

Strategic ASSESSMENT

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Operation Cast Lead: Significance and Ramifications

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OPERATION CAST LEAD IN GAZA: SIGNIFICANCE AND RAMIFICATIONS

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Strategic ASSESSMENT

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

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

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Abstracts

Operation Cast Lead: Civil-Military Processes and Results of the Campaign / Giora Eiland

The political processes of Operation Cast Lead lagged behind the impressive military achievements: clear goals were defined later than necessary, there was no clear consensus on how to attain the goals, and the political apparatus needed better coordination to face the many players involved.

Operation Cast Lead: The Diplomatic Dimension / Oded Eran

International political issues were important considerations for Israel in the timing, management, and conclusion of the campaign. In the wake of Operation Cast Lead, Israel must draw on maximal maneuvering skills as it copes with questions having deep implications for its security and its international standing.

The Civilian Front in Operation Cast Lead: Proper Functioning in Face of a Limited Challenge / Meir Elran

The systems responsible for managing the civilian front, especially the IDF Home Front Command and the local authorities, functioned rather well, in particular in striking contrast to 2006. Nonetheless, the gap in Israel between the threat potential and the home front's response capabilities has not been sufficiently closed.

Operation Cast Lead and International Law / Robbie Sabel

Self-defense against urban guerillas; proportionality in the use of force; laws of war applied to an asymmetrical conflict; civilian targets and casualties; responsibilities to the civilian population; and the use of phosphorous shells are among the questions of international law explored in relation to the campaign in Gaza.

Operation Cast Lead: Political Dimensions and Public Opinion / Yehuda Ben Meir

The timing of Operation Cast Lead was not chosen because of the February elections but rather despite them. Throughout its duration the operation enjoyed massive support among Israel's Jewish population: the public believed it was a justified war, and even the outcome, though disappointing to some, was acceptable to most.

Operation Cast Lead: The Test of Public Diplomacy / Hirsh Goodman

An examination of Israel's public diplomacy in Operation Cast Lead reveals an ironic disparity between a carefully planned and implemented wartime media policy and the net result, which was damaging for Israel's international standing. Israel did not prepare sufficiently for the post-campaign fallout from foreign media coverage.

The Operation in Gaza and the Palestinian System / Shlomo Brom

Palestinians in the West Bank were relatively unresponsive to the campaign in Gaza, due largely to PA preventive measures and Hamas' weakened infrastructure in the West Bank. The question arises how much Hamas' weakened state will advance intra-Palestinian dialogue and the Israeli-Palestinian political process.

Between Hamas and Fatah: Implications of Operation Cast Lead / Anat Kurz

Though not directly involved, Fatah was a victim of the Gaza campaign, as the campaign highlighted Fatah's weakness and advanced Hamas' leading role in the Palestinian national movement. Despite the blow Hamas suffered, it is acknowledged as the ruler in Gaza, and Fatah remains dependent on it for any political process.

Hamas' Weapons / Yiftah S. Shapir

The most important weapon possessed by the Palestinian organizations in Gaza, and particularly Hamas, is rocket weaponry, which includes non-standard homemade rockets and more advanced rockets with greater ranges. Mortars were used extensively in the campaign; antitank and antiaircraft missiles were not.

Hizbollah and the Palestinians: From Defensive Shield to Cast Lead / Amir Kulick

The Hizbollah response to Operation Cast Lead was low keyed and primarily rhetorical, calling on others to act. Hizbollah's caution since the 2006 war, its internal Lebanese standing, its aversion to domestic criticism spurred by its ties to Iranian, and forthcoming parliamentary elections helped curb its active support for Hamas.

Ramifications of the Gaza Campaign for Local Terrorist Organizations / Yoram Schweitzer

Hamas was dealt a heavy blow but not eliminated by the campaign, and retained its ability to fire rockets and missiles. Other organizations seemingly have similar though smaller capabilities, which they will use based on their sense of Israel's likely response and intra-Palestinian, inter-organizational, and external factors.

Operation Cast Lead: Regional Implications / Ephraim Kam

The most prominent characteristic of the Arab world's response to the campaign was division and weakness. The moderate states, led by Egypt, see Hamas as a dangerous element connected to Iran. For their part, the radical Iran-Syria-Hizbollah axis tried to incite the masses on the Arab street against the moderate governments.

In the Wake of Operation Cast Lead: Egypt's Regional Position Revisited / Emily B. Landau

Egypt's opposition to Hamas during the campaign and its mediation efforts between Hamas and Israel suggest that Egypt is seeking to reassert its former regional prominence more determinedly. This could have important ramifications for regional politics, including ongoing efforts to counter Iran's hegemonic ambitions.

Deterrence: The Campaign against Hamas / Yair Evron

The closer organizations such as Hamas and Hizbollah are to recognizable governments, the more they are vulnerable to deterrence threats. Hamas, as the de facto government of the semi-state of Gaza, is sensitive to Israeli punitive actions and Israel now enjoys a robust state of deterrence.

Decision against a Terrorist Organization: Operation Cast Lead – A Case Study / Zaki Shalom

Although the operation strengthened Israel's deterrence with regard to Hamas and perhaps other hostile elements in the region, the scope of this deterrence should not be overestimated. It is also now probably clear to many that expectations of unequivocal decision is an unattainable goal when fighting terrorist organizations.

Operation Cast Lead: Civil-Military Processes and Results of the Campaign

Giora Eiland

While Operation Cast Lead is over, not all the facts have come to light and the perspective of time is still lacking. Nonetheless it is already possible to relate to two central themes: the processes that took place, in particular with regard to civil-military relations, and the outcome of the operation, i.e., the extent to which the operation's objectives were achieved.

The Processes

The three most important words in any operational command, in descending order of importance, are: *goal*: what do we actually want to accomplish? *mission*: what do we have to do in order to attain the goal? and *method*: how do we accomplish the mission? The importance of these three questions holds true for all echelons involved.

When the issue at hand is an operational command at the level of the General Staff there is also an additional aspect. While the second and third questions above relate primarily to the military realm, the first, by contrast, is entirely the responsibility of the political echelon. The political echelon must define – or approve – the goals of the operation, i.e., the objectives of the war.

When the goals of an operation are unclear, change from one day to the next, or are simply unattainable, the effectiveness of the military operation is significantly undermined. The Second Lebanon War was a good example of the ineffectiveness of a military operation caused in great part due to the lack of clarity in stated goals. In this sense, Operation Cast Lead may be viewed as a substantive improvement.

Maj. Gen. (ret.) Giora Eiland, senior research associate at INSS

The political solution has hardly any relationship to the rate of tactical success. Therefore the political debate on “how do we conclude this operation” should start not four days after the beginning of the operation, rather four months before it.

The awareness of the need to discuss the operation’s objectives was apparent from the beginning. At some point (late though not too late), the various decision makers involved convened in order to define clear, simple, and attainable objectives.

The process, however, was long and convoluted, and therefore impacted negatively on the effectiveness of the operation, while also extending it unnecessarily beyond what was required. It started with defining a very broad goal of “creating a better security reality,” in other words, “wanting things to be better.” This statement cannot serve as a goal, and indeed, the real discussion began only three days after the start of the operation and debated three approaches. The minimalist approach eyed the achievement of a long term ceasefire, based on deterrence, as a sufficient goal. The intermediate position defined the goal as destroying most of Hamas’ military capability. The maximalists defined the objective as the collapse of Hamas’ government (creating a new political reality, not just a new security reality). The decision that the main objective of the operation was to be the minimalist approach was made two weeks after the beginning of the operation and caused

its unnecessary extension by at least a full week. Should one claim that using ground forces was crucial for achieving even the minimalist goal, such a measure already played itself out in two or three days.

A discussion of almost equal importance, one that also dragged on unnecessarily, dealt with the mission. The second objective of the operation – though it was not articulated at the start of the operation, it did become agreed on and defined a few days later – had to do with the arms smuggling from Egypt into Gaza. It was agreed that the operation’s second objective would be to prevent further smuggling.

This argument centered not on the goal but on the mission. There were two approaches: one held that there is no response to the arms smuggling other than Israeli control of the Philadelphi route. Based on this approach, the IDF must control the route (and, if necessary, the city of Rafah as well) and remain there

over time. Those supporting this approach saw the operation as an opportunity to correct the mistake made three years ago when Israel decided to evacuate Philadelphi. The other approach argued that the objective – preventing arms smuggling into Gaza – would be achieved through diplomacy. The debate over this issue lasted for some two weeks before the second approach was approved.

In both cases, it was possible and necessary to have made the decisions before rather than during the operation. This is not to say that one must never change objectives or missions in the midst of an operation depending on its development, but that is not what happened in this case. The results of the military action, both the aerial campaign and the ground operation, were expected ahead of time, and these should have had no effect on either of the two debated issues.

Moreover, unlike wars of the past in which the results on the battlefield – sometimes exclusively – determined the political outcome, today the situation is different. The political solution (the exit from the operation) hardly has any relationship to the rate of tactical success. It would therefore be proper for the political debate on “how do we conclude this operation” to start not four days after the beginning of the operation, rather four months before it. It would thus be possible to clarify to ourselves what we want and, more importantly, it would be possible to coordinate conclusion of the operation ahead of time with the United States, and thereby avoid unnecessary embarrassment regarding Security Council deliberations.

The Outcome

In the end, three goals were defined for the operation: create a long term period of calm, prevent Hamas from rearming itself, and bring Gilad Shalit home (this objective was articulated only towards the end of the operation, and even then not in unequivocal terms).

It is probably safe to stay that the first – long term calm – has been achieved, in particular because Israel’s deterrence was reestablished, though not only for this reason. Hamas is, first and foremost, a political movement with political ambitions, and its immediate ambition is to stabilize its control of Gaza and then, later on, attain similar power in the West Bank. At present the challenges facing Hamas are significant. At stake is not only the reconstruction of Gaza and Hamas’ ability to

supply food and medicines for the area's 1.5 million residents, but also its ability to receive support from other players, at least in the Arab world. It is reasonable to assume that Hamas' top priority dictates strengthening its own political standing and governing capacities before turning to another military encounter. The population in Gaza gives the organization credit, but that credit is not unlimited. It is clear that another violent round bringing about another wave of destruction may make the population rise up against Hamas, just as Nasrallah is afraid of such an atmosphere prevailing in Lebanon. Thus in contrast to Israel's demands, the international community should rescind its boycott of Hamas and agree to extend all economic-humanitarian aid in a joint effort with Hamas, instead of going through different organizations. As such, the aid can be made conditional on the existence of absolute calm.

The second goal, ensuring a situation in which arms smuggling from Egypt into Gaza is a phenomenon of the past, has not yet been achieved because there is very little connection between Israel's military successes in Gaza and this objective, which is completely dependent on Egypt. Egypt has no real interest in stopping the smuggling. Continuing the dynamic in which Hamas attacks Israelis and Israel attacks Hamas operatives is tolerable from Egypt's perspective, as long as it happens on a small scale. Furthermore, the smuggling industry provides a livelihood for many, from the heads of the Bedouin tribes to the Egyptian officers in the area. Egypt has no desire to confront them.

How, on the basis of the Operation Cast Lead, might it be possible to convince Egypt to change its approach? Israel does have an effective tool at its disposal, namely the Israel-Gaza crossings. Israel and Hamas have a common interest that conflicts with Egypt's interest, namely, that Gaza's economic ties with the outside world run through Egypt rather than Israel. Israel can present a tough stance on the subject of its crossings with Gaza, eventually agreeing to something that runs counter to its own interests by opening the crossings but insisting that the crossings be opened to people and the goods needed in Gaza only if and when the Gaza-Egypt border is properly sealed.

Should Egypt agree to change its approach, then it must stop the illegal traffic of people and goods in the only area where it is possible to do so effectively. This is not the Philadelphi route, which is a narrow

corridor where on both sides – Palestinian and Egyptian – there are houses that are home to members of the same families living on either side. As long as this is the geography and the demography, smuggling cannot be stopped at this location. No German technology, American guidance, or European forces can change that.

Egypt, for its part, can create a security zone of some 5 km south of Philadelphi. It is possible to erect two fences, 2 km apart from one another in this area, which is empty of buildings and people, and ensure that no one enters the area in between. One road would bisect this area and be outfitted with gates, backed up by scanners and advanced technology. It is possible to stop the smuggling in this location if one really wants to. In other words, the political border between Gaza and Egypt would remain Philadelphi, and, without any connection to it, Egypt would act unilaterally within its own sovereign space to stop the smuggling.

One of the worrisome developments on this issue is the rushed agreement signed between Israel and the United States two days before the ceasefire. Based on this agreement, the United States will intercept arms, most of which come from Iran, even before it arrives in Sinai. Since the operational ramifications are tenuous at best, this is a problematic political agreement that implies a solution to the smuggling issue in a different way – and that therefore it is possible to be more conciliatory with Egypt.

The third objective – bringing Gilad Shalit home – was not articulated at any stage as one of the goals of the operation. This is something that political sources are careful to stress. Nonetheless, because of the pressure of public opinion, it became a part of Israel's demands. As of the time of this writing, there has not been any real progress with regard to this issue. Still, it is important to stress that Israel will be able to bring Gilad Shalit home “at a reasonable cost” of releasing Hamas prisoners only if it links this to the subject of the crossings. Both issues concern a humanitarian problem. One is more painful to Hamas, and the other is more painful to Israel. If Israel is not

In contrast to Israel's demands, the international community should rescind its boycott and agree to extend economic-humanitarian aid in a joint effort with Hamas. As such, the aid can be made conditional on the existence of absolute calm.

careful to link them together, it will lose important leverage. Israel is mistaken when it is prepared to open the crossings more extensively without making this conditional on the Red Cross being free to visit the captive Israeli soldier.

Conclusion

Operation Cast Lead was a success by any standard, and certainly when compared with the Second Lebanon War. While it is true that the enemy was weaker and the circumstances less complex, there is still room for satisfaction with the noticeable improvement in the performance of the IDF, the Home Front Command, and the other authorities. On the positive side, at least some of the lessons that emerged from the Winograd Commission report with regard to the decision making process were implemented. Nonetheless, the political apparatus started late and did not operate in tandem with the military action. It was led by various elements (with the Ministry of Defense in charge of interfacing with Egypt, and the prime minister and the minister for foreign affairs dealing with others), each operating on its own. Alongside the successes, the operation also encountered unnecessary glitches (insulting the French foreign minister, the superfluous spat with the Turks, the Security Council debate, and the embarrassing incident between Olmert and Condoleezza Rice).

It is important to remember that the political aspect is fundamentally more complex than the military one. On the military side, there were (at least in this case) two players, Israel and Hamas, conducting a simple zero-sum struggle between them. On the political side, there were many more players with multiple varied interests. Therefore, in order to reach the optimal outcome, early preparation and coordination (with whomever possible), simulations of various scenarios, and daily choices between alternatives are critical. It is hard to conclude that all of these were accomplished in optimal fashion.

Operation Cast Lead: The Diplomatic Dimension

Oded Eran

Three issues continued to engage the international community even after the last Israeli soldier left the Gaza Strip. One is the (dis)proportionality of Israel's response to the Qassam rocket attacks on Israelis, the second is Israel's use of certain types of weapons and ammunition, and the third is Israel's firing on buildings belonging to international institutions operating in the Gaza Strip. The preoccupation with these topics is the price Israel will have to pay in order to establish, to the extent possible, a new equation in its asymmetrical war against terrorist organizations operating against it from within innocent or semi-innocent civilian populations.

In Operation Cast Lead, Israel eased some of the restrictions the military and political echelons had imposed on the IDF in the Second Lebanon War and other previous conflicts. For example, IDF forces intentionally targeted mosques and schools based on information that these institutions were used as weapons and ammunition caches or were sheltering Hamas armed fighters. The low key response to these incidents from the Muslim world represents a tacit admission of sorts regarding the use of these facilities as bases of military operations against Israel. At the same time, new restrictions were imposed, such as not using cluster bombs – in part because of the criticism from the United States and the world at large following their widespread use in 2006.

Three reasons can help explain the departure from certain operational norms of previous wars. The first was the desire to minimize, to the extent possible, the number of casualties among the Israeli fighting

Dr. Oded Eran, director of INSS

forces, a predictable reaction to the Second Lebanon War. The second was the solid information regarding the use of civilian institutions, i.e., schools, mosques, and international facilities. The third has to do with the identity of the enemy, in this case Hamas. The political echelon deciding on Operation Cast Lead was correct in assuming that the international community would demonstrate a greater level of tolerance for Israel's conduct given that it was fighting an organization boycotted and criticized by European nations, the United States, and most Arab governments.¹

The preoccupation of the international political leadership with these issues will be affected by several factors: Israel's own internal preoccupation with these questions, particularly regarding the use of certain types of ammunition; the speed of the humanitarian and infrastructure rehabilitation in Gaza; the scope of cooperation Israel will demonstrate with regard to this activity; and finally, the international political atmosphere that will prevail as a result of the Israeli elections, the formation of a new government, and its approach to renewing the political process with the Palestinians.

The timing of the military operation in Gaza and its conclusion demonstrate that the outgoing Israeli government took international considerations into account. The withdrawal of the last Israeli soldier from Gaza hours before the new United States president was sworn into office testifies to this point. In addition, the creation of the "humanitarian corridor" during the course of the operation points to the (justified) sensitivity to the issue and to international demands. The next Israeli government will have to demonstrate the ability to maneuver in the face of pressures from the international community on different issues stemming from the military operation in Gaza on the one hand, and the broader issue of advancing the political process in the Middle East, on the other.

In their visit to Jerusalem on January 18, 2009, the six European leaders (the Czech prime minister, as the rotating president of the European Union, the French president, the German chancellor, and the British, Italian, and Spanish prime ministers) refrained from discussing issues of proportionality, the use of certain types of weapons, and the targeting of international institutions in the Gaza Strip, but all of them stressed their desire to see progress in the political process.

The Czech prime minister, whose country is one of the friendliest towards Israel among the EU, said with regard to the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, which took place a few hours before the meeting with Prime Minister Olmert, that “the participants have, of course, called on all sides involved to renew the peace process as soon as possible. They agreed that the active role of the new American administration in the process is absolutely critical, and expressed the hope that the process would be a priority on the administration’s foreign policy agenda.” At the same meeting, the French president was quick to propose a summit that would deal with the question of “how a Palestinian state would exist in peace with the State of Israel.”²

The first signs from President Obama, including the phone conversations he had with Middle East leaders as soon as he assumed office, indicate that indeed the administration fully intends to give the political process high priority. The new president will have to wait until Israel chooses its new political leadership, and to an extent, also until the internal political picture on the Palestinian arena clears. However, those who assume that the new administration will flinch from dealing with the topic because of the need to handle the global financial crisis, address issues such as the war in Afghanistan, or plan the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq are making a mistake.

In considering how the United States should approach the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian conflicts, the new administration’s decision makers will have to face up to the weaknesses of the political systems in this region and the problems that surfaced and were exacerbated during Operation Cast Lead. For example, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and the international actors involved in the Israeli-Palestinian political process may well compare the Gaza Strip with the area controlled by the PA. In other words, the question is how to prevent the situation that prevailed in the Gaza Strip – i.e., the capability of various terrorist groups to produce and launch rockets, primitive as they may be – from replicating itself in the West Bank, and can Israel accept Palestinian and/or international substitutes for its own monitoring and preventive activity.

The Gaza operation aggravated the relations between Hamas and Fatah, and it will further reduce the ability of Abu Mazen (or his successor) to conduct effective negotiations with the Israeli government

over the core issues. UN Security Council Resolution 1860 does not refer to Hamas at all, but the reconstruction efforts in Gaza will require some dialogue with the “government” there, while the drive to strengthen the ceasefire regimen has propelled some European Community members to consider easing the minimal conditions for dialogue with Hamas. A possible outcome of such a move might be the further undermining of Abu Mazen’s standing. The operation also brought into sharper relief the relations between the moderate Arab regimes and Iran. It is not hard to guess to whom President Mubarak was referring in his speech at the Kuwait conference on January 19, 2009, when he said that one must not allow external forces to use the tragedy of the Palestinians in order to invade the Arab world.³ One must not assume that Iran will abandon its Hamas satellite and not assist in its economic, military, and political rehabilitation.

An additional question confronting the new administration in Washington, especially if it decides to become closely involved in the negotiations between Israel and Syria, is its relations with Turkey. During the course of the operation, Turkish leaders adopted a very blunt and critical tone towards Israel. This may have been anger created over the fact that the Israeli prime minister, who visited Ankara just days prior to the beginning of the operation, did not so much as hint to his Turkish counterpart that Israel intended to attack Gaza, and over the fact that Turkey, in its attempts to broker a ceasefire, was pushed from the center of the political stage and forced to watch Egypt reap most of the political rewards. Turkey’s expected demotion as the primary political broker in the Syrian-Israeli track might bring about an additional deterioration in Ankara-Jerusalem relations. The new Israeli government will have to invest significant efforts in damage control, both with regard to the Turkish government and with Jordan, where every round of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is cause for near-existential fears. If the assessment is correct that the head of Jordan’s general intelligence services was recently removed from his post for attempting to improve the relations with Hamas abroad, this is further evidence of Jordan’s own internal struggle with the issue.⁴

In his speech at the Kuwait conference, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia said, “Israel must understand that the choice between war and peace will not remain open forever, and that the Arab peace initiative

currently on the table will not remain there forever.”⁵ UN Security Council Resolution 1860 of January 8, 2009 regarding the events in Gaza refers to the importance of the Arab peace initiative in its call to renew efforts to achieve peace.⁶ Before deciding to restart negotiations under its own auspices, the new administration will also have to consider the possible inclusion of the Arab initiative in the limited platform of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The moderate Arab states, and Egypt in particular, made a public showing of their willingness to confront Iran and its satellites. It may be assumed that in exchange they will demand greater American support for their initiative.

These are merely some of the political questions arising out of Operation Cast Lead. The issues are sensitive and touch on complex interrelations that also exist between the main players (or those who view themselves as such) dedicated to solving the Arab-Israeli conflict on the political level. The new Israeli government will need maneuvering skills and sophistication in order to cope with immediate issues emerging from the operation and with questions having deep implications for Israel’s security and international standing. The change in the American administration, the change in the stances of certain nations in the Middle East, the political ambitions of the EU and some of its members – these will require Israel to enlist all of its political capabilities. Another round such as Operation Cast Lead in the shadow of Iranian nuclear capability is a challenge Israel has never faced. This will have to be discussed again as Iran’s efforts bring it closer to attaining such capability.

Notes

- 1 At the Arab summit meeting in Kuwait on January 19-20, 2009, the Saudi Arabian king stated: “In all honesty, I must say to my Palestinian brothers that their internal conflict is a greater threat to their struggle than the Israeli incursion.”
- 2 A telegram from the Foreign Ministry to its embassies dated January 18, 2009.
- 3 Egyptian State Information Service, January 19, 2009.
- 4 *Jerusalem Post*, December 30, 2008.
- 5 *Arab News*, January 20, 2009.
- 6 S / Res / 1860 (2009), (Section 8).

The Civilian Front in Operation Cast Lead: Proper Functioning in Face of a Limited Challenge

Meir Elran

The challenge to the civilian front at the national level in the course of Operation Cast Lead was fairly limited. Those individuals affected undoubtedly underwent in their own immediate circles a difficult if not traumatic episode. However, in terms of the general public and from the perspectives of the state and even those communities within range of the rockets, the actual threat against the civilian population was relatively limited. This is true not only in terms of the number of launches,¹ but also in terms of the direct and indirect impact on individuals: three fatalities, thirteen severely or moderately wounded, several dozen lightly wounded, and several hundreds who were treated for stress symptoms. Thirty-five families were evacuated from their homes because of rocket damage. The daily routine in southern Israel was only partly affected. The major disruption occurred in the educational system, which was virtually shut down; by contrast, the average attendance of workers in factories in the south stood at over 85 percent.² Few residents of the south left of their own volition, and there was no need to organize evacuations or send people elsewhere for respite. The conduct of the population was usually restrained, orderly, and focused, which contributed to the low number of casualties. By every measure of comparison, whether with regard to the bleak forecasts presented to the public before the confrontation, or the Second Lebanon War (a daily average of 140 Hizbollah rockets), or the total potential threat against the civilian front in a multi-front confrontation,

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the civilian front underwent limited turmoil, which was somewhat artificially inflated by the media.

This paper focuses on the performance of the systems responsible for the civilian front and its implications for the future, and on the public's resilience and its effect of on the management of the confrontation and its outcomes.

During Operation Cast Lead the systems responsible for managing the civilian front functioned rather well. Two systems in particular stood out, in striking contrast to 2006: the IDF Home Front Command and the local authorities. Overall, the Home Front Command learned and implemented the lessons from its problematic performance in the past. The warning systems that were developed and deployed generally proved effective, with the exception of some local glitches.³ The close ties with the local authorities, strengthened by the newly formed and trained liaison units, were productive, as were the direct dialogue and cooperation with the government ministries. Information dissemination to civilians functioned effectively and was appropriately restrained in its rhetoric. Above all, the Home Front Command assumed a leading position for managing the civilian front. There is an important albeit mixed message in this: on the one hand, it was demonstrated once again that when the IDF enlists its power and organizational skills in the service of essentially civilian tasks it is capable of making

The relative successes of Operation Cast Lead must not lead to the conclusion that we have closed the gap between the threat potential and the response capabilities of the home front.

effective contributions. That is the upside. On the other hand, the question is to what extent it is appropriate in a democratic country for the military to be responsible for managing clearly civilian matters. A clear example was the decision, taken primarily by the Home Front Command, to close the entire school system in the south. Even if this decision was taken in consultation with the Ministry of Education and the local authorities, it was the military that led the move, despite its social civilian ramifications.

The achievements were perhaps even more noteworthy regarding the local authorities. Unlike in the north during the Second Lebanon War, the local authorities in the south, generally speaking, operated effectively and in a confidence-inspiring fashion. This is true not only

in terms of their technical performance, important in and of itself, but perhaps of even greater significance was the conduct of mayors and heads of local and regional councils, some of whom were new in their positions, who demonstrated restrained guidance, stood at the helm, and assumed responsibility. This may reflect an advanced stage of a process, slow but important, of gleaning a major insight on the municipal level, namely, that local governments and their professional staffs can and should have a decisive role to play not only in peacetime, but also during times of crisis and disaster. This understanding is crucial in building capabilities at the local level and in establishing a strong civilian society that can cope successfully with challenges involving quasi-military threats.

The message suggested here is clear: in face of future threats it is necessary to continue the balanced building of the civilian front's capabilities and the systems in charge of managing it. The relative successes of Operation Cast Lead must not lead to the conclusion that we have closed the gap between the threat potential and the response capabilities of the home front. We have not. The growing rocket and missile capabilities of Israel's enemies still pose a real threat for the civilian home front that should be met effectively. In this complex task, the National Emergency Authority can play a crucial role and faces a difficult challenge.

The question of the public's resilience vis-à-vis the threat must also be evaluated critically. Public resilience is defined as a socio-political phenomenon, reflecting the response of the public (unlike the individuals directly affected) in relation to the intensity of the traumatic stress it experiences, and in particular its ability to return quickly to routine life. A public responding appropriately to trauma and returning quickly to routine conduct may be defined as having a high resilience level, and vice versa. Based on this definition, it appears that in the course of Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli public in general and the population in the south did not experience a real trauma, with the exception of those who were hit directly by rocket fire. The scope and nature of the damage inflicted during the 22

Proper advance preparation of the civilian front, in tandem with continued investment in related military, civilian, and philanthropic systems, proves itself in the hour of need.

days of fighting did not produce substantive public stress for southern Israel, and certainly not when compared to the north during the Second Lebanon War. Without a doubt, there was distress of varying degrees experienced by many individuals and communities. However, the scope of damage and casualties, which decreased steadily starting the second week of the fighting, the performance of the systems in charge, the public mood, and what was seen as an IDF military success,⁴ all greatly mitigated the potential for trauma and its effect on the public's conduct. Daily routine dominated in most cases and population segments (with the important exception of the schools). The high public morale, as well as the sweeping support for the political and military leaderships, remained consistent during the entire operation. The stamina and strength of the nation did not undergo as difficult a test as was anticipated before the operation or as we might expect in an extensive confrontation in the future.

The conclusion is that proper advance preparation of the civilian front, in tandem with continued investment in related military, civilian, and philanthropic systems, proves itself in the hour of need. Given the high potential for future threats against the civilian front and the strategic risks therein, it is necessary to continue to balance all the components of possible responses: strengthening Israel's deterrence and prevention capabilities; foiling and destroying high trajectory weapon systems; developing effective active defense systems, including tactical ones; strengthening passive defenses, including selectively fortifying sensitive locations (such as the schools); and improving psycho-social services under the leadership of the local authorities. It is important to continue the efforts begun in the wake of the Second Lebanon War and maintain the momentum. It is necessary to devise a comprehensive, multi-year national plan, appropriately budgeted, and to manage its ongoing implementation in a centralized fashion. This will improve the chances for successful performance on the civilian front in the next confrontation as well.

Notes

- 1 Based on an announcement made by Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, 345 Qassams and 213 Grads were launched in the course of the operation. This constitutes a daily average of 23 rockets over the course of the entire operation, a daily average of 37 rockets during the

first week, 21 during the second, and 15 during the third. Furthermore, several hundred mortar bombs (412 according to the organization) were fired.

- 2 *Kalkalist*, January 15, 2009.
- 3 The extended range of the rockets beyond 20 km, even though anticipated by Israel's intelligence services before the operation, did not bring about – perhaps because of a lack of time – full preparations on the part of the Home Front Command, local authorities, and residents in outlying areas.
- 4 On January 13, 2009, 78 percent of respondents to a *Haaretz* poll said that the operation was a success. On January 18, 2009, immediately after the ceasefire, in a poll published by Israel TV's Channel 10, the number of respondents who viewed the operation as a success plummeted to 41 percent – a number equal to that of those who viewed the operation as a failure.

Operation Cast Lead and International Law

Robbie Sabel

A combination of factors has led to particular interest in issues of international law in the study of Operation Cast Lead. These factors include the amorphous political status of the Gaza Strip; the problem of application of the rules of war to asymmetrical warfare between a modern military and urban guerrillas; the role of the UN Security Council; the involvement of European and other states in attempts to resolve the dispute; the intensive involvement of NGOs in Gaza; the widespread coverage by the international press and particularly Arab TV; the increasing involvement of judicial discourse in Israeli society and the IDF; and attempts by Palestinian organizations and their supporters to brand Israel's campaign and tactics as illegal.

The article that follows reviews several international law issues that are particularly related to the operation in Gaza.

Self Defense against Urban Guerrillas

International law and the UN Charter recognize the inherent right of states to use force in self defense against an armed attack. The right applies even if the attack is by irregular forces. Following 9/11, the UN Security Council explicitly recognized the right of states to self defense against terrorist attacks. However, if the area from where the attack occurred is under the military occupation of the state being attacked, then it could be argued that the applicable law is that of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which deals with the rights of the occupying

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power to arrest and take legal action against violators of the law. If Gaza was under Israeli military occupation prior to the campaign, then Israel, according to this argument, should have simply arrested the Hamas rocket firing teams.

Occupation, however, requires effective control; only then do the laws of occupation apply. Clearly there was not sufficient Israeli control, if control at all, to allow police type actions. The legal status of Gaza is not clear and in the absence of effective control and ability to carry out police type actions, Israel correctly invoked its right to use force in self defense against attacks emanating from Gaza. The applicable law is thus the law of armed conflict.

Proportionality in the Use of Force?

To justify the claim of self defense, the use of force must be in proportion to the attack. A minor border incident does not warrant a full armed conflict in response. Proportionality can be measured not only against an individual attack but against an accumulation of attacks if they were part of a pattern. Regarding Operation Cast Lead, the Hamas attack by thousands of rockets clearly justified a response of armed attack.

Once armed conflict develops, international law does not require proportionality of response. A state defending itself may strive to cause disproportionate damage to its enemy's military targets and capabilities.

Once parties are in armed conflict, the rule of proportionality is no longer applicable or relevant, except as regards civilian casualties. The rules of war do not impose a game type of equilibrium. In an armed conflict a party is entitled to use superior force to destroy the enemy's armed forces and military capabilities and not only to respond in kind. The UN Security Council authorized the US and its allies to defeat Saddam Hussein's military, not just to force it to vacate Kuwait. An aggressor state or organization must take into account that it is liable to meet a potential victim state that will use "disproportionate force" to defend itself.

Application of Laws of War to an Asymmetrical Conflict

Hamas has not denied that its attacks were targeted at Israeli towns; such attacks are a violation of the laws of war. Furthermore Hamas used civilians to shield its combatants, which is also a violation of the laws of war. There are reports that the Hamas leadership headquarter

was located in the basement of a hospital, a further egregious violation. Reciprocity, which is normally an essential element of international law, did not exist in this conflict. Nevertheless, the IDF correctly saw itself as being bound by the laws of war in its conduct, notwithstanding the total disregard of these rules by its opponents.

Civilian Casualties

Where combat takes place in a built up area, civilian casualties are a tragic but inevitable consequence of a military operation. International law obligates that if there are civilians close to military targets, efforts must be made to minimize civilian casualties, and the civilian casualties may not be disproportionate to the military advantage to be gained. Hamas frequently fired from civilian areas. In the Gaza operation, the IDF repeatedly warned civilians of impending attacks, using leaflets and mass telephone messages. Civilian casualties apparently constituted about one third to one half of all casualties. It does not appear that any other military has ever taken such steps to minimize civilian casualties, nor is there any other similar conflict on record in a built up area where the percentage of civilian casualties in relation to combatant casualties was lower than in Operation Cast Lead.

Civilian Targets

A civilian target, including a mosque (or church or synagogue) that is used for military purposes such as storing weapons and ammunition, loses its immunity from attack and becomes a legitimate target. Any other rule would lead to granting an illogical advantage to an enemy hiding weapons in such a building. Israel had information that a certain hospital was used for hiding the leading staff of Hamas. Nevertheless Israel refrained from attacking the hospital because of the civilian casualties that would be caused by such an attack. The civilian police in itself not a military target, but where the police is part of the military establishment, as it was under Hamas, it becomes a legitimate target.

Phosphorous Shells

Like every military in the world, Israel uses phosphorous shells in flares and smoke shells, and for marking targets. Such shells are standard equipment in all NATO militaries as well as the Arab states'

armed forces. They are of course dangerous to handle when burning but absolutely legal. The International Committee of the Red Cross has confirmed that there was no evidence that these shells were used in Gaza in any irregular way.

Supplies to the Civilian Population in Gaza

Classic laws of law permitted total embargos, as was done during the Second World War. Modern laws prohibit starvation of civilians as a means of warfare. Israel took the unprecedented step of allowing the large scale delivery of food and medical supplies from its territory into Gaza while actual fighting continued. Furthermore, Israel applied a unilateral ceasefire of some three hours every day to ensure distribution of such food and medicine.

Iranian Responsibility

A state selling weapons is not normally legally responsible for the results of their use. However, Iran trained Hamas operatives and financed and supplied rockets to Hamas, knowing that the rockets were to be used against civilian targets. This could well entail legal responsibility by Iran for the actions of Hamas.

Conclusion

The principal legal criticism of Israeli tactics in Operation Cast Lead appears to revolve around the issue of proportionality. It could be questioned what is a proportionate response to an attack of some four thousand Hamas rockets targeted at civilian towns over a period of three years. Beyond that, however, it is relevant to emphasize that once armed conflict develops, international law does not require proportionality of response. A state defending itself may indeed strive to cause disproportionate damage to its enemy's military targets and military capabilities. Let the attacking state or organization beware.

Operation Cast Lead: Political Dimensions and Public Opinion

Yehuda Ben Meir

The government of Israel decided to embark upon Operation Cast Lead six weeks before the general Knesset elections. According to security sources in Israel, this is one of the reasons Hamas was surprised by the operation: Hamas did not expect Israel to embark on a military operation – certainly not one of such scope – before the elections and the formation of a new Israeli government. Indeed, this assessment was not unique to Hamas. In the days leading up to Operation Cast Lead, many analysts in Israel said that Israel was – in practice, if not in theory – in a time-out of sorts, and that it was highly unlikely that a transition government would undertake a substantial political or security initiative in the midst of an election campaign.

The willingness of the government, especially its two main parties – both at the time vying with Likud to form the next government – to make such a decision at such a time has a clear political aspect. Above all, it reflects the ability of the Israeli leadership to make decisions even under difficult circumstances. There were many, especially abroad, who wondered whether embarking on the operation at this time was not in fact connected to the elections, i.e., a function of the leaders' desire to attain strong achievements and tally up points before the voters went to the polls. This claim was made publicly by Hamas leaders and spokespeople, as well as other parties hostile to Israel.

A more critical analysis, however, leads in fact to the opposite conclusion, i.e., the timing was not chosen *because* of the imminent elections but rather *despite* them. One may safely assume that Israel's leaders understood that it is very hard to assess the electoral effect of

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such a military operation ahead of time – indeed, its effect is still far from clear and may well turn to the unexpected. The political risks of such an operation – like any military undertaking – are substantial. From the outset, the campaign’s objectives were limited and were not meant to satisfy all of the public’s wishes (e.g., a clear decision against Hamas or the collapse of its government in Gaza); the military achievements and especially the political ones were by no means a foregone conclusion; there is always the risk of a high number of casualties among both soldiers and civilians (casualties have a strong impact on public opinion); and there is also always the risk of unforeseen complications. Added to all this is the basic critical and suspicious nature of the Israeli public and the fickleness of public opinion. While before the operation there was tremendous pressure on the government to act and it seemingly had little choice in the matter, the government has already proven that when it wants to, it can withstand such pressure. Accordingly, embarking on the operation one and a half months before the elections demonstrates the readiness of the country’s leadership to take political risks and its ability to make difficult decisions. This on its own carries a message of deterrence.

From its first day, Operation Cast Lead enjoyed massive support among Israel’s Jewish population. The public saw and continues to see Operation Cast Lead as a just war in a double sense: there was full justification for going to war (the war was seen by all segments of the Jewish population as a war of “no choice”), and the way it was conducted and its use of force were justified. A poll taken the day after the start of the operation¹ showed 81 percent of the Israeli public supporting the operation, with only 12 percent opposed. In light of what we know today about the profound differences of opinion among the Jewish and Arab populations on Operation Cast Lead, it is apparent that the vast majority of those opposed were Israeli Arabs and that the scope of Jewish support for the operation reached 90 percent.

Unlike the Second Lebanon War, when support for the war and for the political and military leaderships eroded the longer the war continued, support for Operation Cast Lead remained steady throughout and even after its conclusion. However, the increase in political support for the two main parties in the government conducting the operation that was evident in the early days of the operation quickly evaporated.

As for support for the operation, the data is unequivocal. In a poll from the fifth day of the war (December 31, 2008), in a statistically representative sample of the Jewish population,² 79 percent the population “strongly supported” the operation and 14 percent “largely supported” it. A poll held on the third day of the ground offensive (January 6, 2009)³ showed that 70 percent of the Israeli population felt it was necessary to continue the operation, compared to 20 percent that said it was time for a ceasefire. Here too, one may assume that some 80 percent of the Jewish population supported the continuation of the operation. These results are fairly similar to those collected before the ground offensive. In a poll taken on December 30, 2008,⁴ 81 percent of the total population (equivalent to about 90 percent of the Jewish population) supported the continuation of the operation, compared to 10 percent that favored a ceasefire. A poll taken at the end of the second week of the operation (January 8, 2009)⁵ showed that 91 percent of the Jewish population expressed support for the operation and only 4 percent opposed it.

This picture of absolute support within the Jewish population for the operation was repeated almost exactly in the data collected by the War and Peace Index of the Tami Steinmetz Center. In a poll taken January 4-6, 2009,⁶ 94 percent of the Jewish population responded that they strongly supported the operation; 92 percent thought it had security benefits for Israel; 92 percent justified the air force strikes on Gaza; and 70 percent felt that sending ground troops into Gaza was “a necessary step.” The poll charted a reverse picture among Israeli Arabs: 85 percent opposed the operation.

The more the operation progressed, the more some segments of the population started to feel that the operation had realized its potential. Still, the large majority supported its continuation. A poll taken on January 13, 2009⁷ showed that 62 percent of the Israeli public (equivalent to some 70 percent of the Jewish population) responded that the operation ought to be continued, compared with 26 percent of the public that supported the ceasefire.

There was also a consensus in the Israeli public regarding the outcome of the operation. A poll taken on January 13, 2009⁸ – just four days before the ceasefire – showed that 78 percent of the Israeli public felt that “the operation in Gaza was a success,” compared to only 9

percent that defined it “a failure” (13 percent responded “don’t know”). Eighty-two percent responded negatively to the question “Did Israel exert unnecessary force?” compared with 13 percent that responded in the affirmative. Presumably within the Jewish population only a small percentage answered yes. In a poll taken around the same time,⁹ 82 percent of respondents graded the military activity “very good” and another 12 percent graded it “good”; 25 percent graded the political activity as “very good” with another 35 percent grading it “good”; and performance on the home front received grades of “very good” (58 percent) or “good” (28 percent). Clearly the Israeli public saw Operation Cast Lead as both a just and a successful war.

The end of the operation did not meet the expectations of a significant portion of the public, despite the fact that the leadership deliberately did not create unrealistic expectations (a clear lesson from the 2006 war). Nonetheless, the situation was much more favorable than it was at the end of the Second Lebanon War. Then, the attitude of the public to UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (which formulated the ceasefire) was overwhelmingly negative, whereas in a poll taken the day after the Cast Lead ceasefire began,¹⁰ 36 percent said they were in favor of the ceasefire versus 50 percent who were opposed, with 14 percent responding “don’t know.” Polls published about one week after the start of the ceasefire (and several days of complete quiet on the front) already showed a more positive picture. In one,¹¹ those interviewed were asked: “Should the operation have been halted or should the entire Gaza Strip have been conquered?” Forty-eight percent responded “conquer all of the Gaza Strip,” versus 44 percent who responded “halt the operation.” In another poll,¹² 58 percent of respondents answered that “the decision of the Israeli leadership to enter a ceasefire and not continue the fighting in Gaza was the right decision” versus only 38 percent who responded that it was “the wrong decision.” The final public opinion verdict will likely depend on the situation that prevails in the south. Continuing violations of the total calm, as occurred in the last days of January and the first days of February, will make themselves felt very clearly in terms of Israeli public opinion.

Implications of the war for the elections were more complex. On the one hand, the popularity of the triumvirate leading the war rose as long as the operation progressed, though the change was particularly

dramatic with regard to the minister of defense. Just a few days after the end of the operation, a decisive majority of the public ranked highly each of the three as well as the IDF chief of staff and the opposition leader for their conduct during the operation.¹³ Even so, the change was not translated into election results, which was also reflected by the polls. A poll taken the day after the start of the operation¹⁴ indicated, for the first time, a change in the ratio between the blocs and an advantage for the center-left bloc (63 Knesset seats) over the right-religious bloc (57), as opposed to 66 seats to the right-religious bloc and 54 seats to the center-left bloc in a poll published¹⁵ on December 23, 2008 (a few days before the start of the operation).

And yet, already by the fourth day of the operation, the lead returned to the right-religious bloc, and since then it only increased. On January 18, 2009, one day after the start of the ceasefire, the advantage of the right-religious bloc returned to its pre-operation proportions – 65 versus 55 seats.¹⁶ The major erosion was in support for Kadima, which went from a high of 28-29 seats during the first days of the operation to a low of 21-25 seats by the end of January. One poll published towards the end of January even showed a 70 to 50 advantage to the right-religious bloc.¹⁷

It is difficult to account for this phenomenon with any certainty. Perhaps the final results of the operation did not match the expectations among the public, or perhaps the public did not fully appreciate the performance of the Minister of Foreign Affairs during the war – or a combination of the two. It may also be that the war brought out patriotism, hawkishness, and anti-Arab sentiment, which generally serve rightist parties (this may also explain the rise in the strength of Lieberman's Israel Beteinu party). Kadima's loss of popularity and the strengthening of the right-religious bloc proved, however, a passing phenomenon.

An additional question addresses the large difference between the Israeli public's attitude towards Operation Cast Lead and its attitude to the Second Lebanon War, considering the fact that the current operation also did not achieve a clear decision in Israel's favor: Hamas, much like Hizbollah, was not vanquished and did not collapse. The question is if this is linked to the particular characteristics of this operation – the low number of casualties, both among soldiers and civilians, the

positive image of how the military performed, particularly the ground forces, and the efficient and organized handling of the civilian front – or whether this represents a coming of age and a certain sobriety among the Israeli public regarding the nature of war against terrorist and sub-state organizations. The first is the more likely answer, and some of the data clearly points in that direction. At the same time, one must not discount the possibility that the second supposition is something of a factor as well.

Notes

- 1 "Maagar Mohot," broadcast on Israel TV's Channel 10 on Sunday, December 28, 2008.
- 2 "TeleSeker," published in *Maariv*, January 2, 2009.
- 3 "Maagar Mohot," broadcast during the "Mishal Ham Show" on Israel TV's Channel 2 on January 6, 2009.
- 4 "Maagar Mohot," broadcast during the "Mishal Ham Show" on Israel TV's Channel 2 on December 30, 2008.
- 5 "TeleSeker," published in *Maariv*, January 9, 2009.
- 6 War and Peace Index, Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Studies, January 11, 2009.
- 7 "Maagar Mohot," broadcast during the "Mishal Ham Show" on Israel TV's Channel 2 on January 13, 2009.
- 8 "Dialogue Poll," published in *Haaretz*, January 16, 2009.
- 9 "TeleSeker," published in *Maariv*, January 16, 2009.
- 10 "Maagar Mohot," broadcast on Israel TV's Channel 2 on January 18, 2009.
- 11 Poll taken by Mina Tzemah, published in *Yediot Ahronot*, January 23, 2009.
- 12 "TeleSeker," published in *Maariv*, January 23, 2009.
- 13 See notes 11 and 12.
- 14 See note 1.
- 15 "Maagar Mohot," broadcast during the "Mishal Ham Show" on Israel TV's Channel 2 on December 23, 2008.
- 16 "Maagar Mohot," broadcast on Israel TV's Channel 2 on January 18, 2009.
- 17 "Maagar Mohot," broadcast during the "Mishal Ham Show" on Israel TV's Channel 2 on January 28, 2009, and published in the newspaper *Ma'kor Rishon*, January 29, 2009.

Operation Cast Lead: The Test of Public Diplomacy

Hirsh Goodman

An examination of Israel's public diplomacy for Operation Cast Lead reveals an ironic disparity between a carefully planned and implemented wartime media policy and the net result, which has been extremely damaging for Israel's international image and standing. While this has not yet manifested itself in any major diplomatic crises, questions about Israel's disregard for human rights, excessive use of force, possible war crimes, and indiscriminate attacks on international facilities are high on the international agenda.

Though the public diplomacy machine ran smoothly before and during the operation, the shocking post-war situation in Gaza was largely ignored by those responsible for Israel's public diplomacy. Whereas during the campaign Israel's relationship with the media was tightly controlled, on the morning after, when reporters from all over the world converged on the Gaza rubble, Israel had no convincing message that could explain the dimensions of the devastation, and no acceptable rationale for what the world perceived to be an excessive use of force and disregard for international convention. Consider the case of Dr. Ezz el-Din Abu el-Aish, a well-known Gaza doctor with strong ties in Israel, whose three daughters were killed by an Israeli tank shell directed at their house. Weeks after the incident, no clear explanation was offered; the cooperative effort between the Foreign Ministry, the IDF, and the Prime Minister's Office that was so evident during the campaign did not produce an answer to persistent questions from journalists on the subject.

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Whereas during the campaign messages to the media were clear cut, well documented, and prepared in advance, subsequent charges that Israel was guilty of war crimes were not met with a strong, focused, defense. Instead, the government responded by offering soldiers accused of such crimes legal protection, while the military censor ordered that faces of soldiers in photographs be blurred – both actions amounting more to a de facto admission of guilt than a refutation or strong defense against these charges. That these charges would be made the day the guns fell silent should have been known in advance. Materials should have been prepared, documenting pre-battle briefings by commanders to the troops on the use of force and possible civilian casualties; legal papers should have been prepared and briefings for the media done on the precautions taken in this regard. The same zealotry displayed at explaining why Israel had to attack mosques during the campaign should have been applied here. No spirited defense, however, against charges of excessive use of force or war crimes was provided. This is a major departure from the confident, competent, and effective way Israel dealt with thorny issues during the campaign, which gives rise to the question whether those responsible for Israel's public diplomacy in Operation Cast Lead were so focused on the operation itself that they gave little or no thought to the morning after the guns fell silent.

There is no question that those responsible for Israel's public diplomacy prepared carefully for this conflict.¹ At the heart of this effort was the establishment of a centralized body in the prime minister's office charged with coordinating the public diplomacy effort across the board, which it did effectively during planning stages and the campaign itself. Applying lessons learned from the second intifada and the Second Lebanon War, Operation Cast Lead saw strong cooperation between the IDF, the Foreign Ministry, and the Prime Minister's Office, the sharing of real time intelligence to bolster claims made by Israeli spokesmen, and a real effort at curbing problems that caused intelligence security issues.

In addition, during the Second Lebanon War the army spokesman's policy toward the media was one of openness. This was subsequently judged a failure (including by the Winograd Commission) and one of the operational conclusions in preparing for Operation Cast Lead was that the conflict areas would be media-free. This was done from interests

of both information security and “message control” as to the reasons for the campaign and its goals. It was also understood that the more the devastation in Gaza became known to the world, so international pressure on Israel to end the hostilities would increase.

Israel closed the border to Gaza to the foreign media two months in advance of the fighting. The only images emerging from Gaza were gory pictures broadcast by al-Jazeera that were understood to be authorized by Hamas, and a smattering of other pictures and reports. The mainstream media, however, was initially completely barred from the battlefield, and subsequently admitted under tight and controlled pool arrangements. The extent of the operation only became apparent on the morning after the campaign, when the world was allowed to enter Gaza and see the scope of the destruction for themselves. The cumulative pictures have been devastating for Israel’s international image and raised huge questions that Israel has been hard pressed to answer. As such, it seems that Israel’s public diplomacy’s planners saw their first and foremost mission to give the IDF the time it needed to complete its military mission before international pressure set in. This they managed to do, albeit to the chagrin of the foreign media who successfully petitioned the High Court to gain entry to Gaza, which the military denied for “temporary security reasons.”

The question now arises whether this was the correct decision given the massive negative fallout after the campaign. If the international media were given ongoing access to the battlefield during the fighting, the world might not have been so shocked when the curtain was finally lifted once the combat ended. Had foreign media crews been embedded with Israeli forces from the beginning, able to follow the dilemmas facing the soldiers in fighting an elusive enemy that used human shields of all ages and schools, hospitals, and mosques for military purposes, perhaps the overall impression the world is now getting would have been different. Had the foreign media been allowed into the battle zone, perhaps the disastrous consequences, particularly in the Arab world, of al-Jazeera’s exclusive pictures would have been mitigated. So too, perhaps the casualty figures, medical needs, and human rights issues would have taken on a different perspective than those now in play.

A strong case can of course be made why it was wise to close the battlefield to the international media. Correspondents could have been

hurt if not killed, especially if not embedded with Israeli troops – which would clearly have been a public relations disaster for Israel – and they could have hampered the military’s freedom of movement. Overall, however, a total closure of the battlefield, while yielding Israel short term benefits, may have long term negative effects. Thus precisely because of this decision, more careful attention should have been paid to preparing the aftermath. In other words, while efforts were made to hide the destruction during the campaign itself, little or no structured preparation seems evident to explain to the world the pictures it is now seeing, why the IDF is not guilty of war crimes, and why the use of such massive force was necessary. Instead, the country’s reaction has been defensive, with Israel, and not Hamas, being in the dock of world public opinion.

A country’s public diplomacy is judged by the end result. Usually its major battle begins when the war on the ground is over. There is no doubting the competence of the effort during Operation Cast Lead, but Israel now stands at a low point in the eyes of the international community. The world acknowledged – at least formally – that Israel could not live with the continued rocket fire, and even understood that a school can be attacked by mistake in high density urban conflict. But it has not come away convinced that Israel handled this complicated situation in the best way possible, nor in line with normative international behavior.

There were no surprises in this campaign. It was inevitable that when the dust settled it would require a tremendous public diplomacy effort to try and explain what the world was seeing and why. This was not done and the full price for this failure has yet to be exacted.

Notes

- 1 Hirsh Goodman, “Israel’s Public Diplomacy in Operation Cast Lead,” INSS Insight No. 90, January 15, 2009.

The Operation in Gaza and the Palestinian System

Shlomo Brom

One of the interesting aspects to the fighting in Gaza was the behavior of the Palestinian population in the West Bank. While there were expressions of public protest, they were on a relatively small scale, both in comparison to similar protests in the West and in the Arab world, and when considering the images of death and destruction shown on Arab television. The Palestinian Authority's security forces helped temper the protests by directing them to locations where friction with Israeli defense forces would be avoided. Yet in any event, from the outset the protests were low key.

It appears there were two main reasons for this. On the one hand the relatively low participation reflected the mood of the Palestinians who have tired of the ongoing failing struggle, and understand that terrible damage was suffered by the Palestinian people as a result of the recklessness on the part of Hamas, which did not correctly assess the Israeli response. On the other hand it reflected the serious weakening of Hamas' political infrastructure in the West Bank. This process resulted from some decline in support for Hamas due to its forceful takeover of the Gaza Strip and its failure to improve the lives of Gazan residents, but mainly from a series of effective actions by the Palestinian Authority and Israel against Hamas' political and economic infrastructure in the West Bank. For example, a significant number of Hamas political activists were arrested, the Palestinian Authority succeeded in taking control of a large number of mosques where Hamas operated, and the organization's financial assets were impounded. In the absence of a

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functioning political infrastructure, Hamas struggled to motivate the masses to protest.

Another indication of Hamas' weakness in the West Bank was its failure to realize its threat to inflict heavy damage on Israel from this area. Hamas did not manage to launch even one single significant terrorist attack from the West Bank during the fighting, and the few attacks that took place during this period were spontaneous attacks by Palestinians who decided, on their own initiative, to carry out attacks using improvised means (knives, arson, and so on). After the ceasefire there was one shooting attack, although it is unclear if this was a Hamas attack. One may conclude from this that Hamas' terrorist infrastructure has also been crushed through intensive efforts by Israel's security forces in recent years, and recently by the actions of the Palestinian Authority's security forces as well. This does not mean that some Hamas cells are not operating still, but their capabilities are limited.

At this stage it is difficult to assess how the recent conflict in Gaza between Israel and Hamas will impact on the relative political power of Hamas and Fatah, headed by Mahmoud Abbas. Palestinians in and out of Gaza presumably understand the damage Hamas has caused them, the more favorable situation of the Palestinians in the West Bank under Abbas, and that area's greater prospects for further future improvement. This understanding can lead to a drop in support for Hamas and a rise in the power of Abbas and Fatah. On the other hand, during the fighting Abbas and the Palestinian Authority were perceived as collaborating with Israel and as irrelevant to the Palestinian cause, while Hamas again demonstrated that it is the only party that is willing to take Israel on and not succumb despite the large number of casualties. While this image of Hamas may have suffered to an extent because the organization did not succeed in carrying out its many threats and only inflicted limited damage on Israel, it is still strong. Since the end of the campaign Hamas has tried to boost this image and create a perception of its having been victorious in this campaign because it did not succumb and stayed on its feet, thereby "forcing" Israel to stop the fighting. If Hamas does not increase its efforts to stop the violent activity from the Gaza Strip, this will indicate that Hamas operatives might even believe this to be the real situation. The balance between these two antithetical elements is still unclear although the findings of a recent public opinion

poll may indicate that support for Hamas has increased.¹ In any case, even if Hamas loses additional support, it will presumably continue enjoying significant popularity among the Palestinian public. It is also likely that even if there is strong criticism of Hamas in Gaza because of the campaign, this will not hurt Hamas' control of the Strip, and critics will be wary of expressing their criticism and certainly will not stage an uprising against Hamas.

The fighting in Gaza helped Abbas navigate his way past January 9, 2009 which, according to Hamas and many Palestinian legal experts, is the date his term as president of the Palestinian Authority ended. After it recovers from the shock of the fighting in Gaza, Hamas will likely renew its verbal attacks on Abbas on this matter, but it is doubtful whether this will have any real effect that will unsettle Abbas' regime.

Another question is the impact of the developments in Gaza on the dialogue between Fatah and Hamas. Prior to the war the dialogue was deadlocked, due to the lack of real interest among both sides in progress. Egypt is trying to renew the dialogue as part of the post-campaign agreements, but is highly doubtful if this is attainable in the coming months. Hamas was not interested in the dialogue prior to the operation in Gaza because it preferred to conduct it from a position of strength, and it believed it would be in such a position after January 9. Now, after that hope has faded and it finds itself in a position of weakness, it is doubtful it will be interested in dialogue.

The situation in Gaza following the campaign has potential major impact on Israel's political process with the Palestinians. If a new deterrence balance has indeed emerged that will make Hamas hard pressed to renew the firing from Gaza, and certainly if the arrangements with third parties – principally the US and Egypt – make it hard for Hamas to rehabilitate its power, one can assume that stability and relative calm will continue for some time along this border. If Egypt succeeds in mediating between Israel and Hamas and an agreement is reached that will consolidate and strengthen the ceasefire, this will contribute to the stability, which in turn can help renew and accelerate the political process with the Palestinians. Although Abbas put contact with Israel on hold during the fighting because he was forced to display public displeasure with Israel's actions, it is likely that he will want to renew it after the dust settles. In the meantime, there will be a new

government in Israel, and this will help him turn over a new leaf. It is more convenient for both sides to conduct a political process when the security situation is calm. In this respect Hamas' weakness in the West Bank also contributes to the possibility of advancing the political process.

If the expectations of stability in the Gaza sector prove unfounded and the small scale rocket firing and attempts to carry out terrorist attacks along the border continue, Israel will likely first try to bring about calm through air attacks that will exact a greater cost than before. If this too does not help, Israel will probably embark on an ongoing series of wider military operations that will be designed to continue weakening Hamas and achieve freedom of movement for Israel's security forces throughout the Gaza Strip. At this point there would be the risk of anarchy in Gaza and the disappearance of the central government, as happened in the West Bank following Operation Defensive Shield. In such a case Abbas would not likely agree to return to the Gaza Strip, "riding on Israeli tanks." In any case, continuation of the fighting will make it hard for the two sides to conduct serious talks, let alone conclude them successfully and implement the agreement, even if they wanted to. In this case Israel will have to decide between renewing its military rule and anarchy in Gaza.

The political process that began after the Annapolis Conference incorporates two elements: political negotiations, which is a process that works from the top down, and a process of building the Palestinian Authority's capabilities, and particularly its security capabilities, which is a bottom up process. Hamas' weakening will make it difficult for it to disrupt the process of building up the Palestinian Authority's capabilities, although the image that was created of collaborating with Israel may damage the legitimacy of the Palestinian security forces in the eyes of the Palestinian public. These forces will have to demonstrate their contribution to Palestinian interests and the welfare of the population in order to limit this damage.

Another issue that may affect the development of the Israeli-Palestinian political process in the longer term is the impact of the campaign in Gaza on internal developments within Hamas: how will the internal balance of power evolve, will the positions be toughened, or will it be possible to change stances and make them more flexible.

On the one hand, the cost paid by Hamas could generate a process of moderation in which the political branches of Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank will gain strength vis-à-vis the military arm in Gaza and the external leadership in Damascus. On the other hand, Hamas' anger and frustration, particularly in a situation in which it feels that the results of the fighting help intensify the siege and the pressure on the organization, can lead to the military arm gaining power. However, the Damascus-based leadership will probably continue to control the finances and the weapon supplies to Hamas, and this affects the balance of power within Hamas.

In any case, even if the results of the fighting create a convenient environment for the continuation of the political process, this does not mean that an accelerated political process will take place in the coming year. The fighting in Gaza coincided with political transitional periods in the US and Israel, and the position of the Obama administration and the new government in Israel will have a crucial influence on the Israeli-Palestinian political process. In the United States the picture is becoming clearer. President Obama, who straightaway announced that he intends to give high priority to the Israeli-Palestinian track, appointed former senator George Mitchell as special envoy to the Middle East, who in turn has already made his first visit to Israel. On the other hand, the picture on the Israeli side is less clear. The Israeli positions are dependent on the coalition formed after the elections. The fighting in Gaza may strengthen support for less compromising stances towards the Palestinians, and boost those who argue that Israel cannot hand over more territory to the Palestinians given the risk that such areas might become launching bases for attacks against Israel. While this position is challenged by the Palestinian Authority's positive performance during the campaign, it is not clear how much this fact left its mark on the Israeli public and might overcome wariness to handing over additional territory to Palestinian rule.

Notes

- 1 <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3667302,00.html>.

Between Hamas and Fatah: Implications of Operation Cast Lead

Anat Kurz

Fatah was not directly involved in the Gaza campaign between Hamas, its rival, and Israel, its political and security coordination partner. Fatah was, however, a victim of Operation Cast Lead, as the campaign's immediate consequences and subsequent developments highlighted its weakness and advanced the leading role of Hamas in the Palestinian national movement.

The three weeks of fighting exposed the limits of Hamas' military capabilities, as well as its limited commitment to the safety and welfare of the Gaza Strip population. Criticism in the Arab world and soul searching within Hamas itself concerning its brinkmanship and faulty strategic assessment, which brought disaster upon the Gaza Strip, is inevitable.¹ However, the extensive damage to Hamas' military and administrative infrastructures in the Gaza Strip is not irreversible. Hamas can be expected to make full use of a lull in the confrontation and the economic resources that will flow into the Gaza Strip for rehabilitating its civilian establishment, military power, and institutions. Furthermore, the criticism in the Palestinian arena will likely not spark any sizable organized rebellion that will genuinely challenge Hamas' military wing. And in any event, criticism of the Hamas leadership will not necessarily translate into increased popular support for Fatah in the West Bank, and certainly not in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas' accomplishments in recent years, particularly national prestige and leadership, were earned at the expense of Fatah. The defeat of Hamas forces by the IDF did not undermine these achievements. Moreover, it is possible that the very fact of confronting the IDF in a

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campaign whose outcome was quite predictable, and the intense anger directed against Israel as a result of the death and destruction in the Gaza Strip, will even broaden support for Hamas in the Palestinian arena. In contrast, the abstention of the Palestinian Authority (PA) from taking a clear pro-Hamas stance during the confrontation, in addition to its determined effort to prevent any large scale response in the West Bank to calls by Hamas for protest demonstrations, weakened the already shaky public standing of Fatah in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.²

Since the outbreak of the second intifada, the violent struggle waged by Hamas in Israel and Israel's responses to terror attacks have played a decisive role in thwarting any attempt at renewal of the dialogue between Israel and the PA. The Annapolis process, launched following the June 2007 takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas, was designed to weaken Hamas while strengthening the PA, in order to improve the chances of reaching an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. Hamas, however, contributed greatly to impeding progress within the Annapolis-formulated framework. Its military and civilian infrastructure in the West Bank and its ongoing effort to expand its influence there, combined with the threat posed by its entrenchment in the Gaza Strip, have delayed implementation of the first stage of the Roadmap in the

The more tangible the promise of a political breakthrough, the more likely there will be support in the territories for a resolution – even among those sectors that were led by the political stagnation to support Hamas.

West Bank, particularly the removal of roadblocks and transfer of areas to PA security control. The continual rocket fire from the Gaza Strip made it impossible to encourage willingness in Israel and the PA to make compromises and take related electoral risks. The talks in 2008 between Israel and the PA were imbued with distrust, reflecting first and foremost the difficulty in bridging the gaps on key issues. This distrust also embodied recognition that the political split in the Palestinian arena, together with the geographic separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, would thwart any progress towards an overall

agreement, and that Hamas opposition was expected to complicate implementation of understandings – even if these understandings were limited to the West Bank. This political situation was not changed

by the campaign in Gaza. Whatever damage Hamas sustained did not impair its ability to continue to dictate the Israeli-Palestinian agenda.

One significant asset that Hamas deprived of Fatah is its status as leader of the Palestinian resistance. Hamas' image as the herald of resistance to Israeli occupation, to Israel, and to what Israel represents, including a regional order that Israel will be part of, was reinforced by the fighting in the Gaza Strip. Hamas has filled the vacuum created by Fatah's pursuit of a political strategy and its waiver of the "entanglement strategy," which labored to exacerbate tension between Israel and its neighbors. Indeed, there was sharp evidence of newly created tension during the campaign. Protesting the extent of the damage to Gaza civilian infrastructures, the Jordanian ambassador did not return to Israel from vacation until after Israeli forces withdrew from Gaza. Turkey's harsh protest over the Israeli operation signaled a potential crisis between the two countries. For its part, Qatar suspended its economic relations with Israel.

However, Hamas did not create a crisis between Israel and Egypt. The weapons smuggling into the Gaza Strip, particularly since the Hamas takeover, has cast a shadow on relations between the two countries. Yet increasing Egyptian concern about popular protest in its territory against the killing and damage inflicted on the Gazan civilian infrastructure heightened Egyptian pressure on Hamas during and after the confrontation to agree to a ceasefire. This domestic concern overrode the possible consequences of being portrayed as a partner in Israel's efforts to suppress Hamas' militant strategy and military capabilities. In addition, in order to forestall future Israeli military action in the Gaza Strip, Egypt expressed greater willingness to combat the smuggling of weapons into the region. This development significantly limited the achievements Hamas could credit to itself as part of the effort, led by Iran and Syria, to form a regional anti-Israel front.

Nonetheless, Hamas is recognized as the ruler in Gaza. Egyptian contacts with the organization to persuade it to moderate its aggressive policy reflected acceptance of its hold on the area. Even Israel, in demanding that Hamas halt its rocket fire and weapons procurement and enforce a ceasefire on other

Whatever damage Hamas sustained during the campaign in Gaza did not impair its ability to continue to dictate the Israeli-Palestinian agenda.

militant factions, recognized Hamas' responsibility for what happens in the Gaza Strip and what is exported from it. Ideas proposed for renewing the Fatah presence in the Gaza Strip were limited to the possibility that Fatah might take part in reconstruction of the civilian infrastructure there and supervise the Rafah border crossing. These proposals, however, were not accompanied by any expectation that Fatah control of the area would be restored in the foreseeable future. International actors recruited for Gaza's reconstruction, whether Arab or Western, will be unable to avoid coordinating the details and processes of rebuilding with Hamas personnel. After the fighting stopped, France redoubled its efforts to make the Quartet's demands of Hamas more flexible. Even if this diplomatic process, designed to facilitate contacts between EU institutions and Hamas is not successful, coordination with Hamas is likely to constitute a step toward rescinding the boycott of the organization without its accepting the longstanding preconditions for conducting a dialogue.

Does recognition of Hamas control in the Gaza Strip entrench the split in the Palestinian arena – a political reality whereby Hamas' standing is strengthened while Fatah is weakened – and with it lessen the prospects of promoting a compromise settlement between Israel and the Palestinians? Not necessarily. Egypt has repeatedly stressed its intention of rehabilitating the PA by convening a unity government. Support for the Abbas presidency and the Fayyad government and measures designed to clip Hamas' wings suggest that Egypt still regards an integration of forces in the Palestinian arena as a means of easing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both as a goal in itself and as a means for moving the diplomatic process forward. Perhaps this approach harbors a way out of the predicament in which Hamas escalates its confrontation with Israel in response to progress towards a settlement, and escalation in turn impedes progress towards a settlement.

The rivalry with Fatah that began upon Hamas' establishment intensified when Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip. The divide between the organizations, which deepened during the campaign in Gaza, is expected to widen further should real progress occur in Israel-PA dialogue. At the same time, political progress will likely aggravate tension within the Hamas ranks between the radical Damascus-based branch and the more pragmatic leadership in the Gaza Strip.³ This in

turn may prepare the groundwork for a dialogue between Fatah and pragmatists in Hamas. Presumably, the more tangible the promise of a political breakthrough, the more likely there will be support among the residents of the territories for a resolution – even among those sectors that were led by the political stagnation to support Hamas. As such Fatah’s potential ability to head a national representation based on its platform will grow. From this perspective, persistence in the political process, even if the Palestinian national dialogue is renewed without an official recantation by Hamas of its fundamental anti-Israel positions, will make it more likely that understandings reached in the talks will approach the implementation stage. Conversely, political deadlock, regardless of whether a Palestinian unity government is formed or the split in the Palestinian arena continues and is institutionalized, will preserve Hamas’ ability to foil attempts to regulate Israeli-Palestinian relations, while a weakened Fatah will be unable to offer the Palestinian public or Israel a practical alternative in the spirit of two states for two peoples.

Notes

- 1 “Khaled Mashaal: Hamas Believed the Operation would Last Three Days,” Yoav Stern, *haaretz.co.il*, January 20, 2009.
- 2 *Agence France Press*, January 15, 2008; *Christian Science Monitor*, January 15, 2008; *New York Times*, January 15, 2008.
- 3 Recent years have seen differences among the Hamas leadership regarding cooperation with Fatah and possible participation in the political process. These debates intensified in light of Tony Blair’s call to include the organization in the political process. See “Hamas Deeply Divided over Blair Remarks,” *Jerusalem Post* online, January 21, 2009.

Hamas' Weapons

Yiftah S. Shapir

General

Since 2001, the most important weapon possessed by the Palestinian organizations in Gaza, and particularly Hamas, has been rocket weaponry. Rockets offer these organizations clear advantages: the weapons are easy to use and cause damage to the other side from a great distance with a minimum of risk to the operators. The rockets are launched from the simplest rails (or, in the case of standard rockets like the Grad, from launching pipes) and they can be launched, after installation and setup, from a distance – which thereby further reduces the risk to the operators. In addition, it seems that it is relatively simple to manufacture primitive and inaccurate rockets by domestic means, without sophisticated industrial facilities.

Eight years' experience of manufacturing "homemade" rockets has shown that self-made weapons entail serious limitations and therefore, alongside efforts to enhance these primitive rockets, the Palestinians tried to acquire standard rockets made at specialized facilities. Indeed, in the recent campaign extensive use was made of standard rockets. In addition, in contrast with Hizbollah in 2006, Hamas also used mortars, most of which were probably standard.

All told, according to credible data, during Operation Cast Lead (December 27, 2008-January 18, 2009) 640 rockets were fired, (202 Grads and 438 Qassams) as well as another 224 mortar shells, an average of about 29 rockets a day. (In comparison, Hizbollah managed to fire a daily average of around 120 rockets a day throughout the Second Lebanon War).¹

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Non-Standard Rockets

The various Palestinian organizations in Gaza manufacture rockets at a large number of workshops, some in people's homes. These rockets appeared in a variety of models and under many names, with each organization boasting its own model under a particular name (see table). Despite the differences, however, the basic design was identical for all rocket types:

- a. A metal pipe used to house the motor, generally with a diameter of 90-115 mm. This pipe is filled with propulsion material, generally primitive explosives made of agricultural fertilizers (potassium nitrate) and sugar.
- b. The rear end of the engine housing – 4 stabilizer wings.
- c. The front section of the rocket contains the warhead, which is also made of piping with an identical diameter and is filled with high explosives (any explosives the manufacturers could obtain, sometimes plastic explosives extracted from Israeli weapons that had landed there).
- d. The head of the rocket is cone shaped topped with a fuse at the top.
- e. Sometimes a metal stick is added to the rocket head, which is designed to push out the fuse when the rocket reaches a certain height in order to ensure a greater spread of shrapnel.

Since the first models of Hamas' Qassam rockets were used in 2001, Palestinian organizations have made efforts to improve the rocket in terms of accuracy and range. The first rockets reached a range of about 4 km, but since 2007 Qassam rockets have had ranges of 10 -12 km.

Self-produced rockets have other problems, some of which the Palestinians have not yet managed to overcome:

- a. They are highly inaccurate.
- b. There is a great difference between individual rockets from the same production line.
- c. Their trajectory is irregular.
- d. There is a large percentage of duds.
- e. The production is not safe (there are multiple "work accidents").
- f. They are not safe to operate (there have been cases of rockets falling within the Gaza Strip shortly after being launched).
- g. They have a short shelf life (no more than a few weeks).

Standard Rockets

Standard rockets do not have these disadvantages. They are more accurate than self-made rockets, are designed to have a long shelf life, are safe to use, have modern propulsion materials (whose casting requires technical skills that the Palestinians do not have), and have different types of modern explosives in the head.

Since the 2005 disengagement from Gaza, the Palestinians have endeavored to obtain various types of weapons from outside sources and import them through a system of tunnels dug underneath the Philadelphi route between the Gaza Strip and the Egyptian side of Rafah. It was suspected that even before the last confrontation, Iran was Hamas' chief arms supplier, including for rocket weapons. The latter were smuggled in to the Sinai Peninsula by sea, either from Lebanon or from Sudan, or overland through Egypt, and from there via the tunnels into the Strip. During Operation Cast Lead the Palestinians fired standard rockets of the Grad family of rockets, some of which had a range of close to 40 km.

This rocket is the most common in the global arms markets. It has a diameter of 122 mm, and originally comes from the Soviet Grad system. Many types of launchers and many types of rockets were developed for this system. The Grad technology spread among countries that purchased Soviet weapons, and various Grad models are manufactured today in Russia, as well as other countries, like Romania, Iran, and China. Each manufacturer adds its own modifications. The standard Grad rocket is capable of ranges of up to 20 km, although enhanced models, developed in Russia and elsewhere, are capable of reaching distances of up to 40 km.

One rocket, with a range of approximately 40 km, bore markings that indicated it was made in China. Yet in contrast with previous assessments, no signs of Iranian-made rockets were found. This, however, does not provide conclusive findings as to the sources of the rockets used by Hamas. Arms may have come from Iran and the markings were intentionally disguised, or perhaps Iran gave Hamas arms not made in Iran. They may also have had rockets from different sources. There was no use or sign of Fadjr 3 and Fadjr 5 rockets made in Iran (models used by Hizbollah during the Second Lebanon War).

Standard Artillery Rockets

Rocket	Caliber	Length	Weight	Warhead weight	Minimum-maximum range	Type of warhead	Make	Notes
9M22U	122 mm	322.6 cm	66.2 kg	19.4 kg	1.5-20.4 km		USSR	This is the original basic Grad rocket
9M22M	122 mm	287 cm	66 kg	18.4 kg	1.5-20 km		USSR	
9M2B	122 mm	190.5 cm	45.8 kg	19.4 kg	2.5-10.8 km		USSR	Used by special forces
9M217	122 mm		70 kg	25 kg	30 km		Russia	New Russian models
9M218	122 mm		70 kg	25 kg	40 km		Russia	New Russian models
9M521	122 mm		70 kg	21 kg	37.5 km		Russia	New Russian models
Type 81	122 mm	287 cm	66.8 kg	18.3 kg	20 km		China	The name comes from the launcher, not the rocket. This is the Chinese version of the Russian BM-21, used by the Chinese army.
Type 90	122 mm	287 cm 275 cm	67 kg 61 kg	18.4 kg	20 km 30 km		China	The name comes from the launcher. Designed to replace type 81, new development. 2 rocket models for 2 different ranges.
PHZ-89	122 mm	287 cm 275 cm	67 kg 61 kg	18.4 kg	20 km 30 km		China	The name comes from the launcher on a tank – armored version of type 90, with rockets identical to type 90.
Type 90	122 mm						China	The name comes from the launcher. Designed to replace type 81, new development. Rockets identical to the PHZ-89.
WS-1E	122 mm	296.4 cm	74 kg	18-22 kg	20-40 km		China	Rocket developed by SCAIC, as a rival to the models used by the Chinese army (made by NORINCO). Nothing is known of manufacture of orders but this is the only 122 mm rocket made by China with a reported range of 40 km.

Mortars

Mortars, light and easy-to-use artillery, were used during the war. It is known that Hamas had 120 mm mortars armed with standard bombs that were apparently manufactured in Iran (a copy of the Israeli model from the 1970s). Some of the bombs were fitted with an auxiliary engine that added 10 km to their range. Video clips posted on the internet showed Hamas operating smaller mortars, probably with a diameter of 81 or 82 mm. The range of these mortars does not generally exceed 5 km, so their ability to hit Israeli towns is limited.

Antitank Weapons

In light of the Second Lebanon War, where Hizbollah used a large quantity of antitank missiles, particularly Russian-made Konkurs and Kornet missiles, there was much concern that Hamas might also make extensive use of these missiles against the IDF. Reports prior to the outbreak of the conflict indicated the possibility that Konkurs missiles as well as older Sagger missiles had been smuggled into the Gaza Strip. In practice, as far as is known, no use was made of standard antitank missiles during the campaign. On the other hand, the Palestinians used self-made antitank "missiles." Despite their impressive names the Palestinian organizations do not have the ability to manufacture guided antitank missiles. The "missiles" they have are Palestinian copies of unguided antitank missiles like the old RPG-7, which is a standard infantry weapon used by most armies that operate Soviet arms.

Antiaircraft Weapons

In the wake of the lessons of the Second Lebanon War, there was much concern in Israel that the Palestinians would make every effort to bring down Israeli aircraft. Such a strike could be considered by them a major success and a considerable propaganda achievement. In particular there was concern that as part of its arms smuggling efforts, Hamas would obtain portable antiaircraft weapons such as the Soviet Strela and Igla missiles or the American Stinger missile. In practice no attempt to use such arms was identified.

Whether antitank and antiaircraft missiles were not used because the Palestinians did not have them or the weapons they did have were unusable for some reason, or because the Palestinian military leadership decided not to use the missiles it had remains an open question.

Notes

- 1 Various sources offered different figures for the number of rockets fired. According to Israel Police's southern district, 708 rocket launches and 269 rockets landings as well as 151 launches of mortar shells and 20 mortar shells landings were counted. Hamas itself reported 345 Qassam rocket launches, 213 Grad rocket launches, and 422 mortar shell launches. Clearly these figures do not include launches by other organizations, such as Islamic Jihad. The difference between the figures is a result of the different sources of information: many rockets and shells landed in uninhabited locations, and were not necessarily handled by the police. There were also many landings in the sea, and some that occurred within the Gaza Strip itself. On the other hand, it is possible that some of the launch alarms were false alarms.

Hizbollah and the Palestinians: From Defensive Shield to Cast Lead

Amir Kulick

In late March 2002, following a wave of Palestinian suicide attacks, Israel embarked on Operation Defensive Shield, which ended with the IDF in control of the Palestinian cities on the West Bank. In response to the operation, Hizbollah directed artillery fire against IDF positions in the Mount Dov area. The organization kept up its bombardment for two weeks, ceasing its fire only after a visit by then-Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Kamal Harazi to Beirut, and following Israeli warnings to Beirut and Damascus delivered through Secretary of State Colin Powell. In an interview shortly afterward, Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah stated that his organization had initiated the escalation, first in order to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, and second to show Israel his organization's ability to act against it "in case of need." Ibrahim Amin a-Sayyid, the head of Hizbollah's political council added, "We know exactly what the Arab street expects from us, and what is expected from the resistance movement in Lebanon."¹

The Hizbollah response to Operation Defensive Shield stands in sharp contrast to its response to Operation Cast Lead. Ostensibly, the organization's current response should have been more resolute and aggressive. The IDF was engaged in a war in the Gaza Strip against Hamas, Hizbollah's partner in the resistance camp and an important Iranian project in its own right. Furthermore, given the large number of Palestinian civilians killed and the destruction in the Gaza Strip, the unrest in the Arab and Muslim world was also more prolonged and intense than in the past. There is no doubt that Hizbollah

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again understood exactly what popular opinion expected from it. Nevertheless, the organization's response was low keyed.

Nasrallah commented on the operation in a number of speeches, but in contrast to the past, called for others to take action: he demanded that Egypt open the Rafah border crossing in order to supply Hamas with the equipment to continue fighting,² and that the Lebanese president labor to convene an Arab summit; he called on Arab heads of state to find a solution to the crisis; and he called on the Arab and Islamic public to embark on uprisings ("intifadas") on behalf of Palestine.³ On the ground, single rockets were fired at Israel from Lebanon on two occasions (January 8 and January 14) by Palestinian factions supported and approved by Hizbollah.⁴ At the same time, the organization's official spokesmen hurried to deny any involvement in the rocket fire.

Hizbollah's response to Operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip was thus indeed materially different from its response to Operation Defensive Shield in the West Bank. Instead of the activism and initiatives that for years were the pride of the organization, the Hizbollah leadership now chose a middle way – "do little, and do it through others."

The question arises what has changed, and the almost obvious answer was the Second Lebanon War. Following the war and the severe blow suffered by Hizbollah, there is no doubt that the organization is more cautious, both in its behavior and its assessments of Israel's response. Its self-confidence was shaken. From this perspective, there is indeed truth to the claim that the war in Lebanon strengthened Israeli deterrence against Hizbollah. At the same time, an analysis of the organization's response to Operation Cast Lead from this perspective only would to a great extent be lacking. Other factors relating to the internal Lebanese arena, Hizbollah's domestic standing, and future development as expected by the organization are important to the equation.

Hizbollah acts on a number of planes. The first and most basic is the ideological level, stemming from its founding in the early 1980s as an extremist ideological movement reflecting the values of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Hizbollah aspires to establish an Islamic republic in Lebanon and to conduct an unceasing jihad against Israel until Palestinian soil and Jerusalem are "liberated." A second plane is the Shiite community, from which Hizbollah derives its power and a large

part of the legitimacy for its activity as a Lebanese political organization. Prompted by the ideological and Shiite imperatives, Hizbollah has also steadily expanded its activity in the Lebanese political arena. Since the October 1989 Ta'if agreement that ended the Lebanese civil war, Hizbollah has begun to take part in the political system, and since 1992 has also operated as a political party with representation in parliament. Since June 2005, its representatives have even taken part in the government. As such, Hizbollah wishes to regard itself as a national Lebanese faction representing the interests of the general public, not an organization representing an ethnic group or a narrow ideology.⁵

Hizbollah's image among the Lebanese public at large is therefore important to the organization. Since the Israeli withdrawal from the security zone in southern Lebanon in 2000, Hizbollah has labeled itself as Lebanon's defender against Israel. Indeed, large sections of the Lebanese public regard its armed presence in southern Lebanon and its maintenance of an independent military force as legitimate. This image was damaged in the summer of 2006. Many Lebanese saw the war as an Iranian war – part of its effort to attain Shiite regional hegemony. Hizbollah's image as the defender of Lebanon and a responsible national movement suffered a serious public blow. The events of May 2008 further strengthened this process. Following a dispute between Hizbollah and the Lebanese government over the laying of independent communications lines by Hizbollah, Hizbollah fighters conducted street warfare against their political opponents. Although Hizbollah and its supporters got the better of the fighting, its negative image was reinforced. For the first time, the weapon of resistance, which Hizbollah asserted was so necessary in order to protect Lebanon against Israel, was directed inward. Therefore, another round of escalation with Israel that smacks of Iranian involvement and brings unforeseeable results would do further damage to Hizbollah's public standing and the willingness of various factions in the Lebanese system to accept its armed presence. While in the short term there is probably no political element strong enough to eliminate Hizbollah, it is certainly possible

Instead of the activism and initiatives that for years were the pride of the organization, the Hizbollah leadership chose a middle way – “do little, and do it through others.”

that another round of fighting would undermine the delicate balance between Lebanon's ethnic groups. At this point in time, Hizbollah is decidedly not interested in that happening.

Another likely factor underlying Hizbollah's underplayed response to Operation Cast Lead is the Lebanese parliamentary elections scheduled for spring 2009. It is in Hizbollah's interest that these elections be held as scheduled, since the party of Michel Aoun, Hizbollah's main ally among the Lebanese Christians, is expected to strengthen its electoral power. Based on the Doha agreement reached after the events of May 2008, the electoral districts in Lebanon were redistributed in a way that Hizbollah and its allies believe will increase the number of representatives Aoun's faction will earn. The composition of the government will therefore be more comfortable for Hizbollah and the pro-Syrian camp in general, which will of course confer many advantages on the organization.

There is no doubt that the Hizbollah leadership, particularly Nasrallah, regards its popular image among the Arabs and Palestinians as important. At the same time, as the organization's response to Operation Cast Lead showed, even jihad on behalf of the Palestinians can wait when Hizbollah's political interests in the Lebanese theater are at stake.

Notes

- 1 Quoted by Daniel Sobelman, "Hizbollah Two Years After the IDF Withdrawal," *Strategic Assessment* 5, no. 2 (2002): 15.
- 2 Al-Manar, December 29, 2008.
- 3 Al-Manar, December 29, 2008.
- 4 Amos Harel and Yossi Melman, "Hizbollah Behind Lebanon Rocket Strikes in North," *Haaretz*, January 18, 2009.
- 5 For an analysis of the organization's different aspects, see Dani Berkovich, *Can the Hydra be Beheaded? The Campaign to Weaken Hizbollah*, Memorandum No. 92, Institute for National Security Studies, December 2007, pp. 37-48.

Ramifications of the Gaza Campaign for Local Terrorist Organizations

Yoram Schweitzer

Operation Cast Lead, which lasted three weeks, dealt a heavy blow to Hamas' governing institutions in Gaza and its security and military mechanisms, and seems to have hurt other terrorist groups active in Gaza as well, such as Islamic Jihad and global jihad organizations. At this stage, it is impossible to assess fully the scope of the blow these organizations sustained and the impact it had on their future ability to operate. However, the main objective of the operation was clearly to affect Hamas' future conduct, and, based on initial assessments by Israeli security sources, it appears that Hamas sustained a heavy blow to its infrastructure and fighting capability. According to these assessments, most of the tunnels used to smuggle arms, equipment, and personnel were destroyed, and about 700 Hamas fighters were killed and many others wounded.¹ Hamas' weapons production capabilities and long range rocket reserves were also damaged.² At the same time, it seems that Hamas retained its ability to continue firing Qassam rockets towards populated Israeli areas near Gaza and to launch Grad missiles towards population centers farther away. It also seems that the other organizations have similar capabilities, though smaller in scope. These organizations' future decision whether to continue firing rockets at Israel will be greatly affected by their assessment of Israel's likely response and by other considerations – intra-Palestinian, inter-organizational, and external factors.

Israel's mode of fighting during the operation revealed to these organizations that preparations against Israeli superiority in the air, at sea, and on land did not allow them to realize their original plans

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and cause severe harm to Israeli soldiers and the Israeli rear. Their attacks against IDF fighting units and the number of IDF casualties were significantly lower than what was anticipated by Israeli security sources and certainly lower than Hamas' stated expectations before the fighting erupted. The extent of the damage among Israeli civilians, despite the launch of some 640 rockets and some 224 mortar bombs towards Israel, some of which landed in cities in the southern part of the country such as Beer Sheva, Ashkelon, and Ashdod, was relatively low; the damage was mostly to property and in the disruption of the routine in these cities. Their effect on Israeli decision making and on the morale of the Israeli public was minimal or less.

The public victory declarations by Hamas leaders presumably do not prevent their understanding the organization's need to prepare for the next campaign in a way that will help it extract from Israel a much steeper and more painful price than it did this time, in light of the IDF's clear military advantage, which is unlikely to change in the near future. Thus it seems that the organization will have to adjust its combat strategy and operational methods and equip itself with the appropriate arms that will allow it to render more effective blows against the IDF and enlarge the range and power of its capacity to harm Israel's cities.

In light of the Hamas leadership's concern that it will be challenged for sole control of the Gaza Strip, one may expect that in the short term, the organization will act to restore its civilian and security control of the Strip as soon as possible, along with rebuilding the military power that was heavily damaged. Already in the first days after the ceasefire went into effect, the organization announced it had deployed police in the streets of Gaza and that the smuggling of arms and fighters from Sinai into Gaza through the Rafah tunnels had resumed, taking advantage of the interim period until effective Egyptian activity gets underway to prevent smuggling on the basis of understandings with Israel.³

Because Hamas views the preservation and development of its military capability as its central tool in its struggle against Israel and in its confrontation with the Palestinian Authority, it would seem that its future military priorities are expected to include:

- a. Reorganizing its manpower in fighting units and appointing new commanders to replace those killed or wounded.

- b. Rebuilding the military units by recruiting new volunteers from among the Gaza population.
- c. Purchasing large quantities of equipment and arms, especially of improved quality (e.g., having greater firing range so as to reach central Israel and beyond); they will attempt to smuggle these into Gaza in every conceivable manner.
- d. Tightening cooperation with Iran, Hizbollah, and Syria to obtain financing, training, and equipment to replace what was lost.
- e. Attempting through terrorism to extort from Israel a cost in casualties, primarily via activists in the West Bank, in order to redress its sense of the intolerable gap between the huge number of Palestinian casualties and the few Israeli casualties, though doing so carefully in order not to lead Israel to a massive response against Hamas in Gaza.

For Islamic Jihad, whose power base and main interest lie only in carrying out armed attacks, the lessons of the campaign are not expected to change the strategy of the struggle guiding its actions. It is possible that its operatives will learn tactical lessons regarding preferred methods and operational arenas against Israel. In light of the common interests of the organization and its patron, Iran, and Iran's protégé, Hizbollah, to undermine the post-campaign intensified diplomatic efforts to generate an extended period of calm and the renewal of political negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, Islamic Jihad will likely attempt to renew at the earliest possible opportunity revenge attacks in the Gaza Strip (as much as it is capable of, and until a ceasefire that will limit it is finalized) and particularly in the West Bank, where its main infrastructure is concentrated. The organization will undoubtedly try to renew its attempts to harm Israel proper, and it is even possible that it will try to extend its activity to other arenas, such as Lebanon, Sinai, or – though only to the extent that Iran will approve and assist – carrying out revenge attacks abroad.

Islamic Jihad will undoubtedly try to harm Israel proper, and it is even possible that it will try to extend its activity to other arenas, such as Lebanon, Sinai, or – though only to the extent that Iran will approve and assist – revenge attacks abroad.

Global jihadists and al-Qaeda leaders who criticized Hamas' political path and viewed it as doomed to failure will try to capitalize on the difficulties imposed on the Gaza population by the campaign, and intensify their efforts to recruit new volunteers into their ranks. It may be that one of the lessons learned by global jihadists in the Gaza Strip will be expressed by an attempt to strengthen their ties with their affiliates outside of Gaza, and perhaps even with al-Qaeda itself, ties that so far were tenuous at most. Al-Qaeda, which for a long time has been trying to build a base of operations against Israel within its borders – and therefore in part tried to expand its influence in the Gaza Strip – is waiting for a change in policy on the part of Hamas, which until now has prevented al-Qaeda from establishing a base in the Strip and acting freely via its supporters against Israel. Such a change is not likely to occur as yet, and global jihadists will have to suffice themselves with using the interim period until the ceasefire arrangements stabilize in the south to harm Israel through terrorist attacks (as in the January 27, 2009 incident in which one soldier was killed and three wounded) or by sporadic fire from the Gaza Strip, and at a later date, by expanding its activity as much as possible to Sinai, the West Bank, or inside Israel itself, using locals or by bringing in activists from abroad.

Thus while insufficient time has passed in order to make a comprehensive assessment of the effect of the campaign on the anticipated conduct against Israel by the terrorist organizations in Gaza, it is clear that despite the blows they absorbed, all the organizations will act at the earliest possible opportunity to rebuild the military strength that was damaged, in order to prove that their ability to

Thus far Hamas has prevented al-Qaeda from establishing a base in the Gaza Strip and acting freely via its supporters against Israel.

continue harassing and hurting Israel remains considerable. The gap in losses between the sides is expected to motivate them to try to carry out mass-casualty attacks, including suicide attacks, whose prevention depends primarily on Israel's ability to foil them. The renewal of ongoing fire from Gaza beyond the transition period until ceasefire arrangements in the south are stabilized depends to a large extent on what Hamas can

achieve through Egyptian mediation, particularly opening of the border crossings, and its assessment of the punishment the Gaza population

and Hamas itself can expect should it or the other organizations in Gaza again disrupt the calm on Israel's southern border. Therefore, Israel's responses and the measure of its determination to prevent in practical terms a return to the situation that prevailed on the southern border before the operation, along with help from Egypt and international elements to prevent massive rearming and renewal of fire from Gaza, will have a decisive weight in shaping the picture on Israel's southern border in the immediate years to come. Continued terrorist activity on the part of Palestinian organizations against Israel on the other fronts is a reality that only a comprehensive political settlement may perhaps change, certainly not one limited military operation in Gaza.

Notes

- 1 http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/01/22/world/main4746224.shtml?source=RSSattr=World_4746224.
- 2 <http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000412293>.
http://dover.idf.il/IDF/News_Channels/art_mivzaim/09/01/2001.htm.
- 3 "Smuggling into Gaza Renewed through Rafiah Tunnels," Anshel Pfeffer and Barak Ravid, *Haaretz*, January 22, 2009.

Operation Cast Lead: Regional Implications

Ephraim Kam

“The Arab situation is in very big chaos.”
(Amr Moussa, Secretary General of the Arab League, January 16, 2009)

The most prominent characteristic of the Arab world’s response to Operation Cast Lead was division and weakness. The Arab states did not join forces and agree on a joint program that would influence developments in the Gaza Strip, and it was only at the end of the campaign that a decision was made at the economic summit in Kuwait to allocate a package of \$2 billion for the rehabilitation of Gaza. Even then it was not decided who on the Palestinian side should receive the assistance. The radical parties demanded that it be given to Hamas; Egypt and Saudi Arabia opposed this motion. The hurried convening of the emergency summit of Arab leaders in Doha, Qatar, which was designed to formulate a joint policy on the crisis, accentuated the split: close to half of the Arab states, notably leading countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, did not attend the summit. No less important, Abu Mazen avoided representing the Palestinians at the summit, and instead they were represented there by Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders. Saudi Arabia’s efforts to bring the Gulf states together in order to formulate a joint position on aid to Gaza also failed.

Expressions of the Arab world’s weakness are not new. For over a generation the Arab world has witnessed differences of opinion and conflicting interests and has struggled to formulate a common platform on major issues. In the Gaza episode, the line crossing the Arab world follows the position on Hamas. Most of the Arab states, and certainly

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most of the moderate Arab states, have reservations over Hamas' conduct and its rule of Gaza. They see it as a dangerous radical element that is connected to Iran and the radical Shiite axis that threatens them, ignites the Palestinian arena, and prevents progress towards an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. Most – though without confessing this publicly – were eager for Israel to strike Hamas with a heavy blow and weaken it, just as they were looking for heavy damage to be inflicted on Hizbollah in 2006. At the same time, they identify with the distress of the Palestinians in Gaza, are influenced by the mood of the Arab street, and consider it their duty to help alleviate the Palestinians' suffering.

Regarding Hamas, the moderate camp is led by Egypt, which sought at this point to emphasize the leadership role it once enjoyed that has deteriorated over time in the face of the radical Arab camp. More than any other Arab government, the Egyptian regime sees Hamas as an enemy and a rival, in part because of its linkage to the Muslim Brotherhood, which poses the greatest threat to the regime. It considers Hamas an emissary of Iran that is looking to establish a second stronghold on the Mediterranean coast following the one it established in Lebanon. Egypt is apprehensive about the creation of an Iran and Hizbollah-linked Hamas entity on the Egyptian border that also sparks friction between Egypt and Israel. It opposes the uncontrolled entry of Palestinians and Hamas activists from the Gaza Strip to Sinai, where there is already a problematic security vacuum that can be used to launch terror attacks. For these reasons, Egypt's leaders made unprecedented sharp comments on Hamas' conduct, and ascribed responsibility for the deterioration in Gaza to it, as well as to Israel. Egypt rejected the Hamas demand to open the Rafah crossing, unless it would be controlled by Palestinian Authority and European observers, as per the crossings agreement from 2005. Thus, Egypt tried to undermine Hamas' position as a legitimate government and its position in the Strip as a separate political entity from the Palestinian Authority. To this end Egypt was willing to take overt measures that entailed cooperation with Israel against Hamas.

On the other side there are Iran, Syria, and Hizbollah, which support Hamas fully. This group is lead by Iran whose involvement in the Gaza Strip has increased since the start of the intifada, with the goal of wielding influence in the Palestinian arena, binding the

Palestinian organizations – particularly the Islamic ones – to it, and fueling the armed struggle against Israel. To this end, Iran provides the Palestinian organizations with much financial assistance, arms, military equipment, and training, while exploiting its dependence on outside aid. The military and financial link between Iran and Hamas strengthened greatly after the organization took control of the Gaza Strip, as the partially isolated Hamas needed ways to arm and raise finances, and Iran rose to the occasion.

During Operation Cast Lead the Iran-Syria-Hizbollah axis tried to expand its influence in the Palestinian arena in general and in Gaza in particular by boosting Hamas' ability to withstand the confrontation with Israel, strengthening its position vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority, and undermining Egypt's position as the leading Arab party and principal mediator between Hamas and Israel and Western elements. As most Arab governments disapproved of Hamas and its conduct, the radical axis tried to influence events during the fighting principally by inciting the masses on the Arab street – who demonstrated support for the Palestinians and who were influenced by the troubling images broadcast from the Strip – against the moderate governments, in order to harm their relations with Israel and to assist Hamas.

Alongside these countries, Turkey was also prominent in its harsh criticism of Israel. Against a backdrop of street demonstrations against Israel, Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan adopted a vehement anti-Israel line: he accused Israel of killing children, proposed considering Israel's banishment from the UN, and suggested to the Obama administration that it reexamine the definition of terror organizations, which implied that he was referring to Hamas and Hizbollah. Erdogan also sent his envoy as an observer to the radical camp summit in Doha. Turkey's motivation is not entirely clear: does it stem from the interest of the current Turkish government to raise its profile in the Middle East and the Arab world? Is it connected to its vision of the Islamic domain as its own back yard? Does it result from its perception of Hamas as a legitimate organization? Or do the approaching municipal elections

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in Turkey and the understanding by the Islamic party that the Turkish street supports an anti-Israeli line influence Erdogan's stance? In any case, the episode has already damaged Israeli-Turkish relations, and both parties are now trying to repair the damage.

Ultimately, the radical axis states had a limited influence on the progress of the conflict in Gaza, as they had few options available to them and because their main consideration was to avoid taking risky steps. The demonstrations in the moderate Arab states, which were mainly organized by Islamic or Palestinian elements, were not prolonged or large scale and did not get out of hand. They principally voiced support for the Palestinians' distress, not Hamas distress. Thus, in view of the weakness of the Arab world, and as Hamas is not favored by most Arab countries, Hamas and the Palestinian public found themselves under heavy pressure from Israel for three weeks without the Arab world finding a way to provide them with measurable help.

Iran's failure is particularly prominent. Iran invested great efforts, directly and through Hizbollah, to build up Hamas as a military organization capable of withstanding an Israeli attack and inflicting considerable damage on the IDF in the process. However when put to the test, Hamas failed, at least in military terms, without Iran managing to help it, other than registering 70,000 students who volunteered to fight in Gaza. Their registration stayed on paper. Iran also refrained from using the main means at its disposal to help Hamas: encouraging Hizbollah to open another front against Israel from Lebanon. However, the story does not end there. Iran will undoubtedly labor to become the main party helping Hamas rehabilitate the Strip, both militarily and on the civilian level, and one may expect that Iran will try to infuse Gaza with arms and military equipment as well as large sums of money. In light of the expected efforts of Israel, Egypt, and Western countries to block the arms smuggling routes and money transfers to Gaza, it is unclear to what extent it will succeed.

Egypt emerged as the Arab player that gained the most from the confrontation in Gaza. It led the efforts to end the fighting in the Strip and to formulate an agreement, and European leaders sought Cairo's assistance in order to further these measures. It maintained its standing as the principal mediator between Israel and Hamas, which remained dependent on Egypt despite the tension between them. However, the

fact that Qatar, generally a moderate state that maintains relations with Israel – although it has links to the radical camp – convened even a partial summit in Doha at which the radicals set the tone, indicates the limits of Egypt's strength in the Arab world, even in the moderate camp. Moreover, in order to continue as a central element regarding the situation in Gaza, Egypt will have to carry out some considerable tasks in the future: substantially limit smuggling into Gaza, prevent significant Iranian intervention in Gaza's rehabilitation, help maintain calm in Gaza, and try to reconcile Hamas and Fatah.

What remains is a word on the regional implications for Israel. Antagonism toward Israel in the Arab world has certainly increased following Operation Cast Lead. Two countries with relations with Israel – Qatar and Mauritania – have frozen their ties. The anti-Israel line was prominent at the Doha summit, including a call to suspend the Arab peace initiative of 2002 – although it was not in fact cancelled as it was never approved as a resolution and because the Doha summit was not considered a full-fledged summit. Israel and the moderate Sunni camp have common interests, including blocking the radical Shiite axis, weakening Hamas and Hizbollah, and strengthening the Palestinian Authority. However, these interests have to date not led to actual cooperation between Israel and this bloc, partly because of the reservations of the Arab world about cooperation with Israel, certainly on sensitive intra-Arab issues. It cannot be assumed that such cooperation will occur in the foreseeable future beyond Egyptian-Israeli coordination on arms smuggling into Gaza, especially since Israel's negative image in the Arab world following the campaign in Gaza will not contribute to this.

In the Wake of Operation Cast Lead: Egypt's Regional Position Revisited

Emily B. Landau

The past several weeks have seen interesting developments that are potentially significant for Egypt's regional stature. In the Middle East balance of power, Egypt has been losing ground over the past years, a trend dramatized by the fact that even Hamas and Hizbollah seem to have no qualms about openly humiliating Egypt in their statements and actions. However, indications from the campaign in Gaza that Egypt is seeking to reassert its regional prominence more determinedly could have important ramifications for regional politics, including ongoing efforts to counter Iran's hegemonic ambitions.

As in 2006, Egypt once again refrained from automatically pointing the finger at Israel upon the launching of Operation Cast Lead. In fact, similar to the situation at the start of the Second Lebanon War, when Hizbollah was castigated for its adventurism, Egypt blamed Hamas for having invited Israel's military reaction by unilaterally ending the six month ceasefire eight days earlier and firing rockets at Israel. Still smarting from Hamas' rejection of its attempt to mediate between the two Palestinian factions, Egypt was unrelenting in its blame, even though the firm stance it assumed against Hamas was highly unpopular in some other Arab states and certainly within the Arab population across the Middle East.¹ Egypt's refusal to open the Rafah border crossing, coupled with the open and repeated trips of Amos Gilad to Egypt for consultations, fueled accusations of complicity with Israel. Tzipi Livni's visit to Egypt two days before the operation began even allowed some to go so far as to accuse Mubarak of having given Israel a green light to attack.²

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Egypt's direct interest in developments in Gaza and the concern it shares with Israel as to the dangers of Hamas' radicalism set the stage for Egypt to advance mediation efforts between Israel and Hamas in the context of the raging conflict. With the initiation of Israel's ground campaign Mubarak became much more critical of Israel's actions,³ and at the same time began earnestly pursuing efforts to broker a ceasefire, inviting representatives from both Hamas and Israel for consultations. Within days, Egypt's potential as a principal mediator between the two sides was firmly established. Egypt is of course not an uninvolved third party in this conflict: as a country bordering the Gaza Strip it has a direct stake in curtailing Hamas' ability to stir up trouble in this area, and Hamas is also deemed a direct threat due to the connection between the organization and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. From Israel's point of view, Egypt also has a crucial role to play in instituting the necessary mechanisms to stop the smuggling of weapons into Gaza.

Mediation between Israel and the Palestinians has traditionally served Egypt as a means to establish and underscore its leadership role in the Middle East, and at the end of the three weeks of Operation Cast Lead, Egypt emerged as the primary regional mediating party, although there were other contenders for the position. The regional status benefits that it stands to gain are further enhanced by the fact that it prevailed over Turkey, a rival in the Middle East "mediation game." Turkey had scored important points over the past year mediating the Israel-Syria indirect talks, and there were even hints that it might assume a similar role between the US and Iran. However, Turkey's harsh condemnation of Israel during the operation – to the point of calling for Israel to be

Beyond the Gaza context is Egypt's potential willingness to stand up to Iran's regional hegemonic ambitions.

barred from the UN – sparked a crisis in Israeli-Turkish relations that diminished its prospects as a successful mediator. Israel refused to accord Turkey a role in ceasefire negotiations, and Egypt's orchestration of the Sharm el-Sheikh meeting when hostilities came to an end indicated its undisputed primacy.

Significantly, talks with the Egyptians continued post-ceasefire. A week after the ceasefire came into force, new border security arrangements were under discussion between Israel and Egypt with regard to Israel's major concern: weapons smuggling into Gaza,

long a contentious issue due to Egypt's resistance to the presence of international monitors on its soil to help stop this phenomenon.⁴ Focus was on a possible increase in the presence of Egyptian security forces along the border.⁵

Egypt's determination to reassert itself in Middle East politics thus surfaced in Operation Cast Lead in two ways: adopting the unpopular stance of blaming Hamas for the outbreak of hostilities – and sticking to its position; and then orchestrating mediation efforts for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. An important question goes beyond the Gaza context and extends to Egypt's potential willingness to stand up to Iran's regional hegemonic ambitions as well. Indeed, Iran also played a central role on the sidelines of the recent round of fighting, and it was likewise hoping to use the conflict in order to reap regional benefits. In contrast to Egypt, however, Iran's strategy was based on its expectation that its proxy Hamas would be able to declare victory over Israel, which would further underscore its regional clout and in turn enhance its bargaining position with the West.

Hamas' poor performance undermined Iran's plans, and the question is whether this might encourage Egypt to channel its regional assertiveness to the Iranian arena in a more direct and overt fashion. Generally speaking, instances of lack of respect toward Egypt that emerged surrounding the recent war – and that were apparent even in attempts by Qatar to interfere in Egyptian mediation efforts – unleashed a fierceness in Egyptian reactions that has not been seen for some years.⁶ In the days following the end of the campaign, Egypt continued its harsh line against Iran when Mubarak declared that he would not allow Iran to rehabilitate Gaza. Moreover, in a strongly worded message, Egyptian foreign minister Aboul Gheit related to Iran's attempts during the war to push Egypt to actively confront Israel, reconfirming Egypt's rejection of Iran's radicalism and underscoring Egypt's strategic choice to follow the path of peace.

The regional status benefits that Egypt stands to gain are further enhanced by the fact that it prevailed over Turkey, a rival in the Middle East "mediation game."

Egypt's interest in regional leadership, which is integral to its national identity, means that it is a natural rival to Iran. A more openly assertive Egyptian position would be useful in the overall effort to

confront Iran's nuclear ambitions: in negotiations with Iran, the US would have stronger cards to play if moderate Arab states were to voice their opposition to Iran's hegemonic designs more clearly. It is, however, too early to predict whether the trend that has emerged with regard to hostilities in Gaza will continue in a way that will offer concrete help to undermine Iran's attempts to bolster its own power in the Middle East.

Notes

- 1 Volkhard Windfuhr, "Egypt in Quandary as Gaza Raids Divide the Muslim World," *SpiegelOnline*, December 30, 2008.
- 2 See Steven Erlanger, "Egypt Pressed on Gaza from Without and Within," *New York Times*, January 3, 2009.
- 3 *Ynet News*, January 4, 2009.
- 4 Sebastian Abbot, "Egypt FM Dismisses US-Israeli Anti-Smuggling Deal," *Washington Post*, January 17, 2009. According to reports, however, Egypt agreed and has begun to install advanced cameras and sensors as part of its effort to curtail smuggling: *Jerusalem Post*, February 1, 2009.
- 5 "Israel to Allow Egypt to Boost Force on Gaza Border to Fight Smuggling," *Haaretz*, January 23, 2009.
- 6 *Ynet news*, January 28, 2009.

Deterrence: The Campaign against Hamas

Yair Evron

While it is still too early to determine the long term effects of the campaign against Hamas, some ramifications can already be discerned. In addition, it is worthwhile comparing them to the effects of the campaign against Hizbollah in 2006, specifically with regard to deterrence.

Deterrence against Sub-State or Semi-State Organizations

Though deterrence is a complex posture, it is relatively simpler when applied against states than when applied against sub-state organizations. The cost-benefit calculus of terrorist organizations differs from that of sovereign states, and overall, deterrence against these organizations is quite difficult, though not entirely impossible.

In the two campaigns that Israel launched in the past thirty months, the adversaries were not pure sub-state organizations. Both Hizbollah and Hamas are first of all political organizations built on extensive civil and social services infrastructures with deep roots in their host populations. Indeed, Hamas presently operates as the government of the Gaza Strip, which thereby assumes the guise of a state. This no doubt affects Hamas' cost/benefit calculus.

The success of deterrence against organizations such as Hamas and Hizbollah depends on the extent to which they come closer to being governments or semi-governments. The closer they are to recognizable governments, the more they are vulnerable to deterrence threats. As in the case of states, deterrence of these organizations depends on the

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cost/benefit balance of the status quo versus costs involved in violation of the status quo. These organizations can also deter Israel to an extent, partly through limited violent means such as the use of rockets. This, however, has its limitations, since if these operations accumulate, Israel can use its superior military capabilities to launch punitive actions, as it did in 2006 against Hizbollah and again in Operation Cast Lead.

The Israeli-Hamas “Strategic Dialogue”

While Hamas has become a semi-state, its extreme anti-Israel ideological stance has continued to affect its behavior and probably contributed to readiness to use force as an instrument of policy. Nevertheless, in March 2005 Fatah and Hamas unilaterally accepted the *hudna* (ceasefire), but this did not halt the violence between Hamas and Israel completely.

Prior to the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Hamas resorted to violence in order to demonstrate its ostensible contribution to the Israeli withdrawal. Following the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections in January 2006, Hamas interpreted the *hudna* as applying to the West Bank as well, an interpretation Israel did not accept. The result was continued outbreaks of violence when Hamas and Islamic Jihad reacted to Israeli operations in the West Bank. These disagreements about interpretation persisted after the Hamas coup in 2007 when it became the sole ruling power in Gaza. Only in the last *hudna* did Hamas in fact give up this demand. In addition, there were disagreements over the control and volume of traffic through the border crossings that led to acts of violence and ceasefire violations. The result was an imperfect balance of deterrence coupled with acts of coercion by both sides. Hamas targeted Israeli civilian settlements with rockets, and Israel reacted in a limited way with controlled force and crossings closures. As was the case with Hizbollah in 2006, Hamas misjudged the Israeli tolerance threshold and launched a major rocket attack on December 24, 2008, which was the final provocation before Israel embarked on a major counter strike.

The Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead

When Israel launched its campaign against Hizbollah in 2006, it announced far reaching objectives, including a complete change of the situation in southern Lebanon and the destruction of Hizbollah. These

were entirely unrealistic and certainly unattainable through military methods. The restoration of the balance of deterrence between Israel and Hizbollah was not defined as an objective. In fact, however, while the far reaching objectives were not accomplished (as indeed they could not be), Israel did succeed in establishing stable deterrence against Hizbollah. This was amply demonstrated during Operation Cast Lead,¹ in which Hizbollah was deterred from resorting to military activity in solidarity with its allies in Gaza.

In Operation Cast Lead, Israel defined much more limited objectives, chief among them creating better security conditions for southern Israel, a euphemism for a strong deterrent posture against Hamas' ongoing attacks. After three weeks of fighting, Israel agreed to accept the Egyptian proposal for a ceasefire and other measures. In turn Hamas announced a ceasefire that has largely been upheld. In view of the tremendous damage incurred in Gaza, it is very likely that Hamas will adhere to the ceasefire. Thus, notwithstanding minor violations in the initial stages, the objective of stable deterrence has probably been accomplished. By deterrence parameters, the Israeli strike was both the exercise of a deterrent threat as well as a deterrence signal about future Israeli action should Hamas resort again to violence.

Military Tools for Establishing Deterrence

The most effective instrument for punitive action is the air force. Therefore, it is quite possible that following the initial days of air strikes, the deterrence effect could have been secured. This is certainly a valid assessment for what occurred vis-à-vis Hizbollah. Under conditions such as these only the use of disproportionate force can achieve the reestablishment of stable deterrence. The use of ground forces in Operation Cast Lead possibly served the purpose of advancing the Egyptian initiative for a ceasefire, but its contribution to deterrence is a highly complex question, beyond the scope of this discussion.

Conditions for Stable Deterrence

Hamas has become the de facto government of the semi-state of Gaza. As a political movement and not only an armed organization, it has assumed responsibility for the Gazan population. Precisely because of that it is sensitive to Israeli punitive actions against the Gaza

infrastructure. Consequently, Israeli deterrence based on its expected future punitive actions – if Hamas violates the ceasefire – is much more robust. Hamas must also have effective control over the other armed organizations in Gaza. On the other hand, there might be causes for instability related to Fatah-Hamas conflicts and the control over the other armed organizations. In addition, though deterrence is based in the first place on the expected costs resulting from the deterrer's punitive actions, its robustness would be undercut if the deteree suffers high costs from the status quo. Thus Hamas will probably insist on full reopening of the crossings; otherwise ceasefire violations are likely. While Israel is seeking a total ceasefire, the problems mentioned here might lead to a situation in which Hamas is deterred from rocket attacks on populated areas but it (or other organizations) might initiate from time to time limited local attacks.

The Israel-Hamas Paradoxical Relationship

For Israeli deterrence to be stable, the Hamas semi-government should be in effective control. However, this challenges the basic Israeli political posture, which seeks to undermine its rule. Yet for its part, Israel is self-deterred from reoccupying the Gaza Strip – which it could certainly accomplish by military means – since it understands that reoccupation might lead to an extended presence in Gaza with attendant high costs. This paradoxical situation could change if the political circumstances shift, i.e., if another power assumes control of the Gaza Strip. This could be secured, for example, if a coalition of Fatah and Hamas becomes the central authority in Gaza.

Notes

- 1 For the analysis and forecast that the 2006 war established stable deterrence vis-à-vis Hizbollah, see Yair Evron, "Deterrence and its Limitations," *Strategic Assessment* 9, no. 2 (2006), and Yair Evron, "Deterrence and its Limitations," in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, eds. Shlomo Brom and Meir Elran (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2007).

Decision against a Terrorist Organization: Operation Cast Lead – A Case Study

Zaki Shalom

As far as can be seen, Operation Cast Lead achieved some significant successes from Israel's perspective, though some have yet to be proven. In the course of the operation, massive damage was inflicted on Hamas' civilian and military infrastructures in the Gaza Strip, and hundreds of operatives were killed or wounded. Hamas leaders defined the situation in Gaza as a disaster. Khaled Mashal, the head of Hamas' political bureau, called the IDF operation "a holocaust." Reports on the extent of the damage were submitted by both foreign reporters and diplomats. The Hamas government will have to budget significant resources to rebuild the area. One may assume that during the rehabilitation, however long it lasts, Hamas will seek to maintain calm.¹

It is almost certain that to a certain extent, the operation strengthened Israel's deterrence with regard to Hamas, and perhaps also with regard to other hostile elements in this region. However, the scope of this deterrence should not be overestimated. In an interview after the war, the prime minister perhaps exaggerated the scope and force of the deterrence achieved: "Today," Prime Minister Olmert declared, "Israel's deterrence is higher than ever, not just in the last decade but much beyond that. This is deterrence against the entire axis of evil, and whoever needs to know it – knows...The war in Lebanon created deterrence not only vis-à-vis Hizbollah but also with regard to Syria." Deterrence, by its nature, is valid within defined parameters of time and space. Its force is tested the more time passes. In any case, there

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is no certainty that deterrence in the southern sector will translate, for example, to the northern sector as well and apply to Hizbollah.²

Israel apparently succeeded in conveying to Hamas that the rules of the game that were in place before the operation have changed beyond recognition. On the basis of the new rules, the IDF's fire response policy will be completely different than before. Senior IDF officers made such announcements already several months ago. However, their statements were met with a great deal of skepticism regarding the Israeli military's determination to implement the new rules. Operation Cast Lead proved that the IDF did, in fact, adopt a new policy, greatly different from that which preceded it. In the context of the new rules, Israel almost certainly succeeded in creating a credible threat that it is prepared to use tremendous, expressly disproportionate firepower and target, if necessary, populated areas, mosques, schools, universities, UN institutions, and other sites hitherto considered to be beyond Israel's reach.³

Another Israeli achievement was the establishment of a more effective oversight mechanism than in the past regarding the arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip, which will involve efforts by Egypt, the United States, and the European Union. The prime minister said, "we insisted on stopping [the war] only when we were able to reach an agreement with Egypt [over the smuggling of arms into the Gaza Strip]. This is a detailed agreement – in writing. No more whispering in someone's ear: 'he said, I said.' Everything is documented down to the last item, in their commitments, actions, efforts, understandings with the Americans and the Europeans. There has never been anything like this before." However, the true effectiveness of the mechanism will become clear depending on the circumstances on the ground over time. The existence of a written agreement, no matter how detailed, cannot by itself guarantee its fulfillment in practice. The pursuit and raid by American forces of an Iranian weapons ship transporting arms to the Gaza Strip may point to a positive development from Israel's perspective.⁴

The war emphasized and deepened the rift in the Arab world between the moderates and the radicals. Amr Moussa, secretary of the Arab League (who should understand the Arab world better than others) stated during the operation that the Arab world was on the brink of a rift and total anarchy. The weakening of the Arab world may allow Israel greater room to maneuver internationally if Israel is smart enough to take

advantage of this opportunity. Furthermore, the confrontation between the two blocs of Arab nations has demonstrated that the moderate camp, led by Egypt, has the upper hand. This, too, is a phenomenon that serves the interests of the State of Israel. Nonetheless, in this case as well there is need for great caution. In the past, the Arab world has known difficult quarrels and schisms that were ultimately resolved in a way that could hardly be considered as serving Israel's interests.⁵

Finally, the war stressed the great interest within the international community, especially the United States and Europe, in the war on terrorism. The appearance of leading European heads of states in Israel at the end of the war alongside the Israeli prime minister and other government ministers at a supportive and festive gathering demonstrated this stance explicitly. In many ways, this could have served as the "victory picture."

In light of these achievements, senior political and military personnel expressed their opinion that "the operation's objectives were fully attained." And yet, in wide circles among the political and military echelons as well as among the public at large, there is a feeling of having missed the target. One may suggest three hypotheses about the gap between the feelings of achievement and letdown:

- a. After the Second Lebanon War, the military echelon, particularly Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi, repeatedly stressed that in the next confrontation Israel must achieve a clear decision on the ground so that the question of "who won the war" is not asked. This statement created the expectation of a more unequivocal decision in this campaign. It is now probably clear to many that this is an unattainable goal when fighting terrorist organizations.
- b. It may be that the so-called sense of victory is determined without regard for the official objectives articulated for the operation by the country's leadership. Public opinion forms an independent stance with regard to what the operation's goals were supposed to have been, and it is with regard to these that the public judges the outcome of the war. The feelings of failure were displayed in the media in the context of three main elements: (a) Hamas did not concede defeat and did not seek, at least publicly, a ceasefire without preconditions; (b) the mechanism for controlling the smuggling of arms in the Gaza Strip does not supply Israel with

foolproof safeguards; and (c) the conditions for releasing Gilad Shalit were not visibly improved.⁶

- c. It is also possible that public opinion is shaped by the fact that the official objectives presented by the political echelon do not reflect the range of true goals the political echelon sought to achieve through this operation. In the case of Operation Cast Lead, the understated goals were probably meant on the one hand, to provide cover in case the more extensive objectives were not met, and on the other, to generate great satisfaction should objectives beyond expectations be attained. The prime minister himself lent credence to this view when he stated that “none of you ever heard me say what I really want to achieve, the goals I set, other than the official statement. Why? Because I thought it would be a mistake to do so.”⁷

These insights into how feelings of victory take on a reality of their own must be digested by Israel’s decision makers before another military confrontation with terrorist organizations in the north and south breaks out. Given the prevailing circumstances, the probability of that happening is close to certain.

Notes

- 1 Barak Ravid, “Operation Cast Lead; Chief of Military Intelligence: ‘ Hamas is Seeking Appearance of Victory to Avoid Loss of Face,’” *Haaretz*, January 11, 2009. Regarding Mashal’s statements, see “Operation Cast Lead – A War Diary,” January 10, at <http://www.sikurmemukad.com/gaza2009/?p=561>, and Thalif Deen, “UNRWA Chief Appalled at Israeli Destruction in Gaza,” at <http://antiwar.com/>.
- 2 Ben Caspit, “Now You Deal with It,” *Maariv*, January 23, 2009. Regarding the statements made by the Chief of Military Intelligence, see Israel TV’s Channel 2 News, January 11, 2009, at <http://news.reshet.tv/News/Politics/StatePolicy/Article,11392.aspx>.
- 3 For IDF’s “new” response policy, see Zaki Shalom, Ron Ben Yishai, “Shock Treatment,” *Ynet*, December 27, 2008.
- 4 For Olmert’s statement, see Ben Caspit, “Now You Deal with It,” *Maariv*, January 23, 2009.
- 5 Hagai Huberman, Amr Moussa, “The Arab World on the Brink of Collapse,” Israel TV’s Channel 7, January 19, 2009, at <http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/184369>.
- 6 As for the sense of failure in the IDF, see Amos Harel, “Operation Cast Lead: Field Commanders Summarize the Fighting in Gaza,” *Haaretz*, January 23, 2009.
- 7 Caspit, “Now You Deal with It,” *Maariv*, January 23, 2009.



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