soldier, Corporal Gilead Shalit was kidnapped.

Israel responded with air and ground attacks in Gaza and closure of the Gaza Strip in order to prevent the kidnappers from smuggling Gilead Shalit from the area. In addition pressure was applied to the political representatives of Hamas by arrest of Hamas Legislative Council members. Hamas responded by launching of Qassam rockets at the western Negev area, particularly at the town of Sederot.

Intentions and Perceptions

A common version was that the June 25 attack a were initiated by the external leadership in order to compromise the Hamas government and subvert the negotiations over the national unity government.[85] **The Israeli threat of re-occupation did not carry much weight in the eyes of those who Israel wanted to deter – the Hamas leadership in Damascus – as it believed that it would benefit from the destruction of the Palestinian Authority.**

Outcome

The Israeli pressure prior to the attack and after it did not create a sense of deterrence in the eyes of the Hamas leadership. As noted above, unlike the local political leadership of Hamas in Gaza, the Hamas leadership in Damascus did not view the prospect of an Israeli offensive in Gaza – or even re-occupation – as causing harm to its own vital interests. After the attack Israel continued to apply pressure to the Hamas elements within its reach. The lack of a credible threat however towards the Hamas leadership in Damascus made this pressure less effective.

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[85] E.g. Muhammad Khalid al-Az'ar, "Hamas al-Ha`irah bayna al-Hukm wal-Muqawamah", Islamonline, June 28, 2006, www.islamonline.net/arabic/politics/Palestine/topic_01/2006/6/06.shtml.

Summary

Israel's success in deterring Palestinian terrorist organizations has been spotted. On one hand, there have been long periods of relative quiet which can be attributed to the Israeli demonstrations of force that preceded them. These periods reflected the achievement of "tactical deterrence", which, in order for it not to die down, must be stoked up by actual shows of force. The real dilemma of deterring the Palestinian organizations however has been the absence of any one clear-cut "address" for deterrence. Even before the Oslo Accords, the PLO made wide use of non-attributable terror in order to create the pressure on Israel that such actions do, but not to pay the political price of being perceived by the international community as a terrorist sponsor.

The Palestinian side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict benefits from what is called in Israeli deterrence parlance "the power of the weak". This is defined as the relative power that the weaker side (in this case – the Palestinians) maintains vis-à-vis the stronger party (Israel) due to two interdependent components: the ability to neutralize elements of the power and deterrence of the stronger party either by finding a defense against such a capability or by creating circumstances that preclude the stronger party from using its superior power and thus allow the weaker party to ignore that element of superior power; creation of counter-threats that occupy the superior power and narrow its room for maneuver. The counter-threat in the Palestinian case was terrorism against the Israeli civilian community. The very fact that the Israeli defense community and public debated whether or not it was wise to continue in the targeted killings and whether they created more terrorism (for revenge) showed that this counter-threat was effective.

As the Israeli system found solutions for terrorism within the borders of Israel (the security barrier, reducing the number of Palestinians allowed to work in Israel), the Palestinians adopted new methods to create a counter-threat (the Qassam rockets), based on the model that was successfully used by Hizballah. Another counter-threat was posed by weakening the Palestinian society to the extent that implementation of Israel's ultimate deterrent threat in the case of the Palestinians – re-occupation of the West Bank and Gaza – would create chaos in those areas and leave Israel with a humanitarian crisis on its hands. This counter-threat brings the "power of the weak" to full expression.[86]

This modus operandi was imported by the PLO leadership when it came into to rule the West Bank and Gaza. The PA enjoyed the status of the weaker side, who if pressured too hard may lose control all together. The Arafat policy of *laiser faire*, and creating controlled chaos eventually created a multi-polar terrorist space in the West Bank and especially in Gaza with no one "address". Whilst Arafat was at the helm, he could conceivably have used his personal influence and financial perks to rein in the various groups. Since his demise, there is no individual person in the PA with enough succulent carrots and hard enough sticks to influence the plethora of warlords who have taken over the Palestinian scene. The situation has been likened by one senior

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[86] Gen (rtd.) Amos Malka, "The power of the Weak against the Weakness of Power – asymmetric deterrence", Hebrew, unpublished paper.

Israeli intelligence officer to deterrence of organized crime as opposed to small non-organized criminals. The former is much easier, once a clear picture of the "godfather's" interests is drawn.[87] In the case of the latter, there is no way to develop a comprehensive policy of deterrence that would apply to hundreds of autonomous warlords.

The Palestinian crisis also shows how interrelated the different theatres around Israel are. Any Israeli attempt to deter the Palestinians or Hezbollah must take the other. The Intifadah broke out in September 2000 on the heels of what was perceived as an Israeli defeat at the hands of Hezbollah in Lebanon (the Israeli withdrawal). Similarly, Hezbollah attempts to challenge Israel's deterrence have been, in many cases, linked to escalation on the Palestinian front and Hezbollah's assessment that Israel would refrain from acting on two fronts simultaneously.

The Israeli policy of siege on Arafat was criticized within Israeli security circles at the time. It was claimed that by transmitting the signal that Israel would never relent and allow Arafat to leave his "jail" with honour, Arafat personally had little or nothing to lose. Therefore, any attempt to coerce him to act was doomed to failure. Among the critics of the policy towards Arafat, there were those who claimed that by inducing a sense of being in his last act on the stage of history, Israel denied Arafat the option of acting "politically" (i.e. pragmatically) and forced him to play the historic role of not giving in to Israeli pressure.

A controversial claim which is frequently raised (including by former senior security and military officials) is that the policies based on a heavy hand towards the Palestinian population in order to "burn into their consciousness" to refrain from terrorism is that Israel did not offer any alternative.[88] A major criticism of this policy has been that deterrence of a non-state actor cannot be based only on "what is lost" if they turn to violence, but on "what is not gained" if they do so and "what will be gained" if they refrain from terrorism. Such measures that were contemplated were: redeployments in WB/Gaza, removal of roadblocks, transfer of areas to the PA, renewing arrangements for safe passage, removal of illegal settlements; freeing prisoners (with a possibility of prior contact with the senior prisoners about to be freed); dismantling of settlements; practical gestures in Jerusalem; encouraging international organizations to operate in WB/Gaza; allowing Palestinian workers to enter Israel; transfer of taxes; channeling resources to areas where the leaders are more acceptable (perhaps after holding local elections); boosting economic activity by removal of closures; channeling development projects.

The rise of religious tendencies in all the Palestinian organizations also contributed to growing difficulties in finding the correct formula for deterrence. It is, of course, impossible to know how sincere religious beliefs are; however, the social acceptability – and consequent social pressures - of the Islamic interpretation impedes compliance with deterrent pressures. Military deterrence is based on proving to "the Muslims" that certain actions which are sanctioned or even obliged by Islam are counter-productive to their collective interests. The emergence of a "thanatophile"

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[87] Personal communication from Gen Amos Malka, former Head of Military Intelligence.
[88] This criticism has been raised by senior security officials who opposed the Chief of Defense Staff, Moshe Ya'alon's policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

ideology of Jihad with wide social currency confounds such military theories of deterrence. If an act of Jihad is, by definition, an act of faith in Allah, by fighting a weaker or equal enemy, the Muslim is relying on his own strength and not on Allah; by entering the fray against all odds, the *mujahid* is proving his utter faith in Allah and will be rewarded accordingly.

Israeli analysts of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis have placed the blame for the lack of deterrence against Palestinian terror to some degree or another on the constraints of Israeli democracy and the modus operandi of its governments (all governments) in taking decisions. Thus, it has been claimed that Israel's restraint in the first Gulf war, while it could be explained rationally to the Israeli public (who accepted it) as deriving from the fact that the US was operating in Iraq in any case and the added value of an Israeli attack was minor, had a psychological effect on the Palestinians that Israel could be attacked without it retaliating and that political circumstances could preclude Israel from retaliating. It has been claimed that in Middle Eastern societies, a person or group who does not exact its revenge for wrongs perpetrated loses all status and becomes a target for further attacks. Here, the fact that restraint was based on Israel's clear raison d'état does not mitigate the psychological result. Other examples have been rational statements by Israeli leaders that "there is no military solution" but only a "political solution" to terrorism, which were perceived as excusing the leadership from taking full advantage of the military capabilities that it had at its disposal. The willingness of Israel to negotiate under fire was also perceived as weakening Israel's deterrence. Finally, Israeli attempts to satisfy the international community regarding its rules of engagement and to present itself as an open society have all been viewed by the Palestinians as representing constraints that prevent Israel from bringing its obvious military superiority into play.

Nevertheless, Israel has achieved temporary and fragile deterrence vis-à-vis the Palestinians over the years. There is no doubt that periods of relative quiet derived from concern not to provoke an Israeli reaction to a terrorist attack that would neutralize any benefit from such an attack. This occasional tactical deterrence was achieved not by the threat of force but by actual application of force and inducing fear that the force would be reapplied and even increased. Deterrence of this type is difficult to distinguish from disruption and many Israeli security experts would categorize it as "operational considerations" that dictate when and where to perform acts of terrorism, whereas deterrence deals with whether or not to do it.

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Gen. (rtd.) Yaacov Amidror – former deputy head of Military Intelligence (AMAN) and former head of the College for National Security.

Prof. Moshe Arens – Former Minister of Defense, Israel (1983–1984, 1990–1992, 1999)

Dr. Yuval Arnon – Former Mossad officer and expert on Palestinian history.

MK Ami Ayalon – former Director of Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet)

Col. Avriel Bar-Yosef – Secretary of Knesset Defense and Foreign Relations Committee.

Adv. Haim Ben Ami – former Director of Interrogation in Israel Security Agency (Shin-Bet).

Brig. Gen. (Rtd.) Amos Gilboa – former Deputy Head of MI.

Mr. Ephraim Halevy – Former Head of Israeli Secret Intelligence Service (Mossad).

MK Israel Hasson – former Deputy Head of Israel Security Agency (Shin-Bet)

Pinhas Inbari – Veteran Israeli journalist, covers WB and Gaza for 30 years.

Brig. Gen. (rtd.) Yossef Kuperwasser – former Deputy Head of Military Intelligence for Analysis.

Maj. Gen (rtd.) Amos Malka – former Director of Military Intelligence (1999–2001)

Adv. Dan Meridor – former Minister in charge of Intelligence in the office of the Prime Minister and Chair of the committee for formulating Israel's Defense Doctrine.

Col (rtd.) Shlomo Mofaz – former Director of Counter-terrorism in Military Intelligence.

Mr. Yossi Sarid – former MK, former Minister, former head of Knesset Defense and Foreign Relations Committee.

Mr. Shabtai Shavit – former Director of ISIS (Mossad).

MK Dr. Yuval Steinitz – former Chairman of Knesset Defense and Foreign Relations Committee.

MK Maj. Gen (rtd.) Danny Yatom – former Head of Israel Secret Intelligence Service (Mossad), former Military Aide to PM Rabin.