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# **Israeli Experience in Deterring Terrorist Organizations**

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**Working Paper**

Submitted for the Herzliya Conference,

January 21-24, 2007

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This paper reflects the opinion of the author only

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“Only when not a single breach is visible in the iron wall, only then do extreme groups lose their sway, and influence transfers to moderate groups. Only then would these moderate groups come to us with proposals for mutual concessions”. Ze’ev Jabotinsky, “The Iron Wall” 4 November 1923

## Preface

This study is a summary of two separate studies, which analyze Israeli successes and failures in deterrence or compellence of non-state terrorist actors since the beginning of the decade (the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 and the outbreak of the second Intifada in October of the same year) with relevant references to cases and incidents in previous periods. It deals with three separate, but related case studies with respect to the Israeli experience in deterrence and compellence of non-state actors:

1. **Hizballah** – is an example of a non-state actor operating within the framework of a dysfunctional state (Lebanon), which maintains an extensive social and political infrastructure and wide grassroots support within the Shiite community in Lebanon, and is heavily supported by two regional states – Iran and Syria.
2. **Palestinian terrorist 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:
  - A. **Fatah** is 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 rather composed of a multitude of streams and lines of command. On one hand, it contains a political stream, of which the present Chairman, Mahmoud Abbas, is representative. This stream 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. 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 with the stream that Abbas espouses, and use terrorism against Israel as the means to achieve their goals. In the middle, the Fatah and the Palestinian Authority security apparatuses controlled by Fatah (under Muhammad Dahlan, Jibril Rajub, the “Presidential Security”, formerly “Force 17” et alia), have been intermittently involved in terrorism.
  - B. **Hamas**, conversely, is a case of an organization, which has acted both as a terrorist organization vis-à-vis Israel, and as a grass roots domestic opposition within the PA. This behavior is very similar to that of Hizballah's in Lebanon, and integrates political, social and military-terrorist agendas. Like in Fatah, before the Oslo era, Hamas includes both “external” and “internal” elements. The external leadership, based in Damascus, is composed of distinct streams and persons affiliated with different external forces (Syria, Iran the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan or Egypt, Saudi Arabia), and is involved in directing both the political activity and the terrorism of the organization in WBG. The

“internal” element includes a “political wing” inside the West Bank and Gaza (WBG) area, which is ideologically and politically Hamas but is not directly involved in the organization’s terrorist activities. Alongside it the military cells of the organization in WBG (“The Martyr ‘Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades”) operate both autonomously and by direction of the “external” Hamas leadership. 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.

## **Deterrence and Asymmetric Conflict**

The concepts used in modern theories of deterrence tend to focus on the relationship between states, and on the high end of potential conflict. For example, 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 as well as between states and non-state (insurgents, guerillas, terrorists). The relationship between a state (Israel), and non-state terrorist organizations is, by nature, asymmetric. This asymmetry makes doctrines of deterrence, which were formulated for relationships between states unsuitable solutions for 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.<sup>1</sup>

The terms that will have been used in this study are:

1. Deterrence – the prevention from action by fear of the consequences; a state of mind brought about by the existence of a credible threat of unacceptable counteraction.<sup>2</sup> Deterrence will be defined here as: a situation in which the deterring party (A) presents to the object of the desired deterred party (B) a threat of harm to B’s interests if B takes a certain action (C) that is perceived as harmful to the interests of A and beneficial to those of B. This harm will either (1) neutralize C (deterrence by denial) and prevent it from achieving its goal, or (2) make any benefit from C not worth the damage incurred in retaliation by A on B (deterrence by punishment).
2. Compellence (or “coercive diplomacy”) – the threat of force or the demonstration of limited force to convince an adversary to desist from actions that it is already involved in. Compellence will be defined here as a situation in which the compelling party (A) presents to the party of compellence (B) a threat or actual

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> JCS Pub 1-02 – <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/100-20/10020gl.htm>.

causing of harm to B's interests if B does not desist from (D), an action which serves B's interests and contradicts A's interests. This harm may be based on (1) neutralization of the benefits of D for B (disruption), leaving B to suffer only the disadvantage of the action or, (2) a punishment for D that makes any benefit from D not worth the damage incurred by the retaliation of A on B.

In addition to these definitions, we will use the following definitions, which focus on the channels of transmitting the deterrent message:

Direct deterrence or compellence – based on threat or implementation of direct action by the deterring party (A) towards the target of deterrence (B). This may be through: pre-emptive action, disruption (e.g. deterrence by denial) or retaliation (deterrence by punishment).

Indirect deterrence or compellence – based on threat or implementation of actions of the deterring party (A) directed at a third party (E) which is closely linked to the target of deterrence (B). Such a third party may be: (1) the population associated with B, (2) the host state (when dealing with non-state actors associated with a certain territory under a state regime) or association of states in which B operates, (3) external actors with which B has mutual interests and therefore have influence over B (occasionally, a “patron state” when dealing with non-state actors). The objective of such an action is that: (1) harm caused to E will disrupt B's activities and inhibit B's operational activity, either directly or by causing E to exert pressure on B to refrain from its actions against A.

This study will also distinguish between **strategic** and **tactical** deterrence. Israel has succeeded in maintaining **strategic deterrence** vis-à-vis neighboring states through both high-end conventional capabilities on the ground, 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. This inconsistency of targets for deterrence creates great difficulty for Israel's freedom of action and ability to implement a coherent deterrent doctrine.

Ultimately, deterrence is a matter of mutual perceptions. These are 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”. Other important influences include: 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 Case Studies

This study has analyzed three cases of protracted conflict between Israel and non-state terrorist organizations – Fatah, Hamas and Hizballah – with the aim of identifying successes or failures of attempts to deter those organizations. The main characteristics of these actors are detailed in the table below:

<b>Non-state Actor Trait</b>	<b>Hizballah</b>	<b>Fatah</b>	<b>Hamas</b>
<b>Affinity to host state</b>	Involved in parliamentary life; attempts to prove its Lebanese character and deny that it is an Iranian proxy.	Until the rise of Hamas, the ruling party in the PA, vested interests in the continued functioning of the PA.	Until lately – opposition to the PA regime, and now part and parcel of the double-headed PA.
<b>Dependence on patron state</b>	Totally dependent on and subordinate to Iran and highly dependent on Syria for supplies.	Enjoys a budget from the PA and is not dependent on a patron state.	Receives funding from Saudi Arabia with no “strings” attached, and therefore little sense of dependence and from Iran which takes advantage of the funding to influence the organization.
<b>Sources of authority</b>	Totally subordinate to Iran and to the Supreme Leader, Khamene’i.	Under Arafat – total subordination to Arafat. Since his death, decentralization.	Sheikh Yasin, was, until his death, the spiritual authority. Religious edicts requested from clerics in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.
<b>Ideological tenets</b>	Commitment to the destruction of Israel.	Pragmatic. Accepts the Oslo Accords.	Commitment to the destruction of Israel.
<b>Unity of command</b>	Centralized line of command.	Under Arafat – conscious decentralization. Since – fragmentation and warlords.	No real line of command in the field. Activists linked to handlers outside with each one linked to different patrons.
<b>Decision making</b>	Individualist decision making by Nasrallah with some influence of the political bureau.	Complete individual decision- making by Arafat until his death. Since then, process of collective consensus building.	Collective decision making in the political bureau.
<b>Image of Israel</b>	Intelligence collected by Iran and passed on to Hizballah. Tactical intelligence of a high level in the field.	Intuitive intelligence along with pervasive intelligence apparatuses of the PA.	Proximity to Israel allows a high level of tactical and strategic intelligence.

## The Influence of Culture and Leadership

While the understanding that even strategic deterrence has to be "tailored" to the adversary has become more accepted in Western defense circles, it is more critical to gain understanding regarding the cases involving non-state organizations. The existence of sources of authority – religious, ideological or political – of the non-state actors, which can be influenced by Israeli actions, is also a potential channel for deterrence, though it has been difficult to exploit. All the organizations in this study

are ideologically motivated – either by a secular nationalist ideology (Fatah), or an Islamic – Sunni ( Hamas), or Shiite ( Hizballah) worldview. The role of religious authorities is much greater in the two latter organizations than that of the secular ideological authorities for Fatah. In the case of Hamas, there are those who claim that deterrence towards the spiritual authorities of the organization in Saudi Arabia and Egypt would have an effect on the leadership. The mechanism of a “source of emulation” (*marja’ taqlid*) in Shiite Islam however, holds much more potential for influencing the behavior of a Shiite organization such as Hizballah. This has been evident in the way that the organization has responded to criticism by senior Lebanese Shiite clerics after the last war. Those clerics see themselves as a moral compass for their communities and feel responsible for the “*maslaha*” (public interest) of their flock.

The religious nature of the object of deterrence also has a significant influence on the ability to deter. While one may not be able to know how sincere religious beliefs are, 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” 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, then 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.

Ideological tenets of the non-state actors, which supersede pragmatic political interests, are a central force in resisting deterrent signals. The content of the ideology also affects the efficacy of deterrence. In organizations, which have the destruction of Israel and martyrdom as fundamental tenets of their ideology, ( Hamas and Hizballah), “capitulation” to deterrence is more difficult for them to swallow. Even if the leadership understands the prices and the need to be deterred, it stands before a much more difficult task of explaining its actions to its followers and its spiritual leaders compared to a leadership which is not dedicated to such principles.

A central factor in the way a party reads deterrent signals of an adversary is the type of leadership that exists in that party, and the way that the leadership receives and processes information. Some salient questions that arise in this context are:

1. What type of sensors does the leadership possess and who controls them?
2. How is information transmitted into the leadership and handled there?
3. What biases and personal inclinations affect the reading of signals and images?

The three cases analyzed in this study have in common a strong reliance on monitoring of the Israeli media and the domestic Israeli debate as a basis for their assessments of Israel’s intentions and resolve to carry them out. While Hizballah – and to a lesser degree, Hamas – is privy to the composite intelligence of a state (Iran) which can complement the overt sources, this type of intelligence does not seem to have had a great influence on their assessments regarding acts of deterrence implemented by Israel. The personal inclination of two of the leaders analyzed – Arafat and Nasrallah – was to rely on their own intuition and sources of intelligence.

It would seem that efforts to infuse deterrent messages through sophisticated disinformation campaigns would be difficult when leaders are using such paradigms.

Once a message of deterrence has been transmitted, the three cases have shown the importance of the paradigm, which exists in each organization for command and control in regards to the success of the message. A unified line of command between the leadership and the terrorist forces, and between them to the patron states facilitates deterrence. Once the leadership has been convinced that a deterrent signal should be taken into account, and it has dealt with all the other obstacles (ideological justification, spiritual leadership, patron states); if it lacks a unified command and control, the conviction to accept the signal of deterrence may lose its relevance. This has been the case with Fatah. Hamas, on the other hand has shown a relative discipline once a decision was made to refrain from attacks. This can be explained by the relative control of the “external” leadership over the main terrorist weapon (Qassam rockets). This issue raises an additional one; decapitation of key leaders has frequently been a two-edged sword; while it has raised the price for the surviving leaders, it has frequently disrupted their line of command and complicated the implementation of decisions that derive from the success of deterrence.

Individualist or collective decision-making processes in the leaderships of the non-state organizations have an obvious influence on the absorption of deterrent signals. The studies of the three organizations show that there are fundamental differences in their decision-making processes. Whereas Fatah was almost totally controlled by Yasser Arafat until the period before his death, and since then is almost devoid of any effective decision-making process; Hamas is based on a collective leadership, in which each member of the political bureau has different interests that can be influenced. While Hizballah is formally based on such a collective leadership, it has become more and more governed by the personal leadership of the Secretary General, Hasan Nasrallah. A general observation of this study is that the more “pluralist” the decision making process of a group is **within the leadership** (as opposed to a chaotic line of command and control), the greater the options for effective deterrence is.

## **The Power of Weakness**

The Palestinian side and Hizballah have benefited from what is called in Israeli deterrence parlance, “the power of the weak”. This is the relative power that the weaker side maintains vis-à-vis the stronger party. It can be based on one or a combination of three strategies:

1. **Neutralizing key components of its opponent’s advantage. This is done:**
  - a. By finding a defense against the tactics that are central to that advantage or;
  - b. By creating circumstances that prevent the enemy from using those capabilities that give it the advantage.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In the Palestinian case, this was accomplished by creating the circumstances in Palestinian society that would precipitate chaos and a humanitarian crisis, were Israel to implement its deterrent threat of re-occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. See: Gen (rtd.) Amos Malka, “The power of the Weak against the Weakness of Power – asymmetric deterrence,” (Hebrew, unpublished paper).



2. **Creating an internal situation in the target society that renders acquiescence to pressure or to deterrent threats virtually impossible.** Arafat's policy of controlled chaos in the West Bank and Gaza eventually created a multi-polar terrorist space in the West Bank, and especially in Gaza with no one "address". While 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 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.
3. **Posing 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.

The ramifications of the "power of the weak" are, in any case, an erosion of the ability of the stronger party to pose a credible deterrent. **In the Israeli case vis-à-vis both the Palestinians and Hizballah, the main source of the "power of the weak" is Israel's commitment to international norms and conventions.** Both the Palestinians and Hizballah have succeeded in taking advantage of this factor. Thus, Israel is constrained from using indiscriminate firepower in the vicinity of civilians; is forced to restrict military operations when there are large-scale collateral casualties among civilians; and cannot use prisoners of war as a bargaining chip by keeping them incommunicado (hiding whether they are even dead or alive) as their adversaries do.

## **The Image of Israel**

A primary source of deterrence is the image of the deterring entity in the eyes of the target. This image can be "imported" from the intelligence of the patron state, or it can be independently built through an intelligence collection process within the organization. The case of Hizballah integrates both modes of imaging of Israel, with the organization accepting assessments of the IRGC, but also collecting current intelligence. Hamas and Fatah, on the other hand, enjoy an intimacy with Israel which allows it to draw a much more accurate image of Israeli intentions. There is no doubt that the role of psychological warfare and information warfare is critical to the depiction of this image.

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<sup>4</sup> Personal communication from Gen. Amos Malka, former Head of Military Intelligence.

In all the cases analyzed there is evidence that the leaders of the organizations developed an image of Israel's resolve (or lack of resolve) from the input of the Israeli media. The Israeli experience towards these organizations has shown the limitations of a democratic society with a free press, and a culture of open political debate. When the deterring body is an autocratic state, it has a relatively high control over the image it projects to its friends and enemies. In neither case however does the projected image (that of a confused democratic society which lacks steadfastness and determination or of a un-deterred regime) necessarily reflect the truth. In any case, Israel has made no strategic attempt to manipulate the image that was projected to these organizations. Furthermore, it may be assumed that even were such an attempt made it would not have been able to overcome the open culture of the Israeli media. Some participants in this study pointed out that in the past, the Israeli radio in Arabic (and Persian) was much more effective as it did not attempt to endear the State of Israel on its Arab audience.

Images formed from open sources notwithstanding, Israel's policy towards terrorist attacks by these organizations has also fed the image of "negative deterrence". In the cases presented above it is clear that Israel's restraint, whatever its justified reasons, has created an image that encourages the organizations to continue their terrorist attacks. Occasional attempts to restore deterrence (for example – the bombing of Lebanese infrastructure in order to pressure Hizballah in February 2000) tended to be short-lived and were not followed up. The public debate within Israel to any actions directed at the population or host state tends to feed the image that Israel cannot persevere with such a policy.

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 image of the constraints of Israeli democracy, and the modus operandi of its governments (all governments) in making 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 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 extract 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 found in rational statements made by Israeli leaders that "there is no military solution" but only a "political solution" to terrorism. These statements 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 a weakening factor in Israel's deterrence credibility. Finally, Israeli attempts to satisfy the international community regarding its rules of engagement and its desire 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.

An important component of the deterrent image is the image of "intelligence dominance" – the perception of Israel as an intelligence super-power with the ability to target the leaders of the other side at will, and to eliminate them. This image has

been occasionally reinforced by successes in targeted killings of senior figures (Hasan Musawi in February 1992, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin and 'Abd al-'Aziz Rantisi in April–May 2004), but it has also been impaired by failure in attempts to kill others (Muhammad Deif in Gaza who escaped a number of attempts on his life).

It is noteworthy that a central component in Israel's deterrent image, in all cases, has been the perception of US backing for Israeli counter-terrorism policies. This perception has become stronger since September 11, and was reinforced during the last Lebanon war. It is noteworthy that there is no evidence that the image of the US imbroglio in Iraq, which ostensibly has diminished American deterrence (at least vis-à-vis Iran), and the failure of the US to capture bin Laden, have not diminished the perception of American backing for Israel as a component of Israeli deterrence. On the other side of the coin, strengthening of Israeli deterrence is often interpreted as enhancing American deterrence vis-à-vis the Muslim world. This is particularly true in the case of the Lebanese war, which was portrayed in the Muslim world – and among various Islamic non-state actors – as a proxy war between the US and Iran or even as a “promo” for a future American attack on Iran.

### **Inter-relationship of Theatres**

Any Israeli attempt to deter the Palestinians or Hizballah must take both groups into account, regardless of the individual target. The Intifada broke out in September 2000 on the heels of what was perceived as an Israeli defeat at the hands of Hizballah in Lebanon (the Israeli withdrawal). Similarly, Hizballah's attempts to challenge Israel's deterrence have been, in many cases, linked to escalation on the Palestinian front and Hizballah's assessment that Israel would refrain from acting on two fronts simultaneously.

The deterrent effect of Israeli actions against states and non-state actors (e.g. Palestinian vs. Lebanese) has been mixed. Israel's reaction to the killing of six soldiers on the border of Gaza, and the abduction of one other soldier in July 2006 was not anticipated by Hamas and seemed to indicate a new policy – or at least a new mindset – of the new Israeli government. Nevertheless, Hizballah did not draw an analogy from this event to a possibly similarly severe Israeli reaction to such an action on the northern front. This may have been due to an assessment that its own deterrence towards Israel (long-range rockets) was more potent than that of Hamas (short-range Qassam rockets). On the other hand, since the war in Lebanon there has been a sharp decrease in attempts to launch Qassam rockets by Hamas. While this can be attributed in part to IDF disruptive operations, it seems that the Israeli reaction in the North coupled with the impression of an American *carte blanche* to Israel; enhanced Israel's deterrent image in the eyes of Hamas, and caused the terrorist group to adopt a more circumspect attitude. This enhanced deterrent image seems to have been behind the willingness of Hamas to negotiate over the abducted soldier.

### **Modes of Deterrence**

An almost universally accepted axiom in Israel's defense and security community is that there is no way to “deter” the individual suicide bomber (or even the individual terrorist who is putting his life at high risk). Nor is there a way to deter the terrorist organization, which has no “public assets” that it could lose as a result of the deterring party's reactions. In addition, the Israeli security community is well aware of the fact

that success for a terrorist organization is measured quite differently than the success of the attacked state; one successful attack out of tens or even hundreds of disrupted plans is a total success for the terrorist organization, whereas for the state, it is seen as a total failure.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Israel has directed a de facto strategy for deterring terrorist organizations. This strategy was built on four main pillars: direct military deterrence to bring its leadership to decide to lower its profile; threatening the institutionalized assets of the “host” (the PA, Lebanon); deterrence towards the host population; and indirect deterrence via the patron (Syria).

### **Direct Intervention**

The first pillar – direct military intervention and disruption – has been the core of Israel’s de facto deterrence of Hizballah and Palestinian organizations. Israeli disruptive actions against the Palestinian organizations – particularly targeted killings of top-level activists – have had a temporary deterrent effect. The most salient example has been the series of targeted killings that Israel implemented in 2003. During that period, every activist at any level had to take into account that his movements may result in his death. This eventually brought the leadership to a de facto moratorium on suicide attacks. This period also gave birth to the discussion of a *hudna* (ceasefire).

Such deterrence is almost always "tactical" and not strategic. The paradigm of strategic deterrence in which one state can cause damage to another on the strategic level is almost never applicable towards terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, tactical threats towards terrorist organizations can result in temporary deterrence. The conclusions that arise from this analysis are:

1. Tactical deterrence towards terrorist organizations usually derives from real actions (as opposed to declarations and signaling which comprise the bulk of the deterrent image in strategic deterrence); the terrorist organization knows that an attack of one type or another has resulted in a certain level of retaliation and it has to take that into account.
2. Declarations that are not fulfilled create "negative deterrence". Such a case is rare in a paradigm of strategic deterrence between states (and certainly in nuclear deterrence). In attempts to deter terrorism though, they are a daily phenomenon.
3. Tactical deterrence begins to erode the moment it is fielded. If it is not replenished from time to time by actions, it loses its efficacy. This, of course, differs from paradigms of strategic deterrence which are based on a much more stable perception of the other side’s capabilities and the conditions under which they may act.
4. Tactical deterrence is frequently nearly indiscernible from “operational considerations”. The goal of the terrorist leader is to carry out the attack or attacks. If he receives signs of high alert from the warring side that may thwart his efforts, he may freeze the operation until such a time that the alert goes down. This, it is claimed, is not an expression of deterrence but a purely tactical consideration.
5. Tactical deterrence is based on execution of a threat as opposed to the core definition of deterrence which is, as noted above, the threat of punishment. It

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<sup>5</sup> The Head of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams was quoted as having said to his British interlocutors: “You have to be lucky all the time, we only have to be lucky once.”

has been claimed that as in other areas, “familiarity breeds contempt”; a threat of punishment of unknown proportions looms much darker than a punishment which is meted out on a regular basis.<sup>6</sup>

### **Deterrence via “Host States”**

The second pillar of this strategy aims at bringing pressure of the “host” state (or quasi-state in the case of the PA) to bear on the terrorist organization. The affinity and dependence of the non-state actor on its relationship with existing states (Lebanon) or (the Palestinian Authority) can be important channels for deterring the terrorist actors. This has been demonstrated in the case of Fatah, when pressure on the material interests of the Palestinian Authority brought about occasional restraint of Fatah elements in the field. This is also true in the aftermath of the second Lebanon war, in which the dependence of Hizballah on a modus vivendi with the Lebanese state allowed the state to impose restraints on the guerilla group.

The efficacy of this strategy largely depends on the community of interests between the host and the organization that is the ultimate target of deterrence. The greater the identification between the two, or the closer a non-state actor gets to being a state, the more susceptible it is to deterrence. Fatah, for example, evolved into states, gathered interests and assets, and hence became vulnerable to deterrence methods. In the cases analyzed above, it is clear that effective and credible threats to the hosts (Lebanon or the PA) had the potential of deterring the terrorist organizations from actions that would. Israel did not succeed however in generating such a deterrence. Both hosts benefited from their weakness; Israel (and the West) had a political interest in the continuing functioning of the PA and Lebanon so as not to have even greater chaos at its doorstep, or in the case of the PA, to have to take over its civil functions and re-occupy the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>7</sup> This restrained any Israeli response that could conceivably bring about a collapse of those entities.

Another channel, which Israel has attempted to exploit for indirect deterrence on host and patron states, has been the international community. While inclusion of the organizations themselves in lists of terrorist organizations has not perturbed these countries a great deal, the prospects of international sanctions have always been considered a potential deterrent. Such sanctions have been implemented against the PA, Afghanistan under the Taliban, Syria and Iran. However, without total commitment of the international community it is doubtful that such measures will

A terrorist organization can “evolve” into a host state and internalize the considerations and constraints of the state, including its view of the cost-benefit

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<sup>6</sup> One Israeli MK familiar with the debates in the defense community pointed out that skillful deterrence has an element of dramaturgy. A gun that fires in the first act is no longer relevant for dramatic purposes in the last act. The “audience” gets used to the shots and the deterrence is eroded.

<sup>7</sup> While the PLO forces “outside” of the Palestinian territories support the idea of dismantling the PA and allowing the responsibility for the civil administration of the Palestinians to devolve on Israel as the “occupying power”, those “inside” are not in agreement. Fatah leaders see the PA as a framework, which protects Fatah from returning to the status of a “terrorist organization” in Israeli eyes and are keen to preserve it. Some Hamas leaders – including the Hamas PM Isma’il Haniyya – have, on the other hand, raised the possibility of dissolving the PA, since Israel attacks its elected officials and security forces in any case. In contrast, the PIJ, which has no vested interests in the PA and no immunity from Israel, has sided with the Fatah against dissolving the PA, apparently due to its assessment that the very existence of the PA protects it.

analysis of continuing to be involved in terrorism. This is clearly evident in the case of the Palestinian Authority, and conceivably in the future in the case of Lebanon, were Hizballah may take complete power. However, in most cases of Arab and Islamic organizations, any trend towards institutionalization of a terrorist organization induces a split in those organizations, with the splinter groups rejecting any moderation of positions.

### **Deterrence via the Populace**

The third pillar was also attempted extensively in the confrontations between Israel and Palestinian terrorism and with Hizballah in Lebanon. A major component of Israeli deterrence towards the Palestinian organizations – and to a lesser extent Hizballah – has been the attempt to deter the populace from providing support to them. This has been met with only modest success. Israeli pamphlets distributed over Gaza and South Lebanon could not warn the populace of levels of retribution that Israel, as a state committed to the Geneva Conventions, could not implement.

Israel has tried to deter terrorists through the host populaces both in the Palestinian and the Lebanese context. However, this policy also did not yield any real success in either theatre. Obviously, the ability of a democratic state to take full advantage of this element is curtailed by its international commitments to the laws of war and human rights, not to mention its status as an occupier (when such a case applies). The failure of these attempts may have been due, inter alia, to the fact that Israel's political and humanitarian constraints precluded development of a credible threat.

Proposals for indirect deterrence of Palestinian organizations have been raised. One such proposal was to present a "price table" for launching of Qassam missiles from Gaza by linking the Israeli early warning system for short range rockets (codenamed "Red Dawn" – *Shahar Adom* – it was changed to Tzeva Adom) to the Gaza electric grid in Israel, so that every launching of a rocket would turn off the electricity in Gaza for one hour. The "automatic" blackouts would, according to this proposal, bring about public pressure on Hamas to refrain from launching rockets at certain hours. This proposal was never seriously discussed.

The role of propaganda and Psyop is pivotal for deterrence through a host population. In discussions with senior Israeli security officials, it has been claimed that Israel's attempts to project an image of openness and free press (lacking in the Arab countries) in Arabic language broadcasts has been counter-productive, and Israel's goal of deterrence would be better served by amplifying the threatening image of Israel in case of an attack.<sup>8</sup>

### **Deterrence via the Patron State**

The fourth pillar is indirect deterrence via the patron state. This was the basis of Israel's strategy of deterrence against terrorism in the early days of the State.

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<sup>8</sup> Israeli radio in Arabic (The Israel Broadcasting House – Voice of Israel) used to broadcast blatant threats, describing Israel as a "hornet" that if awakened can sting its enemy to death. Participants in this study claimed that Israel's need to comply with international norms and to apologize on a regular basis for mistakes that caused collateral civilian casualties – including in the Arabic language broadcasts – has been counter-productive to deterrence. These participants pointed out that Israel could have presented its case to the international community but still have used the cases (such as Jenin and Kafar Kana) to enhance its deterrence as willing to go "all the way" against terrorism.

Reprisals were launched against the states (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon) in a manner that was intended to bring them to rein in the terrorists. Questions that influence this pillar are: Is the proxy group (the terrorist non-state organization) so controlled by or identified with the patron (host Internationally legitimate State) that the efficacy of threatening the direct interests of the proxy is diminished and deterrence can be achieved only by direct threats to the interests of the patron? On the other hand, are the interests of the proxy important enough to the patron to justify being deterred so as not to impinge upon these interests?

This pillar is closely linked to the second. The stronger the dependence on the patron is, the less influential the host state may be. In many cases, the non-state terrorist organization adopts the strategic interests and narrative of its patron. This was true in the past in the cases of Palestinian organizations that acted as total proxies of Arab states (al-Sa'iqa as the Palestinian organization of the Syrian Ba'ath; the Arab Liberation Front which represented the Iraqi Ba'ath), and it is true today in the relationship between Hizballah and Iran. Another mode of relationship is that of the Syrian relationship with both Hizballah and Hamas – Syria remains a facilitator and political supporter, but does not intimately involve itself with the ideology and planning of the organizations.

Attempts to deter patron states must also take into account all the factors of leadership, modes of collecting signals, the ways in which they process them and feeding them to their decision makers, and the decision making process itself in those states.

Ultimately, though they are contingent upon the existence of levers of deterrence of the deterring party towards those patron states. When such levers exist, the transfer of deterrence from the patron state to the non-state proxy does not have to be a complicated decision-making process.

However, in practice, Israeli options for deterring Iran and Syria have been limited. The ability to deter Iran has been almost non-existent due to the absence of a common border, and Iran's deterrence towards Israel – the option of international terrorism against soft Israeli and Jewish targets abroad. At the same time, deterrence towards Syria has been impaired by the fact that Syria and its proxies knew that Israel had no interest in risking a full-fledged war with Syria over acts of terror. The deterrence relationship between Israel and Syria is built on preventing Syria from initiating a war against Israel. Any attempt to prevent Syria from supporting terrorism (closing offices of terrorist organizations, etc.) entails compellence. Any attempt to pressure Syria to prevent its proxies from performing terrorist attacks would call for allocating part of the "punishment" reserved for acts of war by Syria for acts of terrorism. This course was never employed by Israeli governments.

Along with the process of terrorist organizations becoming proxies of Arab or other states, a reverse process can also be identified. The freedom of action that Afghanistan under the Taliban accorded al-Qa'ida reflected both the failure of the Taliban to internalize their "statehood", and a total identification of the Taliban with the al-Qa'ida narrative to the point that they were willing to risk the consequences of this identification. There are signs that Syria under Bashar al-Asad is undergoing a similar process in relation to Hizballah; Bashar's public statements have become more

and more identical to those of Nasrallah, and seem to reflect an adoption of the Hizballah-Iran narrative. This should raise the question whether Syria will necessarily react to deterrence "as Syria" per se, or might behave with less caution out of its identification with Hizballah.

An important lesson from the history of Israeli-Hizballah interaction is the difficulty for an open democracy to neutralize domestic debate and changes of government from impinging on the deterrent image it attempts to project to a terrorist adversary. This dilemma places an onus on the Israeli political and military leadership to bolster the deterrent message with unambiguous messages and actions.

Nevertheless, Israel has achieved temporary and fragile deterrence vis-à-vis the Hizballah and 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 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, as opposed to deterrence that deals with whether or not to do it.

## **Conclusion**

In the course of this study, a number of senior Israelis were interviewed on questions regarding whether or not Israel had developed a comprehensive doctrine of deterrence towards terrorist organizations, and whether there had been conscious and coordinated efforts to project a certain deterrent image. The conclusion from these interviews, and from the objective case studies presented above is that **no comprehensive military-political-economic doctrine for deterring terrorist organizations was ever adopted by Israel, either at military and security levels or at the government level.**

This was partially due to the sense of existential conflict with terrorist entities, which are sworn to the ultimate destruction of Israel and are motivated by religious and not political motivation or by an uncompromising nationalist agenda. The conventional wisdom in Israel has been that such organizations cannot be effectively deterred, but should be fought until extirpated. Consequently, the politically sensitive aspect of dealing with terrorism in Israel precluded any official doctrine of deterrence, as that would have implied 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, almost all the Israeli experts and decision makers who were interviewed for this study saw the main obstacle in deterring non-state actors in the absence of a wide array of vulnerable interests that could be threatened, in contrast to the interests of a state. Hence, the more such an organization took on itself attributes and interests of a state, the more susceptible it became to deterrence.

Israel has succeeded from time to time in achieving deterrence that was limited in time and place. This was achieved, unlike in the case of classic deterrence, not by



threat of force, but by show of force. The deterrence did take effect immediately after Israel proved its willingness to use force and subsequently began wearing off shortly afterwards. The conclusion therefore is that deterrence against terrorist organizations can rarely be based on an image of the deterring state's capability (after all, the terrorist organization is, by definition, struggling against a much stronger adversary), but on actual use of that capability. Furthermore it is necessary from time to time, to refresh the awareness of the terrorist leadership that the state will indeed employ such capabilities. To paraphrase a well-known expression of classic deterrence, the state that attempts to deter terrorism must "*speak loudly and periodically use a big stick*".