Contents

The Race for Soft Power in the Gulf

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For Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, the dominant and richest among the Arab Gulf monarchies, the accumulation of soft power is central to their preparation for the expected decline in global dependence on their energy exports. While each state has its own emphases, this paper identifies the pursuit of soft power by all of them as attempts to safeguard their global importance and, thus, their national security. It offers an original and holistic examination of the soft power strategies of the three states across the media, academia, sport, culture, tourism, religious tolerance, and diplomacy. The analysis outlines how those strategies are designed to reshape the states' negative image and legitimize their values internationally, particularly within the West, thereby sidestepping external demands for changes in their internal conduct. By these means, they continually challenge Western moral superiority, which, at least in the case of Qatar, harms material Israeli interests.

Introduction

Three decades after the American scholar Joseph Nye coined the term "soft power," it has transformed from a theoretical concept to a concrete policy component for players in the international system. Nye distinguished between hard power—a player's ability to influence the conduct of other players in the system by means of military force or sanctions—and soft power—embodied in a player's ability to achieve such influence through its attractiveness and persuasion. As Nye put it: "It was always important to win hearts and minds, but it's even more important in the age of global information" (Nye, 2004, p. 1).

This paper discusses the soft power strategy of the three leading and wealthiest of the six Arab monarchies in the Gulf—Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar. All three have considerable hard power in the international system, achieved since the middle of the twentieth century thanks to their status as leading exporters of fossil fuels—oil and its products and liquid natural gas. On the other hand, their military strength is negligible, while the power attached to their energy exports is declining and even faces the threat of collapse in the looming post-petroleum era, in view of the global transition to sustainable energy sources. At the same time, since the 1990s, each of these three states has increasingly allocated huge sums from their fossil fuel profits to investments and purchases across the world (inter alia by means of sovereign wealth funds or government-funded companies and agencies). While these expenditures were sometimes

perceived as an ostentatious extravagance by rulers who do not suffer from a lack of cash, a deeper examination shows that they are linked by a common denominator: the attempt to elevate the state's image and attract foreign investment and tourism—both objectives that the academic literature closely relates to soft power.

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Indeed, these objectives are also part of the internal policies of the three states, to diversify their economies away from fossil fuels. Yet, the basic assumption of this paper is that the bulk of the investments and purchases made by the Gulf states have a further, externally-oriented function in a systematic strategy to establish soft power, which has become apparent over the past decade.[1] In this paper, we claim that the soft power strategies of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar serve the national security of each, above all, by securing the survival of the ruling families. Just as economic diversity is needed to preserve their internal stability in a future of declining revenues from energy exports, soft power is intended to prop up the hard power they enjoy within the global system. In particular, these three states must be sufficiently attractive and persuasive to preserve their relative ability to withstand international pressures over their conduct with respect to human rights and political freedoms.

One reason that the soft power strategy of the Gulf states deserves research attention is their rather problematic starting point in this context. According to Nye, soft power is based on three pillars: culture, political values, and foreign policy. The more these three elements in a specific country are built on universal ideas and values with which people in other countries can easily identify and accept as representative

of legitimate morality, the greater that country's chances of being perceived as acceptable and attractive, thereby creating soft power. In contrast, if these three elements are based on narrow values associated with a particular society, they will probably not be attractive beyond its borders (Nye, 2004).

In the case of the Gulf states, the fossil fuel exports that shaped their societies in the twentieth century hampered their political, cultural and social development: they have preserved tribal institutions and patriarchal and hierarchical values that are unique to the Gulf and not relatable to the rest of the world; they lack a globally-recognized history or cultural contribution to the world—apart from Islam, with which their association often paints them in a negative light of conservatism, extremism, and support for terrorism. All in all, the Gulf states have assumed a reputation as backward, stagnated societies whose material success is derived simply from their fossil fuels—unpopular in their own right due to their role in the climate crisis—and the exploitation of foreign workers.

Thus, in order to establish soft power, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar must suppress this narrow and negative image as far as possible and replace it with a more attractive and inspiring one. The UAE even specified in the declaration of its soft power strategy the image it wishes to create: "Promoting the country's status as a gateway to the region, making it the regional capital of culture, art, and tourism, and establishing its reputation as a modern, tolerant country open to people from all over the world" (UAE Government, 2017). Unlike their neighbors in the Arab world, the Gulf monarchies benefit from deep pockets and relative internal stability to facilitate the long-term development and investment that can deliver the hoped-for radical change in their image.

The existing academic literature on the subject of soft power in Saudi Arabia, UAE or Qatar traditionally deals with their strategies for promoting their status in the Muslim world or

the Middle East, largely through religion (Baycar & Rakipoglu, 2022; Diwan, 2021; Mandaville, 2022; Roberts, 2019). Studies of soft power aimed at the global arena look at each of these countries separately, with most of the attention on Qatar; and those studies primarily examine the use of sporting and entertainment events as a means of creating a positive image. There is also limited reference to the use of the media, tourism, diplomacy, religious tolerance, and academic and cultural links (Al-Tamimi et al., 2023; Antwi-Boateng & Alhashmi, 2022; Bianco & Sons, 2023; Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2017; Cafiero & Alexander, 2020; Dubinsky, 2024; Søyland & Moriconi, 2022).

In this paper, we wish to present a unified picture of the soft power strategy of the three countries in the global arena, particularly with respect to the Western world. We first propose a comprehensive view that examines their soft power strategies as a whole. Indeed, the three Gulf monarchies do not act as one unit—in fact, their soft power is a material part of the rivalry between them—and this paper refers to the differences in the route each of them has chosen as a way of developing their soft power, differences linked partly to their opening positions and the cards they hold. However, we argue that the objectives of each of their soft power strategies are the same. Secondly, the paper covers a wide spectrum of their areas of activity, with reference to latent aspects that have not yet attracted serious research attention, such as challenging the moral superiority of Western values. All these make it possible to establish the link that we maintain exists between the investments and acquisitions of the three Gulf monarchies and the attempt to support their status and "immunity" in the international arena by nurturing an image that radiates universal attractiveness and legitimacy.

As much as they can be empirically measured, the soft power strategies examined in this paper are proven to be effective at present. In the rating of global soft power published in early 2024 by Brand Finance, a world-leading

consultancy for brand valuation, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar were placed 10th, 18th and 21st, respectively. These ratings are higher than those of their Middle Eastern neighbors—including the other three less wealthy Gulf states, as well as Israel—and higher than the ratings of many Western countries.

The Soft Power Index of the Middle East, 2024

Country	Global rating	Soft Power Index
United Emirates	10	57.7
Saudi Arabia	18	56.8
Qatar	21	54.5
Israel	32	48.7

(Brand Finance, 2024)

Theoretical Argument

In order to establish the claim that three Gulf states are seeking to acquire soft power in addition to their economic power, as a way of ensuring their security and status in the international system, the test case must focus on Nye's theory of soft power, and also point to aspects in which it extends and challenges it. Firstly, Nye's theory looks at the United States and other great powers, whose geographic and demographic size greatly exceeds that of the Gulf monarchies in question: Saudi Arabia has about twenty million citizens, the UAE about a million, and tiny Qatar has fewer than 350,000 citizens. Other literature on the subject points out that small and medium-sized countries can also have soft power, and it is even particularly advantageous for them because it compensates for their inability to compete with the military and economic resources of the great powers. So soft power allows medium and small countries to "punch above their weight"— that is, to achieve a dominant international status that they could not achieve in other ways (Jepperson et al., 1996).

Secondly, as the practical means for establishing soft power, Nye points to public

diplomacy: actions initiated by countries to communicate directly with the citizens of other countries, to improve their image in global public opinion, and thereby achieve support for their policies. Rather than simple propaganda, public diplomacy refers to the creation of deep ties with the target population and participation in international discussions of topical matters. It allows countries to adapt their messages for different audiences and present their culture and values in a positive light, while being perceived as credible rather than manipulative. Nye lists some of the important tools of public diplomacy: media campaigns, educational and cultural programs, academic collaborations, and support for international projects and initiatives (Nye, 2008). All these tools, as will be seen in the following analysis, are used by the Gulf states under discussion.

The assumption of this paper, that the three Gulf countries leverage their weight in the energy market in seeking to establish soft power, suggests a close interplay between hard and soft power. Nye defines the strategy of using soft power to supplement hard power as "smart power." He argues that the ability to know where to make use of each type of power maximizes the effectiveness of each, and thus the country's ability to achieve its goals in the international system (Nye, 2004). Evidence of the relevance of the idea of smart power in the test case under discussion can be found in a paper published in 2021 by the Doha Institute, the Qatari Government's research institute, which clearly defines the country's method of operation, which to a large extent is also used by Saudi Arabia and the UAE:

> Qatar is a successful example of the exercise of soft power that small countries can enjoy with the aim of influencing international politics. Qatar's international power can be interpreted as "combined power,'" in other words, a combination of hard and soft power, which demonstrates

the country's ability to make use of many tools and resources at local, regional and international levels and exploit them to achieve the influence it seeks (Al-Qahtani & Al-Thani, 2021, p. 9-10).

It cannot be ignored that in their striving for soft power, Saudi Arabia, the United Emirates and Qatar challenge Nye's concept (Nye, 2011), which doubts that authoritarian countries would be able to use soft power effectively. Nye maintains that oppression and the lack of internal freedom in authoritarian states, together with the absence of global cultural institutions—like "Hollywood" or a leading academy—would make it difficult for them to create the universal attraction enjoyed by Western countries that stand for liberal democracy. On the other hand, the later literature undermines this assumption. For example, studies of China (Shambaugh, 2013) and Russia (Dema, 2023) indicate that these authoritarian countries have manipulatively adopted Western tools such as international media outlets, NGOs, or globally-spread cultural centers (such as China's Confucius Institute) to establish soft power. By means of these platforms, they promote their image and their cultural and political values while stressing that their success was achieved without them being subject to democratic, liberal values. Moreover, those authoritarian countries frame their policies as embodying universal values, such as stability or growth and development, in a way that challenges the dominance of liberal democracy in the global consciousness, proposing a more "diverse" world order that does not necessarily rest on liberal Western principles.

Notwithstanding Nye's skepticism over the use of soft power by authoritarian states, he himself establishes a link between a state's ability to persuade others of the legitimacy of its values and its ability to withstand external pressures to change its conduct. Nye (2004)

shows how the "Asian economic miracle" (economic growth in East Asia in the second half of the twentieth century) gave the authoritarian regimes in Singapore and Malaysia the ability to withstand internal and external calls for improvements to democracy and human rights. This was helped by a narrative that the economic power and political stability of these two states allegedly rested on their local cultural identity, which should therefore not be replaced with the foreign values of the West.

This paper assumes that it is possible to apply this paradigm to the Gulf monarchies. It rests on existing research on Qatar (Al-Tamimi et al., 2023; Peterson, 2006) and Saudi Arabia (Berni, 2023) that links their international image and efforts, to their survival in the international system. It argues that Qatar, as a small state, and Saudi Arabia, as a state identified with religious conservatism and extremism, needed to prove both their ability and their credibility in order to establish their legitimacy and ensure that "they'd be taken seriously" in international affairs. The creation of a credible brand allows the countries to build the system of contacts essential for their defense in the long run—as shown, for example, by Doha when it managed to preserve its international standing during the Gulf blockade from 2017 to 2021. This paper assumes that these considerations guide all three of the Gulf states discussed.

Sources of Soft Power
The Media
The soft power pioneer in the Gulf was the Qatari television network Al-Jazeera, which shortly after its launch in 1996 became the most popular media outlet among the world's 200 million Arabic speakers, thanks to its engagement with controversial issues and its tendency to criticize the Middle East's rulers. Al-Jazeera, which is entirely funded by Qatar's energy revenues (it features barely any advertisements), serves to broadcast Doha's desired image. Over the years, it has proven its ability to control the narrative in the Arab world, and thereby enhance the power

of tiny Qatar at the expense of the traditional dominant forces in the region (particularly during the Arab Spring and throughout the 2017-2021 crisis between Qatar and its neighbors).[2] In 2006, a decade after the network opened, Doha extended the success of Al-Jazeera to the global arena by launching an English-language channel, which gives it the highly valuable ability to determine the way in which the Middle East and the Muslim world are presented to dozens of millions of viewers, and thereby challenge the way they are covered by the western media (Antwi-Boateng, 2013).

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Quickly understanding the power of social media, the next step for Qatar at the start of the previous decade was to introduce AJ+, Al-Jazeera's social media platform in English, French and Spanish. AJ+ engages in public discourse in the West, dealing with topics that concern Gen Y and Gen Z, such as socio-economic gaps, human rights and the climate crisis, with a particular emphasis on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and racial tensions in the United States (Fipp, 2017). It is an epitome of Qatari manipulation that also finds expression in academia: fanning the flames and pointing the spotlight at issues that stir controversy, sentiments and historical resentments over injustice, exploitation, discrimination, and oppression; it champions human rights and equality—which Qatar itself does not observe—while exploiting freedom of speech in the West, which does not exist in Qatar.

Similarly, Qatar funds (though it is not officially identified with) the London-based

English media platforms Middle East Eye and Middle East Monitor, which cover human rights issues in the Middle East with an agenda emphasizing the moral weakness of the West and its historical and ongoing crimes against the region's peoples (Cherkaoui, 2018). With its intensive focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Qatari Western-oriented media praises the morality of Muslim support for the Palestinians compared to the injustice of Western support for Israel. These narratives promoted by Doha among the young, intellectual target audience highlight the hypocrisy of Western countries in lecturing Muslim countries, including Qatar, on equality and human rights. As a by-product, they cast Israel in a particularly negative light, endangering its legitimacy among younger Western audiences.

In this practice, Qatar is seemingly unique among the Gulf states since Saudi Arabia and the UAE focus their efforts in the media on the Arab discourse. Yet, noteworthy is the Dubai Media City, an Emirati venture that offers international media companies cutting-edge facilities, tax breaks and exemption from local restrictions on freedom of speech. Since its launch in 2000, a whole string of global media and technology giants have opened offices in the complex, including Reuters, CNN, the BBC, and Google. By this means, the UAE ensures that corporations with the power to disseminate information worldwide receive a positive, open and polished impression of the authoritarian state (Al-Ghoul & Esmail, 2024; Hilotin, 2020). Ultimately, both Qatar and the UAE are harnessing the power of the media and new media in particular to improve their place in international discourse, not by means of simple propaganda but by using sophisticated manipulations to bring about a deep change in the way their policies and cultures are presented and perceived in the world.

Academia and Research

Higher education is at the heart of the theory of soft power. Joseph Nye attributes the success of the United States in spreading liberal democracy over the globe to the dominance of the American academy: Exchanges of students and knowledge between the United States and its colleagues in the world exposed the latter to the prosperity, superiority and justice of the American way; the fact that the world's political, economic and cultural elites acquire their education in American universities brought the values and policies taught in those universities to a position of dominance in their countries of origin (Nye, 2004). Paradoxically, the American academy in recent years has found itself serving the soft power of Gulf states that challenge the superiority and justice of the West.

The subject of Gulf funding for Western universities, mainly in the United States but also to a lesser extent in Europe, has attracted special attention following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, given Qatar's funding of Hamas and the pro-Palestinian demonstrations on campuses against the war in Gaza. But this is far from a new phenomenon: data from the US Department of Education show that the rate of donations from government sources in the Gulf monarchies to academic institutions in the United States have increased hugely since the start of this century, beginning soon after the previous event that stained their reputation, the attack of September 11, 2001. Qatar heads the list with a donation of some 4.7 billion dollars to American universities over this period; in the years 2012-2018, almost a quarter of all foreign donations to American universities came from the six Gulf states (more than all the European Union countries and six times the Chinese contribution), in addition to amounts funneled through channels that are difficult to track, such as research grants awarded directly to students and scholars. In Britain, where there is less transparency over donations, it is known that in the period 2000-2018, Saudi Arabia donated almost forty million dollars to Oxford University alone, with half of that amount going to establish a center for Islamic studies (Arnold, 2022; England & Kerr, 2018).

While both the Gulf states and the universities insist that their cooperation is for the sole purpose of academic excellence, it is safe to assume that the sums come with conditions or at least hidden motives. Firstly, the ruling elites of the Gulf wish to be associated with the global intellectual elite as a means of normalizing their countries in high places. Secondly, they want to influence the way their countries and the Arab and Muslim world in general are presented in studies: in some institutions, the Gulf's funding has led to the introduction of Gulf studies into the curriculum for the first time (as this area has traditionally been sidelined on the grounds of a lack of cultural and historical depth), and individual study grants are often contingent on a link between the research subject and the donor country. It can be assumed that the economic dependency of institutions and schools on funding from the Gulf states limits the criticisms they can voice regarding those states and affects how the Arab and Muslim world is presented in the curriculum.

The flagship of Gulf investment in Western academies is the establishment of branches of some of the most prestigious universities, such as Georgetown, New York University and the Sorbonne, in the UAE and Qatar, in return for their donations. The parent universities manage student exchange programs and joint degrees with the Gulf campuses, and students come from all over the world for a semester or degree studies. The universities justify their operation in authoritarian countries—which have no freedom of expression beyond the campus—by asserting that the Western academic spirit will strengthen liberal values in the Gulf (Arnold, 2022; England & Kerr, 2018). However, it is clear that the Qatari and the Emirate rulers seek influence in the opposite direction: the hosting of international students in their countries is made with the hope that when these students eventually take their place in the ranks of influential positions in their home countries, their attitude to the Gulf states will be tolerant and sympathetic (Antwi-Boateng, 2013). The UAE even explicitly

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mentions "scientific and academic diplomacy" in its soft power strategy, as part of the measures intended to create a positive global image for the country (UAE Government, 2017).

Further, the Gulf states' funding of academic causes in the West might have a far wider effect. Its critics commonly allege—particularly in the context of Qatar—that it leads to the promotion of anti-western and anti-Israeli ideas in the syllabuses, as well as a conciliatory attitude to radical Islam and terrorism, eventually contributing to the evident growth of antisemitism on campuses (Fenton-Harvey, 2019; Rosen, 2023). While such a causal link is not proven, it cannot be denied that progressive approaches such as post-colonialism, which challenge Western hegemony, have risen to dominance in faculties of social science and humanities in elite universities in tandem with the funding they receive from the Gulf. It is not inconceivable that the decision by institutions, departments and scholars to receive this generous funding has contributed to the reinforcement of this scholarly trend, which places the Arab and Muslim world on the "good" side in the dichotomization between oppressor and oppressed, against the white West which is blamed for all the ills of the Global South (Nair, 2017). The stormy 2023-2024 pro-Palestinian encampments on the campuses in the United States and Europe are evidently inspired by these approaches, where the leading groups frame the war in Gaza as part of global, colonialist oppression and injustice that is allegedly inherent in the Western culture (and even in curriculum studied in the universities themselves); the Qatari media empire covers these demonstrations in an intensive and particularly sympathetic way, backing up their anti-western approach and

denouncing their alleged stifling by the local governments and institutions. Here, too, the narrative indirectly plays into the hands of the Gulf states by undermining the West's ethical and moral superiority (Berrien, 2024; Shareef, 2024; Ullah, 2024).

The Gulf states are, therefore, using the existing framework of Western academia to question the latter's own conventions. Their obsessive preoccupation with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not the goal itself but an effective means to gently bend the views of future elites in their favor. The framing given to the Palestinian issue—in which Qatar is the focus because of its links to Hamas, although it is quite likely that the other Gulf states also support it—poses a significant challenge to Israel's legitimacy in the eyes of future Western elites.

The influence of the Gulf states on the Western research discourse does not end in the universities but has also entered, over the past decade, the realm of think tanks. First, they established their own ones: Qatar founded the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, and Saudi Arabia and the UAE jointly founded the Arab Gulf states Institute in Washington (AGSIW); both based in Washington DC, the global hub of think tanks, and bring together Arab and Western researchers to publish analyses in Arabic and English on the Middle East and its relations with the United States. These institutions imbue the global research discourse with a positive attitude toward the policies of Qatar or of Saudi Arabia and the UAE (the differences were marked, for example, during the Blockade on Qatar or the matter of the Abraham Accords). But this is just a secondary move in the efforts by the Gulf states to establish an influence "inside the Beltway," that is, the inner circle of policymakers in the American capital: the main thrust is their donation of millions of dollars to established research and lobbying institutes with a reputation for influence on policymakers in the United States and worldwide, inter alia, over issues relating to policy in the Middle East. Almost all of the leading institutes have received donations from at least one of the three states, including the Brookings Institute, the Rand Corporation, the International Crisis Group, the Atlantic Council, the Middle East Institute (MEI), Foreign Policy magazine, and others. Some have opened offices in Doha, and many of their researchers take part every year in the Doha Forum, which hosts political and security figures to discuss topical issues (Grim, 2017; Khatri, 2013; Lipton et al., 2014; Pecquet, 2015; Rosen, 2023).

While the said institutions deny that their ties to the Gulf states are contingent upon granting the donor countries special treatment in their publication (and some have even ended those following such criticism), whatever the case, the sponsorship of such prestigious institutions aims to identify the Gulf states, in the eyes of policymakers and in the intellectual circles influenced by these institutions, with their values and agendas: the promotion of peace, stability, economic development and—paradoxically—liberalism and democracy. Here, too, the interests of the Gulf states may clash with those of Israel and pose a risk to its security and regional interests.

Sport

While higher education and research appeal to the intellectual elites, sport is the way for the Gulf states to reach the hearts of the masses. The name Qatar became famous globally when the tiny principality hosted the football World Cup in 2022 (Saudi Arabia is expected to follow suit and host this event in 2034). The World Cup is just one of a whole series of prestigious international sporting events held in the Gulf in recent years—in return for generous payment from the local governments—in popular branches such as racing, golf and wrestling. The ultimate prize will be the 2036 Olympic Games, which both the Qataris and the Saudis are vying to host (Corruzzi, 2013; Goddard, 2022; Morse & Lewis, 2022; Sean, 2022). But the focus is on football—a highly popular sport in the Gulf and in the whole world. The Gulf rulers have

identified the appeal of football and they are prepared to invest a fortune exploiting it for their own benefit: over the past two decades, the three countries discussed here have spent huge amounts on the acquisition of major clubs in England, France and Spain; on signing agreements with prestigious teams and leagues in Europe, such as providing sponsorship and hosting the clubs' games and football academies; and on importing leading players to play in the fairly unknown local football leagues, or to publicize their tourism and sport (Carosella, 2022; Kessous, 2011; Quinn, 2021; Romano, 2022).

The Gulf investments in football involve record-breaking sums that attract sensational attention, such as featuring the logo of the Qatari national airline on the shirts of the Spanish club Barcelona (which has historically avoided advertising sponsors on its uniform) for the record amount of 30 million euros annually, or a move that astounded the world of football— the 2022-2023 signings of Cristiano Ronaldo, Karim Benzema and Neymar by Saudi Arabian teams for hundreds of millions of dollars per season (Romano, 2022; Weinberg, 2017). These actions have aroused huge excitement among football fans in the Gulf and the entire Middle East, and naturally stimulated global interest in the three Gulf states.

"Football serves a similar function to Hollywood. Sport, like movies, is very popular at all levels of society. Just like the world learned to love America through Marlon Brando and Marilyn Monroe, so the world will learn about Qatar through Paris Saint Germain" (Corruzzi, 2013). The investment in sport provides the Gulf monarchies with "bread and circuses" for the local population, by bolstering national pride and the legitimacy of the ruling family at home, but also helps to improve their image and presence in the international arena and among new audiences worldwide. The picture of footballer Lionel Messi draped in a traditional Qatari robe (Bisht) while brandishing the world cup symbolizes the strive of the Gulf states

to identify themselves with sports culture— an exclusive stature that is reserved for very few countries.

Due to the extraordinary popularity of sport, its use by the Gulf states to improve their image has attracted more international criticism than other fields and is contemptuously referred to as "sportswashing." In some cases, it has even become a double-edged sword by drawing unwanted public attention to negative aspects of these countries, such as the questions that were asked about the Qatari treatment of foreign workers following the World Cup, or Saudi conduct of the war in Yemen, issues that made headlines in England as part of the public's opposition to the acquisition of local football clubs by Saudi Arabia (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2017; Dorsey, 2024).

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Religious Tolerance

In a sense, Islam is the oldest source of soft power in the Gulf. The Saudi Royal House has always based its legitimacy on its status as "the custodian of the two holy sites of Islam" by funding a widespread network of religious scholars and colleges ("madrassas") throughout the Muslim world to preach the strict religious doctrine— Wahhabism—until recently espoused by the monarchy as the Islamic ideal. Qatar, by contrast, provides hosting and financial and media support for elements of political Islam—from the Muslim Brotherhood, which is popular and represented all over the region and the world, to extremist Jihadi elements—as a source of a more public-level support across the Muslim world (Mandaville, 2022; Salman, 2021). The effect of these practices is therefore limited to a Muslim audience; moreover, they

arouse antagonism in the rest of the world because they associate the Gulf states with extreme Islam and terrorism (particularly since the September 11, 2001 attacks, whose perpetrators were educated in Saudi religious networks) and in general with violence and instability in the region. In particular, the global resonance of the atrocities committed by the Islamic State (ISIS) in the previous decade once again, rightly or wrongly, tarnished the Gulf states as the parties responsible for promoting extreme Islam. To a large extent, this was the catalyst for the obvious efforts by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar to convey to the world at large a completely different image of the Islam they espouse.

The message conveyed by the new narrative is that the accepted identification of the Gulf states with extreme Islam derives from a mistaken stereotype, or at most an outdated historical anomaly.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates have promoted high-profile ventures of religious tolerance. For the Saudis, this is an aspect of the far-reaching reforms introduced by the Crown Prince and acting ruler Mohammed bin Salman since 2017, with the purpose of renouncing Wahhabism in favor of moderate Islam and Saudi nationalism; as much as these reforms are principally internal, they also include projecting to the world the "other Saudi Arabia" in religious terms. For example, one of the major Saudi-run preaching networks, the World Muslim League, was rebranded as promoting interfaith dialogue: in 2020, its Secretary-General, Sheikh Muhammed al-Issa, paid a widely covered visit to Auschwitz alongside rabbis; in 2022, it organized the Riyadh Forum for World Religious Leaders, a historical gathering of Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist clerics.

The image of the UAE is less problematic in this context: its strategy plays on the existence of a large population of non-Muslim foreign residents within the state so that it can describe itself as a beacon of tolerance and cultural-religious pluralism in the region. A Government Ministry dedicated to tolerance, which was set up in 2016, arranges a range of activities that are said to promote harmony, understanding and knowledge between the various religious communities, accompanied by media campaigns; the historic visit of Pope Francis in 2016, the first papal visit to the Gulf, was exploited to show the world the peaceful lives of the Christian foreign workers in the country—something quite extraordinary in the contemporary Muslim world; a year later, normalization with Israel was marketed to the world as Jewish-Muslim reconciliation under the name the Abraham Accords, accompanied by formal recognition of the Jewish community in the UAE and the establishment in Abu Dhabi of the House of the Family of Abraham—a complex containing a mosque, a synagogue and a church. A magnificent Hindu temple was also constructed in the Emirates capital for the large community of Indian expats and inaugurated with the participation of the president of the world's largest country (Winter & Guzansky, 2020; Monier, 2024; Hoffman, 2023).

Qatar, on the other hand, uses its media power in the Western world (as specified above) to change the narrative regarding the political Islamic groups it supports: Qatari media platforms portray the Muslim Brotherhood as representatives of moderate Islam who are fighting for democracy against oppressive regimes—a claim that appeals to liberals in the West; other organizations supported by Qatar, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and of course Hamas, are also shown in a positive, conciliatory light (Cherkaoui, 2014; Quitaz, 2024).

Thus, the Gulf states are not renouncing their image as promoters of Islam but rather seeking to turn this into virtue through a narrative claiming that "'their'" Islam supports peace, tolerance, multi-culturalism, and freedom. The new narrative, in effect, maintains that these values are not the sole preserve of Western liberalism, but are also an important component

of Islam and the national identity of the Gulf monarchies. The message conveyed by the new narrative is that the accepted identification of the Gulf states with extreme Islam derives from a mistaken stereotype, or at most an outdated historical anomaly. This manipulation supports the image that the Gulf rulers seek to acquire for themselves as respecting the values of equality, peace and prosperity for all.

Tourism, Culture and Art

Tourism is a sector on which the Gulf states pin great hopes as a tool for diversifying their economies, and it also plays an essential role in their soft power strategies. Large-scale events such as festivals, concerts and sporting competitions, or the World Expo (held in Dubai in 2022 and planned for Saudi Arabia in 2030) join iconic monuments and grandiose attractions—all designed to make the Gulf monarchies attractive destinations for shopping, business and even residence for people from all over the world, and more than that—to tell "success stories" about the countries and transform their image in the eyes of visitors.

First and foremost is the city of Dubai, which has undergone rapid development since the begining of this century, and whose skyline with the world's tallest tower, the Burj Khalifa, has become the hallmark of the UAE, if not of the whole Gulf. What was a desert oasis until just a few decades ago is now the fourth most popular tourist destination in the world, with almost 17 million visitors every year (just behind Paris and London), with the world's busiest international airport (First Group, n.d.). Leveraging the flow of visitors that is attracted by the country's modernity and innovation, the UAE incorporated in the tourist route elements of the values and heritage to which the Emirates supposedly owe their success. The most prominent example is the Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi: although it was actually built in the 1990s, it appears to have emerged from the pages of *One Thousand and One Nights* and is an icon on Instagram—based on visitor ratings

on Tripadvisor, it is more popular than the Taj Mahal (Abu Dhabi Media Office, 2024). This splendid building links the UAE to the flourishing Muslim culture of the Middle Ages, and the signs adorning the complex explain to the crowds that the UAE is guided by its universal values of tolerance and wisdom. Nor should visitors to the Emirati capital miss the magnificent People's Palace (Qasr al Watan), which is free to enter and displays exhibits celebrating the legacy and wisdom of the ruling family, or the structure of the National Museum that is currently being built—in the shape of falcon's wings (the bird that accompanied the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula in their wanderings)—both designed to show that the country had a rich history prior to the discovery of oil.

So far, the Emirates is the only one to record a significant achievement in the field of tourism, although Saudi Arabia (which until 2019 was closed to tourists, apart from Muslim pilgrims) is seeking to catch up via several ventures: first, numerous theatrical performances, parties, exhibitions and festivals are organized in Saudi cities, some with international artists of the first rank (such as Ed Sheeran, Ariana Grande, David Guetta and Eminem); their initial purpose is to serve as bread and circuses for young Saudis, but they are also a means of rebranding the image of this conservative country and "normalizing" it as a legitimate destination on the global cultural map. Second, the Red Sea Project sprawling over the Kingdom's unspoiled beaches and islands will offer, by the end of this decade, dozens of pastoral vacation resorts on an area larger than the State of Israel (without the conservative restrictions on alcohol and revealing bathing costumes); third, the renovation and marketing of the ancient Nabatean city of Al-Ula in the heart of the Saudi desert are based on the hope that its preserved stone monuments will attract tourists just like its counterpart Petra in Jordan (Arab News, 2024; Denisyuk, 2024; Hodgetts, 2024).

Another feature of the development of tourism is the surge in the construction of

museums in the three Gulf states and their investment in art. In 2017 Abu Dhabi became home to a branch of the famous Parisian museum, the Louvre, which sent some of its artworks to the Gulf in return for a generous Emirati investment; an extension of the Guggenheim Museum, larger than the original in New York, is currently under construction nearby. The millions of tourists who came to Qatar for the World Cup were also invited to visit the Doha Biennial being held at that time—an exhibition of contemporary art rivaling its counterparts in the West. Further, the Gulf states exploit their contacts with art institutions to promote their own art and heritage: next to its famous Museum of Islam, Doha has opened the Wusum Museum—named for tribal symbols that were in use throughout the history of the Arabian peninsula—displaying art from the Gulf region, with the focus on its desert and tribal environment. On the other hand, as part of the collaboration between Saudi Arabia and the Louvre, the museum in Paris featured an exhibition titled "Saudi Heritage," which displayed—in a way that must certainly have surprised visitors—the remains of pagan statues discovered in the Saudi desert (Ammagui, 2024; Gronlund, 2024; Proctor, 2024, The Star, 2022).

The change in image sought by the Gulf states is therefore directed also to tourists. In the eyes of the growing crowds of visitors, the rulers wish to replace the picture of a barren desert and conservative societies with skyscrapers, coral reefs and museums. Further, they want to show that their countries had a thriving local cultural heritage way before the arrival of oil wealth, with ancient historical remains that are reminiscent of those in other areas of the world, and that their governments are open to culture and art, and invest in their enrichment (while, in practice, they considerably restrict their subjects' freedom of expression).

Constructive Diplomacy

One of the first fields used by the Gulf monarchies to leverage their resources as a means of positioning their global image was diplomatic activity. Beginning in the early 1990s, they began to establish a whole range of humanitarian governmental and semi-governmental agencies to organize the provision of humanitarian aid worth billions of dollars (in the form of food distribution, search and rescue, or medical aid) to needy countries and regions, first in the Arab and Muslim world, and later in other places around the globe. The donations of these three states are defined as unconditional and on a global scale: according to data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), over the past decade, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE have been listed among the world's top ten donor countries (Elkahlout & Milton, 2023). In this way, they broadcast to the world, and particularly to governmental and diplomatic circles, foreign policy and political values that are focused on development, prosperity and peace, thus setting themselves apart from the rest of the Arab and Muslim world, which is usually the recipient of aid and identified with weakness and wars. This is in line with Nye's theory, which deems foreign policy and political values that are generally perceived as legitimate and ethical to be an effective source of soft power.

As a response to any remaining skepticism, mainly in the West, about the good faith and sincerity of their ambitions for global development, the Gulf states take an active role in diplomatic action on one of the most painful issues for their image as the producers of polluting energy—the climate crisis. The UAE is home to the headquarters of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and in 2023 hosted the annual UN Conference on Climate Change (COP28). Saudi Arabia and Qatar are founding members of the Net-Zero Producers Forum, which brings together energy producers such as the United States, Canada and Norway, to discuss the reduction of toxic gas emissions. Moreover, in 2021 at a conference in Riyadh, the Saudi King launched the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI), where countries from the region

discuss programs to mitigate climate change. In response to criticisms that these moves are cynical, when coming from countries that have become wealthy on the export of polluting fuels and are considered to be the world's biggest polluters (per head), the Gulf states claim that their arid desert environment means they are the first to be harmed by the climate crisis, and it is therefore in their interest to play a leading role in the struggle on behalf of the whole world (Shafi, 2021).

Conclusions

The assembly of high profile investments and acquisitions by Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar in recent decades points to a coherent pattern of action to enhance their global visibility and to gain control over the way their countries appeared in the discourse throughout the world. In this way the three Gulf powerhouses hope to project—in public opinion and among decision makers—a positive and attractive image based on universally accepted political and cultural values, while blurring or concealing any negative aspects. In addition, the narrative promoted by the monarchies through large numbers of ventures challenges the cultural hegemony of traditional sources of power, firstly in the Arab and Muslim world, and more ambitiously, also in the global arena. Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Doha wish to remove the skepticism and scorn that generally characterize how they are perceived and prove that they are neither ethically nor culturally inferior to other countries, particularly in the Western world, whose liberal democratic values profoundly contradict their own character.

All these elements combine to form what can be seen as a preventive move by the ruling families in these three Gulf states against existing and future demands for internal changes to adapt to external ethical criteria. With the help of their fossil fuels revenues, they have become involved at the highest level in every field of interest with a global presence—

sport, culture, academia. These are most likely strategic moves designed to create a global reputation that will 'protect' them: when faced with a country that serves as an economic hub and hosts branches of Georgetown University or the Louvre Museum, it is very difficult to isolate it politically, impose sanctions on it, or even attack it militarily.

The three Gulf monarchies are fostering their soft power through the strategic adoption of the values of Western liberalism, which are presented as inherent to Islam and the local culture, while at the same time, in the case of Qatar, challenging Western culture by stressing the "hypocrisy" of western demands for changes in the Arab and Muslim world. In the end, the Gulf states are promoting in the global arena values and qualities that they themselves do not practice: countries without a free press become a global media hub; countries without freedom of expression host the world's academic and cultural elite; countries with the highest per capita emissions in the world are playing a leading role in the struggle against climate change; countries with a structural social hierarchy, most of whose inhabitants do not have citizenship, take a stance against racism and discrimination; and last but not least, countries without much political freedom wave the banner of tolerance and pluralism. These contrasts are evidence of the wide-ranging ambitions of the Saudi, Qatari and Emirati leaderships, but also of the challenges they face in their desire to achieve soft power, as well as the risk that their entry into the global spotlight could achieve the opposite result of damaging their reputations and their credibility.

It is important to maintain a sense of proportion when examining the effectiveness of these soft power strategies. There is no doubt that the three Gulf states have bought themselves a place in fields affecting people all over the world. On the other hand, it is hard to make a precise assessment of the extent to which their power in the international system,

if any, derives from their attractiveness and persuasiveness, and how much from their status as suppliers of the energy on which the world still depends.

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Notes

1   In 2017, the UAE announced the launch of a governmental Soft Power Council to be responsible for national strategy on this matter (UAE Government, 2017). The existence and main points of the national soft power strategy of Qatar were mentioned in an article published in 2021 by the Qatari, state-run Doha Institute (Al Qahtani & Al-Thani, 2021). Saudi Arabia has not announced that soft power is an explicit objective, but it is embodied to a large extent in the Saudi Vision 2030 for the Kingdom's future, which was presented in 2016 and includes items that echo the soft power strategies of the UAE and Qatar (Saudi Vision 2030, n.d.).

2   On the significant influence of al-Jazeera on the political discourse in the Arab world, particularly around the events of the Arab Spring, see Abdelmoula, 2015; Cherribi, 2017.

Missed Signals that Led to a Strategic Surprise: Israeli Arab Riots in 2021

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Israel's security doctrine has historically been founded upon external threats, which have shaped its national security conception accordingly. In recent decades, these concerns have given way to new, *internal* threats to Israel's national security. For example, the outbreak of the Second Intifada/Second Palestinian uprising in October 2000, which began in the Palestinian territories (Judea, Samaria and Gaza) but then spilled over into Israel, was a significant surprise for Israel's security and political systems. A similar situation took place in May 2021, which was triggered by highly charged conditions in Jerusalem and by rockets launched from the Gaza Strip at Israeli cities. The sudden outbreak of violence within the Green Line was, again, a strategic surprise for the Israeli government and its security establishment. The events of May 2021 enable us to examine and explain a strategic surprise from different angles, both internal (Palestinians in Jerusalem and Israeli-Palestinian citizens) and external (Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza). This paper will also explore how strategic surprises may result from other internal issues. It will consider the challenge of assessing signals that are not distinct and alerting decision-makers as early as possible.

Keywords: Counterintelligence, counter-subversion, ISA (Israel Security Agency), strategic surprise, weak signals, Israel, Palestinians, predictable surprise, diffused surprise.

Introduction

For more than three decades following Israel's conquest of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza in 1967, tensions in those areas did not affect the relationship between Jews and Arabs within the rest of Israel; not even during the first Intifada in 1987. In contrast, the timing of the Second Intifada in October 2000 was not only unexpected, but the rapid and intense escalation directly affected relations within the Green Line. (Ben Ari, 2020; Lavi, 2010). The riots quickly crossed the 1967 border and

Israel was surprised by the active solidarity of Israeli Arabs with the Palestinians in the territories (Intelligence Heritage Center, 2005). Lasting more than a week, Israel experienced the most severe rioting by Israeli Arabs since the establishment of the State in 1948. It had been a strategic surprise (Zaken, 2021; State Comptroller of Israel, 2022) for the government, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and especially for the ISA (Israel Security Agency, also known as Shabak), which found it difficult to restore

calm and return to the status quo ante (Barnea, 2022). After order had been restored, the general assessment in Israel was that it was a one-time event (Feldman, 2001).

More than two decades passed until the next outbreak of major internal Arab Israeli riots in Israel. In May 2021, a sequence of violent incidents by Israeli Arabs took place in several cities. In Jerusalem, the riots erupted amid unrest that had intensified during the month of Ramadan and resulted in Muslim clashes with police on the Temple Mount (Ben Menachem, 2022). Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement in Gaza, then sent an ultimatum demanding that Israel evacuate its forces from the Temple Mount and Sheikh Jarrah, a neighborhood in East Jerusalem. When the ultimatum expired on May 9, which was Jerusalem Day, Hamas launched a barrage of rockets from the Gaza Strip toward the Jerusalem area and other cities. In response, Israel launched Operation Guardian Walls and attacked Hamas targets in Gaza. Beginning on the night of May 10, the riots spread from Jerusalem to several cities in Israel, primarily mixed cities, including Acre, Lod, Jaffa, and Ramle, where Jews and Muslims had been living side by side. It took ten days for quiet to be restored. In a similar reaction to events of the Second Intifada when the riots quickly crossed the Green Line into Israel, the Israel Security Agency (ISA) and the Israeli security establishment were once again taken by surprise.

This article has three core sections: the first presents a discussion of Israel's internal security challenges, an examination of the strategic surprises related to internal security, and a study of the counterintelligence aspects relevant to the case under discussion (Barnea, 2020). The second section discusses the obstacles to assessing the moods and feelings of the Israeli Arab minority towards the State of Israel and their intentions of changing the internal political status quo. The last section examines the available intelligence before the mass demonstrations in May 2021 and what could have been done to curb them in the early stages.

One important methodological note is that the May 2021 riots will be studied using two alternative theoretical approaches. First, they will be examined as a possible diffused surprise (Barnea, 2019), a spontaneous phenomenon that gradually develops and surprises the intelligence establishment and government when it occurs. Alternatively, we will also consider the May events as a predictable surprise (Watkin and Bazerman, 2003) due to the "weak signals" that accumulated but seem to have been ignored. Examining May 2021 as two different kinds of surprises is a critical innovation of this paper. The paper further discusses the challenge of detecting "weak signals" (Ansoff, 1975; Schoemaker and Day, 2009; Wohlstetter, 1962) and interpreting them as early as possible to prevent an unexpected attack. We argue that the ISA should reconsider its early warning systems regarding the possibility of broad, extreme political subversion that may be associated with terrorism in a complex security situation. Special capabilities must be developed to better understand the ebb and flow of latent sentiments that are rooted in both deep frustration and alienation of significant parts of the Arab population in Israel.

It is important to note that this paper addresses events up to and including August 2023, which is before Hamas breached the Israeli border and massacred and kidnapped Israeli citizens and others on October 7, 2023. Nevertheless, the subject of intelligence organizations' difficulty in dealing with strategic surprises is chillingly relevant to what happened two and a half years after the events analyzed in this article.

Israel's Internal Security Challenges

The Arab minority in Israel numbers around two million people, which is about 20 percent of the total population of the country. Most (83%) are Sunni Muslims, and they are spread throughout Israel, mainly in the north of the country, in the south, and also on its eastern side. Several Jewish cities in Israel can be called "mixed

cities," including Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Acre, Ramle, Lod, Maalot Tarshiha, and Nof Hagalil since they have a significant percentage of Arab residents. A few examples: Arabs make up 30% of the 81,000 residents in Lod, 33% of the 60,000 residents in Jaffa (Avgar et al., 2021) and 33% of the 50,000 residents in Acre. The Arabs in these mixed cities suffer from poor housing conditions, low socioeconomic status, and housing policy discrimination (Shmaryahu-Yaron, 2022).

Tensions between Jews and Arabs in Israel can be ascribed to two primary reasons. The first is Arab resentment dating back to Israel's War of Independence in 1948, when the majority of Palestinian Arabs were permanently displaced. The second reason is Israeli Arab identification with the approximately 5 million Arabs in the Palestinian Authority, who live in Gaza (from which Israel withdrew its forces in 2005) and Judea and Samaria, which has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967. In recent years, the Arab minority in Israel has expanded its political influence, mainly by increasing its representation in the Knesset. But the Jewish nation-state law (The Jewish Nation-State Law, 2018; Wootkliff, 2018), which declares that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people and anchors the Jewish identity of the state in its formal constitutional structure, has dramatically increased Arab feelings of alienation. The internal strategic threat to the State of Israel raises the question of whether Israel's concept of national security is still appropriate for complex situations in which Israel is attacked simultaneously from outside and inside, as happened in the May 2021 riots.

A few remarks regarding Israel's historical concept of national security are critical to understanding the background to the current tension between Jews and Israeli Arabs. In August 1953, David Ben-Gurion, then Prime Minister and Defense Minister, withdrew from politics and devoted his time to studying Israel's security needs. He wrote, "This examination requires one to forget what one knows, to drop one's prejudices and to see everything anew" (Ziv-Av, 2023). The result was an 18-page document brought before the government, which to this day, constitutes the basic outline of Israel's security concept. Among its tenets are taking the war to enemy territory, maintaining the IDF as a popular army (the bulk of its forces consists of reserves), and taking the initiative immediately at the beginning of a war (Harkabi, 1999). This security concept was created in order to deal with the threat, in 1953, of an attack by an Arab coalition on several fronts; it was necessary, at the time, to find the proper response to remove this threat (Bar-Joseph, 2000). It should be noted that Ben-Gurion's security conception was not limited to the military domain but also addressed security issues in internal areas of Israeli life, such as society, economy, science and technology (Shelach, 2015).

> **The internal strategic threat to the State of Israel raises the question of whether Israel's concept of national security is still appropriate for complex situations in which Israel is attacked simultaneously from outside and inside, as happened in the May 2021 riots.**

To Ben-Gurion's "security triad" of deterrence, early warning, and decisive victory, a fourth component, defense, was added by the Meridor Committee in 2006. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon appointed this committee, headed by Member of Knesset Dan Meridor, to revise Israel's security paradigm. However, the Meridor report does not reference Israel's internal security challenges and in a 2017 review of the Committee's report, a decade after its submission, the authors noted that while a significant portion of the principles of national security remained relevant, there was a vital need for an updated and relevant national security analysis to be formulated as soon as possible (Meridor and Eldadi, 2019).

The important point here is that Israel's national security conception does not include any internal situations, such as civil war. Barbara Walter, an American political scientist and

professor, whose study covers a number of countries, believes that a civil war today will not resemble America of the 1860s, Russia in the 1920s, or Spain in the 1930s. She identifies crucial risk factors, including democratic backsliding, factionalization, and the politics of resentment. According to Walter, a civil war will begin with sporadic acts of violence and terror accelerated by social media. It will develop stealthily and leave the government wondering how it could have been so blind (Walter, 2022). The challenge, then, lies in detecting threats early and stopping them as soon as possible. It is important to note that Walter's analysis does not consider using the theory of weak signals, which may provide intelligence agencies an early warning of possible civil riots.

> While the General Security Service Law of 2002 mentions the ISA's role in preventing subversion, this term is insufficiently defined. This leaves the door open to interpretation by the ISA itself, without authorization from any other body, to define individuals and organizations as "subversive."

In Israel, as in other Western democracies, a state intelligence service is responsible for counterintelligence, namely the Israel Securities Authority (ISA), also known as the Shin Bet or General Security Service. In the early 1950s, the ISA was responsible for counterintelligence operations: counterterrorism, counterespionage, and countersubversion. This was given formal legal validation with the passing of the General Security Service (ISA) Law in 2002, in which clauses 7 (a) and (b) state: "The Service shall be in charge of the protection of State security and the order and institutions of the democratic regime against threats of terrorism, sabotage, subversion, espionage and disclosure of State secrets" (General Security Service Law, 2002). A comparative analysis of counterintelligence organizations in other Western democracies shows that the ISA's fields of responsibility are the broadest. (Barnea, 2017).

While the General Security Service Law of 2002 mentions the ISA's role in preventing subversion, this term is insufficiently defined. This leaves the door open to interpretation by the ISA itself, without authorization from any other body, to define individuals and organizations as "subversive." The result has been the wide use of covert tools provided to the ISA to protect state security, including wiretapping (without judicial oversight) and relatively free access to communications data. Even though the ISA deals primarily with counterterrorism and counterespionage, the issue of defining subversion has been a topic of public debate due to the danger that the regime could exploit the ISA's powers in a way that may jeopardize democratic values (Margalit, 2018).

A Close Look at Strategic Surprises and Counterintelligence

The Outbreak of the October 2000 Riots
While there had been warnings about the potentially explosive situation among Israeli Arabs some six months before the riots broke out, they did not prevent opposition leader Ariel Sharon from going up to the Temple Mount on September 28, 2000. This visit to the Muslim holy site, Al-Aqsa, was perceived by the Palestinians as a provocation and sparked the Second Intifada, which quickly erupted in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza and then spilled over the Green Line into Israel, with Israeli Arabs demonstrating and rioting all over the country (Barnea, 2022; Lavi, 2010). The initial situation became known as the "October 2000 Riots" and lasted for about a week, in which 13 Arab citizens and one Jewish citizen were killed (Or Commission, 2003). It constituted a strategic surprise for the government, which encountered great difficulties in restoring order. The Second Intifada that it sparked however, was concentrated in the occupied territories and lasted until 2005, during which time more than 1,000 Israelis were killed in Palestinian terrorist attacks (both inside and over the Green Line).

The ISA was unsuccessful in its attempts to prevent many terrorist attacks that were carried out, both inside Israel and in the territories, against settlers and IDF during the Second Intifada. Only after Operation "Defensive Shield" and the construction of the security barrier between Israel and Judea and Samaria was there a significant decline in terrorist attacks.

The government set up the Or Commission in November 2000 to investigate the October wave of protests and demonstrations by Israeli Arabs in solidarity with the Palestinians of Judea and Samaria, who had launched the Second Intifada. One of the Commission's important findings was that the ISA had received warnings of possible widespread riots as early as May 2000, due to the radicalization of Israeli Arabs. However, the ISA did not share the warning with the Israeli security agencies. However, the head of the ISA's northern district testified before the Commission that before the October 2000 riots had spread into Israel, the ISA had assessed that "the Arab sector was frustrated by its economic hardships and claimed it was deprived, ignored, and marginalized by the authorities, who were not doing enough, in Arab opinion, to solve the fundamental problems plaguing the Arab sector. In addition, according to the ISA assessment, the situation alienated the Arabs in certain circles, to the point of delegitimizing the State of Israel." (Or Commission, 2003). The Or Commission revealed that on September 26, 2000, a document produced by the National Security Council (NSC), Israel's central body for coordination in the field of national security, had a different interpretation based on information received from the ISA and had correctly predicted developments. The NSC document stated that:

> The activities of Israeli Arabs could take on a similar but more violent character to previous activities during the difficult period of the "Intifada." The intensity of the reaction depends on the situation that develops and

may include violent demonstrations, roadblocks, and attacks on symbols of the state, such as police stations, post offices, and bank branches. Israel's response to Palestinians' activities [could lead] to a Palestinian counter-response, escalation, and widescale expansion of hostilities in the "territories" … [and these] could intensify the nature/activity of Israeli Arabs. The more Palestinian casualties there are, the more resistance by Israeli Arabs will increase as more and more moderates are swept into taking part in violent demonstrations. (Or Commission, 2003)

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This assessment was supported by a former senior executive in the ISA, who admitted that the riots had been a complete surprise: "We have arrested many Israeli Arabs without actual need, and it did not help" (Harel, 2022).

The Or Commission report discussed discrimination by state institutions toward Arabs in Israel, which had led to a sense of severe distress among them. "Arab citizens live in a reality where they are discriminated against as Arabs. Inequality has been documented in numerous government reports, including state comptroller reports and other official documents" (Or Commission, 2003). These included inequality in land allocation, discrimination in local government budgets for Arab communities, low employment rates in the civil service, frustration in the political sphere, and higher than national averages for poverty and unemployment. The Commission also noted the escalating messages heard from

leaders of the Arab sector in Israel, which had contributed to the increase in tensions between Arabs and Jews and later led to the outbreak of the riots.

Following the outbreak of violence in October 2000, the Israel Police focused on defense and calming tensions. Still, they had difficulty in doing so because, as the Or Commission had noted, there had been no early warning by the ISA, which was responsible for preventing terrorism and political subversion. The police were not ready, the level of violence, in at least parts of the country, primarily the north, was high, and it was difficult to restore calm and return to the status quo ante (Barnea, 2017).

The Commission pointed to the potential for civil uprising inside the Green Line due to developments within Israel and/or in the territories (Barnea, 2017). As a result of its findings, the government decided that it would be the responsibility of the ISA to gather intelligence to prevent the deterioration of Israeli Arab sentiment that could lead to unrest and violent nationalistic subversion. The Israel Police Force, on the other hand, would be responsible for collecting and evaluating intelligence regarding public order unrelated to nationalist activities (State Comptroller, 2022).

The Difficulties in Assessing the Moods of Minorities and Their Intentions

Israeli Arabs Since the 2000 October Riots

In the years following the October riots, the significant recommendations by the Or Commission were not implemented (Sade, 2010), and there is no indication that the government discussed this matter further. The government acted as if the possibility of the recurrence of riots and political subversion was low, an attitude which may have led to the strategic surprise of the May 2021 riots.

In the years leading up to 2021, a trend was observed within the Arab sector of a sharpening criticism of the State of Israel. According to the public opinion survey conducted by the Harry S.

Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah (PSR), in 2006, during the Second Lebanon War, for example, Arab citizens of Israel held a pro-Hezbollah position. (Matza, 2016, p. 49; Nachmias, 2006). Their criticism, which sometimes accused Israel of war crimes, was perceived by Jews as evidence of an enemy seeking to annihilate Israel. However, the situation of the Israeli Arabs is possibly more complicated, as scholar Sammy Smooha writes that the war revealed not only the commitment of Israeli Arabs towards Palestinians and Arabs but also their Israeli identity. They were vulnerable and injured by Hezbollah missiles just like other Israeli residents of Haifa and the north; they expected help and received it from the rescue services, as is customary in Israel (Smooha, 2013).

As Yoram Cohen, the former head of the ISA, said, "The ideological leadership of the Arab public in Israel is much more extreme than the majority of the public, and sometimes it attracts Israeli Arabs to places with which the public does not identify". In a closed meeting in March 2012, Cohen elaborated:

> Israeli Arabs have been involved in three terrorist attacks in the past year. The number of people involved in terrorism among Israeli Arabs is not significant. We have arrested 20-30 Israeli Arabs in the past year compared to 2,000 Palestinians detained in Judea and Samaria. The problems with Israeli Arabs are complex, but these are not security problems. These are alienation, the problem of integration into society, the problem of employment, poor management of local councils, crime and drugs (Ravid, 2012).

Between the 2000 October riots and the outbreak of riots in May 2021, the IDF

conducted three major military operations in the Palestinian Authority. It is important to note how Israeli Arabs responded to each of the operations to better understand their mentality. The first was Operation "Defensive Shield," which was held March-May 2002 in major cities in the West Bank and aimed to eliminate the infrastructure that had enabled terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians during the Second Intifada. The second operation was "Cast Lead," which took place in December 2008 in the Gaza Strip and was intended to put an end to the firing of Hamas missiles from the Gaza Strip at Israeli civilians. During Defensive Shield, Arab civilians in Israel showed almost no protest in the face of IDF activities (Rabinovitz, 2002), but six years later, in Operation Cast Lead, the situation was completely different. There were routine demonstrations in Arab communities against Israel's bombing of Palestinian population centers, civilian infrastructure and schools (Ilani & Lis, 2008). The third Israeli military operation was "Protective Edge," in July-August 2014, which once again aimed to stop rocket fire into Israel from the Gaza Strip as well as to destroy the tunnels from Gaza that enabled them to attack Israel (State Comptroller, 2017).

With the outbreak of Protective Edge, the Arab public in Israel was already in the midst of a wave of protests, demonstrations, and arrests. The operation signaled another wave of protests in various parts of Israel against the war in Gaza. Some demonstrations were led by local organizations, some by disorganized youth, while organized Islamic movements led others. As the war continued and the number of deaths among the civilians in Gaza increased, so did the protests among the Arab public in Israel. However, other voices in the Arab sector wanted to balance protests and cooperation with Jewish citizens, mainly in the mixed cities and business areas; and the Jewish public also wanted such collaboration to continue. It should be noted that in this case, Israeli Arabs protested the operation and also discussed Jewish-Arab

relations intensively on social media (Rabinovitz and Abu Baker, 2002).

The impact of "Operation Protective Edge" on Arab-Jewish relations in Israel, particularly on the possibility of a return to cooperation, did not receive significant attention in the Jewish public discourse. During the fighting, many questions haunted the Arab public but Israeli society was not aware of them and Arab Israelis were marginalized. In Israeli society, there were manifestations of racism, intolerance, and even hatred toward Arabs, which further threatened the possibility of coexistence. On the Israeli-Arab side, the socioeconomic and political distress experienced by many Arab citizens fueled the protest, which was further fueled by a strong empathy for the Palestinians in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza (Foier, 2014; Matza, 2016).

Compared to the Jewish population, the Arabs in Israel have been at a considerable economic disadvantage for many years: "The poverty incidence of Arab families continues to rise [...] Arab households have a low income [...] and they have difficulty covering their expenses." (Haddad Haj-Yihia, 2017, p.5). This has caused feelings of discrimination and alienation from the government and also from society as a whole. The data shows that Arab men currently earn about 60% of the wages of Jewish men. The labor force participation rate for Arab women is particularly low—22%. The employment rate of Arab 18-22-year-olds is also very low—about 26%. The prevalence of poverty is high and reaches about 48% of the total population, compared to 15% in the Jewish sector (Yashiv & Kasir, 2013). A study carried out about four years ago indicates an improvement in the employment figures of Israeli Arabs, which are still far below the Jewish sector (Botosh, 2020).

Historically, Israel's Arabs have not been heavily involved in terrorist activities (Matza 2016, pp. 45-46). However, in recent years, there have been some severe cases, such as the October 2015 attack on the central bus station in Beersheba, perpetrated by a resident of the

village of Hura in the Negev. There also was the January 2016 terrorist attack on Dizengoff Street in Tel Aviv, committed by an assailant from Arara, and the attack on the Temple Mount, committed by two residents of Umm al Fahm in July 2017. All of these attacks were perceived as perpetrated by individuals, not by the Arab population as a whole, which remained uninvolved.

An Examination of Available Intelligence Before the Outbreak of Demonstrations and Riots in May 2021

The Israeli Response: The Military Operation, "Guardian of the Walls"

On Jerusalem Day, May 10, 2021, during the flag parade through the streets of Jerusalem, Hamas-led Palestinian terrorist organizations began firing massive rocket barrages from Gaza towards Jerusalem and then later to other areas in Israel. To counter the attacks, the IDF mounted, on the same day, Operation "Guardian of the Walls," a large-scale military campaign in the Gaza Strip. The operation lasted until the ceasefire, which took effect on May 21 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). During the operation, terrorist organizations fired about 4,360 rockets from Gaza at Israel. The IDF conducted many attacks in Gaza and caused huge damage (IDF, 2021). "Guardian of the Walls" was unique as the trigger to the clash between Hamas and Israel began following the escalation of riots inside Israel on Jerusalem Day, in which dozens of Palestinian demonstrators from Judea and Samaria and several policemen were injured. Immediately afterward, Israel faced an outbreak of mass demonstrations and riots in several cities, including most of the mixed cities where Jews and Muslims were living together as neighbors.

A recent study conducted in February 2022 (Shragai, 2022) cites dozens of statements and quotes regarding the reasons for the violence from Muslim clerics and Arab youth who took part in the riots, including Arab residents in mixed cities. The research suggests that two direct and central reasons motivated the May Riots—the "Defense of Al-Aqsa" and the friction surrounding the "Residence of the Jewish families in Sheikh Jarrah-Shimon the Tzadik." However, the research claims that another fundamental factor behind the events was Israeli Arab preoccupation and discourse on the Nakba (translated as "the disaster of the establishment of the State of Israel") and the hope for the realization of the "right of return" to the places where Arabs had lived before 1948.

Israel was surprised by the attack of Hamas on Jerusalem. According to a leading Israeli military correspondent: "Intelligence assessments before the outbreak of Operation Guardian of the Walls delivered together by the Israeli Military Intelligence (IMI) and the ISA were wrong. Israel relied on assessments of Yahya Sinwar, the head of Hamas in Gaza, but, in fact, the real Hamas decision-maker is Mohamad Deff (the head of the military arm of Hamas), who authorized the firing of rockets on Jerusalem at 6 pm on May 10" (Yehoshua, 2021).

The Evolution of the May 2021 Civil Riots

Immediately before the outbreak of the riots, the Temple Mount and Jerusalem were at the forefront of developments and were known to be sensitive issues for Israeli Arabs. There were grounds to assess that this could become a central issue, especially after Hamas in Gaza had fired in the direction of Jerusalem, claiming that it was defending the Temple Mount.

The riots in Jerusalem erupted amid unrest in the city against Israel's plan to force Arab residents of the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah to evacuate their homes. The unrest intensified during the month of Ramadan and continued with Arab clashes at the Nablus Gate to the old city of Jerusalem; it then spread to Muslim clashes with police on the Temple Mount. Following the events, Hamas in Gaza sent an ultimatum demanding that Israel evacuate its forces from the Temple Mount and Sheikh Jarrah. When the ultimatum expired on Jerusalem Day, May 10, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad

launched a barrage of rockets from the Gaza Strip toward the Jerusalem area and other cities. In response, Israel launched Operation "Guardian Walls." During the riots, there were approximately 520 violent clashes between the rioters and the police: three Israeli citizens were killed, and dozens were wounded, among them 306 policemen. A total of 6,000 Israeli Arabs actively participated in the riots, and among them, 3,200 were arrested and 574 were indicted. There was also massive damage to property. The physical and property damages caused by the riots were estimated at tens of millions of New Israeli Shekels (NIS) (State Comptroller, 2022).

In the early days, the police initially framed the riots as local public protests and tried to lower the "flames," even when this meant not intervening with force. Only later, the police commissioner explained, "[f]rom the moment we understood the intensity of the events and the number of events, in less than 24 hours a response was given throughout the country, within four days the Intifada was eliminated [...] with zero casualties, with a minimum of measures" (Hankin, 2022).

As part of their response, the Israel Police was reinforced by Border Police forces. Four days after the start of the riots, the ISA became actively involved in helping the police. It issued an unusual statement in light of the escalation of violent incidents, stating that it was terrorism (Mako, 2021). The ISA's support for the police was very valuable, mainly in supplying alerts of further violent incidents and also in the interrogation of suspects who were arrested during and after the riots (Zaken, 2021). It was later reported that contrary to initial publications, the ISA estimated that less than ten percent of the Arab perpetrators had a prior criminal record, and the primary motivation of the Arab rioters, who were mainly between the ages of 20-30, had been Palestinian nationalism (Ben David, 2022).

From the end of the Second Intifada till May 2021, none of the clashes between Israel and the Palestinians ever prompted a specific warning about possible widespread riots by Israeli Arabs. However, suppose one connects such clashes to fundamental (basic) intelligence about the attitude of the Israeli Arabs to the State of Israel, especially in the immediate period before the outbreak of the riots. In that case, the events can be seen as "weak signals." In other words, while the signals did not communicate that something substantial was about to happen, ISA could have captured these signals and amplified them using forecasting techniques (Barnea and Meshulach, 2020). In contrast to the Second Intifada, when the ISA had made a specific assessment of the possibility of riots breaking out, the May 2021 riots were a complete surprise (State Comptroller 2022). "The ISA had assessed that the events were only local and the main emphasis was on Jerusalem" (Ibid.). According to the report by the state comptroller:

> "In the months leading up to the events of the Guardian of Walls, the ISA recognized a trend of increasing tension in the Arab sector and insisted on the potential risk and the possibility of an outbreak, including in the context of friction between Jews and Arabs in mixed cities," (Ibid.) but it was not assessed as an intelligence warning.

In contrast to the Second Intifada, when the ISA had made a specific assessment of the possibility of riots breaking out, the May 2021 riots were a complete surprise.

The State Comptroller reported (2022) that the Director General of the ISA said in a discussion that took place after the May 2021 events: "We must say honestly that we did not foresee the outbreak, neither the scope of the participants nor the intensity of the violence that developed by the Israeli Arabs." In that discussion it was apparently stated that the "ISA unit responsible for the coverage of the Israeli Arabs failed to provide a warning about the outbreak before

the events began. The phenomenon that led to the outbreak was not surprising. However, the surprise was reflected in the outbreak's scope and intensity and the characteristics of the attacks. At this point, the ISA's unpreparedness for the scenario that materialized in the events of May 2021 was clearly visible."

Contrary to the observation by the Inspector General of the Israeli Police, who said, "No one predicted the riots in the mixed cities—neither the police nor the ISA and not the IDF" (Levi and Ilani, 2022), the Director General of the ISA said: "We understood that the area was unstable. We recognized the trends, but we thought that the direction we were heading was individual terrorist attacks and not a wide outbreak of nationalist riots."

> The trusted bodies of Israeli internal security—mainly the ISA but also the police—were taken completely by surprise with the riots and violence in the mixed cities in May 2021. As a result, there was no prepared plan for dealing with them.

The remarks by the General Director of the ISA made it look as if there was some intelligence before the eruption of the May 2021 riots—that may be termed "weak signals"—that were not fully understood as alarming. "Weak signals" are fragments of relevant information received by the agency. However, the organization does not recognize them as a warning because of their weak magnitude or because of the noise and the information congestion around them. When they are received, their importance is not recognized and they therefore do not spur further organizational action (Schoemaker and Day, 2009).

The Unique Challenges of Early Warning

It is impossible to ignore the fact that important conclusions of the Or Commission after the Second Intifada (2000), which contained proposals for improvements in a variety of areas related to the Arab sector in Israel, were never implemented. The Israeli government ignored the Commission's report as though they believed that the occurrence of the Second Intifada had been exceptional and was unlikely to happen again. The result was that the ISA was caught off guard again.

According to Yehezkel Dror, a leading Israeli political science strategist (Dror, 2022), the reasons for the blindness of internal security bodies, especially the ISA, is rooted primarily in ongoing intelligence that depends on indicative signals of what may happen shortly. This contrasts strategic intelligence, which, according to Dror, should be included in any assessment. It goes deeper into the study of historical processes and their causes and produces dynamic assessments, even for the long term. Dror's assessment coheres with the critique by the State Comptroller of the ISA's failure to understand the potential threat to Israel's internal security as a result of the mood change and increasing alienation among Arab Israelis (State Comptroller, 2022).

The lack of awareness of the possibility of a flare-up in the mixed cities after the Hamas attack on Israel and the start of Operation "Guardian of the Walls" explains, to some extent, the belated understanding that the riots had severe subversive implications, the police's slow response and the delayed arrival of the ISA on the scene.

The trusted bodies of Israeli internal security—mainly the ISA but also the police—were taken completely by surprise with the riots and violence in the mixed cities in May 2021. As a result, there was no prepared plan for dealing with them. It should be added that academic studies indicating the increasing adaptation of the Arab minority to Israeli citizenship had not mentioned the possibility of violent riots (Hadad Haj-Yichia, 2021). However, other available intelligence has indicated that other publications on the Arab sector described an intense situation (State Comptroller, 2022).

It is possible to look at this event and the ISA's delayed response from another angle: the difficulty in detecting weak signals in the absence of precise early warnings. These signals include discrete searches for radical websites, interest in violent local riots, new radical connections, widening criticism of the government, etc. Such signs alone could not be interpreted as an immediate actionable threat. They could not predict unexpected damage without support from solid intelligence indicators such as extremely violent discourse in social media or violent intentions, which were missed.

In an article that explores the best way to detect weak signals and avoid strategic surprises, "Forecasting for Intelligence Analysis: Scenarios to Abort Strategic Surprises," the authors Barnea and Meshulach (Barnea and Meshulach, 2020) suggest using the methodology of scenarios to clarify and interpret weak signals. The article explores how to prepare organizations to be alert to possible strategic surprises and enable them to prepare for them in advance. Key topics include the following:

a. How do we gather intelligence and examine weak signals that can prefigure and anticipate a threat?

b. How can we survey relevant areas to study such signs?

c. How can we build prevention scenarios?

d. How can high-level discussions about these scenarios be conducted, utilizing the involvement of external and unbiased experts?

e. How and when should you decide to create/ not create a threat alert?

The authors propose scenario methodology and show how using what they call "surprise-preventing scenarios" could constitute an important added-value tool to an organization's intelligence toolbox and should, therefore, be seriously considered.

In addition to detecting weak signals and correctly interpreting them, which is the responsibility of the ISA, the Israeli government needs to keep in mind the ideas that are important to its Arab citizens—ideas that seemed to have triggered the May 2021 Riots. Even though the economic situation of Israeli Arabs and their welfare services are far better than those of the Palestinian Arabs in the Palestinian Authority and most Arab countries, Israeli Arabs know that they are discriminated against compared to Jews. They feel that they are belittled and hated. In addition to this, the legislature has passed laws that diminish their equality, such as The Nation-State Law of the Jewish People (2018). This law specifies certain rights that are granted only to the Jewish people, such as the right to self-determination and the right to return. The problem is what the law leaves out: it excludes minorities, omits equality, ignores democracy and the Declaration of Independence, and undermines the fragile balance of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state (Fuchs and Navot, 2023).

The hostility toward Israel of Palestinian elements such as Hamas, the memory of the two Intifadas, and especially the terrorist acts that have harmed many Jews, add to the reasons for the discrimination of Israeli Arabs and hatred towards them. Jews feel less secure as a result of the terrorist incidents (Shuker, 2022). The reasons for discrimination are also religious. For example, Jewish rabbis and clerics openly call for the discrimination of Arabs and do not allow them to live alongside Jews (Nachshoni, 2010).

Regarding the May 2021 riots, it is important to ask: What kind of strategic surprise did Israel face? The information gathered shows that no organized effort stood behind the Arab rioters in 2021, similar to the Second Intifada in 2000 and also the First Intifada in 1987 (Lustick, 1993). The surprise, then, of May 2021 can be defined as a type of diffused surprise (Barnea, 2019) that started in East Jerusalem and expanded into the mixed cities of Israel as a spontaneous phenomenon that developed gradually, mainly through social media, as a popular protest against Israel. The ISA found this phenomenon challenging to tackle because they could not

identify any leaders or organizations directing the activity and could not halt them. This situation precisely fits the definition of diffused surprise.

Intelligence agencies know that surprises can occur but are deeply frustrated when they fail to see the disasters they should have anticipated (Watkins and Bazerman, 2003). Watkins and Bazerman (2003) present a model for better scanning and claim that, "In studying predictable surprises that have taken place in business and government, we have found that an organization's inability to prepare for them can be traced to three kinds of barriers: psychological, organizational, and political. Executives might not be able to eliminate those barriers entirely, but they can take practical steps to lower them substantially." The authors note that these failures arise from breakdowns in recognition, prioritization, and mobilization. The failure to act at any of these three stages will leave organizations vulnerable, as seems to have happened in this event. Effective prevention of surprises requires first, the study of potential changes that may risk the internal stability of a state to be recognized early. Then, once they have been identified, they must be given high priority. The third stage is to mobilize the organization's resources, look deeply into the indicators, and decide if any action must be taken.

Conclusions

According to the State Comptroller (2022), in the months leading up to the Guardian of Walls operation and surrounding events, the ISA recognized increasing tension in the Arab sector and even the possibility of an outbreak, including in the mixed cities. However, this was not considered as an intelligence warning. The ISA's assessment was that the events would be purely local, with the main emphasis on Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, the ISA could have improved the chances of not being caught by surprise. The agency could have warned the government

of a severe situation called "strategic notice" (Omand, 2010), meaning to warn the government that there were security developments of which it needed to be aware. This was not done as the ISA did not anticipate the outbreak. It looks as if it did not learn the lessons from the internal unrest of October 2000, which began with demonstrations by Islamic elements at the holy site of the Muslims, Al-Aqsa, in Jerusalem and then spilled over the Green Line into Israel.

Assuming that in similar cases in the future, there may be no specific intelligence indicators of the development of an internal threat with extremely subversive characteristics but only weak signals, the great challenge is to understand deep social processes, read correctly the moods of a large minority, and identify, in a timely way, changes that may indicate the brewing of a storm. The centrality of Jerusalem in Arab/Palestinian national consciousness and identity is a delicate subject that must be addressed.

Monitoring a large minority who have felt alienated from the State of Israel, have not been satisfied with their status and could possibly take action leading to subversion, was defined by law as the responsibility of the ISA. The ISA's challenge is knowing when and how the outbreak will happen.

While intelligence organizations are expected to warn senior government executives about risks to internal stability as a result of subversive activity, this seems highly challenging when related to events that present only weak signals that are not fully understood, which is what happened in the eruption of the May 2021 riots in Israel.

Based on an analysis of the widespread riots of the Israeli Arabs in May 2021, the ISA is now expected to develop new capabilities that will help it identify timely changes in the moods of a targeted population, such as the Israeli Arabs. As a result of this case study, it is reasonable to assume that a warning about potential riots will not come from one "golden" piece of intelligence that will indicate the intentions

of radical groups among the Arab population to act against the government. However, it will be a gradual, diffused development that may explode without advanced warning. It will need exceptional analytical capabilities to identify changes in internal dynamics in the moods of minority crowds, alienated from the state, particular indicators to identify these changes and the drivers that may indicate when such changes may lead to violent subversive actions that threaten national security.

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Towards Peace Education in the Middle East and North Africa: A Pan-Abrahamic View

Eldad J. Pardo and Yonatan Negev

This paper is dedicated to the future of education in the Middle East and North Africa, with a focus on the place of Israel and the Israeli and Palestinian curricula. We assume that a major cause of hostility toward Israel is legitimacy deficit and radicalism across the region. Addressing ethnocultural diversity and acknowledging aspirations for regional unity widespread among radicals and moderates alike, will chart new horizons and alleviate animosity. Culminating with the Abraham Accords, the most serious plan to date for regional reconciliation, the Abrahamic discourse opens the gates to welcoming Israel into a family of Islamic-Arab nations. A 'Pan-Abrahamic' view in education, where Israel must seek to position itself as an inseparable element in the region, addresses the longing for legitimacy and regional unity. We suggest that the Abrahamic discourse is critical for deradicalizing the Palestinian and other curricula and for helping Israel to synchronize the voices of its four conflicting education systems. While Islam and the Arabic language will remain the cultural axis of this region, educational systems should support the revival of the cosmopolitanism and efflorescence which had been its hallmark in former times.

Keywords: Education, Deradicalization, MENA, Incitement. Abraham Accords, Abrahamism, National Identity, Islam, Periodization, Narratives, Cultural Policies, Islamism, Israel, Minorities, Race, Palestinians, the Day After

Introduction: Regional Core Education and the Abrahamic Discourse

The purpose of this article is to explore promising directions for a shared core education in the Middle East and North Africa. We argue that the future of education across the MENA region must revolve around a vision of peace and prosperity that emanates from our *common civilization and history*. Without a shared vision for our future

that is clear, appealing, accepted, and taught in some detail across the region, peace seeking countries will lack the moral backbone to justify the struggle for a better region. Considerations of economy, security, and practical concerns are compelling only when grounded in a broader philosophical perspective.

The need for educational cooperation was recognized already in the Egypt–Israel

peace treaty of 1979 and the danger of hate and incitement in education has become apparent at least since the Oslo Agreements. Furthermore, since the early 1980s, Iran's aggressive penetration in the Arab world has exploited divisions within national identities, which have been shaped by their respective education systems. More urgency was added with the second Intifada, the 11/9 attacks, the post Arab Spring civil wars leading to the emergence and decline of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and the Turkish-Kurdish conflagration of 2015. Recently, the October 7 attack and its aftermath brought to the forefront of public awareness the dire consequences of bad education, not only in Gaza, but also across the region and in Western academia. An uncompromising "tough-love" reform in Palestinian education is recognized by many as a *sine-qua-non* requirement for any "day after" plan aimed at preventing more horrors in the future.

The quintessential example for this sorry state of affairs is perhaps the Iraqi curriculum. Heavily influenced by the likes of Syrian-Ottoman turned Arab nationalist Sati al-Husri, Iraqi curricula since the 1920s have had a radical anti-Western and anti-Zionist bent. Serving as a tool to enforce the hegemonic ambitions of the Sunni-Arab minority, Iraqi radical education replicated itself from generation to generation, driving the country into a host of wars and violent episodes (Eppel, 1997; Baram, 2011, 2016). New research on recent editions of Iraq's textbooks reveals a pathetic picture (Bengio, 2024). Large chunks of Iraq's modern history are not even taught. Glaring omissions are the rule of Saddam Hussein and the story of Iraq's ancient Jewish community dating back at least to 586 BCE with the arrival of Jewish exiles from Jerusalem to Babylon. This curriculum, which is rife with antisemitic content, still maintains that Israel is a colonialist country and Jerusalem is an occupied city. As Iraqi young minds are directed to Jerusalem, a city having little to no significance for Shiism, the country is slowly but surely falling into Iranian

hands, as it operates a web of armed agents ready to act as a so-called "deep state" within the government or send militiamen onto the streets. One can only imagine how Iraq could have looked today had there been a century of patriotic education committed to open society, respect for minorities, and peace.

Many of the issues we examine emerged while writing our recently published review of the portrayal of Jews and Israel in Muslim and Arab Textbooks in the MENA region, Indonesia and Azerbaijan (Negev & Pardo, 2024). Studying a wide array of curricula, we predictably realized that significant differences divide the textbooks of the region's main two camps, the moderate and the radical (or *fundamentalist-regressive*). There is also a third camp, consisting of the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Qatar and Turkey whose curricula contain a mixture of liberal elements and Islamist expansionism. The camps differ over strategies to bring the region together: from a totalitarian-rejectionist approach aimed at transforming the region and beyond into a militaristic superpower, on the one hand, to an alliance of tolerant countries focused on peace and prosperity, on the other. Support for the Palestinians, which among the radicals entails the elimination of Israel, forms a litmus test for these conflicting visions because, as shown in the above Iraqi example, it remains a symbol of Arab or Islamic unity.

Significantly, however, there are also regional commonalities that may serve as a foundation for a universal core education that could be attractive, even to those societies now living under the Iranian yoke. Perhaps most important of all is the dream of regional unity, given a common conception of MENA or Southwest Asia as a unique civilizational center strategically located between the West and the East. Having said that, the national identities charted by curricula throughout the region are not sufficiently inclusive of important minorities, including Israel but also Kurds, Armenians, Druze, Copts, Alevis, Amazigh, Assyrians and Greeks. Conversely, all

regional curricula emphasize national pride, loyalty to the leadership, citizenship, and local heritage and depictions of real or invented ancient traditions are commonplace. Islamism has failed to root out nationalism, especially in Iran and Turkey but also among the Arabs, recruiting it instead as another mantle for its endless expansionism. To various degrees, all the curricula omit embarrassing parts of the past, and self-criticism is rare and partial at best.

<div align="center">*</div>

For a future core curriculum in the region to succeed, it must therefore subscribe to these dreams of unity, glory and power and, at the same time, impart deep commitment to national sovereignty, peace, tolerance, a culture of open dialogue, curiosity, a high degree of personal freedoms and mutual respect. While providing future students with cutting edge schooling in the arts and sciences, core-education textbooks should address the challenges faced by every country and social group in the region. Combined, they will strive to develop a unique and workable alternative in handling humankind's moral and material challenges.

We believe the Abrahamic discourse is our best hope for any future educational regional vision. Indeed Ofir Winter's seminal book highlights that this very discourse has spanned at least five decades, and has enabled past Muslim Arab peace efforts that have ultimately culminated in the Abraham Accords and the regional reconciliation they bring (Winter, 2022). Nevertheless, the educational dimension of the Abrahamic discourse still awaits much deliberation and development.

Curriculum overhaul is critical for any serious effort to end the perennial state of violence and state failures in the region. Thus, a shared regional core education imbuing common values may not only help participating countries to peacefully cooperate among themselves, but also to overcome internal conflicts and social justice issues, and in so doing dramatically enhance the wellbeing of their citizens and

their allies near and far. Finally, it can provide the much-needed clarity of mind to resist the danger of radical Islamism.

We therefore suggest a regional "pan-Abrahamic" prism, which will grant the Jewish state the indigenous-familial status it needs and deserves.

An agreed-upon and meticulously planned educational method based on the Abrahamic discourse could win the hearts and minds of the great majority of Muslims, Sunni and Shiite alike, for peace and coexistence. From the Israeli perspective, it may herald a strategic turning point by solving the nation's double majority-minority identity challenge (accommodating a Jewish majority that is a regional minority and a large Arab minority within the country). We therefore suggest a regional "pan-Abrahamic" prism, which will grant the Jewish state the indigenous-familial status it needs and deserves, while the country's commitment to an essentially Arab-Muslim project will allow all Israeli citizens to practice their patriotic attachment to the state, defend it against rejectionism and take it to new level of prosperity and cultural achievement. If successful regionally, pan-Abrahamism could project a positive moderating influence on Europe and the West at large, which have become in recent decades important abodes of Islam in their own right.

While portrayal of Jews and Israel is the central theme of this article, we approach it here as a case study that reflects the wider regional issue of majority-minority relations. The article includes two parts, one explains the logic of pan-Abrahamic education, and the other focuses on Israel as a case study with some attention also given to the urgent issue of Palestinian education.

Beyond this article, two more discussions are also needed to develop a regional core education. One is to handle all majority-minority relationships in the region at large

with a historical perspective that acknowledges cultural contributions from various historical layers (as will be discussed below). The other should be to synthesize a forward-looking perspective assuming that this region, with its way of thinking and doing business, can offer a unique contribution and role on global issues.

PART ONE –
Why Pan-Abrahamism?

The Identity Challenge: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

The challenge of national identity and the longing for regional unity are not new and are not specific to education. In his 2006 seminal article, "Who Am I? The Identity Crisis in The Middle East," P. R. Kumaraswamy explains that while none of the countries of the Middle East are homogeneous, "these states have been unable to define, project, and maintain a national identity that is both inclusive and representative." (Kumaraswamy, 2006, p. 63)

> The problem is universal. Whether they are democracies (Israel and Turkey), evolving democracies (Iraq and Palestinian areas), republican regimes (Egypt, Syria ,and Algeria), quasi-liberal monarchies (Jordan and Bahrain), or Islamic regimes (Iran), the region suffers from the inability to recognize, integrate, and reflect its ethnocultural diversity. Without exception, all the Middle Eastern states have tried to impose an identity from above. Whether ideological, religious, dynastical, or power-centric, these attempts have invariably failed and have often resulted in schism and sectarian tensions.

The Middle Eastern state, often seen as a Western innovation, has faced repeated challenges by competing groups at home and cross-regional ideologies (Ben-Dor, 2006). Religious and ethno-cultural divides traverse many countries, and the tribal-clan structure remains a powerful factor in regional politics and social processes (Baram, 1997; Tapper, 1983; Rabi, 2016; Alon, 2021). As national curricula aim at securing the loyalty of most if not all citizens to homeland and regime, they must grapple with competing identities—both internal *and* regional—, and much is missing or misrepresented.

What are the solutions offered by education systems across the region to the national-identity problem described in Kumaraswamy's article? Clearly, each country's curriculum presents its own identity first, which entails reference to pre-Islamic cultures, and some allusion to minorities. Ancient local cultures such as Phoenician, Canaanite, Babylonian and Pharaonic are often Arabized or otherwise embraced as part of the national heritage, emphasizing primordial elements of race, lineage, or roots. Some discourse about democracy or other means of legitimacy is also included, alongside the commitment of the leadership to global and regional obligations that bolster national identities. Rallying against Israel—a substitute for actual unification and a symbol of its absence—also serves as a convenient means to consolidate identity in textbooks. Mainly in the textbooks of the radical camp, Israel is associated with Western colonialism—another common target in the crosshairs of the region's curricula. Textbooks also resort to longing for past empires and nurture direct and indirect aspirations for reuniting the region, drawing inspiration from various eras in its history.

While historiographical periodizations (and, in our case, their projection into the future) are perforce arbitrary, they are nevertheless useful for a broad brush understanding of historical processes and narratives. There are four main, apparently unifying visions in the curricula, constituting a periodization of four historical layers:

1. Ethnic or racial imperialism (Pan-Turkic, Pan-Iranian, Pan-Arab, Pan-Kurdish)[1] drawing

on the pre-Islamic/pre-Monotheistic era (assuming that Abraham is the first Muslim);[2]

2. Neo-Islamic-traditional visions (Neo-Ottoman, Wahhabi-Tawhidi in Saudi Arabia);

3. Modernist/Islamist visions (popular war or *resistance*, Iranian-Khomeinist, Muslim Brotherhood), which can be understood as a *fundamentalist-regressive* reaction to the failure of modernization in the region (Lewis, 2002) (in which we include the region's tumultuous experiences of granting equal citizenship to non-Muslims,[3] decline, colonialism, and cultural renaissance followed by the rise of the supremacist ultra-nationalist and Islamist movements including Jihadi Salafists such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS).

4. As will be elaborated in the next section, gradually budding is a fourth imagined future "unity," largely predicated on the Abrahamic peace discourse. This imagined regional future, which we call the "Abrahamic Age," is essentially Arab-Islamic in character, inspired by classic Islamic golden ages such as the Abbasid empire, and tends to adopt a maritime vision of global trade, peace and prosperity.[4]

The above four-layer periodization of the region's history can serve as a matrix for examining the curricula's attitudes toward "other" countries or minorities. The tension between the Arab world and Israel may be seen as one, indeed a conspicuous example, of the myriad tensions and conflicts in this area. According to some, Israel represents a stumbling block for Islamist unity. An Iranian textbook explains that the "continuation of Israel's existence and activity gives the Zionists the guarantee that if a powerful Islamic state is ever established in this region, Israel will confront it and be able to stop their influence."[5] Most curricula, however, appear to prefer a loose collaborative unity that is not the "powerful Islamic state," imagined by Khomeinist Iran.

Hate toward Israel and the Jews emanates from the first three historical layers. The Jews

The Arab and Iranian textbooks often present the Jews of Arabia as a treacherous group, collaborating with the enemies of the believers.

or "Israelites" are among those pre-Islamic and even pre-ḥanīfi (Abraham's monotheism, according to the Qur'an) tribes rejected by Islam, perpetually regarded as "others." The textbooks' presentation of other minorities and remnants from earlier ages varies from significant (Amazigh in Morocco; Kurds in Iraq; Circassians in Jordan; Copts in Egypt) to minimal (Kurds and Alevis in the Turkish curriculum; Azerbaijanis and Baluchis in Iran; Sabians and Yazidis in Iraq) to almost denial and distortion (Armenians and Greeks in the Turkish curriculum; pre-Islamic customs in Saudi Arabia; Kurds and Nusayris in Syria). Paradoxically, the Israelites are accepted as the spring of monotheism, but the curricula are hard pressed to see them as an indigenous culture still alive today, manifesting in modern Judaism, Zionism, and Israel. The idea of Israel stands in sharp conflict with claims of a Palestinian national continuity in history, which identifies "Arab" Canaanites as the original inhabitants of the land. For example, Palestinian students learn that "Jerusalem is an Arab city built by our Arab ancestors thousands of years ago,"[6] since "the Arab Canaanites were the first to settle in Palestine."[7] A similar problem is faced by the Jordanian curriculum regarding Israelite tribes east of the Jordan river: the Moabites are considered Arab immigrants[8] and the Mesha Stele is described without referring to its language [quasi-Biblical Hebrew] or the tribe of Gad.[9] It is not unlikely that under the right conditions, this enchantment with ancient ancestors could flip from brute competition into a shared passion. A Saudi textbook already takes a milder tone claiming that "Palestine has been Arab land since the Semitic migrations from the Arabian Peninsula"[10] and that "the Muslims allowed the Jews to live in Palestine as citizens under Islamic sovereignty."[11]

As regards the second age or layer of classic Islamic order, the Arab and Iranian textbooks often present the Jews of Arabia as a treacherous group collaborating with the enemies of the believers. It is true that there is a tiny but growing community of Muslims who believe that Zionism is perfectly commensurate with Islam, namely that the Land of Israel is the Jewish homeland (Palazzi, 2010; Dana, 2014; Hänel, 2023; Shofar, 2024). Indeed two new Hebrew books have been published, both claiming—based on numerous conversations with Muslim Arabs—that there is a clear distinction in the region's "local knowledge" between Jews, who are viewed as inherently evil and undeserving of independence, and Israelites, to whom the Quran promises an auspicious return to their homeland (Yemini, 2023; Bareli, 2024). A call to consider Israeli Jews as Israelites—and to follow in their footsteps as the quintessential people of the East—was already articulated by the Iranian proto-Islamist Jalal Al-e Ahmad in the early 1960s (Pardo, 2004; Al-e Ahmad, 2017).But these views are not yet to be found in the curricula, except for some echoes in Turkish educational materials. The preponderate popular portrayal of Islamic civilization in the textbooks is one of glory and tolerance, within which there is some recognition of cultural roles played by the "People of the Book."[12]

Much of the anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish polemic belongs with the Modern Age third layer. To invoke the words of antisemitism expert Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, an "interconnectedness of hatred" allows hateful discourse on one subject to seamlessly feed into other related but independent topics. In other words, antisemitic content directed at Jews on the one hand, becomes entangled with content against Israel on the other, and vice versa (Miltz, 2022). The renaissance of the Jewish nation is generally associated in the region's textbooks with Western imperialism, criminalizing Israel as a colonial-settler entity, and describing it as an evil occupying regime which should be eradicated. Except for Morocco and to a degree also Turkey and Azerbaijan, local Jewish communities and their fate are largely ignored, even in a country such as Iraq in which the Jewish community is much older than Islam and Arabism.

In this article, we pin our hopes for better education on the Abrahamic Age; i.e., the slow reconciliation process with Israel that seems to have become the strategic choice for several Arab countries since the mid-1970s.[13]

A Budding Abrahamic Age: Islamic and Inclusive

As the curricula plainly show, Middle Eastern countries are still tightly attached to overarching regional narratives. The Ottoman Empire is gone, but the thirst for a large and powerful global hub in this part of the world is widespread in the curricula, taking various shapes and forms. We believe therefore that a solid and convincing regional vision, embracing all, and ideally expressed in all the curricula, is not beyond reach. Under such a vision, members of minorities and majorities will have the reassuring feeling of belonging to an inclusive and benevolent worldview, one which fosters Emile Durkheim's concepts of "common consciousness" and "pre-contractual" solidarity (Dwairy, 2006; Naji, 2014; Grosbard, 2014; Ilai, 2022).[14] The importance of peace and tolerance standards notwithstanding, they are nonetheless abstract and context-dependent ideas which lack the adhesive qualities of commonality and solidarity.[15] In the pioneering spirit of the Abraham Accords, it is our belief that such an adhesive may be found in the familial connection to the figure of Abraham.

The core of this familial vision—common ancestry—is stated in the Abraham Accords, the most serious plan to date that lays the common ground for regional cooperation. While peace agreements with Israel are bilateral, they include a regional perspective that reflects the existence of a meaningful regional identity.

> Recognizing that the Arab and Jewish peoples are descendants of a common ancestor, Abraham, and inspired, in that spirit, to foster in the Middle East a reality in which Muslims, Jews, Christians and peoples of all faiths, denominations, beliefs and nationalities live, and are committed to a spirit of coexistence, mutual understanding and mutual respect. (Abraham Accords, 2020, p. 1)

The Accords accept the centrality of Abraham as the "common ancestor of the Arab and Jewish peoples." Abraham in Islamic heritage is the quintessential monotheist (ḥanīf), a prefiguration of Muhammad who is seen as bringing monotheism back to the purity of Abraham's ideal (Levenson, 2012, p. 105).[16]

In every single prayer, five times a day, Muslims ask Allah to send his blessings upon the prophet Abraham and his family (Habib, 2013). Students in the Arab world learn about the various roles of Adam, as "father of all humanity"; Abraham, as "father of the prophets"; and Moses, as "prophet sent by Allah to the Children of Israel" (Pardo, 2023, p. 6). The figure of Abraham has been decisive in explaining peace to Egyptian, Jordanian, and Emirati elites. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's 1977 historical speech in the Knesset coincided with Eid al-Adha, the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice in which Abraham is the central figure. Sadat not only referred to Abraham, "the great-grandfather of the Arabs and Jews," but also to his spiritual power and readiness to "sacrifice his very own son." Sadat called both sides of the conflict to repent, assume responsibility and adhere to justice and truth. His discourse was "Abrahamic" or regional, going beyond a separate peace to fully recognizing Israel: "we welcome you among us [the Arabs], with full security and safety" (Sadat, 1977). Israeli textbooks quoted King Hussein's speech during the signing of the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty saying: "Jordanians, Israelis, Arabs, Palestinians—all

of them are children of Abraham."[17] A general agreement has developed in recent decades over the commonality of Abraham, even if traditionally this figure meant different things to different faiths; and a host of interfaith movements such as the Tariqa Ibrahimiyya, the Israeli Sufi Way, have emerged (Elkayam, n.d.; Abrahamic Reunion, n.d.).

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Hence, Jews and Arabs (Christians and Muslims alike) are connected ethnically, sharing one father, and religiously, as sharing one founding prophet. The Accords unabashedly invite "Muslims, Jews, Christians and peoples of all faiths, denominations, beliefs and nationalities" to live together in a spirit of coexistence, mutual understanding and mutual respect (which may be understood as equality) (Abaraham Accords, 2020, p. 1). The Accords are dramatically more liberal and open-ended than the openly-Islamic Ottoman system under which Theodore Herzl, David Ben Gurion and others envisaged the Jewish national home to exist (Friedman, 1977, pp. 101-100),[18] as well as that of non-liberal Muslim-majority Indonesia, where monotheism is enforced.[19] It is, however, similar to these examples in the sense that it offers an *Islamically-initiated* substitute for the original Arab-Islamic Caliphate. Arguably, it mainly aims at placing the Islamic world closer to the Western Judeo-Christian world by mitigating the medieval Islamic anti-Jewish invective, weaving in commonalties instead.[20]

This vision, which we call "Pan-Abrahamic," may allow for genuine diversity without threatening the sovereignty and patriotic feelings of people in the countries forming the regional framework. The way forward in terms of how Israel and Jews are depicted should

be charted based on the aspiration for the promotion of a new regional unity-agreement, alongside other cross-regional visions (such as the Islamic Nation, Arabism, pan-Turkism, pan-Kurdism, the Mediterranean or Levantine commonality and the solidarity of humankind at large) or nationally-specific visions for each country and leadership. A combination of a Pan-Abrahamic vision with countries' national, minority and tribal identities, and other cross-regional affiliations, will also address and embrace the cultural mosaic emanating from the three main historical layers described above (pre-Islamic, Islamic, Modern).

The pan-Abrahamic paradigm therefore suggests a quantum leap from Egypt and Jordan's cold-peace with Israel, in which normalization with an independent Jewish-Zionist state remains a cause for embarrassment. Even so, as demonstrated by Ofir Winter, the Abrahamic discourse has been pivotal in Egyptian, Jordanian and Emirati pro-peace campaigns to shift from rivalry to normalization with Israel. Winter laments that Israel is yet to *fully embrace* the discourse "as a fundamental component of its national ethos and policy priorities," actively fostering its domestic acceptance (Winter, 2023, p. 30). Our findings on Israeli curricula confirm this observation regardless of the pro-peace attitude of the textbooks, but also suggest that Abrahamic discourse does not permeate Arab curricula. The latter may be related to the ongoing Islamist anti-Abrahamic discourse, also noted by Winter, insisting on the supremacy of the Muslims and warning of a Zionist "plot to create a new religion called 'al-Ibrahimiyya (Abrahamism),' which would subsume all three monotheistic religions and harm Muslims" (Winter, 2023, pp. 29-28). Intellectual and theological answers for this "new religion" argument abound.[21] Still, properly measured Pan-Abrahamism in education remains our best hope, because taken together it is largely an *Arab-Islamic initiative* addressing the need for familial attachment and regional togetherness, and welcomed by

non-Muslims. Nevertheless, the fundamentalist curricula are still a long way from embracing the pan-Abrahamic vision and will require great efforts and much convincing. For example, a Qatari Islamic-Studies textbook repeating the "Arab-Canaanites" refrain also places a six-century gap between the Jews and Abraham, while still recognizing ancient Jewish presence in the Land of Israel and associating between the Israelites and Abraham.[22]

The Abrahamic discourse is less familiar, but extremely relevant, to the Palestinian issue. Hillel Cohen explains that the discourse that has developed in Fatah and the left-wing Palestinian camps, was from the beginning an anti-colonial discourse. Despising Zionism, it presented the Jews as insidious foreigners in the land, making it difficult for these movements to justify a reconciliation process with Israel, even following the Oslo Accords. However, local Palestinians who initiated the Village Associations movement in 1977 aimed at a two-states-for-two-peoples vision via close cooperation, coexistence, and relationship on the basis of common ancestry between these two peoples sharing one country. According to Jamil El-ʿImleh, one of the heads of the Associations: "This land does not belong to Israel alone nor to the Palestinians. It is a land of both peoples. . . We are all sons of our father Abraham" (Cohen, 2014, p. 277; Carmon, 2016). This example demonstrates that the Abrahamic discourse of brotherhood is deeply rooted on a popular level and critical for a genuine Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation. And even now, as war is raging, the Abrahamic discourse remains a beacon of hope for peace lovers (Higuera & Basch-Harod, 2024). In a March 2024 interfaith meeting between local Jews and Muslims in the West Bank, the Muslim side reiterated that: "You know, Islam, Judaism, Christianity—we all believe in one religion. All follow the religion of the prophet Abraham, who 'was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah's (which is Islam), and he joined not gods with Allah.'" (Qur'an, Sura Ali-Imran 3:67, trans. Yusuf Ali) (Ben Shalom, 2024).

PART TWO – Israel's Regional Integration as a Case Study for Abrahamic Education

We have dedicated a separate article to mapping the negative and positive elements in educational attitudes toward Israel in our region (Negev & Pardo, 2024). The main question one must ask when looking at the gaps that exist in teaching about Israel and the Jews is what *vision* these curricula try to impart and what could make anti-Israeli teaching out of place and embarrassing.

The salient anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish material in the region's curricula, we speculate, are a manifestation of the radicals' need to conceal the difficulties faced by these countries to articulate a workable national identity, alongside their professed sympathy with the Arab-Muslim Palestinians, typically presented as victims of Jewish "aggression." The obsession with the Palestinian cause is a central theme in the rhetoric of the radical curricula, and while rallying against the people of Israel—a regional minority group—may create the semblance of unity, it in fact subverts regimes from developing functioning open societies of their own. According to such curricula, a powerful Israel epitomizes the weakness of Arabs and Muslims, their disunity, and the unhappy return to the fore of a traditionally weak and subdued pre-Islamic force. While the Jews are acknowledged at times as providing the infrastructure for the rise of Islam, this undeserving indigenous people has become an invader settler-colonialist. Thus, in their obsession with blaming the Jews, Israel, and Western Colonialism for the plights of the Middle East, the radical countries take no responsibility for developing their own societies and thereby diminish their own agency.

As things stand now, even in moderate countries, anti-Israel and anti-Jewish teaching can be interpreted as a battle cry to invoke patriotic or religious sentiment among Muslims or the Arab nation. We believe that this emanates to a considerable degree from the challenge of legitimizing and consolidating the diverse, often competing identities into a functioning state identity, as described by Kumaraswamy. This is particularly true in countries like Iran, where the curriculum fails to recognize the cultural contributions of non-Persian and non-Shiite minorities, and even more so neglects the basic freedoms of the predominantly secular and non-revolutionary segments of society (Bayat, 2007, pp. 135-16; Monishpouri & Zamiri, 2023). A lack of tolerance characterizes other radical groups and Iran-proxy party-militias within failed states. The pro-Muslim Brotherhood regimes of Turkey and Qatar play a double-game. Both are important hubs of anti-Israeli incitement. Both actively subvert their neighbors' stability, ruthlessly undermining basic human rights at home. Their curricula, particularly that of Qatar, largely written by Muslim Brotherhood affiliates, but also the Turkish Imam Hatip curriculum, reflect a duality: While the curricula are essentially nationalistic, these two regimes simultaneously advance educational agendas that include anti-nationalist and ultra-nationalist messaging (Negev & Winter, 2023).

Pan-Abrahamic education will facilitate a straightforward representation of Israel and the Jewish people by addressing the challenge of inclusive national identity. It embraces the widespread yearning for unity in the region while also paving the way for genuine and secure diversity in each country, making it fully legitimate. This will indirectly strengthen each country's national identity, improve regime legitimacy and open the gates for gradual democratization. The curricula will draw on all four historical layers discussed above, allowing for free expression of the existing tribal, ethnoreligious, and cultural imprints they create. The proper educational attitude will save Israel's potential partners the hefty price of keeping their cooperations with Israel "under the radar" ((Schonmann, 2013; Jones & Guzanski, 2017; Podeh, 2022). In fact, as we have shown in part one of this article, the Abrahamic discourse has accompanied

Israel's peace treaties with Egypt, Jordan and the Emirates (Winter, 2022). In any event, unity that includes Israel has the advantage that it guarantees the independence of participating countries (while other unities such as those offered by Islamists, pan-Turks, pan-Iranians, and formerly pan-Arabs required the hegemony of one country over the rest).

As a relatively small country and as a non-Muslim one, Israel has neither the ambition nor ability to lead, yet it can tip the balance to help the "moderate camp" to block hegemonic dreams of the "radical camp." Such loose unity corresponds with the self-perception of many Israelis as members of a cosmopolitan people having no hegemonic ambitions in the region. Hence the great potential of the fourth "Abrahamic Age" and the promise it brings to welcome Israel to the region's family of nations. The discussion below presents the case study of Israel as it may ideally be presented within regional core education, how Israel itself could benefit by applying this curriculum at home as it tries to mend the cracks in its national identity, and what to do about supremacist Palestinian education. The ideas we present do not amount to a cohesive, well-developed skeleton for a future curriculum. Instead, these are a collection of ideas and possible trajectories to pursue, reject or use as stepping-stones to better proposals.

> **The mainstream Palestinian educational vision is still bent on a violent return, both explicitly and implicitly, to an imaginary "historical Palestine."**

The Israeli case can serve as a good example for a country which could greatly benefit from the Abrahamic perspective. In the Arabic-Muslim landscape of the region, comprising roughly 20% Arab Israelis and a growing Palestinian population on its doorstep, Israel is the conspicuous element which seeks to preserve its uniqueness while still seeking to belong within the region. The upheaval that

shook the country over the proposed judicial overhaul (January–October 2023) exposed gaps in the legitimacy of the political system and a deep divide over the country's national identity. The Israeli education system comprises four main curricula—National (secular-liberal), Religious-National (Pardo, 2022b), Ultra-Orthodox/Haredim (Pardo & Gamliel, 2017), and Arab-Palestinian as a national minority (Pardo, 2022c)—which teach different, largely conflicting, visions of Israel's national identity. Two of these curricula, the Ultra-Orthodox and the Arab-Palestinian, offer only a qualified recognition of the country's declared "Jewish-Democratic" character. The differences between the four curricula notwithstanding, all four embrace Israeli democracy and share a commitment to and enthusiasm for peace and mutual respect with neighboring countries and among all the citizens.

"Pan-Abrahamic" elements already exist in Israel's Law of Education, according to which all Israeli students should become "acquainted with the language, culture, history, heritage, and unique tradition of the Arab population and other communities within the State of Israel, and to recognize the equal rights of all Israeli citizens" (State Education Law, 1953). The curricula are imbued with much Middle Eastern culture, Arabic is taught, and the history of the region's Muslims, Christians and Jews expounded. Noteworthy is the Israeli Arab-Palestinian national minority curriculum, which in some respects, such as international language teaching (Arabic, Hebrew and English), is superior to that of the majority. The students in Israel and the region should thus be aware that, beyond the Abrahamic Accords, Israel is juridically committed in other ways to regional elements of identity.[23] A discourse on Abrahamic education should awaken Israelis to the existing regional-national dimension of the state's identity and bring together its seemingly opposing poles of rootedness and liberalism. One may speculate that a regionally-agreed pan-Abrahamic educational vision would not

only help Israel's integration in the region but facilitate an *agreement at home* over identity and vision.

The Palestinian case, whose education systematically rejects the existence of Israel, can serve as another, complementary, example for the value of Pan-Abrahamic education.

But the problem is larger. The October 7 attack and its aftermath revealed a shortage in moral and character edification, let alone peace education, in the Palestinian education system. While the general Israeli educational vision can be summarized as preserving and developing a national home with a hope that one day peace will be secured (excluding extreme right-wing outlooks), the mainstream Palestinian educational vision is still bent on a violent return, both explicitly and implicitly, to an imaginary "historical Palestine," which means that the focus is on removing Israel from the map and making the territory Muslim-Arab. In the Abrahamic approach, however, Israel would be recognized as an organic element of the region's cultural, historical, and familial makeup. Under this premise, Israelis and Arab-Palestinians would be considered equally indigenous and belong to the Land of Israel/Palestine *and* the region at large. Students should be aware of the fact that the ancestors of most Jews and Palestinians alike, immigrated (in the case of Jews, made 'Aliya' or ascended) to the Land of Israel/Palestine during the last two centuries, from other parts of the region and beyond (Khalidi, 2004; Grossman, 2011; Zureik, 2016; Shpak Lissak, 2021). According to one estimate, three quarters of Israel's Muslim citizens are either immigrants or the descendants of immigrants (Pipes, 2024). In short, adopting an Abrahamic approach could lessen the perception of a binary struggle of two peoples on one tiny land, and replace it with a rich and diverse, familial-regional, panoramic view of the Abrahamic idea.

Developing a proper education system in Gaza, and hopefully for the Palestinian Authority in general, will require the consideration of

> Education about Jews and Israel in the region at large should similarly be part of the Abrahamic educational approach that embraces all the minorities and beliefs in the MENA region and considers Israel and the Jews as indigenous people sharing common ancestry and forming the central pillar of the monotheistic worldview.

three sets of guidelines. The *Abraham Accords values*, as described above, should form a first set of guidelines, with particular emphasis on the Land of Israel/Palestine as the birthplace of the conflicting peoples, with one's identity as ancient and the other's new in forming a separate national identity. The second set should outline the demands for *peace and tolerance* required by international standards. The IMPACT-se methodology (IMPACT-se, n.d.) summarizing these international standards has been applied for decades to analyze textbooks. The standards of this methodology mainly revolve about peace, tolerance, and respect for the Other in conflict situations, but also take a wider view as regards society's vision for the future and a host of other questions such as national identity, gender equality, and maintaining the prosperity of country and environment. A more focused and detailed approach to the presentation of the conflict itself, and the sides to the conflict, is Arnon Groiss' study questions for researching of societies in conflict (Groiss, n.d.). The third set of guidelines should be *character and family education*. The first thing to consider are the Wasatiya standards (Dajani, 2019), developed by Mohammed Dajani Daoudi that focus on humanistic and empathy education with an Islamic emphasis, thereby imparting "necessary knowledge and skills required to solve conflict issues and advance peace, moderation and reconciliation as responsible citizens."[24] Two other character education programs to be considered with appropriate modifications are the originally-British, Naomi and David Geffen's Loving Classroom project (Loving Classroom,

2023), successfully applied in the UK, and William Haines' *My Journey in Life*, originally written in English, translated to Russian and successfully applied in Russia in the early post-Soviet years (Haines, 2002). In 2017, an Arabic version (*riḥlatī fī al-hayāh*) was prepared for Palestinian schools by Ghassan Abdullah from CARE. Finally, character education involves a solid base in philosophy and critical thinking leading to genuine search for meaning (Kizel, 2017; Cohen & Rocklin, 2023).

More Recommendations Related to the Portrayal of Jews and Israel in MENA Curricula:

- **Education about Jews and Israel in the region at large** should similarly be part of the Abrahamic educational approach that embraces all the minorities and beliefs in the MENA region and considers Israel and the Jews as indigenous people sharing common ancestry and forming the central pillar of the monotheistic worldview. Once incitement is uprooted, educators can remedy the curricula's disregard for Jewish history—starting in ancient times, through the history of Jews in Muslim countries, their prosperity and suffering, to the double blow they sustained during the Modern Age, namely the Holocaust and the demise of communities across the Middle East and North Africa. Similarly, students should learn with appropriate documentation the long, gradual and steady move from Arab-Israeli conflict to Arab-Israeli integration (Olson, Zaga & Benger, 2024). Other stories of ethnoreligious minorities must naturally be taught as well, a subject to be thoroughly researched and discussed elsewhere.

- **Many Islamic Education textbooks are overly focused on inter-tribal military tactics and stories of martyrdom.** Martyrdom (*shahāda or istishhād*) and *Jihad*, the violent application of this early Islamic concept (originally conceived with the intent to defend Islam from extinction)

should not be promoted in the context of modern political conflicts.[25] Islamic military history may or may not be taught as part of general history of the region and the world. It may be useful to discuss whether military history is an appropriate topic for our K–12 students, given the current volatility in the region.

- **Religious studies should include the common sources of spirituality (prophets and beliefs) and interfaith relations**, such as the **Abrahamic Family House** in Abu Dhabi and the acceptance of the Quranic *Al-Fātiḥa* as a prayer text for Jews and Christians.[26] These should reference the place of Jews and Judaism in the Qur'an, and their contribution to the consolidation of the Islamic state during the early centuries and later (see for instance Meddeb, 2013; Franklin, 2014; Lecker, 2014; Bar-Asher, 2021). New research shows that biblical knowledge was widespread in Arabia, and dichotomies with Judaism, or even polytheists, were not that pronounced (Whittingham, 2021). Thus, commonalities between Islam and Judaism may be expanded and information on early Islamic conflicts between Muhammad and Jewish tribes be mentioned only briefly, if at all, and *in context.* Likewise, there is little doubt that Judaism as we know it was largely developed in close contact with Islamic civilization, not only in fields such as philosophy and mysticism, but also in grammar, religious law, as well as cultural spheres like music, liturgical poems, cuisine and the arts (Rejwan, 1998, pp. 80-48).

- **How to present Jews and Israel in an Abrahamic context?** Israel and Zionism are mostly perceived in the region, especially in school textbooks, as something between a demon or a malignant disease at worst, and a foreign entity with whose existence one has no choice but to reconcile, at best. In some cases, however, it is even regarded as a role model, and the cause of much angst, even in a peaceful context (Pardo, 2004; Shavit & Winter,

2016). In Fouad Ajami's words, Israel's post-Oslo "New Middle East" utopian peace project caused much dread, because it was seen as "a form of Israeli hegemony, *pax Hebraica*" and "a threat to all the sacred totems of Arab nationalism." So, one needs to draw the lessons and present common roots and possible contributions, but stay away from an image of, in the words of Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani, a "Middle Eastern supermarket with an Israeli chairman of the board" (Rejwan, 1998, pp. 194-193). Jews have often been famous for catering their religious, scientific, and financial knowledge to non-Jewish rulers (Gilbert, 2010).[27] Ideally, Israel should be presented as an advanced country with the capacity to help and support in a majority-Muslim region, with no interest in hegemony or proselytizing.[28] Most importantly, the Abrahamic context requires that students also learn the Israeli and Jewish story as a distinct nation, with its own unique history and civilization (Eisenstadt, 1992; Cahill, 1999; Firestone, 2001; Senor & Singer 2011; Myers, 2017; Jacobs, 2024).

- **Israel's reputation is replete with the export of its knowhow to the Third World and beyond**.[29] MENA curricula may well portray it as an inseparable part of and deeply rooted in this geographical region, a minority group within a large Arab and Islamic friendly environment, striving to improve and reform rather than to replace and destroy. At home, the majority of Arab Israelis are quite attached and incorporated into Israeli society and economy, making it even more part of the region (NAS, 2022). The same goes for Jewish refugees/Olim from the Arab and Muslim countries who, together with local Arabs form a large majority in Israel (roughly 70% of the population) (Rejwan, 1998, p. 191). This perception of Israel as part of a regional mosaic and a contributing player will endow it with "soft power," that is to say legitimacy through asserting its attractiveness to the region, and not coercion exercised over it

(Nye, 1991; Nye, 2005, p. 12). Likewise, Israel's educational policy would better paint our national vision as playing a supportive role for the Islamic majority. A pan-Abrahamic education should depict a region that is open to minorities and immigrant groups. The Gulf countries and Morocco provide a good model for such an approach, but most curricula are lacking information on this issue. Proper immigration policies and corresponding education could pave the way to the revival of Jewish communities across the region and help Israel finetune its own identity accordingly.

- **Should future curricula teach about tragedies of the past and particularly the question of rejectionism?** Dialogue is easier when we ignore contentious issues. But as much as we would like to put the past behind us, is it really possible? Should not the young generation come to terms with what Joseph Braude describes as "the century of damage wreaked by pan-Arabist and Islamist forces" (Braude, 2019, p. 142)?[30] Should they not learn to beware of the fundamentalist rejectionist countries? Also, to what extent should History, Civics, and Literature textbooks delve into the damage caused by rejectionism? Lessons on the history and plight of ethno-religious minorities may posit a causal effect between the destruction of minority groups and the hefty price paid by majorities in allowing the rise of oppressive regimes unfit for modern economy, welfare, and freedom (a few cases of such minorities are Jewish, Greek, Assyrian, Armenian,[31] Maronite, Shi'ite, Amazigh-Berbers-Imazighen,[32] Kurdish, Zaza, Nusayri, Alevi, Druze, Yazidis, Saibans, Talesh, Turkmen, Baluchi, Bahá'í, Ahmadi, and "Levantine" European immigrants among others).

- In that vein, **the Holocaust and the fate of Jewish communities in the region** must be acknowledged in the textbooks, not just out of respect for the survivors, the memory of the dead, and historic accuracy, but also out

of empathy—acknowledging a great suffering of the "other" could be a first positive step towards rapprochement. Another part of the equation is the role of Palestinian extremists, first in radicalizing Palestinian society and then the Arab world and various Islamist movements. Most curricula about Israel suffer from a dichotomous outlook on the Palestinian cause, whereupon supporting the plight of the Palestinians renders any positive reference to Israel and Zionism to be inconceivable. A more dispassionate view is that the ancestors of both sides were often forced to face historical forces largely beyond their control. To be sure, Israeli textbooks teach about the Palestinian "Nakba" and the negative consequences of the 1948 War for Palestinian Arabs, noting that "both sides got hurt," and acknowledging that there were those who "were forced from their homes and towns during the battles."[33] Arab students, however, clearly do not receive the balanced picture that they should, thus creating serious gaps in the approach to learning history and how to draw relevant lessons from it. The question of the 1948 refugees—both Arab and Jewish—should be taught in a forward-looking view. Mistakes and tragedies should not be concealed, and resentment should be replaced by a mature, empathetic, and complex view of history, with the adoption of a future-looking, morally-sound, and reconciliatory spirit.

- **Lineage and Ancestry**: Ideally, a common regional vision will educate the youth on a common outlook regarding Israel and Jews with emphasis on shared religious values and cultural roots. The region's curricula already teach racially-based common lineage and ancestry (from family and tribal affiliations or *nisba*, to belonging to the Prophet's family, to being part of the Semitic, Aryan, or Turkic race). In the Iranian curriculum, for example, the non-Persian Kurds and Azeris are "Aryanized" in the textbooks, to keep them in the fold. In the Jordanian curriculum, Hashemite,

Arab, and Semitic roots are inculcated and so is connection to the ancient "proto-Jordanians," (e.g., Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites and Nabateans). The Palestinian curriculum boasts about the Palestinians as descendants of the "Arab" Canaanites, their ancient presence in the region serving to justify their claims for the land. The assumed common Abrahamic-Semitic ancestry of Arabs and Jews could bring people together, but the pan-Abrahamic paradigm would better remain "color-blind," welcoming the "non-Semitic" Iranians, Turks, Kurds, Alevis (boasting Sumerian roots), Greeks, Armenians, Amazigh and so on. Likewise, the often-imaginary attribution made by local nationalists of descent from this or that ancient people must be contextualized as a social, historic, and political trend, and not presented as fact.

- **Less Familiar Facts about Zionism.** Students, including in Israel, are not familiar with much of the non-conflictual relations between the Jewish national movement and the Arab and Muslim majorities. Teaching such incidents of goodwill will naturally put past conflicts in perspective as avoidable and as reflecting only part of the story. As noted above, Herzl called for a tax-paying Jewish national home *within the Muslim-Ottoman Empire*, in order to save it from the collapse he anticipated (with full participation of and equal rights to local Arabs). He even ordered the manufacturing of the first industrial Arabic typing machine, which served as a prototype for generations to come.[34] Also of note is that in its first five decades, mainstream Zionism shunned military thinking (Shapira, 1992). Between 1881–1921 the majority of Jewish immigrant newcomers were refugees escaping pogroms with no nationalistic designs (Alroev, 2014; Rettig Gur, 2024). Those who did, dreamed about integration in the Levant (Milson, 1997; Harif, 2019; Evri, 2021). "Learning Arabic is a *part of Zionism*," explained German-Jewish historian Shlomo Dov Goitein in 1946, "a

part of the return to the Hebrew language and to the Semitic Orient, which today is completely Arabic-speaking. We desire that our children, when they go out into the world, will be able to feel *that they are children of the Orient and able to act within it,* just as we aspire that they do not lose the precious inheritance of European spirituality that we have brought with us" (Goitein, 1946, p. 8; Halperin, 2006). Other useful anecdotes of peace initiatives in the region include the Faisal–Weizmann Agreement, David Ben Gurion's 1930 "Shami" federation plan, the 1949 unity of Jordan and the West Bank, the various Jordan-Palestine-Israel proposals, and Sadat's historical visit to Jerusalem. Similarly, students will benefit from learning about missed opportunities for peace, secret relations between Israelis and Arabs over the years, and personal relations between Jews and Arabs (Podeh, 2015). Part of the story is also Palestinian cooperation with Israel and the contributions of Palestinians to building Israel (a sensitive subject matter still waiting for a good historian).[35]

Conclusion

To what extent can one argue that a peace culture has taken hold in Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and the Abraham Accords countries? Particularly since the October 7 attack, pessimistic experts on Islam have become even more suspicious of the idea that genuine peace between Israel and the Arab countries will ever exist. According to this view, even if peace agreements are signed, they never transcend the status of *hudna* or temporary truce with a superior enemy, and *jihad* war lurks just around the corner. The ecstatic glee that came from Muslim crowds after the massacre[36] and the enthusiastic embrace of the horrors by the Al-Azhar Institute contributed to this gloomy view (Winter & Barak, 2023). Their conclusion is that, in order to provide Muslim moderates with the Shariah justification they need to defer their *jihad* obligations, Israel must be known to cause disproportionate and

irreparable damage to any aggressor (Herrera, 2023; Sharon, 2024, Ben-Ari, 2024).

The problem, according to the pessimists, is not only that of the Islamic or Islamist worldview. Arabism, a modern ideology created by Arab Christians and Muslims, is imbued with Islamic military history, European antisemitism, and the total rejection of Israel as an alien colonial-settler entity. It seems that the majority of Arab liberal elites remain rejectionist, fiercely opposing normalization with Israel. Textbooks across the region (except for Turkey) continue to omit Israel's name on maps and refuse to teach about it. The long-term vision of destroying Israel in stages is predicated on various interchangeable models such as the early wars against the ancient Jewish tribes of Arabia; "resistance" (*muqāwama*) or anti-colonialist "popular war" by stages following the wars of Vietnam and Algeria; and, most of all, the Saladin's model of the Islamic world unified under one leader conquering the crusader-colonial state.

Time is of the essence, because urgent decisions must be taken to transform the violent and hateful education provided by the PA/Hamas/UNRWA in the West Bank and Gaza.

All the above notwithstanding, a new "Abrahamic discourse" has meanwhile emerged and is gradually pervading the Middle East and North Africa. Currently, most analysts tend to ascribe the Abraham Accords and the Israeli-Arab rapprochement mainly to widespread fears of the Ayatollahs' regime in Iran. However, the buds of the Abrahamic discourse preceded the 1978–79 Iranian revolution. We therefore argue that identity crises and local afflictions in the region indicate that there is room for an alternative regional vision, whose terminology, rhetoric, and underpinnings would not undermine other specific and regional visions. Drawing upon the spirit of the Abraham Accords, "Pan-Abrahamism" may offer such an

alternative to those radical and impractical elements of the Islamic and Arab-nationalist visions. If designed as an overarching framework that does not impinge on the legitimacy of local narratives, such as the Palestinian's right to self-determination, Israel and the Jews might very well be welcomed to the region as kindred spirits.

One of the first to grasp the direction of history and speak about Abraham in the context of peace with Israel was former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, "the Hero of War and Peace," who raised Arab-Jewish religious and ancestral ties in his historical visit to Jerusalem in 1977 (Meital, 2003, p. 150). We have shown above that Palestinians used the Abrahamic discourse even earlier and some still use it today. Taking this discourse as a guide, we attempted to offer a preliminary "pan-Abrahamic view" for peace education in the Middle East and North Africa. We believe textbooks fashion the future since they are a "sacred and living corpus," serving as a pathway for society's objectives and values (Pardo & Winter, 2024). If indeed the curriculum shows us "where society wants to be heading in the future," fashioning robust peace education should contribute to a reality of peace as students grow up (Williamson, 2013, p. 115). As time goes by, the countries of the Middle East and North Africa will develop principles for their unique community, structure, economic ties, and freedom of movement. Meanwhile, curricula fostering a "pan-Abrahamic view" should teach students that the region is an open and inclusive one, and not merely a fighting arena in which national and regional visions and narratives clash. Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Arabism, and other regional, national, tribal, and global philosophies will still be taught as part of the appropriate mix suitable for each country, lending it more legitimacy at home and in the region. Interfaith activities and dialogue, growing over the years, can provide much more material for the Pan-Abrahamic education.

Time is of the essence, because urgent decisions must be taken to transform the violent and hateful education provided by PA/Hamas/UNRWA in the West Bank and Gaza. The Abraham Accords envision a region that fosters a reality in which peoples of all faiths, denominations, beliefs, and nationalities are committed to a spirit of coexistence, mutual understanding, and mutual respect. These principles, if cautiously developed into well-calibrated "Pan-Abrahamic" curricula and educational initiatives, will impart individual countries with powerful tools to overcome their representation and social justice deficits while helping each other keep their independence, security and prosperity. This new approach may extend to new pedagogical policies of inclusive teaching about minorities and immigration, hopefully paving the way to reviving and reforming Jewish communities in the Arab-Muslim world. It may also change the balance of immigration from the region to the West and allow for smooth integration of immigrants in both directions, making the two civilizations complementary. Most of all, such education will not only make Israel a welcome member in the region but will also address a host of other conflicts, large and small, as a new generation grows up within this new educational framework and begins to lead.

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Notes

1   Prevalent in Turkey, but also in Azerbaijan, and Iran. Among the Arab curricula we examined, the Syrian is the most pan-Arab, but this idea also has significant presence in those of Jordan and the PA as well.

2   The rise of monotheism, or the "Abrahamic religions," in late antiquity is largely seen in modern scholarship as one conflicting and concurring historical process deserving a unified academic field "studying the various Judaisms, Christianities, and Islams in juxtaposition to each other." (Halft, 2020, p. 329)

3   The Ottoman Empire, in its role as the Islamic caliphate, declared Christians and Jews equal citizens of the empire in its famous 1856 reform edict (*Islâhat Hatt-ı Humâyûnu*). Interestingly, 1856 is now considered in the radicalized Palestinian curriculum, as the new beginning of Zionism (bought forward from 1917, the beginning of the "Zionist Invasion," according to the Palestinian National Charter): "Since the Zionist Movement established its first settlement known as '*Montefioriyyah*' [Mishkenot Sha'ananim] in 1856, southwest of the Jerusalem city wall, the series of divisions in Palestine has not stopped." PA – *Social Studies,* Grade 9, Vol. 1, 2017, p. 10. See also, The Palestinian National Charter (1968), Article 6. See also (Quandt, Jabber & Mosely, 1973, p. 101).

4   Examples for this perspective can be found in the various "Vision 2030" visions available in the Emirati, Saudi and Jordanian curricula. Egypt emphasized dialogue, civilization and communication among them. According to Sarah Paine "continental" powers covet conquests while "maritime" powers compound wealth. (Paine, 2021).

5   Iran – *History 3, Iran and the Modern World*, Grade 12, 2021–2022 (1400), p. 113. See (Pardo, 2022a, p. 67).

6   PA – *National Education and Socialization*, Grade 3, Vol. 1, 2016–17, p. 28. See also: Jordan: *Arab and World History,* Grade 12 (Literary Branch), 2018–19, p. 65.

7   PA – *National Education*, Grade 4, Vol. 1, 2013, p. 14. Jordan – *History of Jordan,* Grade 11, 2017–19, p. 17. Qatar – *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2020, p. 144.

8   Jordan – *History,* Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2017–19, p. 14.

9   Jordan – *History of Jordan,* Grade 11, 2017–19, p. 17.

10   KSA – *Social Studies*, Grades 10–12 (Joint Track), 2019, p. 62.

11   Ibid.., p. 63.

12   The debate over the treatment of religious minorities under Islam is as wide and large as the richness of human history itself. For a recent skeptic view see (Pollack & Norwood, 2023).

13   Exact periodization is elusive. We tend to consider Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, and his speech at the Knesset focusing on Abraham and the need to repent, as the "turning point," while the "tipping point" may have occurred already sometime before or after the Yom Kippur War. The Khartoum Resolution of September 1967 aiming at "the withdrawal of the aggressive Israeli forces from the Arab lands which have been occupied since the aggression of 5 June," leaving the fate of pre-1967 Israel in the dark. (Arab League Summit, 1967). Khaizaran points to the 1979 Israeli Egyptian Peace Treaty as a "a crucial turning point" transforming the Arab-Israeli conflict into an Arab-Palestinian one (Khaizaran, 2023).

14   Solidarity "is *the* key problem within the sociological tradition." Coined by Emile Durkheim, these two terms, "common consciousness" and "pre-contractual" solidarity, maintain that unlike the Enlightenment's assumed "social contract" that binds people together, collectives share values and sanctity that go deeper than utilitarian agreement among atomized individuals. This particularly is true for the non-Western, community-based psychology.

15   According to intercultural psychologist Ofer Grosbard, "there is no model of peace in the Arab world other than the family model" (Grosbard, 2009, p. 15).

16   According to Meir Bar Asher, Abraham is considered "The first founder of Islam," an attitude that is reinforced five times a day in the prayer of Abraham, "O Allah, send prayers upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad just as You have sent prayers

upon Ibrahim and upon the family of Ibrahim, verily You are the Praiseworthy, the Glorious." (Bet Avi Hai, 2023).

17   Israel – *History*, Grades 11–12, National World 2: Building a State in the Middle East, Moshe Bar-Hillel and Shula Inbar, Lilach Books (Permit: 4214), 2009, p. 213.

18   The Zionist project was intended to be part of the Islamic Caliphate, aimed at bolstering it, with the Sultan granting the Jews "national protection." Herzl was presented the Grand Cordon of the order of Mejidiyye, the highest Turkish decoration. The Sultan even sent a telegram of good wishes to the fifth Zionist Congress.

19   This Abraham Accords text is reminiscent of Indonesia's five principles, the Pantja Sila, which stand at the core of that country's constitution. The Indonesian Muslim majority relinquished their aspiration to have their country openly Islamic. Instead, all Indonesian citizens are required to commit to the "Belief in the one and only God." No agnosticism or animism is allowed. No sex before marriage. One's obligatory religion must be selected from a list of six world faiths, none of them indigenous. Hence, monotheism is enforced.

20   It remains to be seen to what extent elements of humanism, relativism, liberalism, secularism and *doubt* will be embraced (Yadlin, 2006). On the difference between "revelation-based" and "doubt-based" societies see (Shavit, 2017).

21   According to one scholar, the three Abrahamic religions, "raise similar questions about God and the human being… but answer them differently." (Halft, 2020, p. 328). Hence, they cannot be considered one faith. Another angle can be to ask at which point new interpretations and practices make Islam, or any faith for that matter, a "new religion." Is Khomeinism, for example, a new religion? Is Indonesia's Pantja Sila a new religion? Were the Ottomans? Is the commitment to international order and laws non-Muslim? What is the religious meaning of interfaith practices, coexistence, dialogue, and cross-pollination? Does interfaith amount to the abolition of the religions participating in its activities, naturally assuming equality before God and sharing prayers, rituals and insights, or are there multiple ways to reach the Divine? And if so, can more than one religion claim "superiority in truth" (at least in certain ways) and still accept each other as fully adequate and respectable. Finally, and fundamentally, Pan-Abrahamism is not a religion but a spiritual and political discourse and superstructure, which is based on commitment to peace, common ancestry and values like many other international initiatives, bodies, and organizations.

22   Qatar – *Islamic Education*, Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2020, p. 144.

23   The **Declaration of Independence** states that the "Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance, and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books." In fact, Jews not only lived in the Land of Israel, but across the region since times immemorial, and so did the Arabs. The Declaration refers specifically to the region: "we extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help [..] The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East."

The 2000 amendments to **the Law of Education** and the Ministry of Education's guidelines require that all Israeli students learn to "be loyal citizens of the State of Israel, who respect their parents and family, their heritage, cultural identity and language." They should also learn to "recognize the language, culture, history, heritage and unique tradition of the Arab population, and other population groups in the State of Israel, and to recognize the equal rights of all Israeli citizens."

The **Guidelines of the Ministry of Education** demand that the curriculum impart "the history of the Arabs and Islam, and enhance their feeling of belonging to the Arab heritage and civilization," the "struggle for independence in Arab lands," "the question of Palestine," and "Arab nationalism in Palestine." In Arabic literature the guidelines specify that "students know that the heritage of the Arab minority in the State of Israel is part of the heritage of the Arab-Palestinian people."

In the Israeli context, the recognition of Arab collective rights can be found in the status of the Arabic language in Israel's **Law of the Supreme Institute for the Arabic Language** (2007) and Israeli Public Broadcasting Law, 7,5 (2014) and **Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People**, 4,bc (2021) and **Israeli Arabic language Academy Law** (2007). Both refer to the Arabic language as an official language in general and not local Israeli dialects of Arabic, though there are a host of them. The **Sharia Courts** and the **Islamic Studies curriculum** function according to the same Sunni Islam as is practiced in the Arab world.

24   Please pay special attention to WAI educational standards on page 6 -- no. 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 and 15 (mainly 3 and 15). Article 15 is critical but needs reformulation in the Gazan situation, since what is right is not clear enough for a population raised on hate, revenge, and the celebration of death *("15. Moral Courage: To believe in doing 'what is right' irrespective of any opposition")*. This is reminiscent of Philip Zimbardo's Heroic Imagination Project, which 'designs innovative strategies by combining psychological research, intervention education and social activism to create everyday heroes equipped to solve local and global problems' (Heroic Imagination Project, n.d.).

25   We are thankful to Professor Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi for this insight.

26   Both Egyptian president Sadat and the UAE planned interfaith prayer centers (at Mount Sinai

and Abu Dhabi) to include a mosque, a church and a synagogue (Winter, 2023, pp. 14, 20). The **Abrahamic Family House** in UAE was officially opened in February 2023, housing the St. Francis of Assisi Church, the Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue and the Imam al-Tayeb Mosque. Abrahamic Family House, https://www.abrahamicfamilyhouse.ae/. (Gambrell, 2021). Two projects initiated by Avi Elqayam prepare the ground for joint prayers. One is the exposition of less-familiar interpretations of *Al-Fātiḥa* so it can be used by Christians and Jews; the other is a trilingual prayer book (Elqayam, 2015; Elqayam, Arbib, Manasra, 2015).

27   The first Islamic *waqf,* as reported by al-Tabari, was donated by a Jewish rabbi in Medina named Mukhayriq, who fought alongside Muhammad and died in the Battle of Uhud (625) (Al-Tabari, 1987, p. 136). Samuel HaNagid (d. 1056) was a preeminent advisor and military general of the Muslim state (*taifa*) of Granada (Wasserstein, 1993). One may also consider as examples of figures sought-after for their knowledge, the Jewish converts into Islam, Ka'b al-Ahbar (d. 652/6) (Schmitz, 2012). In that vein also consider the famous Rashid al-Din Tabib al-Hamadani (d. 1318) the powerful vizier of the Mongol lkhan Mahmud Ghazan (Brack, 2023, p. 12ff). On the influence of Islamic legal thought on Maimonides, see (Stroumsa, 2009, pp. 65-66).

28   Practical reasons are sometimes presented in curricula to justify good relations. The Azerbaijani curriculum points out armaments procured from Turkey and Israel. Indonesia teaches that the US is a powerful country to reckon with.

29   See for instance on the history of Tahal "Water Planning for Israel," established in 1952 (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.); on Israeli technology in Africa, see (Ya'ari, 2023).

30   The book can serve as a good background for planners of future curricula.

31   Bulut, 2014; Aprim, 2024; Morris & Ze'evi, 2019; For efforts in balancing claims, see Gunter, 2011; Suny, Göçek & Naimark, 2011.

32   Cheref, 2024; Minority Rights Group, 2023.

33   Israel – Homeland, Society and Civics, Grade 4, *In Our Town and Around It*, Ziva Luria Maimoni, State and State-Religious, Kinneret-Zmora (Permit: 2420), 2011, pp. 240–41.

34   Herzl was a great friend of both Islam and the Ottomans and even ordered an Arabic typewriter to be created as a present to the sultan (Messenger, 2015; Artsy, 2016). At the time, Herzl was considering a "night shelter," as a stopgap for Jewish refugees in East Africa, before the establishment of a permanent homeland (Lewin, 2014, p. 82).

35   While some research exist on the economic role of Arab-Israelis with emphasis on equality or lack thereof in distribution of resources, there is still not an overall assessment of the contribution of Arabs to the emergence and the success of Israel – before and after independence – across the board, from agriculture to building, from media, diplomacy, politics, and the arts to architecture and medicine, law and industry, from cuisine to science, from nature preservation to security and defense. Also, a question to ask would be why no such comprehensive research exists.

36   "The Arab and Muslim world has never come to terms with the existence of Israel, and whenever there is a war – like on October 7th – the prevailing feeling among the masses of the people, as opposed to their dictatorial rulers, is support for the perpetrators of genocide." (Carmon, 2023).

Taiwan between the Superpowers: Strategic Thinking, Historical Background, and Major Trends until 2016

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Taiwan, and the complex, tense relations that surround it, is considered a significant "hot spot" in the global arena. The more the competition between the two major superpowers, the United States and China, escalates in the Asian or Indo-Pacific arenas, the more the tension surrounding the issue of Taiwan intensifies, the rhetoric grows extreme, and the actions of the two sides form a new status quo that threatens to be replaced overnight by real warfare. To understand the events surrounding the Strait of Taiwan, this article examines the reasons for the strategic importance of the controversial island; reviews Taiwan's historical background as reflected in US-China relations; and highlights the "third Formosa crisis" (1995-1996). In doing so, it maps the primary trends and prominent changes that occurred in the dispute over the island until 2016, which marks the beginning of a new era in these relations.

Keywords: China, Taiwan, United States, Formosa Crisis, Communist Party, Gaomindang, DPP.

Introduction

In recent years, and especially since 2022, the media has been full of reports pondering whether the People's Republic of China is heading for war with Taiwan to achieve the island's forceful unification with the mainland. The media storm intensified against the analogy of Taiwan to Ukraine, which was invaded by Russia in February 2022; the visit of Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the US House of Representatives, to the island in August 2022; the Chinese military response to this visit, during and following it, and in May 2024, upon the swearing-in of a new president in Taiwan. Still, the media and academic storms have typically addressed the events of the hour in an overly specific manner,

while assigning secondary, if any, importance to the historical background and long-term trends in China-Taiwan relations.

Also missing from the discussions is any comparison with other crises in this context, particularly that of 1995-1996. The present article, therefore, will review the strategic importance of Taiwan in general; examine China-Taiwan relations, through a historical lens including the various crises and US-China relations, which have had decisive influence on the issue; map the major trends in this tripartite relationship until 2016, with the coming into office of the DPP (the Democratic Progressive Party, which recently began its third term in

the Presidency of Taiwan), when relations took a turn that requires separate examination in its own right. The main question underlying this article is: How have the dynamic relations between China, Taiwan, and the United States, in addition to the changing interests of all three, influenced Taiwan's positioning in the regional (East Asian) and in the global space and its own self-understanding?

The Strategic Importance of Taiwan

Taiwan consists of several islands (some located just a few kilometers from mainland China), of which Taiwan is the major one both in terms of land area and population (and whose name is therefore often used as a synonym for the Republic of China [ROC] in general. In what follows Taiwan will be used to refer to the singular island of Taiwan for the pre-1949 era and the entire collection of islands, also known as ROC, for the post-1949 period.) Today, Taiwan has 23 million inhabitants and an 800 billion dollar (gross domestic product) economy (in 2023)—that is the world's twenty-first strongest, with a per capita average annual income of more than $30,000.[1] Still, most of the world does not formally recognize Taiwan as a sovereign independent state (except for a handful of countries, primarily in the Pacific Ocean and in South and Central America), and the People's Republic of China (PRC) regards it as an integral part of China and a "district in rebellion" that must be unified with the Chinese "homeland." Even within Taiwan itself this is a controversial issue, leading to disagreements from both sides of the Formosa Strait, which separates the island of Taiwan from the PRC.

The island of Taiwan was not ascribed any special strategic importance until the seventeenth century, when its strategic location, the rise in scope of international trade and the superpowers' increasing presence in the region, gave it expanding significance. The main geostrategic reasons for this growing importance are as follows:

1. The island's relative proximity to the mainland (southeast of China—at a distance of 160 kilometers on average—provides access to trade areas and to the estuaries of important rivers in southeast China that lead inland (the importance of Taiwan's location grew in the early modern period together with the expansion of trade).

2. Taiwan's location between northeast and southeast Asia, or between the South China Sea and the East China Sea, in close proximity to international trade routes (and maritime currents) running from southern China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and other countries in southeast Asia, to Japan and Korea, in the northeast.

3. The region is also strategic from a military perspective (navy, air force, missiles, etc.), whether due to its access (or lack thereof) to the South China Sea, an area that in itself constitutes a sensitive issue in the region due to intensified Chinese activity in recent years, or to the access or lack thereof to the East China Sea, on the way to China, Japan, and Korea.

4. Its location on the route linking western America to China via the Pacific Ocean—This maritime route first became significant in the early modern era, but its significance intensified from the second half of the nineteenth century.

5. The island of Taiwan itself is located at a crossroads of maritime topographies: to its west, toward China, the ocean is relatively shallow (depth of 40-60 meters, and sometimes less); to its east, toward the Pacific Ocean, the depth of the waters plunges quickly to hundreds of meters and even deeper. This is the source of the island's geostrategic importance in terms of resources (energy and fishing, for example), as well as its military and security importance (especially from the twentieth century onward, vis-à-vis submarine activity).

When we consider these factors together, we understand that the island has become not only a

Map 1. China and Taiwan in broad context

Design: Shay Librovsky

stopping point during maritime voyages, but also a kind of immense (and fertile) base at China's doorstep. It comes as no surprise, then, that the island became a coveted target for control by the Japanese as they worked to expand their empire from the end of the nineteenth century; and by China, in order to protect the strategic space surrounding it to the east. Clearly, for the United States and its allies, Taiwan is a strategic asset for any action in the region and for securing routes of access to and from the region. The more the United States develops alliance systems in the Indo-Pacific region, especially under the Biden Administration, the more Taiwan constitutes a center connecting the alliance systems of

northeast Asia (Japan and South Korea) with those of southeast Asia to Australia—even if not necessarily in an explicit or official manner. For China, therefore, US control over Taiwan is a break in "the first island chain"—a collection of key points facing the coast or borders of China— that it regards as an attempt to limit its actions in eastern Asia and beyond. In addition, in recent decades Taiwan has become a world leader in the production of microchips, explaining its essential role in the production and supply chains of an immense variety of products for the entire world, the PRC and the United States included. The fact that Taiwan possesses some of the world's largest foreign currency and gold

reserves also increases its economic importance (Chen, 2024).

For the PRC, Taiwan is a mirror image— an alternative Chinese regime in which the absolute sovereign is not the Communist Party but rather the state and the liberal-democratic state regime. By its very existence, this alternative is perceived as a threat to the CPC regime.

For the PRC, however, more than all these concrete elements, Taiwan's "return" to the bosom of China is perceived as a "core interest" (核心利益) that constitutes a red line regarding which there is no room for compromise or negotiation (Fang & Zhao, 2021). This stems not only from its economic, security, and geostrategic importance, but rather mainly because the division between Taiwan and the PRC is perceived as an "original sin" and lies at the heart of the national ethos of building the Chinese nation, or, according to the rhetoric of current Chinese president Xi Jinping, "the national rejuvenation of China." Historically, moreover, and not in modern China alone, "separatism" (分裂) is typically perceived as one of the most serious "crimes" against the sovereign (see, for example: State Council, 1993), regardless of the identity of the "separatists"; as an unacceptable precedent; and as a relinquishment of an essential element of Chinese national culture. Because Taiwan's very existence is defined as such "separatism," any compromise on the issue is also viewed as untenable, as relinquishing an essential element of the national identity of the PRC, and as undermining the fundamental reason for the very existence of the PRC—the Communist Party of China (CPC). Moreover, for the PRC, Taiwan is a mirror image— an alternative Chinese regime in which the absolute sovereign is not the Communist Party but rather the state and the liberal-democratic state regime. By its very existence, this alternative is perceived as a threat to the CPC regime.

Thus, despite the facts that on both sides of the Strait the Chinese language is dominant, ethnic belonging is largely similar, and, on many occasions, culture and religion are also very similar, the major question that has been hanging over the island for more than seven decades has been: What is the real China, and to which China does the island belong?

Historical Background

During the seventeenth century, with some inroads in the sixteenth century, the Portuguese (who apparently were those who coined the term "Formosa," meaning "beautiful," for which the Strait was named), the Spanish, and then the Dutch made their way into East Asia. They regarded Taiwan as an important anchor between northeast and southeast Asia— destinations which for them were particularly important. The Dutch also established a small port on the island to meet their needs in the region. Although the island had a small indigenous population, it had not, by that point in history, been forced to answer questions of sovereignty, and as an unimportant island it had also not been the site of any unusual battles. However, in the seventeenth century, the Chinese arena was turbulent, and the Manchus gradually succeeded in defeating the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), conquering the territory it had controlled, and establishing a new dynasty: the Qing Dynasty (1635-1911). During the conquest years, one loyalist of the previous (Ming) dynasty fled to Taiwan with an army, accompanied by a wave of immigrants who feared the Manchus, by means of the Ming Dynasty navy; they conquered the part of the island that was held by the Dutch and established a base of their own there, thus creating in Taiwan a small renegade regime to the Manchus in China. In this way, the island of Taiwan captured the attention of the Qing Dynasty shortly after it established its rule over the entire Chinese mainland. In the 1680s, the Qing Dynasty embarked upon a campaign of war against the "rebels" in Taiwan and subdued

them. Taiwan became part of the sovereign territory of the Qing Dynasty (although rebellions on the island continued to trouble its rulers) for a period of approximately 200 years (Andrade, 2008).

However, at the end of the nineteenth century, a new power emerged in East Asia: Japan. It was the Ming era (1868-1912), and from the 1870s Japan began seeking to expand its territory and sovereignty into additional regions in eastern and northeastern Asia (Mizuno, 2009). In 1874, shortly after an incident in which Japanese sailors were killed on the shores of Taiwan, Japan successfully invaded the island but withdrew after being paid compensation by the Qing Dynasty. Approximately one decade later, during the Sino-French War (1884), France also attempted to invade the island, but without success. As a result of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, in which China suffered a stunning defeat, Taiwan in its entirety was seized by the Japanese and became part of the Japanese empire until the end of World War II. During this period, Japan introduced modernization and industrialization (on many occasions working against the local population of Taiwan), including a railway system, and turned Taiwan into an important base of operations in the Pacific region during World War II (Liao & Wang, 2006).

In the meantime, in China proper, the Qing Dynasty collapsed (at the end of 1911), and the Republic of China (ROC) was established, led by the figure known as the "father of the Chinese nation": Dr. Sun Yat-Sen. The newly formed ROC was governed by the Guomindang (the nationalist party, transcribed in Taiwan as Kuo-min-tang, henceforth KMT), but in the first decade-and-a-half of its existence its control of China was weak and extremely partial. In 1921, the Communist Party of China (CPC) was established, and despite an element of cooperation between the two parties at the beginning of the 1920s, relations between them quickly became violent. In 1927 and 1928 (that is, during and after the unification of a large

portion of the Chinese state) the KMT tried to eliminate the members of the Communist Party and to establish one party rule led by General Chiang Kai-shek (who rose to power after the death of Sun Yat-Sen in 1925). The Communists were forced to flee or to go underground; they managed to survive the persecution, and in doing so they began to build initial foundations for their own rule, particularly in remote rural areas, in parallel to the KMT's military campaigns against them. The latter also resulted in the Communists' Long March (1934-1936), in which they kept moving for thousands of kilometers, from southeast China, via the western regions, to the north. Despite the mutual animosity between the two sides, both parties were forced to resume an element of cooperation during World War II in order to resist Japan, which had begun a gradual invasion of mainland China in the 1930s (in East Asia, the war was at full intensity already in 1937).

From the 1920s until the 1940s, the CPC's approach to Taiwan differed from the form it assumed after World War II. First, the CPC recognized the Taiwanese as an "ethnic group," a "nationality" (民族), and even a "race" (種族) that was separate from that of the Han Chinese. The Taiwanese were referred to in the same breath as Koreans, Mongols, Muslims, and others. At the time, the CPC also supported the Taiwanese, who were fighting "Japanese imperialism" and explicitly sought to act against the Japanese together with other nations, including Korea and Taiwan, for example, on the way to a broad scale international communist revolution. The Taiwanese who helped the Japanese in mainland China, in Fujian for instance, were portrayed not as traitors against their homeland but rather as foreign agents. In 1941, Zhou Enlai, deputy chairman of the CPC who was responsible for foreign policy for many years, declared unequivocally that the Chinese needed to act together,

> …with the liberation and independence movements of other nation states. Not

only will we assist the anti-Japanese movements of Korea or Taiwan, or movements against German or Italian aggression, of nations in the Balkans or in Africa, but we are also working together with national liberation movements in India and in a variety of states in Southeast Asia.

> **After several years of civil war, the army of the CPC succeeded in driving the army of the KMT out of mainland China. In this way, Chiang Kai-shek found himself with what remained of his army and one and a half million refugees from China on the island of Taiwan.**

His words portrayed Taiwan as one of many other nation states that were not China (Hsiao & Sullivan, 1979, p. 453).

Concurrently, the KMT was somewhat more resolute regarding Taiwan's belonging to China and claimed distinctly that Taiwan (and Korea, incidentally) was originally part of China. Nonetheless, the KMT maintained an element of ambiguity and appears to have implicitly accepted the idea that Taiwan—paralleled to Korea—could be independent or enjoy an element of independence, and in any event held that both (Taiwan and Korea) should receive help in liberating themselves from the Japanese. The turning point in the approach of both parties, the KMT and the CPC alike, to the issue of Taiwan, occurred around the Cairo Conference in November 1943, where Roosevelt, Churchill, and Chiang Kai-shek formulated concrete principles for the postwar world order. In the Cairo Declaration, these leaders agreed that Taiwan was part of China and should be returned to China. Both parties accepted this principle, and from this point on the policy of both parties was unequivocal: Taiwan was and was meant to be an integral part of China (Hsiao & Sullivan, 1979).

The end of the World War also marked the end of cooperation, as partial as it was, between the KMT and the CPC. Despite American efforts to bring KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong, leader of the Communist Party from the mid-1930s onward, to negotiations towards a continued shared existence, a bloody civil war quickly broke out in China. This war, which erupted in parallel to the beginning of the Cold War and the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, prompted the Chinese parties to align with one of the sides in the Cold War: the KMT with the United States, and the CPC with the Soviet Union. After several years of civil war, the army of the CPC succeeded in driving the army of the KMT out of mainland China. In this way, Chiang Kai-shek found himself with what remained of his army and one and a half million refugees from China on the island of Taiwan, from which the Japanese withdrew at the end of 1945. On October 1, 1949 Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China, leaving the ROC and the PRC facing one another from either side of the Strait of Formosa—each with the respective superpower supporting it, and each claiming to be the true and authentic representative of greater China.

Over the years, beginning in the 1910s, the ROC (and later Taiwan) was regarded by most of the world as the official representative of "China." Thus, during World War II, it was Chiang Kai-shek who met with leaders such as Roosevelt and Churchill, and when the United Nations was founded, it was the ROC that became one of the founding states and a permanent member of the UN Security Council. When the ROC and the PRC separated in 1949, the ROC (Taiwan) continued to serve as the China representative to the UN, and many states did not even recognize the PRC, nor maintain diplomatic relations with it.

The People's Republic of China-Taiwan-US Triangle, 1949-1995

The stormy 1950s in Asia, and most importantly the Korean War (1950-1953), caused the United States to assign increasing importance to

Map 2. The Formosa Strait

Design: Shay Librovsky

every country in Asia, no matter how small (the Truman Doctrine) (Yoshihara, 2012). Beginning in the 1940s, the PRC saw the Asian space surrounding it (and not East Asia alone) as part of the "intermediate zone" (一个中间地带)—a concept developed by Mao during the decade following World War II, based on the idea that in the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, the United States was trying to seize control of various countries in the world, and only then to engage in conflict directly with the Soviet Union. East Asia, as a mirror image of the US Domino Theory threat, was perceived as a necessary stage on the road to total American world domination. From China's perspective, then, the struggle against the American attempt to achieve hegemony in the intermediate zone was critical to the global future, and Taiwan, like other states in

the same region, was an Archimedean point for this struggle, particularly as a possible point of American entry into China itself.

It was in this context that China unsuccessfully attempted, in October 1949, to conquer the island of Kin-men, just kilometers away from China's eastern coast, and staged a successful conquest (or "liberation," to use CPC terminology) of the large island of Hainan, located southeast of China (An, 2013; Zhang, 1992). It is important to emphasize that during the preparations for the military campaign to conquer Hainan, Mao explicitly instructed the commander of the army, Lin Biao, that "the principle of the attack on the island of Hainan should be that we must be completely ready and absolutely certain of victory before we start the attack; and that we must completely refrain from any haste or irresponsibility" (以充

分准备确有把握而后动作为原则,避免仓促莽撞造成过失) (Yang & He, 2020). This principle, and the civic influence campaign in Hainan, which preceded the successful attack of the spring of 1950 (Murray, 2017), continues to reverberate in today's PRC, while the memory of the loss of Hainan is also present in Taiwan.

> **The propaganda clashes between the PRC and the ROC continued, with each trying to convince the citizens of the other country that it was the one and only real China, while the other was the embodiment of evil.**

The PRC threats against Taiwan, which were accompanied by actual warfare on two occasions (the "first Formosa crisis," in 1954-1955, and the "second Formosa crisis," in 1958), were also part of the PRC's strategy to handle the United States in the region, vis-à-vis the Korean War and American actions in Vietnam. These threats appear to have been more of an attempt to influence the mood in Taiwan (similar to the attempts in Hainan, in preparation for the concrete military action) than the beginning of a full scale military campaign against Taiwan. Nonetheless, in January 1955, China's threatening moves caused the United States to legislate the "Formosa decision," which authorized the president of the United States to use force to defend Taiwan (Mutual Defense Treaty, 1954). At the same time, the idea of a "median line" (or the "Davis line," after the American general who proposed it) also entered the informal lexicon: an imaginary line, running more or less down the middle of the Strait, that separated Taiwan from the mainland and that the military forces of China and Taiwan were not supposed to cross. Though never formalized in an official agreement of any kind, this line remained in place for decades, with virtually no crossings from either side (until recent years). The warfare in both crises occurred primarily on and around small islands located very close to the mainland (a distance of up to 10 kilometers),

and except for several air or sea battles (in the second crisis), most of the fighting consisted of mutual artillery bombardment, despite the use of nuclear threats on the part of the United States (Trent, 2020).

During this period, between 1954 and 1959, the statements made by CPC leaders such as Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong defined the party's distinct attitude to the Taiwan issue from that point on (Chen, 2019):

1. The Taiwan issue is an internal issue (内政问题) that holds no relevance for any other state, whereas every discussion with the United States (or any other country) is an international issue (国际问题), which are two completely different matters. This is a critical distinction from the perspective of the CPC.

2. "Taiwan is ours, and under no circumstances should concessions on this matter be made" (台湾是我们的,那是无论如何不能让步的).

3. The Taiwan issue is the result of foreign imperialism (帝国主义) (first Japanese, then American).

4. The issue can be resolved by "liberating Taiwan through peaceful measures" (和平解放台湾), but if this fails, there is nothing to prevent the use of military force to achieve the aim of "liberating Taiwan."

Throughout the 1950s, the feeling in the PRC that "peaceful measures" were no longer an option grew. However, due to PRC's weakness at that time, the violent clashes faded for the most part by the end of the decade, although the aggressive ideology remained. On the other hand, the propaganda clashes between the PRC and the ROC continued, with each trying to convince the citizens of the other country that it was the one and only real China, while the other was the embodiment of evil (Aldrich et al., 2000). At the same time, in the 1950s, both with the support of American aid and as a result of wise economic policy, Taiwan began maneuvering out of destruction and poverty and towards economic growth: first, as a result of a process that allowed farmers greater economic freedom; and gradually, into the 1960s, as a

result of a process of rapid industrialization that transformed the island into a significant export economy. Taiwan's alliance with the United States and its allies in East Asia (primarily Japan, and South Korea) contributed significantly to this success and to Taiwan's solid economic position, which only accelerated in the decades that followed (Kuo, 1983).

In parallel, beginning in the 1950s, and with greater intensity in the 1960s and 1970s, relations between the PRC and the Soviet Union worsened, to the point of a border clash in 1969. On the other hand, beginning around 1970, ties between the PRC and the United States began to take form. It is important to remember that in the 1960s, other Western countries such as France (1964), had established diplomatic relations with the PRC, so that at the beginning of the 1970s, the PRC was no longer as isolated as it had been in its early days. The outcome of the warming of relations between it and the United States and other countries in the West, was that at the end of 1971, the UN passed a resolution that the ROC no longer represented "China," and that the PRC would now represent China at the United Nations in its stead. The United States, interestingly, abstained in this vote. Still, relations between the United States and Taiwan remained positive (Nam, 2020).

In 1979, relations between the PRC and the United States matured into full formal diplomatic relations. Taiwan paid the diplomatic price, again, when the United States ceased to recognize it as a state for all intents and purposes (the embassy and the consulates of Taiwan in the United States were no longer referred to as such and became economic, commercial, or cultural offices). Nonetheless, the United States sought to strengthen its commitment to the security of Taiwan and to maintain its relations with it. The result was the Taiwan Relations Act of the same year. This law maintained relations between the United States and Taiwan from an economic and a security perspective, alongside the diplomatic downgrade towards non-recognition of Taiwan

as a sovereign state that was separate from the PRC (Goldstein & Schriver, 2001). Immediately thereafter, the United States continued with another series of binding statements (known as the Six Assurances and the Three Joint Communiques), which explicitly normalized its commitment to the "One China" policy, on the one hand, and its commitment in practice to Taiwan, on the other hand (Kan, 2009).[2]

The "One China" principle requires some explanation, as the different players interpret it differently (Drun, 2017). This issue took center stage during President Nixon's visit to China in 1972 and in the Shanghai Joint Communique from the same visit (Joint Statement, 1972). In this communique, China advanced the *principle* of One China from its perspective, and the United States presented its own One China *policy*. The Chinese principle, according to the communique, was that "the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government of China" and that "Taiwan is a province of China." In contrast, in the same document the United States stated that "all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China." It appeared that both had accepted the position that there was only one country named China that faithfully represented "China," and that it was not possible to separate, divide, or split-off different countries claiming to be China. However, as noted, Taiwan regarded itself as the One China for many years, while the PRC also maintained that it was the One China. American statements, in the Joint Communique of 1972 and subsequently, did not determine which was the true One China, and in any event the path to creating that One China would be one of peace and dialogue. The PRC agreed to this, to the extent that this was possible. Indeed, the PRC itself ostensibly proposed "peaceful measures" back in the early 1950s; however, the context in which the UN accepted the PRC as the representative of China in 1971, and the fact that in 1979 the United States sought formal relations with PRC at the expense of Taiwan,

resulted in a prevalent feeling that beside the formal vagueness regarding the question of One China, the United States was relating to the PRC as the "One." Still, the United States also insisted (and continues to insist) that using the term "policy," as opposed to the term "principle," allows for greater flexibility in understanding the idea in question and allows for change to this policy (Goldstein, 2023).

> Taiwan's global importance with regard to microchips means, firstly, that the world became dependent on these microchips and would therefore defend Taiwan; and secondly, that China itself—which also needs microchips from Taiwan—would refrain from taking military action against the island so as to avoid damaging this industry, and especially its supply chain to China proper.

The broader context of the US desire for closer relations with the PRC in the 1970s and the early 1980s also included the Cold War and the desire to include the PRC among the countries that were opposed to the Soviet Union; the fear during the years in question of the increasing economic strength of Japan; and the naïve assumption, which may have stemmed from ignorance or possibly over-optimism, that the closer the PRC got to the United States and the "enlightened" West, the more China itself would "see the light" and seek a liberal democracy for itself, as was customary in the West. As we will see below, the latter point would be put to the test a decade after the establishment of full relations.

From an economic perspective, in the second half of the 1970s and with greater intensity in the 1980s, Taiwan began to place an emphasis on its hi-tech economy, and especially on the manufacturing of microchips by different companies, led by TSMC (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company). As a result of this emphasis, Taiwan's economy experienced particularly impressive growth throughout most of the 1980s and the 1990s, with success that

was referred to as the "Taiwanese miracle." At the beginning of the 2000s, Taiwan's microchip industry was referred to as a "silicon shield" (Adisson, 2000, 2001). The silicon shield concept conveys the following ideas: Taiwan's global importance with regard to microchips means, firstly, that the world became dependent on these microchips and would therefore defend Taiwan; and secondly, that China itself—which also needs microchips from Taiwan—would refrain from taking military action against the island so as to avoid damaging this industry, and especially its supply chain to China proper.

The increasingly close relations between the PRC and the United States in the 1980s allowed Taiwan and the PRC, in the second half of the decade, to begin to establish informal relations with one another, based on visits, economic links, and, gradually and secretly, diplomatic conversations and an attempt to reach understandings (Tung, 2005). At the beginning of the 1990s, according to various reports, this attempt developed into what was referred to in retrospect as the "1992 consensus." Within this framework, the PRC and Taiwan agreed to the One China principle, but also agreed that this principle would be implemented gradually via dialogue and over time, and without explicitly stating which country was the true One China.

This consensus, to the extent that it existed (there are contradictory statements on this point), was reached when the PRC was in need of greater international legitimacy, particularly Western legitimacy (Wang et al., 2021). As a result of the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989, large parts of the Western world came to regard the PRC as a problem. The violent suppression of the massive protests, which sought democratization, caused the Western world to rethink its relations with the PRC, as well as to rethink the probability of the assumption regarding China's track to liberal democracy (Foot, 2000). The Gulf War (1991) demonstrated to PRC how far it still was from modernization (especially in the technological and military realms), as opposed to the United

States, and Taiwan's technological abilities were therefore alluring. In addition, although the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union allowed the PRC to renew its relations with Russia, which was not troubled by the events of Tiananmen Square, the technological and economic gap between Russia at the beginning of the 1990s and prosperous Taiwan or other Western countries was significant.

When President Clinton entered the White House at the beginning of 1993, it appeared that, as an extension of his campaign promises, Washington would take a more stringent approach to China and would more closely connect the subject of human rights in China to the issue of trade. However, less than two years later, the Clinton Administration severed this first connection between human rights and trade, supposedly in order to help bolster relations between the countries (Baum, 2001; Shambaugh, 2000). On the other hand, at the end of President Bush's term in office in 1992, a decision was made to provide Taiwan with 150 F-16 fighter jets. In addition to previous declarations and decisions of the United States, in which it expressed its obligation to defend the island, the PRC was extremely displeased with the direction in which it appeared that Taiwan was heading. American protection and advanced weaponry were perceived as means that would enable Taiwan to avoid implementing the terms of the 1992 consensus, and especially to withdraw from the agreement (as the PRC saw it) that the PRC was the One China (Lee, 1993).

In the meantime, in September 1993, China published a first "white paper" on the subject of "the Taiwan question and the unification of China" (台湾问题与中国统一) (State Council, 1993). In this document, China asserted that "the solution to the Taiwan question and the realization of the unification of China are the weightiest and most sacred task of the entire Chinese People" (解决台湾问题，实现国家统一，是全体中国人民一项庄严而神圣的使命). China emphasized that its fundamental policy regarding the resolution of this issue was "unification through peaceful measures and one country—two systems" (和平统一、一国两制), the approach that appears in the agreement with Britain regarding Hong Kong. The white paper unequivocally clarified that "the world has only one China; Taiwan is an inseparable part of China" (世界上只有一个中国，台湾是中国不可分割的一部分), and that for more than a decade prior to the publication of the document, the Chinese leadership had espoused these principles of "One China," "unity through peaceful measures," and "one state—two systems." In the same document, in a manner that has persisted consistently until today, China also presented the Cairo Declaration (1943) as a binding international document that defines Taiwan as part of China (although the Chinese representative to this conference was of course Chiang Kai-shek).

The Third Formosa Crisis and Its Aftermath

When the PRC published the first white paper on the issue of Taiwan in 1993, Taiwan itself was deep in the midst of a process of democratization. After decades of dictatorship led by Chiang Kai-shek, and since the mid-1970s under the rule of his son Chiang Ching-kuo, Taiwan began to undergo a gradual dramatic shift. Initially, after free elections (which were later split into parliamentary elections and presidential elections), the government remained in the hands of the KMT party (the party that had been led by Chiang and his son), but voices that did not accept the principle of One China gradually began to emerge and gain momentum. Lee Teng-hui, who was appointed president after the death of Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988, was the one who led the democratization process that developed into the first elections for the presidency in 1996. Leading up to these elections, Lee, a member of the KMT, emphasized Taiwanese identity, sought to limit ties with the PRC, and to strengthen connections with the United States (Jacobs, 2012).

Accordingly, Lee sought to visit the United States. Whereas in 1994 Washington had refused him a visa, under Chinese pressure, in mid-1995 he was granted one. Despite the opposition of the US administration, both houses of Congress (then under Republican control) passed a decision that demanded that the administration allow Lee to visit the United States. The decision passed with a crushing majority of 397:0 in the House of Representatives and 97:1 in the Senate. Even if the American administration did not think that such a step was wise, at this point it surrendered to pressure, and Lee Teng-hui paid what was portrayed as a private visit to Cornell University (where he studied in the 1960s) in June, 1995. Beijing's resolute reaction was quick to come and propelled the "third Formosa crisis" into high gear.

It is important to note that only a few months earlier, on January 30, 1995, in a major speech on the issue of Taiwan, Chinese President Jiang Zemin had presented a plan of "compromise," as the PRC viewed it, for reconciliation with Taiwan through peaceful measures. This plan recognized Taiwanese democratization and did not insist on the idea of "one country, two systems" as a basis for negotiations, which, as noted, was the idea that facilitated the agreement with Britain regarding the return of Hong Kong to the PRC. Taiwan's lukewarm response to this proposal disappointed Beijing and resulted in a feeling of humiliation. Still, the talks between the sides continued, along with growing resentment on the western side of the Strait. The United States had let the PRC understand that Lee Teng-hui would not receive a visa, but it quickly became clear that he actually would receive one. The United States continued to support arms sales to Taiwan. And the Taiwanese president and his close associates sought to circumscribe relations with the mainland and to demand that the PRC publicly denounce any unity by force, while trying to advance Taiwan's formal status among nations of the world (for example, through an attempt to acquire a seat in the UN) (Ross, 2000).

In Beijing, it seemed the discussions, either with the Unite States or with Taiwan, were pointless. From China's perspective, American policy vis-à-vis Taiwan, especially after the end of the Cold War and the flourishing of the Chinese economy, boiled down to four characters: "Controlling China by means of Taiwan" (以台制华). These four characters were based on a concept that depicted China's "century of humiliation" (from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century): "Controlling China by means of the Chinese" (以华制华). The concept related especially, but not exclusively, to Japan, which from the Chinese perspective had made use of the Chinese in Manchuria or the coastal regions (for example, Wang Jingwei) to establish its control over China. Use of the term to refer to the US policy, replacing the Chinese with the Taiwanese, gives expression to Beijing's deep resentment and sense of humiliation, as well as the feeling that the entire Taiwan issue, from the American perspective, was a colonialist legacy and an attempt to contain and belittle China. Since the 1990s (especially in recent years), the use of this term has also been prevalent in administration documents and in the Chinese media (Fan, 1997).

The immediate concrete response to Lee's receipt of a visa in May 1995 was formal protest by members of the Chinese foreign service in the United States, in addition to the recalling of diplomatic delegations and the cancelling of high-level talks. The testing of a DF-31 intercontinental ballistic missile was conducted at the end of May, although it is difficult to determine whether this test had been planned ahead of time. In any event, the connection between these events was only natural. When Lee's visit to Cornell occurred on June 9-10, 1995, the media in China went wild, publishing numerous articles that, in addition to emphasizing that Taiwan was an integral part of the PRC, referred to Lee himself as a "traitor." The Chinese ambassador to the United States was recalled back to his country,

and the PRC announced that toward the end of July it would begin various military exercises, including live-fire exercises ("missile tests") in the East China Sea region—in other words, in Taiwan's direction.

And indeed, this is what transpired. For approximately a week at the end of July and ten days at the end of August, China conducted wide-ranging exercises, including live fire from planes, ships and artillery, and landing exercises on various islands. Short range (DF-15) and medium range (DF-21) ballistic missiles— some of China's most advanced missiles at the time—were fired toward Taiwan in addition to various kinds of rockets. In mid-August, China also conducted a nuclear test, apparently of a warhead for a DF-31 missile. The PRC may have hoped that as the elections in Taiwan approached, the unequivocal message it had tried to send—that the One China principle must be maintained—had been conveyed. This message had several target audiences: the party of Lee Teng-hui, the KMT, which may decide to replace him; Lee Teng-hui himself and his associates; those in Taiwan who were calling for final separation between the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China (the "independence" of Taiwan supporters); and those who were perceived as weakening the One China principle.

Between the two exercises, the foreign minister of China and the secretary of state of the United States met on the sidelines of the ASEAN conference, but their meeting bore no real results, except for a declaration that they would continue to engage in dialogue. The United States continued to state, in a weak voice, that its policy regarding Taiwan and One China had not changed, but nothing more. Still, China decided to return its ambassador to Washington, and it appeared that the crisis had subsided. Between September and November, the Chinese foreign minister and the US Secretary of State met repeatedly, and a brief summit between their presidents took place. The Chinese military continued to conduct exercises, but

with no direct proximity to Taiwan, which was perceived as less of a threat to the island, even if the scale of the exercises was larger. However, at the beginning of December, one day before the parliamentary elections in Taiwan, China announced that it would conduct larger scale, more comprehensive exercises in March, just before the presidential election in Taiwan.

In addition to the announcement apparently resulting in sharp drops on Taiwan's stock exchange, it may also have been one of the factors that resulted in election results that were less positive for Lee Teng-hui, and was certainly perceived as such by Beijing at the time. Although his party remained the largest in the legislature (with 85 seats), it lost 17 seats. The New Party (which split from the KMT a few years earlier and supported union with the PRC), on the other hand, achieved unprecedented success, winning 21 seats (in the previous elections, it ran under a slightly different name and won only seven seats), and the DPP also gained three seats (for 54 in total). From the perspective of the PRC, the pressure had worked.

On December 12, 1995, a battle group led by the American aircraft carrier the USS Nimitz passed through the Strait of Taiwan, on its way to the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. Whereas this step is sometimes understood as a message from Washington to Beijing, it was part of a planned deployment and a passage that was apparently caused by considerations pertaining to weather and navigation, not by an attempt to convey a geostrategic message. Beijing also appears to have dismissed this act as lacking any meaningful signal of any kind. In China, the fact that the United States continued to grant visas to senior Taiwanese officials during January 1996 only reinforced the feeling that there was no one to talk to in Washington.

And so, assuming a deaf ear in Washington, China amassed large forces in the Nanjing command (the command responsible for the Taiwanese front): some 150,000 soldiers,

hundreds of airplanes and helicopters, ships, air defense components, and missiles. The United States warned China against "erroneous calculations" or "mistakes," and sought to restore order. However, Beijing continued to engage in additional military exercises during March, which only intensified in scope and in proximity to Taiwan. At the same time, the Chinese military continued to launch missiles (DF-15) and also made use of a civilian maritime force, an act that would repeat itself over the years. At the same time, the United States dispatched a battle group led by the aircraft carrier the USS Independence—which was usually stationed in Japan, not far from the area in any event—to closely follow the events along the coast of Taiwan. Shortly after, it also sent the battle group led by the USS Nimitz, which was in the Persian Gulf at the time. Both battle groups remained a safe distance from the exercises themselves and did not get directly involved, because Washington was convinced that China, in any event, would not attempt to invade Taiwan. These events occurred concurrently with the presidential elections in Taiwan and, contrary to expectations in Beijing following the parliamentary elections in December, the Chinese actions did not result in the fall of Lee Teng-hui, who won the presidency with a 54% majority of the votes. The new/old president did not declare independence, the Chinese pulled back their forces, and the major crisis came to an end, at least temporarily.

During the months of the crisis, from May 1995 to March 1996, whereas the PRC maneuvered militarily vis-à-vis Taiwan, its actions were in fact directed, perhaps primarily, at Washington, demonstrating its desire to preserve the status quo between United States, the PRC and Taiwan according to the agreements that had been reached since the 1970s. That is, a status quo in which all are committed, not only in rhetoric but rather also in practice, to the One China principle according to the Chinese understanding thereof. However, it is doubtful that Beijing's goals were achieved.

In 1997 Newt Gingrich, then Speaker of the US House of Representatives for the Republican party, visited Taiwan. Gingrich was the highest-ranking American official to visit Taiwan in decades. However, this visit occurred after the elections had already been decided in Taiwan, and after the PRC was deterred by the American forces in the region or did not intend to continue beyond the exercises in any event. It is also important to remember that, in addition to the fact that part of the American conduct was related to internal political considerations, such (internal) motivations also played a role for the PRC: In 1995, reports that Deng Xiaoping had a serious medical condition began to flood the Chinese media. Jiang Zemin, who until that point had been in Deng's shadow, needed to assume the reins of government in a clear and resolute manner. Once his conciliatory suggestions regarding the issue of Taiwan (from the end of January, 1995) received a cold shoulder, and Lee's visit to the United States came to pass, he himself needed to show, domestically, that he was in fact the strong leader that was worthy of replacing Deng. (Thies & Braton, 2004; Ross, 2000).

Later, the strengthening of Jiang's standing also allowed him to return to the pragmatic position that had preceded the crisis in China's foreign relations, referred to as the Good Neighbor policy (or diplomacy), or China's "peaceful development." Although this policy had begun a bit earlier (in the context of other countries in the region), the aftermath of the crisis of 1995-1996 accelerated the policy and the Chinese president at the time, Jiang Zemin, reiterated it several times at the most important Party conferences in 1997. It appears that the understanding in the PRC was that at that point in time, a positive policy toward its neighbors would yield more than a negative one. China experienced an economic boom in the 1990s, but progress had not yet been made militarily on a similar scale, and patience was necessary. In other words, the PRC knew that, militarily, it was at a disadvantage, but that economically—

given the right diplomatic system—it could continue to grow stronger and thereby also strengthen its army with an eye toward the future. One of the lessons learned from the crisis was that the Chinese military required significant strengthening, particularly its A2/AD (anti-access/area-denial) capabilities. This was a lesson that was first learned during the 1991 Gulf War, and it gained notable momentum.

China proceeded accordingly. In the East Asian economic crisis of 1997-1998, the PRC was an important factor that helped stabilize the situation by providing economic and diplomatic aid to countries in the region. Its regional and international standing increased. Concurrent with its economic and diplomatic development, 1997 was also a year of fundamental change in terms of Chinese military development. From that year on, PRC's military budget grew consistently by more than 10% in real terms (most of the time by more than 15% annually). In 1997, it was decided to separate the commercial activities of the army (which had engaged in many such activities over the years up to that point) and to place them in civilian hands, so that the army could focus on its military tasks. In addition, reform to the Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOE) facilitated the upgrading and reform of the Chinese defense industry. Also, the army transitioned from an approach of high-intensity warfare to one of local wars under modern, hi-tech, conditions. As a result, the Chinese army has developed impressively since then, from its technological abilities to its weaponry, to the type of training exercises employed in the different corps (Kanwal, 2007; Watkins, 1999).

Developing Relations in a Global Context, 2000-2016

In the United States, as the tension surrounding Taiwan in the 1990s did not interrupt US economic ties with the PRC, many understood that the PRC was quickly becoming a globally dominant country economically (and gradually militarily as well). Its dominance was not to

> **If President Clinton referred to China as a "strategic partner" in the second half of the decade, the 2000 candidate for president, George W. Bush, was already referring to China as a "strategic competitor" of the United States.**

be confined to "its own neighborhood" but also on the global level. If President Clinton referred to China as a "strategic partner" in the second half of the decade, the 2000 candidate for president, George W. Bush, was already referring to China as a "strategic competitor" of the United States. Central to the elections of that year was the question of using "a firm hand" or "too weak a hand" toward the PRC, in a preview of the years to come. However, despite the statements made by presidential candidate George W. Bush regarding the firm hand that was needed vis-à-vis China and the intense competition it posed to the United States, President Bush soon found himself in a different position (Shambaugh, 2000). First, a few months after the start of his term, on April 1, 2001, a collision between an American intelligence-plane and a Chinese fighter plane (apparently as a result of overenthusiasm on the part of the Chinese pilot) resulted in the emergency landing of the American plane and the crash of the Chinese fighter plane. The emergency landing occurred on the Chinese island of Hainan, the crew of the plane was taken by the Chinese, and the plane itself, or what was left of it after the actions of the crew, remained dismantled into components. The new US president sought to reach understandings with China's long-time president Jiang Zemin and to try to retrieve the crew and the remains of the plane. In this way, a US-Chinese dialogue began with the US in an inferior position.

Shortly afterward, after understandings were reached, Beijing was declared the host city of the 2008 Olympics, and the discussions regarding China's joining of the World Trade Organization (WTO) gained momentum. Though Bush the

candidate sought to constrain China, by the beginning of his presidential term, the PRC's standing only continued to rise (Blanchard & Chen, 2015). This was the context immediately prior to the 9/11 attacks. The United States then needed maximum support from the international arena if it wanted to take action, and certainly from the UN Security Council, of which the PRC was a permanent member with veto rights since 1971. In this way, the approach of "China as a strategic competitor" made way for the approach of "China as a partner" by means of the War on Terror, whether in rhetoric (primarily) or in practice, for most of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

> Most of the law's sections (1-7) contain principled statements on the following themes: "in the whole world, there is only One China" (世界上只有一个中国), that includes mainland China and Taiwan; sovereignty in that One China is indivisible; and actualizing the unification between the PRC and Taiwan is "the sacred task of the entire Chinese People" (全中国人民的神圣职责).

American attention shifted to other places, and East Asia was less the focus. During this period, China could also increase its regional influence via regional organizations that China itself had played a role in establishing (such as via the development of the SCO—the Shanghai Cooperation Organization), or through instruments which the United States itself encouraged, such as the Six Party Talks with North Korea, from 2003. Moreover, the more the United States became militarily and economically entangled in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the more China could increase its involvement elsewhere. In the mid-2000s, China began to increasingly invest in many countries, from Sri Lanka to Greece. The world financial crisis of 2008-2009, which harmed the United States and the countries of Europe first and foremost and caused them to be economically drawn into their own domestic

matters and to decrease and reduce their capacity for global investment, enabled China, immediately afterward, to significantly increase its investments around the world (Overholt, 2010).

At the same time, between 2000 and 2008, Taiwan was governed by the DPP. The PRC, which at the beginning of the 1990s took action to try to prevent representatives of the KMT from winning the elections, understood that the party that was the main rival of KMT posed an even bigger challenge, as the DPP entertained itself with the idea of full separation from the PRC and non-recognition of the One China principle. As a result, during this period, and particularly during the DPP's first term in office (2000-2004), an almost total rift emerged between the PRC and Taiwan, and great hostility prevailed between the bodies of government. Nonetheless, during the DPP's second term in office (2004-2008), the situation changed somewhat, perhaps due to the change of presidents in China (Hu Jintao in place of Jiang Zemin) and perhaps due to a rethinking of more effective means of influencing Taiwan. It was then that the PRC decided to allow greater informal ties with Taiwan and started to cultivate ties with the KMT party, which was then in opposition (Muyard, 2008).

However, at the same time, the hostility between the countries' governing bodies—the CPC on the one hand, and the DPP on the other—persisted, and at the end of 2004, after the DPP again won the presidential elections, the PRC began to legislate the "Anti-Secession Law of China" (反分裂国家法2005), which was fully enacted in 2005 (following another "white paper" that was published in 2000, again emphasizing its principles and condemning Lee Teng-hui and the "separatists" on the Taiwanese side). This law is ascribed declarative, lobbyist, and diplomatic importance even today, and it includes ten sections. Most of the law's sections (1-7) contain principled statements on the following themes: "in the whole world, there is only One China" (世界上只有一个中

国), that includes mainland China and Taiwan; sovereignty in that One China is indivisible; and actualizing the unification between the PRC and Taiwan is "the sacred task of the entire Chinese People" (全中国人民的神圣职责). This part of the law calls for "the unification of the homeland through peaceful measures" (以和平方式实现祖国统一) and details the different ways of strengthening the connection between mainland China and the island of Taiwan, as well as of conducting negotiations regarding the desired unification.

The two following sections of the law (8 and 9; section 10 only defines the law's immediate application), on the other hand, address a situation in which unification through peaceful measures is not achieved. The law defines three options in which the state, the PRC, must use non-peaceful measures to "defend the sovereignty of the state and its territorial wholeness" (捍卫国家主权和领土完整): if the forces of "independent Taiwan" (台独) somehow manage to make it so that the division of China is an established fact; if the occurrence of a significant event leads to such a division; or if all possibility of bringing about unification through peaceful measures is lost. The law defines the institutions entrusted with implementing "non-peaceful measures" and seeks to ensure that if such an event occurs, the state would put its greatest efforts into protecting the lives, property, and rights of the people living in Taiwan—Taiwanese and foreigners alike.

This law sparked protest in Taiwan itself on the part of all political parties. However, as already noted, the PRC also promoted informal ties with Taiwan, so when the KMT won the elections of 2008, these ties developed into much more widely ranging relations between PRC and Taiwan. The new KMT president, Ma Ying-jeou, cultivated and advanced China-Taiwan relations according to the tripartite principle: "without unification, without independence, and without the use of force"—in other words, preserving the political status quo while promoting all

other connections. Indeed, the scope of trade increased, China also invested in Taiwan (and Taiwanese investments were made in China), tourists began to move between the island and the mainland, and many thousands of PRC citizens settled in Taiwan, and vice-versa. The connections were not only economic, commercial, and related to tourism, but also included deeper ties, based, for example, on shared religions, journeys of pilgrimage, and the support for temples, especially Daoist or Buddhist temples on both sides of the Strait (Brown & Cheng, 2012; Laliberté, 2013).

Relations appeared to be advancing on a clear and positive track, despite the fierce PRC opposition to agreements on the sale of billions of dollars of arms by the United States to Taiwan that emerged from time to time. Meetings between formal PRC and Taiwanese officials occurred on several occasions; the high point was a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou in Singapore in 2015 and the establishment of mechanisms for direct ties between the governments (Hsiao, 2016).

At the same time, President Obama's entry into the White House in 2009, and the US initiative that positioned Asia, and especially East Asia, at the focus of its foreign policy ("pivot to Asia") beginning in the early 2010s, resulted also in a rethinking of US-Taiwan relations. Whereas the Obama Administration continued to accept the One China policy and to support increasingly close relations between the two sides of the Strait, an internal American debate developed on the subject: on the one hand, some maintained that Taiwan had become a factor disturbing the advancement of China-US relations, and at that stage—more than 20 years after the end of the Cold War and 30 years after the normalization of relations with the PRC—there was no longer anything to be gained from US protection of Taiwan. From their perspective, the United States needed to stop selling arms to Taiwan and to promote the position of the PRC to conclude the matter. In contrast, the majority

Diagram 1. Timeline – Major events and American announcements of arms sales to Taiwan.
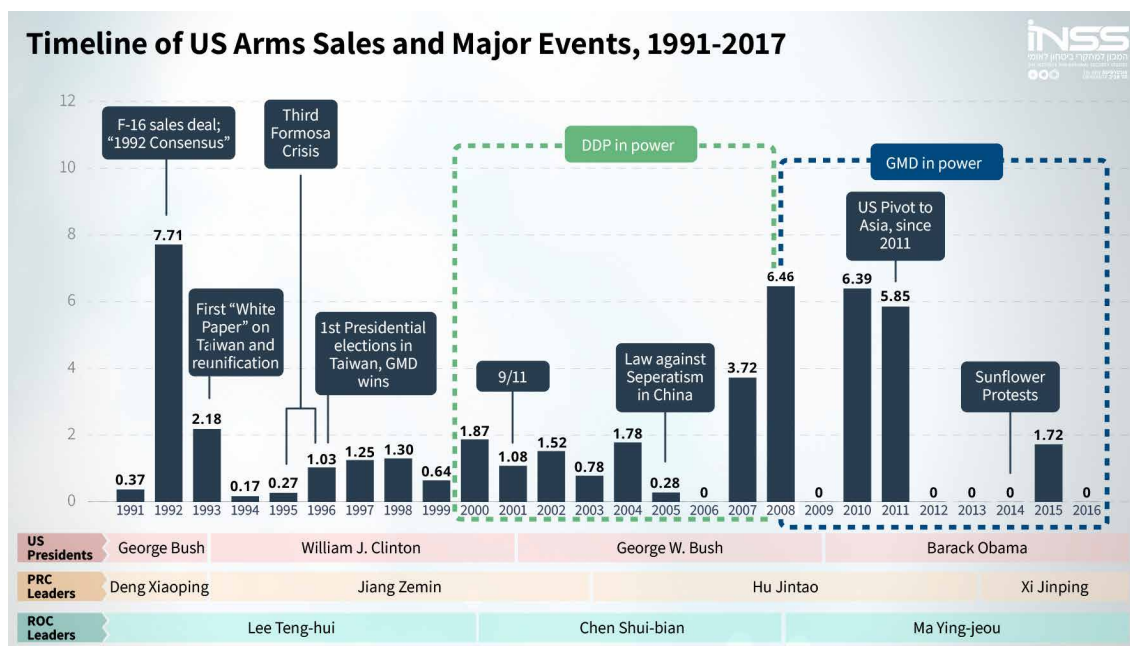
Source: Taiwan arms sales, 2023; Major arms sales, n.d.; Taiwan: Major U.S. arms sales since 1990, 2014.
Design: Shay Librovsky

in the United States argued the opposite: that the rise and growing strength of the PRC made it increasingly necessary to promote Taiwan, especially as its increasingly close relations with PRC had made Taiwan more and more dependent on the PRC. Obama, as noted, continued the approach that maintained all the United States' previous agreements with China on the political level ("One China" and support of ties between China and Taiwan). But at the same time, his administration also promoted wide-scale arms sales to Taiwan worth billions of dollars, including an agreement to upgrade the F-16 fighter planes that had been sold to Taiwan at the beginning of the 1990s and warships (Thayer, 2011). It also attempted to promote the international standing of Taiwan, for example, by adding it to the World Health Organization as an observer in 2009 and, several years later, as an observer in the International Civil Aviation Organization. The Taiwanese also received a visa exemption for entry to the US. The PRC was of course displeased with the way in which the United States had acted. It

viewed the arms deals as a deviation from the agreements between the United States and the PRC that had been made decades earlier (under the Reagan Administration, for example, the United States committed itself to reducing such deals over the years) (Löfflmann, 2016). But, in any event, the good relationship between the Chinese administration and the Ma Ying-jeou administration in Taiwan resulted in China-Taiwan relations that continued to advance quickly in positive directions.

However, due to the increasingly close ties and the agreements that developed between the two sides of the Strait, most of the Taiwanese public felt that its own interests were being abandoned, or that the relations between the PRC and Taiwan were improving at the expense of the Taiwanese population. One of the most well-known agreements that Taiwan signed with the PRC, but that Taiwan ultimately did not ratify, was the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement. This agreement was signed in Shanghai in June 2013 and was supposed to be ratified by the legislative branch in Taiwan immediately

afterward. However, this agreement, which was to result in a marked intensification of economic and social ties between the two (from banking to health, tourism, etc.), was perceived by the Taiwanese public as extremely problematic and undermining its very existence. Many thought that the agreement would worsen Taiwan's economic situation, result in total dependence on the PRC, and give it immense influence on the island's political system. As a result, not only was the agreement itself not ratified, but massive demonstrations and protests, referred to as the "sunflower protests," led to an overall decline in the popularity of the administration (Templeman et al., 2020).

Economic issues were not the only ones to cast a shadow over the question of unification between Taiwan and the PRC; an issue that was no less complex was that of Taiwanese identity, which also lurked in the background. If, for most of its years in existence until the mid-2010s a majority of Taiwan's population saw themselves and defined themselves as Chinese, the trend over the past three decades has been one of retreat from this definition and a marked increase among those who regard themselves as Taiwanese. The rise of Taiwanese identity has also resulted in hesitations about returning to the homeland, which gradually came to be considered less and less as a true homeland, even if a variety of significant Chinese elements (cultural, religious, etc.) still remained the basis of the new Taiwanese identity (Brown, 2010; Lin, 2016; Liu & Li, 2017).[3]

Conclusion: Major Trends in Relations up to 2016

We can identify three major phases in the relationship between Taiwan and the PRC between 1949 and 2016:

1. 1949-1971: After initial attempts at the beginning of the 1950s to achieve military successes that would allow the unification of "China," both countries understood that it could not be achieved by force, which resulted in stagnated relations. During this period, each tried to exert influence on the other, using both propaganda and military scare tactics, and in this way to produce long-term internal change that would lead to unification. At the same time, from a political perspective, Taiwan's claim to be the authentic representative of "China" received international legitimacy, including in the UN Security Council based on American support, whereas China and the Soviet Union became enemies.

2. 1971-1995: As a result of the process of reconciliation between the United States and China, based on acceptance of the "One China policy" (as opposed to the "One China principle," which is espoused by the PRC) and in the context of the Cold War, Taiwan's international legitimacy was eroded, certainly on a formal level (as the PRC replaced Taiwan in UN institutions and received broad international recognition). In this way, reliance on the United States became even more important, while Taiwan's (global) importance in the technological context (the "silicon shield") grew. In addition, China and Taiwan gradually began secret discussions to promote mutual ties, in the shadow of the dispute, until they reached a dead end with the third Formosa crisis, which also emphasized Taiwan's dependence on the United States, the obstructions blocking the PRC, internal politics in the United States, and the PRC's need to seek a different direction.

3. 1995-2016: Despite the military actions of the PRC in the mid-1990s (the third Formosa crisis), two trends emerged from the end of the military crisis. On the one hand, particularly from the mid-2000s onward, we observe a gradual strengthening of the economic and civic ties between the countries. On the other hand, the more pressure was exerted by China on Taiwan to accept its position, the more the Taiwanese public distanced itself from China and from any willingness to discuss unification. The positive contacts between the PRC and the KMT resulted in

a public counter-response in Taiwan, after which the DPP rose to power. The United States has remained an essential force for Taiwan, and China understood that, at the time, it was still far from advancing a military force with capabilities superior to the United States. Nonetheless, it has continued to build up its military. From China's perspective, America's "pivot to Asia" has brought into sharper relief the US's intention to engage in what China regards as excessive intervention in its backyard. As a result, its perceived need to build up its forces has only increased. During the first two phases, the more democratic Taiwan became, the more significant domestic issues and Taiwanese public opinion became in the tripartite relationship. The strengthening of the economic ties between China and Taiwan has helped the island's economy, but it also brought about an element of dependence on China. The strengthening of ties in the areas of tourism and culture (people-to-people) helped the two populations get to know one another again. At the same time, however, it created channels for potential Chinese campaigns of influence. The more invested the United States became in the Middle East ("the global war on terror"), the greater potential China saw for non-military successes in the context of Taiwan. Still, the Obama Administration's focus on East Asia (pivot to Asia) caused China to attempt to accelerate its measures vis-à-vis Taiwan under the KMT administration, which accepted some of China's basic assumptions. This acceleration of the aggressive elements of China's approach caused the Taiwanese public— as in the third Formosa crisis, even if not in a military sense—to experience intensified fear of China, to emphasize its separate identity, and to form an administration perceived as oppositional to Beijing in the elections of early 2016. After the elections and the DPP's entry into government, just before Trump's rise to power in the United States, these elements prompted the Chinese administration, led since 2012 by President Xi Jinping, to change its approach to

Taiwan. This change would later gain significant momentum and greatly intensify.

The radicalization of American rhetoric against China—during and following Trump's election campaign, which intertwined with the "trade war" and the strategic and technological competition between China and the United States at the end of the second decade of the current century—was in a dialectical relationship with similar Chinese radicalization (of course, from the other direction), and China began to position itself, also for its own reasons, as more dominant and aggressive in its foreign policy ("wolf warrior diplomacy," broad military exercises, intensified activity in the South China Sea, and, though somewhat less, in the East China Sea, meaning near Taiwan, until 2020). Taiwan, therefore, has served as fertile ground, and perhaps an excuse, for both superpowers to spar with one another, even as the economic and civic relations between Taiwan and China continued to develop. Still, domestic Taiwanese issues during Tsai Ing-wen's first term in office made it seem as if she would lose the presidential elections in January 2020 and the KMT would return to power. However, China's aggressive approach to the protests in Hong Kong (2019) resulted in a significant rise in the popularity of the DPP, in reaction to the idea that China and Taiwan could be unified based on the Hong Kong model. Indeed, in the 2020 elections, Tsai Ing-wen emerged victorious and continued to serve in office, placing an emphasis on strengthening Taiwan's relations with the United States.

Concurrently, the Coronavirus pandemic, which created internal problems for both superpowers, intensified the negative trends between China and the United States that had started earlier. In addition to the efforts of Taiwan, which contended with the pandemic successfully, to leverage its strengths to receive a more prominent voice in the global arena, it became apparent that the Taiwan arena was heating up. The penetration of Taiwanese airspace by the Chinese Airforce, including

crossing the "median line," became part of a threat diplomacy that only worsened over time, especially since the autumn of 2020.

A more complex relationship between China and the United States since President Biden came into office, both in terms of intensified technological warfare between the two and the creation of wider American alliance systems in the Indo-Pacific (directly related to the Taiwan issue) has again brought Taiwan, sometimes willingly and typically unwillingly, to the center of the discussion, certainly as long as the matters pertain to semiconductors. The internal political needs of the superpowers have also played an important role, as in the case of the US midterm elections in the autumn of 2022, which occurred around the time of the visit of Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan and resulted in a harsh Chinese response; or the 20th National Congress of the CPC (October 2022), which combined to engender a firmer hand (or harsher rhetoric) on the part of the Chinese regime. All of these factors interacted with global geopolitical issues such as the war in Ukraine, which also helped radicalize the discourse, and the reactions within the tripartite relations between China, Taiwan, and the United States.

In practice, we can say that the situation since Pelosi's visit to Taiwan constitutes a "fourth Formosa crisis," which has continued far into 2024 (and continues at the time of writing) and can also be identified in the Chinese response to the Taiwanese elections at the beginning of 2024 and in the inauguration speech of the new president William Lai, also from the DPP, in May 2024. This ongoing crisis itself, whose more recent causes lie in the 2016 fault line, requires separate extensive examination.

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Notes

1   In terms of Purchasing Power Parities (PPP), the amounts are double and even a bit more.

2   There is sometimes tension between the agenda led by the US president in this context and more oppositional efforts against China, which Congress members may promote.

3   For more on the Taiwanese perception of identity as it appears in surveys over the past forty years, see Election Study Center, National Chengchi University. Around the time of the third Formosa crisis, approximately half of the Taiwanese population defined themselves as Taiwanese and Chinese, approximately one quarter defined themselves as Taiwanese alone, and approximately one fifth as Chinese alone. The percentage of the Taiwanese who defined themselves as Chinese has since then declined dramatically. During Ma Ying-jeou's term in office the percentage of those who defined themselves as Taiwanese increased, whereas the percentage of those who defined themselves as Chinese and Taiwanese decreased. As of July 2024, almost two-thirds of the Taiwanese public define themselves as exclusively Taiwanese; almost one third of the public define themselves as Taiwanese and Chinese; and only two percent define themselves as exclusively Chinese.

Reassessing Fundamental Concepts in Iranian Policy Against the Background of the War in Gaza

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The ongoing campaign in Gaza and its spread to other fronts, including the direct confrontation in April 2024 between Iran and Israel, could bring about significant changes in the security conception of the Islamic Republic. These changes could affect the features of its policy and its strategic perceptions, including how it manages its regional network of proxies and its nuclear doctrine. Although Iran's conduct since the start of the war does not currently indicate any strategic U-turns by the Iranian leadership, it is clear that due to internal, regional and international developments—along with the lessons from the ongoing regional war—Tehran increasingly estimates that the strategic balance is tipping in its favor. This perception could lead to significant changes in its policy, specifically a greater willingness to take risks and adopt a more aggressive approach, including towards Israel. This trend obliges Israel to prepare for the new Iranian strategy and for more intense conflict with Iran and the Shiite axis it leads.

Keywords: Iran, strategy, nuclear, proxies, Gaza, Iran-Israel conflict

Introduction

The war in Gaza has found Iran embroiled in significant internal, regional, and international developments. Internally, the regime is facing a severe crisis of legitimacy as it approaches the end of the era of the current leader, Ali Khamenei, and the power struggle that can be expected in the coming years. Regionally, Iran continues to ease the tensions with its Arab neighbors and to entrench its influence through a network of proxies it has built up over the years. Globally, it has intensified its strategic cooperation with Russia and increased its oil exports to China to an extent that allows it to cope with economic sanctions.

Since the start of the war, Iran has led a regional and international effort to recruit support for Hamas and exert pressure on Israel and the United States, coordinating and synchronizing its partners and proxies in the region. In this context, the alleged Israeli attack of April 1, 2024, on a building next to the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, which killed Hassan Mahdavi, the commander of the Revolutionary Guards in Syria and Lebanon, dramatically raised tensions between Iran and Israel. The Iranian missile and drone attack on Israel on the night of April 14 heralded a new stage in the strategic conflict between the two countries,

enabling Iran to exploit the war to draw closer to the military nuclear threshold.

These developments demand a reassessment of several basic assumptions regarding Iranian policy and its strategic perceptions. The complex interaction between ideological-revolutionary aspirations and political logic in Tehran's decision-making processes, the patterns of behavior and decision-making of the Supreme Leader, the preference for maintaining the nuclear threshold over a breakthrough to nuclear weapons, and the continued entrenchment of the regional network of proxies—all these should be examined critically in light of the lessons learned from the campaign to date.

The prolonged war and the growing danger of its spread into other arenas, including Iran and Hezbollah, could lead to significant changes in Iran's balance of considerations and its strategies. This paper proposes an initial examination of the validity of four fundamental assumptions that have underpinned Iranian policy in recent decades: the role of ideological vision in shaping Iranian policy; the Iranian leader's preference for a cautious approach to limit risks and preserve the regime; the objectives of Iran's nuclear strategy; and the proxies' strategy.

The Role of Revolutionary Ideology in Iranian Policy

The murderous Hamas attack against Israel on October 7, 2023, proved that the source of enmity towards Israel does not derive solely from reasons relating to Israel's policies, but also from fierce cultural and ideological hostility shared by Iran. As Michael Milstein remarked:

> Types like Sinwar, who believe in the path of Jihad and declare this openly, are ideologists. His most authentic long-term objective is the destruction of Israel […] not the creation of Hong Kong in Gaza, nor any improvement to the life of the average Gazan […] When Hamas reaches a junction at which it

has to choose between ideology and the welfare of the residents, ideology always wins.

Harel Horev also pointed out the gap between recognizing Hamas' ideology and failure to internalize that the organization indeed wishes to implement this ideology.

Any comparison between Hamas and Iran is partial and problematic. Hamas is a Sunni Jihadist movement, while Iran is a Shiite Islamic Republic. The struggle against Israel is the raison d'etre for Hamas and a central pillar of its identity, whereas in Iran's ideological concept, hostility to Israel is just one, albeit important, element. Moreover, there is no comparison between the limited territorial space within which Hamas operates and the political status of the Hamas regime in Gaza, and the expansive territorial space and broader considerations that guide the Iranian regime. Over the years the combination of internal constraints and changing regional and international circumstances has led the leaders of Iran to adopt a dual policy: attempting to remain faithful to its revolutionary teachings while pursuing a policy that serves Iran's national interests on cost-benefit considerations, employing a pragmatic approach that strives for the best way to achieve its strategic objectives.

Under certain conditions, the Iranian leadership has prioritized Iranian interests over revolutionary and Islamic ideological concepts. In other cases, they have preferred to act according to their ideological vision by striving for revolutionary changes and the establishment of a new regional and international order. For example, in the territorial dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, Iran sided with its Christian neighbor Armenia rather than with Shiite Muslim Azerbaijan, because it feared that a strong and thriving secular Azerbaijan would reinforce separatist tendencies among the large Azeri minority in Iran. In more distant regions, particularly in cases that posed no risk to Iranian interests, Iran has been more determined in its

support for ideologically closer movements, showing more loyalty to its revolutionary orientation. This was evident in its relations

> Declarations by senior Iranian officials and commentaries in the Iranian press have unequivocally rejected Israel's right to exist, portraying it as an illegitimate entity created in sin through nefarious Western plots aimed at weakening the Muslim world and establishing Western imperialist dominance in the Middle East.

with Sudan, radical movements in Algeria, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad and Hamas, although even in these cases, its policy has not always been consistent.

Notwithstanding the differences between Iran and Islamic movements in the region, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, a common thread among them is the rejection of Israel's existence. Iran's hostility to Israel stems from its mere existence and has been a central component of its policy since the Islamic Revolution. This animosity towards Israel has been prominently displayed during the war in Gaza. Declarations by senior Iranian officials and commentaries in the Iranian press have unequivocally rejected Israel's right to exist, portraying it as an illegitimate entity created in sin through nefarious Western plots aimed at weakening the Muslim world and establishing Western imperialist dominance in the Middle East.

However, focusing on the ideological perspective alone is insufficient to grasp Iran's policy towards Israel since the outbreak of the war in Gaza. If Iranian policy were solely determined by its revolutionary ideology, Iran would have likely joined the campaign or at least engaged Hezbollah in full-scale warfare against Israel from the early stages, seizing what appeared to be a historic opportunity to realize its revolutionary vision of Israel's destruction. In reality, throughout the war, Iran has acted based on astute assessments reflecting a rational and pragmatic approach. This approach has

included a strategy of gradual escalation, involving partial engagement of Hezbollah in the fighting, numerous attacks by pro-Iranian Shiite militias on American bases in Syria and Iraq, and involvement of the Houthis in Yemen in the fight against Israel.

Consequently, Iran sought to avoid opening a full-scale confrontation against Israel, which could have exacted a heavy toll on Hezbollah and possibly on Iran itself. This caution was especially evident in light of repeated warnings from US President Joe Biden that Iran and Hezbollah should not exploit this opportunity to act against Israel. Meir Litvak aptly captured this sentiment in his discussion of Supreme Leader Khamenei's decision not to directly interfere at the onset of the war:

> Khamenei had an opportunity on October 7, but he also takes a historical view, and so he is not in a rush to destroy Israel tomorrow morning. His ideological stance is that Israel's blood must be shed, it must be brought to a state of collapse, so that it will yield to Iran's demands and will no longer exist as a Jewish state. Then, according to his vision, we can all return "home"— whether to Morocco or Ukraine.

Thus, David Menashri's observation that "Iran is still a country that operates according to political logic more than fiery ideology" appears to hold true to a significant extent even today.

Ali Khamenei as a Cautious Leader

Following the Iranian missile and drone attack on Israel, a senior American official told ABC News that his country had relied too heavily on the mistaken idea that the Iranian leader, Ali Khamenei, was cautious and would never order a direct attack on Israel. He stated that the direct Iranian attack required a renewed examination and assessment of this conception. There is no doubt that the Iranian attack on Israel has opened a new stage in the strategic hostility

between the countries. Iran's decision to attack targets in Israel from within its territory reflected a significant change in its approach toward Israel's rules of engagement. Even though the Iranian leadership may have estimated that launching missiles and drones to attack military targets in Israel would not necessarily lead to a total regional war, it is clear that launching over 300 missiles and drones demonstrates a willingness to take considerable risks that it had previously avoided.

The Iranian leader is a revolutionary ideologue who has never abandoned his revolutionary worldview. Nevertheless, since his appointment as Iranian leader in mid-1989, Khamenei has generally adopted a cautious policy, particularly in foreign relations, to ensure the survival of his regime. For example, in 2003 he agreed to freeze work in the development of a military nuclear device, concerned that Iran could be the next in line after the American invasion of Iraq. Securing the survival of the Islamic Republic despite internal and external threats is the primary objective of the leadership. Khamenei perceives direct military conflict with the United States as an existential threat to the regime's survival, necessitating a display of caution, notwithstanding his extreme rhetoric. Thus, while his declarations often reflect an uncompromising revolutionary approach, his policies typically express caution.

Khamenei's decision to attack Israel is not necessarily evidence of a significant change in his decision-making processes or his willingness to drag Iran into all-out war with Israel, and certainly not with the United States. Shortly after the nighttime attack, senior Iranian officials were quick to announce the successful completion of an act of revenge against Israel, attempting to close the incident. Moreover, this is not the first time that Iran has retreated from a policy of restraint and shown willingness to take risks in the face of growing external challenges. Twice in recent years, Iran adopted a policy of "strategic patience," and both times, the policy was ultimately abandoned when it

concluded that the risks involved outweighed the potential benefits.

For a year after President Donald Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal in May 2018 and renewed economic sanctions, Iran adhered to its obligations under the nuclear deal of summer 2015 and adopted a policy of strategic patience, hoping to gain adequate financial compensation from the other deal partners. However, Europe's failure to establish an alternative mechanism for financial transactions with Iran, coupled with increasing American economic pressure, led to a shift in Iranian policy. Iran gradually began to deviate from its obligations under the deal while simultaneously engaging in defiant military actions against the United States and its allies.

Iran returned to its strategic patience policy following the assassinations of senior Iranian personnel in Syria, attributed to Israel, during the Gaza war. According to a report in the New York Times in early 2024, the Iranian leader instructed his military commanders to adopt a policy of strategic patience and to avoid, in every possible way, serious escalation that could drag Iran into direct military conflict with Israel or the United States. However, the killing of a senior Iranian in the attack in Damascus prompted Tehran to abandon this policy. It is possible that this decision was based on an assessment by the Iranian leadership that the risk of further Israeli attacks against senior Iranians outweighed the risk of escalation with Israel.

On other occasions, the Iranian leadership has also demonstrated a willingness to take calculated risks to safeguard its essential national interests. For example, in January 2024, in an unprecedented move, the Revolutionary Guards launched salvos of rockets towards a site reportedly used by the Israeli Mossad in Northern Iraq and towards a training base of the Baluchi terrorist organization Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan. The intensive barrage was retaliation against Israel for the assassination of senior Revolutionary Guards commander Sayyed Razi Mousavi and against Jaish al-Adl for a series of

attacks on Iranian officers and soldiers along the Iran-Pakistan border. In response to the attack in Pakistan, on January 18, 2024, the Pakistani Air Force struck terrorist targets in Iran, resulting in casualties.

Conversely, in other cases, Iran has continued to demonstrate a high degree of restraint and caution, particularly towards the United States. An example of Iran's effort to avoid direct military conflict with the United States can be seen in their response following the deaths of three American soldiers in a drone attack on a base in northern Jordan in late January 2024. Less than 48 hours after the incident, attributed to pro-Iranian Shiite militias in Iraq, Esmail Qaani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards, traveled to Baghdad. There, he met with representatives of some Shiite militias and warned them that such actions could provoke a severe American response. According to one report, Qaani instructed the militia commanders to maintain a low profile to avoid US attacks on the militias or even direct action against Iran itself.

> The war in Ukraine and the supply of Iranian drones to Russia have elevated relations between Tehran and Moscow to a strategic partnership, which Iran has leveraged to enhance its standing within the new world order.

It is possible that the fear of military conflict with the United States has decreased in recent years, amidst growing assessment in Tehran that the United States is weakened and the American administration is reluctant to engage in direct conflict with Iran. This shift is attributed to changes in U.S. priorities influenced by international developments, particularly involving Russia and China. In addition, changes in Iran's regional and international status, coupled with its growing military strength, may encourage its leaders to adopt more daring policies. In the regional arena, Iran has capitalized on events to advance its aims and

interests in the Middle East and to strengthen the regional axis under its leadership.

Moreover, the war in Ukraine and the supply of Iranian drones to Russia have elevated relations between Tehran and Moscow to a strategic partnership, which Iran has leveraged to enhance its standing within the new world order. The Islamic Republic views international developments as an opportunity to establish a multi-polar world order, not dominated by America, where it can play a more significant role alongside its regional allies and international partners, principally Russia and China. In a speech in November 2022, Iranian leader Khamenei declared that the United States is no longer the world's dominant power and that a new world order is emerging, characterized by the shift of political, economic, and cultural power from the West to Asia, and the expansion of the "axis of resistance."

The Supreme Leader's willingness to take greater risks could also stem from recent changes in the main centers of power within Iran, particularly the growing influence of hardliners in decision-making and the absolute control by conservatives over all state institutions, starting with the Supreme National Security Council. Although the Supreme Leader holds most of the authority in the country, he is supported by a limited team of advisors and the Supreme National Security Council, headed by the president. The election of Ebrahim Raisi as president in 2021 reinforced the council's hawkish composition. This trend reached its peak in May 2023 with the appointment of Ali Akbar Ahmadian as secretary of the Council, replacing Ali Shamkhani. This appointment also reflected the ongoing rise of the Revolutionary Guards' influence in decision-making, turning the organization into a central focus of power in the Iranian political system.

Ultimately, Khamenei's conduct in recent months does not necessarily indicate that he has abandoned the generally cautious line of his 35-year rule. However, the approaching end of his leadership could lead him in two

opposing directions. On one hand, given his advanced age, he might avoid any far-reaching policy changes or risks that could undermine the national security of country at the end of his tenure. On the other hand, he might conclude that now is the time to bolster the immunity of the Islamic Republic against growing security challenges, mainly from Israel, and internal challenges to the regime's stability, even if that means taking calculated risks that he previously avoided.

The Concept of Proxies

After the Iranian attack on Israel, intelligence sources estimated that Iran was displeased with Hezbollah's actions on the night of the attack. Despite launching several salvos of dozens of rockets toward army bases on the Golan Heights, Hezbollah's response adhered to the established rules of engagement between the organization and Israel along the northern border since the onset of the war in Gaza. This incident was not the first time apparent tensions surfaced between Iran and its proxies during the war. The killing of three American troops in Jordan in an attack by an Iraqi Shiite militia in late January 2024, and the increasing involvement of the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen, targeting shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, risked dragging Iran into an unwanted military confrontation with the United States.

The Islamic Republic views its network of proxies as integral to its military strength and deterrent capability. This network enables Iran to exert influence in the region and deter its enemies while maintaining plausible deniability, thereby mitigating the political and military costs associated with the actions of its proxies. However, despite these advantages, conflicts of interest can arise between Iran and some of the organizations it supports. Moreover, in recent years, particularly following the assassination of Qasem Soleimani in January 2020, Iran has adopted a more decentralized approach to managing this network. While it continues to

wield considerable influence within the network, this influence is not necessarily exerted through complete and continuous control over each of its components.

Alongside the trend of decentralization in the Iranian proxy network, recent years have witnessed a growing Iranian preference for direct attacks by its own forces, alongside continued use of these organizations. Since May 2019, when Iran abandoned its policy of strategic patience adopted after the United States withdrew from the nuclear treaty in May 2018, it has undertaken a series of aggressive actions. These included sabotaging oil tankers in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman (summer 2019), shooting down an American drone (June 2019), and launching cruise missile and drone attacks on Saudi oil installations (September 2019). These actions were orchestrated and executed by Iranian military units under direct leadership and without the involvement of proxies.

In the Syrian arena, recent changes in Iranian activity against Israel are evident in Iran's increased willingness to conduct direct attacks on Israel using drones and rockets. Proxies, generally less effective than Iran's high-quality capabilities, require extensive coordination and control and involve managing complex operations across different arenas. These tasks are largely handled by the Iranian armed forces. Consequently, in recent years, Iran has preferred to deploy its own forces in some cases. Additionally, Iran's growing sense of security has emboldened it to undertake more daring direct actions, calculatedly accepting risks to achieve strategic objectives.

The war in Gaza provided Iran with its first significant opportunity to implement its "united fronts" concept on a broader scale than before, coordinating simultaneous action across multiple arenas against Israel and the United States without facing direct consequences. However, it also revealed the limitations of Iran's ability to fully leverage the capabilities of the axis of resistance, especially due to concerns

about being dragged into direct military conflict with Israel and possibly the United States. Furthermore, Iran has not achieved two crucial objectives through its proxy network: securing a ceasefire in Gaza to minimize damage to Hamas and exerting enough pressure on the United States to end its unequivocal support for Israel, thereby forcing it to cease the war without achieving its objectives.

> In the first mention of the attack, Revolutionary Guards Commander Hossein Salami warned that Iran had established a new equation against the "Zionist entity," asserting that henceforth it would respond directly from its own territory to any Israeli aggression.

The direct Iranian attack on Israel on April 14 could herald a further step in Tehran's increasing preference to utilize its own strategic military capabilities rather than relying on its regional network of proxies. In the first mention of the attack, Revolutionary Guards Commander Hossein Salami warned that Iran had established a new equation against the "Zionist entity," asserting that henceforth it would respond directly from its own territory to any Israeli aggression. Iran continues to derive benefits from its proxy strategy and it is unlikely to abandon it in the foreseeable future. However, the operational difficulties and risks associated with maintaining such a network, coupled with Tehran's growing inclination to act directly in certain instances, might prompt Iran to reassess the proxy concept. Ultimately, Iran will need to determine whether the advantages of its current approach still outweigh the inherent risks and challenges.

The Nuclear Strategy

Against the backdrop of the April 2024 escalation between Israel and Iran, Ahmad Haghtalab the Revolutionary Guards commander responsible for protecting nuclear sites, warned that if Israel attempted to damage nuclear facilities

in response to an Iranian attack, Tehran could deviate from its previous considerations and reconsider its nuclear doctrine. A few days later, Javad Karimi Qoddusi, a member of the Majlis Committee on National Security & Foreign Policy, claimed that Iran needed only one week to conduct a nuclear test after receiving approval from the Supreme Leader.

These declarations align with the growing voices in Iran calling for a reassessment of its nuclear strategy, rather than settling for its status as a nuclear threshold state. Senior Iranian officials emphasize that the primary obstacle to Iran developing nuclear weapons is political rather than technological. For instance, in December 2022, Kamal Kharazi, Chairman of the Strategic Council for Foreign Policy, stated that Iran could produce a nuclear bomb but had no intention of doing so. Mahmoud Reza Aghamiri, President of Shahid Beheshti University and a nuclear scientist, underscored in an April 7, 2024, interview on Iranian television, that Ayatollah Khamenei could change his religious ruling (fatwa) prohibiting the production of nuclear weapons at any time, and Iran has the capability to comply in such a scenario. Saeed Leylaz, an Iranian economist and advisor to the former reformist President Mohammad Khatami, claimed that in the event of an attack on Iran, it would conduct its first nuclear test.

Amidst growing voices in Iran urging a review of its nuclear doctrine, Iranian officials continue to emphasize the civilian purposes of their nuclear program. Following the statement by Majlis Member Qoddusi, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani also reiterated at a press conference in Tehran that a nuclear bomb had no place in Iran's defense doctrine. President Raisi further affirmed that Iran remained committed to its leader's fatwa, and that nuclear weapons had no place in its doctrine. On April 25, 2024, Iranian news sites published an infographic prepared by the Documentation Center of the Islamic Revolution, summarizing the Iranian leader's declarations ruling out the development of a nuclear bomb.

Currently, there is no evidence of a decision by the Iranian leadership led by Khamenei to change its nuclear strategy and pursue nuclear weapons. However, the public statements emerging from Iran supporting a review of its nuclear strategy suggest ongoing discussions on this matter within the corridors of power in Tehran. Factors such as Iran's position on the nuclear threshold, heightened risks of direct military confrontation with Israel and possibly the United States, increased support from Russia and China, and challenges in managing proxy dynamics following lessons from the Gaza war—all these may bolster voices within the Iranian leadership advocating for deeper entrenchment in the nuclear threshold and enhancing Iran's capability to develop nuclear weapons within a short time frame. This scenario hinges on a political decision by the leader, driven by an assessment that mounting threats to Iran's national security necessitate moving beyond reliance on nuclear threshold status to deter adversaries.

Summary and Significance

Iran finds itself at a significant crossroads. The impending end of the current leader's reign, coupled with a new and perilous escalation with Israel, necessitates a reassessment of its military capabilities. Simultaneously, its stance on the nuclear threshold presents an opportunity to review its nuclear strategy, while the lessons from the war in Gaza demand a re-examination of the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing its network of proxies. The ongoing campaign in Gaza, with its regional implications, is akin to a potential earthquake whose effects will inevitably reach Iran. The Islamic Republic must now consider whether the war thwarts or accelerates what it views as positive trends. The outcomes of this reassessment will significantly influence Iran's regional and international policies.

However, this does not imply imminent changes in every arena addressed in this article. The blend of revolutionary vision and national interests will likely persist as the bedrock of the Iranian leadership's power. This combination enables Iran to adapt its policies to evolving circumstances and maintain flexibility in a complex reality. Moreover, it remains uncertain whether there will be substantial changes in the decision-making process of the Iranian leadership, given the advanced age of the current leader and preparations for the anticipated succession struggle upon his death.

However, Iran's perspective on international developments as an opportunity to establish a new multipolar world order without American leadership, its pursuit of the military nuclear threshold, development of missile systems and drones to compensate for its limited conventional military capabilities, establishment of a pro-Iranian regional axis, and creation of a "ring of fire" around Israel, all reinforce Tehran's assessment that the strategic balance is tilting in its favor. This could embolden Iran to take greater risks and adopt a more confrontational policy, particularly towards Israel. Such a stance may be exacerbated by increasing extremism within the Iranian political system and the influence of the Revolutionary Guards that espouse a hawkish, nationalist, and defiant stance towards the West. They may potentially encourage the Iranian leadership to adopt a less cautious approach concerning key issues, including the nuclear program, relations with the United States and Israel, and regional aspirations.

These developments underscore the urgency for Israel and its allies, particularly the United States, to prepare for shifts in Iranian strategy and to devise a comprehensive strategy concerning the Islamic Republic. Such a strategy must offer a robust response to the array of challenges Iran poses to Israel's national security and tilt the strategic balance in Israel's favor. To affectively address Iran, Israel must collaborate closely with the United States, other Western countries, and moderate Arab states based on a vision aimed at shaping a new regional order characterized by strengthened ties with

the United States, promotion of normalization with the Arab world, and deterrence against Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

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Implementing the Israeli Government's Proposed Punitive Measures Could Lead to the Collapse of the Palestinian Authority

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Since the events of October 7 and especially following the Palestinian Authority's involvement in legal cases against Israel at international courts in The Hague and the wave of nations recognizing a Palestinian state, the Israeli government has significantly intensified its punitive measures against the PA, where the economy, which was in a difficult situation even before the war, has deteriorated even further. These measures are designed to punish the Palestinian Authority to the point of its collapse since the package of measures will gradually undermine the PA government's ability to rule. Punitive measures by the Israeli government could spark a violent Palestinian uprising in Judea and Samaria.

Keywords: Israel, Palestinian Authority, October 7 terror attack

Introduction

Since October 7 and the start of the war in Gaza, and even more so in light of the Palestinian Authority's involvement in legal cases against Israel at international courts in The Hague and the wave of various countries officially recognizing a Palestinian state, the Israeli government has significantly intensified its punitive measures against the PA, where the economy, which was in a difficult situation even before the war, has deteriorated even further. Even before these latest measures have an impact, the Palestinian Authority was considered a failed government according to the Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index. This is due to the loss of control over its territory and its lack of monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force; the erosion of its authority to make collective decisions; and its inability to provide basic services to the Palestinian public.

In this article, we will examine the economic, settlement and individual measures that Israel has announced against the Palestinian Authority, in order to highlight their significance and potential ramifications— undermining the functionality of the PA to the point of its collapse.

Economic Measures

The measures that Israel has enacted since the outbreak of the war in the Gaza Strip have led to a dramatic deterioration in the economic state of the Palestinian Authority:

Ban on Palestinian Workers Entering Israel

Before the outbreak of the war, around 165,000 Palestinians were employed in Israel and West Bank settlements; around 130,000 worked

legally. Since October 7, however, Palestinian workers have not been permitted to enter Israel, notwithstanding 8,000 who are defined as essential workers and another 18,000 who have been permitted to work in industrial zones and settlements in the West Bank. In practice, 120,000 people became unemployed and unable to earn a livelihood, with commensurate implications for stability in the territories. The damage to the Palestinian economy is estimated to be in the hundreds of millions of shekels every month and import/export activity has also dropped by 30 percent.

> A proposed new law, which was passed in its first Knesset reading on May 29, deals with the forfeiture of the sum that the Palestinian Authority intends to pay to the families of terrorists (thus far, Israel has withheld around 3 billion shekels), which would allow Israel, two years after the money was frozen, to put it toward a special fund for terror victims.

Withholding Tax Revenues and Customs Duties

These funds are tax refunds for Palestinian workers' labor and customs duties collected by Israel for the movement of goods to the Palestinian Authority. They make up 65 percent of the PA's annual budget. The total is between 750 and 800 million shekels a month, of which 120 million shekels is earmarked for the Gaza Strip. A large proportion of the sum is used to pay the salaries of Palestinian Authority employees, particularly the 30,000 or so members of the Palestinian security apparatus. Shortly after the outbreak of the war, in November 2023, the State of Israel decided—much to the chagrin of the Palestinian Authority—to deduct from these revenues the sum that was to be transferred to Gaza, in addition to the regular deduction of around 50 million shekels a month that the PA pays to the families of terrorists and Palestinian security prisoners (known in

Israel as terrorist salaries). Under international pressure, especially from the United States, Israel decided in January that it would transfer the accumulated differential—between 250 and 200 million shekels—to Norway. A proposed new law, which was passed in its first Knesset reading on May 29, deals with the forfeiture of the sum that the Palestinian Authority intends to pay to the families of terrorists (thus far, Israel has withheld around 3 billion shekels), which would allow Israel, two years after the money was frozen, to put it toward a special fund for terror victims. Seizing the money and putting it in the national coffers would ensure that the frozen funds do not end up in the hands of the Palestinian Authority.

Refusing to Extend the Indemnity Allowing Israeli Banks to Work with Palestinian Banks

Israeli banks need indemnity as insurance against the imposition of sanctions against financial institutions that transfer monetary aid to the Palestinian Authority, which would be a violation of the Taylor Force Act—passed by the U.S. Congress to stop American economic aid to the Palestinian Authority until the PA ceases paying stipends to individuals who commit acts of terrorism. Therefore, refusal to allow two Israeli banks—Bank Discount and Bank Hapoalim—to transfer money to banks in the Palestinian Authority and annulling their indemnity from prosecution for supporting terrorism, could sever the Palestinian banking system from the international system. The Israeli government usually renews this waiver for a period of one year but when Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich renewed it in April, he did so for just three months. Now Smotrich is threatening not to renew the waivers, which would force the two Israeli banks to sever their ties with Palestinian banks. The waiver, according to financial experts, facilitates payment for vital services and salaries related to the PA and makes it easier to import essential goods, such as food, water and electricity to the West Bank.

Without it, the Palestinian economy would be "shut down for an extended period of time."

Bolstering the Settlements

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Minister for Settlement and National Missions Orit Strock, both from the Religious Zionism party, recently announced the allocation of funding and permits for infrastructure in more than 60 illegal outposts that are at the start of their authorization process. Five of them (Evyatar, Sde Ephraim, Givat Assaf, Heletz, and Adurayim) were approved at the cabinet meeting on June 27, in response to five nations recognizing the Palestinian state in the aftermath of October 7. It was also decided that Israel would not remove existing farms on state land, based on the claim that they are situated on lands designated as nature reserves. As Finance Minister and Minister of Defense, Smotrich has assumed total control over planning, land, enforcement and transportation in Judea and Samaria and he is also in charge of all issues related to the settlements. To this end, he appointed, for the first time, his own deputy to the head of the Civil Administration—an official who is not subordinate to the head of the Civil Administration but to the new body that he established within the Defense Ministry.

On May 22, the finance minister made more demands of the prime minister, in response to the wave of governments recognizing the Palestinian state and the diplomatic-legal campaign that the Palestinian Authority is waging against Israel. He demanded an immediate meeting of the Judea and Samaria Planning Council to approve the construction of dozens of housing units in existing settlements—including in Area E1 between Ma'aleh Adumim and Jerusalem—, 6,000 of which were approved at the June 27 cabinet meeting; the establishment of a new settlement every time any country unilaterally recognizes a Palestinian state; and the authorization of four illegal outposts. At the same time, Smotrich also intends to start enforcing building restrictions

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on illegal Palestinian construction in Area B of the West Bank, including the nature reserve in the Judean Desert (land that was defined as a nature reserve in Area B)—a move that was also approved as part of the sanctions adopted at the June 27 cabinet meeting.

As for the restrictions on settlements in the northern part of Samaria, the Knesset last year approved the annulment of the Disengagement Law, thereby allowing Israelis to return to and settle areas of northern Samaria from which Israel withdrew in 2005. Implementation of the law is dependent on a military permit. Indeed, on May 22, the defense minister cancelled the ban on entry into three of the northern Samaria settlements that were evacuated in the disengagement—Sa-Nur, Kadim and Ganim (although entry to the settlements is still not possible since the IDF issued a decree to allow the defense establishment to make suitable security arrangements).

At the security cabinet meeting that was held on June 16, ministers were presented with the measures that the government intended to take against the Palestinian Authority, including permanently cancelling the VIP passes that PA officials use to get through Israeli checkpoints, as well as additional economic sanctions against senior officials and their families.

Individual Sanctions

At the security cabinet meeting that was held on June 16, ministers were presented with the measures that the government intended to take against the Palestinian Authority, including permanently cancelling the VIP passes that PA

officials use to get through Israeli checkpoints, as well as additional economic sanctions against senior officials and their families. Also discussed was the option of deporting senior PA officials and their families (who are living illegally in Judea and Samaria); travel restrictions within Judea and Samaria for those involved in seeking arrest warrants against Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant and preventing them from travelling overseas; and prosecuting Palestinian officials for incitement to terrorism and supporting terrorism in Judea and Samaria—including arresting and putting them on trial. These measures were approved at the June 27 cabinet meeting.

Summary and Significance

Under the current strains, the Palestinian Authority's precarious state, as a failed entity, is liable to worsen to the point of collapse and its institutions will crumble and cease to function as administrative, authoritative and central organizations. As a result, the PA will become insolvent, will stop paying salaries to its employees, will lose the ability to control its security apparatuses and will no longer be able to provide basic civilian needs in Judea and Samaria. This could lead to a situation whereby the Palestinian forces turn their weapons on Israel and stop ensuring public order.

Against the backdrop of the measures described above—and before all of them are implemented—is it important to note that, even now, the Palestinian Authority is in a precarious situation. Since the start of the war in Gaza, more than 530 people have been killed in Judea and Samaria (the vast majority of them terrorists), more than 5,200 have been injured and around 4,000 have been arrested. The IDF is using new methods, including aerial attacks using drones and helicopters. At the same time, the Palestinian Authority's ability to govern and thwart terror attacks has been undermined and its public standing is at an all-time low: more than 60 percent of Palestinians support the dissolution of the PA and 89 percent

want Mahmoud Abbas to step down from his position as chairman.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the Israeli government's proposals are being met with concern by the defense establishments of both Israel and the United States, which are worried about the economic collapse of the Palestinian Authority, leading to chaos in Judea and Samaria and to more support for Hamas, as Iran continues to provide financial support for terror attacks. Recently, the Shin Bet issued a strategic warning to the political leadership and the defense establishment about the dangers of economic collapse. Among other things, the Shin Bet noted that salaries to members of the Palestinian security apparatus have already been slashed, which could lead to them defecting to terrorist organizations and a drop in the effectiveness of their counterterrorism operations against Hamas in Judea and Samaria.

All of this comes against the backdrop of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's reticence to work with the Palestinian Authority. He has reiterated time and time again that he does not view the PA as part of the solution for post-war Gaza but as part of the problem, and has drawn comparisons between Fatahstan and Hamastan. The cooperation of the PA with international moves to recognize an independent Palestinian state also erodes its hopes of legitimacy in the eyes of Israel. The package of sanctions that Israel has formulated against the Palestinian Authority is therefore designed to preclude the PA as a relevant player in reforming the Palestinian arena.

Finance and 'territories' minister Smotrich is therefore taking advantage of the opportunity to hasten the Palestinian Authority's economic collapse and descent into dysfunction. Implementing these measures—especially halting the transfer of tax revenues and refusing to extend the waiver for Israeli banks—could even be a death blow for the PA. A warning saying just that was recently issued by the World Bank, which reported that, even before the implementation of these additional measures,

the gap between the income and expenditure of the Palestinian Authority could lead to its collapse. The changes that Smotrich is implementing contradict the position of the Shin Bet and the IDF's Central Command, which insist that every incident in Judea and Samaria has security ramifications that could undermine national security. Sources in the defense establishment have expressed their views of Smotrich's planned measures, saying that he is taking advantage of his dual roles as minister in the Defense and Finance ministries, to promote a deliberate policy that could lead to an eruption of violence in Judea and Samaria: "We are walking into the abyss with eyes wide open." It would appear that the far-right members of the Israeli government are ignoring these warnings, as well as the fundamental fact that increasing the number of troops in Judea and Samaria will necessarily come at the expense of the Gaza Strip and the northern border. They are also turning a blind eye to the increase in Iranian involvement on the ground, as Tehran promotes attacks by sending money to terror groups and smuggling arms and ammunition via Jordan into the West Bank.

If the Palestinian Authority were to collapse, Israel would find itself laboring under the heavy burden of responsibility for the civilian needs and public order of some 2.7 million Palestinians living in the West Bank, at an annual economic cost of around 57 million shekels. That would be around 5 percent of Israel's GDP (30 million shekels for pensions, 16 million shekels on education, 18 million shekels on healthcare,

6 million shekels on other government expenses and 2 million shekels on the Civil Administration in the West Bank, minus income of around 15 million shekels). And it should be noted that the process of the PA's collapse—even if, in the end, it does not fully disintegrate—will have ramifications for Israel.

In order to prevent the Palestinian Authority from collapsing—given the dangerous implications for Israel in terms of the cost of supporting the Palestinian population, the need to increase troops levels and the danger of international isolation and damage to peaceful relations with our neighbors—the government must take responsibility for the long-term, must not take any far-reaching decisions that would cost more than Israel's resources can afford and refrain from measures that might hasten the collapse of the PA. This does not mean that Israel cannot take measures against the diplomatic-legal campaign that the Palestinian Authority is waging—but not in a manner than would lead to its collapse or to an escalation of the security situation in Judea and Samaria. To this end, we should encourage the international community and pragmatic Arab states to involve themselves in the introduction of the necessary reforms to the PA, including an end to the policy of paying terrorists' salaries—in accordance with the vision of U.S. President Joe Biden.

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The IDF in the Face of Popular Criminality following the Incursions at Sde Teiman and Beit Lid

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The violent incursions at IDF camps in Sde Teiman and Beit Lid are worthy of discussion on a number of levels. Firstly, in the general context of the state, its moral image, and its civil society; and secondly in the context of the political conduct of the state, the government leaders, and the political parties, both within and outside of the Knesset. This article focuses on a different aspect, which is worthy of a separate discussion: that of the IDF, its values and norms, and the actions of its soldiers in carrying out their missions—when it faces popular criminality in its ranks and its surroundings.

The crucial element in these events is not the violent incursions into military camps; it is the acts of which several reserve soldiers in the unit operating at Sde Teiman are suspected. Their alleged abuse of a terrorist under their supervision was described in legal terminology as "sodomy in coercive circumstances, causing injury combined with aggravated intent, collective abuse in aggravating circumstances, inappropriate behavior." Some of them are also suspected of "assaulting and obstructing a public servant."

1. The Breach of IDF Values

Even though the repugnant character of such actions is obvious, we will explain briefly the related breach of IDF values.

Statehood: All of a soldier's actions during their service in uniform must comply with the fundamental requirements of state activity. First of all, they must conform to the principles of the rule of law. Secondly, they must be done for the general benefit in accordance with the IDF values and the law. Thirdly, they must conform to the principles of the soldier's occupation or job, in accordance with IDF values and the law.

Human dignity: Any injury to a person in a situation in which there is no justification for injuring that person, constitutes abuse. Someone who injures a prisoner is injuring a person who poses no danger (which may justify injury). The person causing the injury has no authority whatsoever to punish another person. The person causing the injury is deviating from proper behavior according to the basic moral value of maintaining human dignity, which is one of the IDF values and one of the fundamental values of Israel as a democratic country.

Purity of arms: Arms and any other means of force in the possession of a soldier are designated solely for carrying out the missions assigned to the soldier in accordance with their orders and rules. No rule allows sexual abuse or collective abuse of prisoners or captives, and if an order to do this was given, it was manifestly illegal: it is forbidden to issue such an order, and if given, to obey it.

Representativeness: All of a soldier's actions during their military service should reflect the orders, rules, and values of the IDF, not their personal views. Disciplined military activity is impossible if the soldier does not restrict their actions to the sphere controlled directly by their commanders and indirectly by the IDF through its rules and values. A soldier who commits abuse creates the false impression that the IDF is abusive, thereby damaging their comrades and commanders and the IDF as a whole.

Professionalism: Every action by a soldier in the course of performing their duty is an action for the purpose of accomplishing a given mission in accordance with the professional principles guiding their activity. There are professional rules for guarding prisoners and captives, and these principles provide no basis for any type of abuse whatsoever.

Responsibility: The soldier bears responsibility for their actions, including the foreseeable results of their actions. A soldier who abuses prisoners is responsible for the possible grave consequences of their actions in the sphere of international law, which is liable to regard their actions and those of their IDF commanders as war crimes.

Dedication to a mission: A soldier with a good understanding of the task that they have been assigned in order to carry out a mission knows that they must dedicate themselves to that mission. This includes not only willingness to continue striving to achieve it, but also willingness to devote their best efforts until it is accomplished. Abuse, and especially collective abuse, can have no place whatsoever in the proper achievement of a mission in a

professional manner, in accordance with the orders, rules, and values of the IDF.

The grave suspicion that reserve soldiers failed to comply with their obligations under the law and according to IDF values, gives rise to several general problems which will be discussed here in brief. We will present these problems and initial suggestions for addressing each of them.

2. The Treatment of Criminality

The harsh events at the Sde Teiman and Beit Lid IDF camps feature suspected cases of abuse on the part of several reserve soldiers. The demonstrations on behalf of the suspects and the incursions into those camps attracted the media's attention, perhaps due to the photogenic nature of events. From the perspective of the essential defense of IDF values, however, the alleged criminality by soldiers is more important.

In cases of criminality, the first steps are taken via the internal mechanism for preserving the rule of law in the IDF. This refers to the IDF's internal legal system, which includes the Military Advocate General and its entire military legal staff and the Military Police Criminal Investigative Unit for Operational Affairs (CIUO), which in specific situations will be instructed by the Military Advocate General to investigate allegations of criminal behavior by soldiers. In the appropriate circumstances, the Military Advocate General will put a soldier on trial before a court martial. If convicted, a soldier has the right of appeal to the Military Court of Appeals.

To a large extent, the IDF internal legal system corresponds to that of the state legal system. There are historical and objective explanations for this parallel, which should be maintained as is. In the IDF, the general idea of the rule of law is manifested in the actions of the Military Advocate General, the CIUO, and the military courts. Not even small deviations from these should be countenanced.

The CIUO investigators sent to investigate suspected abuse did their work in accordance

with the principles of their profession and position. I do not accept pointless comments from within and without the IDF about the proper ways of conducting investigations. Instead of asking frivolous questions about whether the investigators were justified in wearing masks, it would be preferable to focus on the gravity of the offenses, the concern about a level of group-orchestrated criminality, and the natural concern about the possibility that commanders were present when abuse was taking place and ignored it, or even worse.

Some of the objections to the conduct of the CIUO investigators came from the IDF Personnel Directorate, the organizational framework of which the CIUO is a part. Soldiers should not hear from the media that their commanders object to some professional aspect of their activity. Criticism of any professional aspect of activity must be communicated via the professional channels. It would be better for the public to hear an effective professional explanation of the CIUO investigators' conduct, rather than a repudiation in a questionable style that is also ethically lacking. The style of criticism is problematic insofar as it raises concern about the penetration of political norms into the IDF. Other expressions of this phenomena also underlie such a concern, but this is not the right place to discuss this question.

Commanders whose soldiers are suspected of severe criminality may not simply rely on the course of complex legal proceedings, from the CIUO investigation to the military court's verdict. In parallel to any formal investigation, they should take command measures to rid their unit of any risk of criminality. Before that, they should ask themselves what aspect of the unit's internal structure or mode of operation, or both of those, left room for criminality to arise, especially on a large scale.

In the reports describing the activity of the Military Advocate General and the CIUO investigators, I found no grounds to malign either of them. I was glad to read that the IDF Chief of Staff supported them in their conduct

and I recommend that he finds opportunities to strengthen and expand this support for both the Military Advocate General and the CIUO. However, it is also important to take note of general educational elements in the training of soldiers at all stages, and to individual educational elements in the standard operating procedures (SOP) and so forth. This will be further discussed below.

3. The IDF is Not, and Should Not Be, a "Mirror of the People"

In the events at Sde Teiman and Beit Lid, the IDF's encounter with criminality was not limited to suspicions about criminal behavior by soldiers. The suspected soldiers were supported by demonstrations, and occasionally by actions, on the part of civilians, including Knesset members, who assembled around the Sde Teiman and Beit Lid bases. Some of these civilians also broke into the bases.

The IDF usually shows sensitivity to views prevailing among civilians, first of all because of the influence that civilians have on the soldiers' families and friends and on the soldiers' decisions about the IDF, such as whether to volunteer for combat units and officer courses, and showing up for reserve duty, and secondly because of the common perception of the IDF as "the people's army."

A clear, well-defined, acceptable, and justifiable conception of "the people's army" does not exist, but the IDF, even as "the people's army," should not be "a reflection of the people." The IDF is a state-directed, essential, and professional institution with its own tasks, tools, and values. It cannot fulfill its essential tasks with the means at its disposal and in accordance with its values if it must reflect the full spectrum of opinions present among civilians. There are situations in which it is the duty of the IDF to distance itself from opinions held by this or that group, so that it can continue to maintain its official status and act properly in fulfilling its essential duty.

In a situation in which dozens, and perhaps hundreds, of civilians gather at the gates of

military bases to defend soldiers suspected of severe criminal behavior, the IDF must express a firm stance against that of the demonstrators, while completely disassociating itself from the criminal behavior itself.

The situation is especially difficult and acute when government ministers or Knesset members are among the demonstrators. The IDF's constitutional status requires it to respect these public officeholders. At the same time, however, it must also maintain absolute loyalty to the rule of law, as represented in the IDF by the Military Advocate General, with the help of the CIUO. Insofar as they are needed, the military courts will also play important roles in preserving the rule of law.

4. The Handling of Civilian Obstruction

In the events at Sde Teiman and Beit Lid there were cases of Israeli civilians obstructing military activity. Civilians massing at the gates of a military installation obstruct necessary movement by soldiers entering or leaving the installation. When civilians break into a military installation, they interrupt the military activity taking place in it. Civilians attempting to prevent the CIUO from detaining soldiers suspected of offenses are obstructing the performance of a task that the military investigators have been assigned to carry out. Civilians trying to free soldiers suspected of offenses who are being held in a military facility are obstructing the military activity being conducted there.

Such cases of obstruction require substantial practical intervention to halt the disruption of military activity. Since the people causing this obstruction are Israeli citizens, it is usually the job of the police to prevent the obstruction using the means available to policemen. Soldiers will summon the policemen, who will remove the rioters to enable the soldiers to carry out the tasks assigned to them.

The policemen who are supposed to deal with the attempt by Israeli civilians to obstruct soldiers in their tasks will be policemen trained

in the use of force aimed at preventing such activity. This is because these policemen have been trained in the use of the force at their disposal to the precise extent needed to restore order, and also because they have been specially trained for tasks involving wider public unrest, rather than by one or a few individuals.

For future incidents, soldiers may be trained to act as policemen to maintain the ability of soldiers to perform their tasks in the face of obstruction by Israeli civilians. This need may arise, for example, when not enough policemen are summoned or arrive at the site where civilians are disrupting military activity and are consequently unable to prevent this disruption. Summoning soldiers who have not been trained in preventing obstruction, such as the two Nahal battalions called to Beit Lid, is legally permissible, but is obviously acceptable only when all the previous measures have failed to end the disruption.

> In a situation in which dozens, and perhaps hundreds, of civilians gather at the gates of military bases to defend soldiers suspected of severe criminal behavior, the IDF must express a firm stance against that of the demonstrators, while completely disassociating itself from the criminal behavior itself.

5. Police Conduct in Cases of Civilian Obstruction

There have recently been a few other cases of police assistance to soldiers. In media reports, Israeli citizens were seen impeding the entry into the Gaza Strip of trucks carrying humanitarian aid. The trucks were delayed, and the rioters threw the aid containers from the trucks onto the road in some cases, and even set them on fire in one case. Under international arrangements, the task of bringing humanitarian aid trucks to Gaza during wartime is a military mission. Although the police were summoned to the locations of the riots, police forces did not arrive in the area and did not suppress the unrest.

Following the Sde Teiman and Beit Lid events, some claimed that the police had not done their job properly in protecting the facilities and the soldiers working there against the rioters, who were Israeli civilians. Without determining whether this assertion is correct, it is worth discussing the proper conduct by the IDF in a situation in which the police are not intervening in an event or are not doing so on the necessary scale and with the necessary determination.

In the current circumstances, it is appropriate to mention a few of the values of the Israel Police. These values are divided into three groups: mission values, attitude values, and performance values. One of the mission values is "upholding and enforcing the law." Two principles are attached to this value. The second principle states, "We will uphold the law in exemplary fashion in all circumstances with no appearance of unworthy conduct in all aspects of our activity." One of the attitude values is "statehood." Principle 1 attached to this value states, "We will uphold the law, in all circumstances, neutrally and professionally, objectively, and with equality, tolerance, respect, and representatively, with the means and methods permitted by law." One of the performance values is "determination and adherence to the mission," which by definition and according to the associated principle requires dedication, responsibility, judgment, alertness and decisiveness, insight and professionalism, reasonableness and proportionality.

Values and principles from the three groups therefore require that policemen act in highly proper, practical ways. Two comments are in order with respect to these values and principles: one local and one general. The local comment is that in the event of civil disturbance having a significant impact on military activity, if police conduct does not appear to conform to the law, its values, and its principles, the IDF should adopt local measures to neutralize the disturbance, using soldiers who have been trained for such activity. These soldiers should operate in accordance with IDF values, among

them statehood, professionalism, preservation of human dignity, and purity of arms.

The general comment is more complex. A situation is possible in which soldiers and their commander draw the attention of their senior commanders to an ongoing series of events in which soldiers were in need of police protection against Israeli civilians who were obstructing them in carrying out their missions, but the police did not provide the necessary help, and frequently provided them with no help whatsoever. In such a situation, following the rigorous examination of the facts, and after providing the police with an opportunity to explain what happened in those events, military staff should work with operational and legal advisors to achieve a general decision: the IDF will take action to protect soldiers against Israeli civilians obstructing military activity in IDF bases, the area surrounding each of those bases, or any site whatsoever in which military activity is taking place, in accordance with regulations. This would not exclude the standard practice of asking for police help and relying on it in putting a stop to the obstruction.

Such a transition to IDF independence in putting an end to actions by Israeli civilians aimed at obstructing military activity requires the training of military forces for such tasks and the training of each soldier to act properly until the military protection force steps in. This training should also include a clear objective, and practical distinction between military activity against an enemy and military activity for dealing with Israeli civilians who are obstructing military activity.

Soldiers are obviously trained to fight an enemy, while this activity deals with Israeli civilians. As such, special training of a military force for preventing Israeli civilians from disrupting military activity is necessary. At the same time, it should be noted that by its nature, such obstruction involves confrontation between civilians and soldiers, and since it is unavoidable when the problem occurs, it is also unavoidable in solving the problem, particularly

under time pressure. The training of a special military force to immediately subdue such disturbances will reduce as much as possible the damage caused by the friction between soldiers and civilians caused by those attempting to obstruct the soldiers in their activity.

This transition is not a step in a dangerous process of the state's disintegration. We are familiar with the Knesset Guard and the Court Guard, which are neither police units nor part of the Israel Security Agency (ISA). We are also familiar with military security agencies that are not part of the ISA security section. Although assigning a professional task to an agency that specializes in it has its advantages, there may still be room for separation between various agencies operating in the same field, so that while professional expertise is acquired in the framework of a single agency, the use of force involving that professional expertise takes place in a different agency. For example, legal evaluation of the situation is done by one agency and its experts, while practical missions are performed by another unit and its experts. We are familiar with such a division of labor in essential spheres, such as medicine and security guards. There is nothing unacceptable about making a military unit responsible for preventing obstruction of military activity by Israeli civilians. Perhaps it's worth considering a military draft for the establishment of a "soldier's protection corps," alongside the "border defense corps."

The day on which the military process of defining rules of behavior is completed in the framework of a properly expanded exposition of the IDF Code of Ethics, there will be room to include in it the compilation of special behavioral rules for activity when faced with Israeli civilians attempting to obstruct military activity.

6. Revised Education for Reserve Soldiers

Criminal activity by soldiers invites intervention by the agencies for preserving the rule of law within the IDF, but the use of law enforcement agencies, criminal sanctions, and disciplinary measures are never sufficient to induce the soldiers to adopt habits of proper behavior in accordance with the law and IDF rules, orders, and values. This requires an educational approach, to which attention should be paid in the current circumstances. We will first discuss soldiers in general, and later devote special attention to reserve soldiers.

Any successful process of instilling values and norms in an organization or professional community must include four stages: recognition, understanding, assent, and internalization. This also applies to the IDF: both in combat units and throughout the command structure. While conducting military activity, the commander can only trust their soldiers to act properly if they can assume that the education processes that they have undergone have caused them to fully accept the values and norms of the IDF, based on an understanding of their meaning and assent to their content. If problems of understanding or assent arise, they should be solved during the education processes. If there are any suspicions of severe criminal activity by soldiers, their commanders must investigate until they locate the roots of the criminal behavior to uproot it and bring the soldiers back to the proper moral frame of mind for military activity.

The root of criminality in the Sde Teiman and Beit Lid cases is a distortion of morality and values—the unrestrained desire for revenge. Any desire for revenge is fundamentally unacceptable and dangerous when carried out. It is unacceptable because normal relations between human beings, groups of people, and countries must be restrained and determined by understanding and reason, not unrestrained emotions. Humanity recognizes that feelings of revenge exist, but has learned to restrain them, first of all through the basic principles of coexistence and secondly by replacing the unrestrained world of vengeance with a restrained world of law and punishment. The desire for revenge is inherently dangerous,

because control over emotions is weak by nature and acts of revenge are unrestrained. Their actual results can entirely exceed any framework of restraint. In the end, they invite retaliation and endless wars of vengeance.

> A soldier's actions are always in the IDF's name, any act of revenge by a soldier is perceived as having been carried out by the IDF, but an image of the IDF as an army of revenge is totally false, immoral, and unjustified.

Educational activity by commanders with assistance from effective professional staff organizations must instill the absolute opposition of the democratic state and its military arm to acts of revenge, even if the anger is justified and the hostility is natural. The focus of education against acts of revenge must be the uprooting of the desire for revenge. To the extent that revenge is perceived as permissible on the level of emotion and desire but forbidden on the level of actions, its materialization in the heat of war is unacceptable. It is not enough for a soldier to refrain from murdering helpless enemy civilians, for example, as an act of revenge for the murder of innocents on our side. Committing acts of vengeance should be inconceivable to the soldier, and they should have no desire to do so. The IDF is an army of defense, not of vengeance, and is able to attack when there is a justifiable need to do so. Since a soldier's actions are always in the IDF's name, any act of revenge by a soldier is perceived as having been carried out by the IDF, but an image of the IDF as an army of revenge is totally false, immoral, and unjustified.

Acts of abuse in the name of vengeance detract from the IDF Code of Ethics and every one of the values listed at the beginning of this article. A person committing abuse for the sake of revenge has excluded himself from the framework of the IDF values, norms, and ethics. In view of the acts of abuse allegedly being committed by their soldiers, the educational process that commanders are called upon to conduct should renew the comprehension, assent and instilling of IDF values among their soldiers. One of the measures of its success will be the elimination of any inclination towards acts of revenge in the soldiers' activity, not only when it is criminal and insufferable, but even when it appears natural and innocent.

7. Moral Education for Reserve Soldiers

The soldiers suspected of abusing a prisoner are reserve soldiers. I believe that attention should be paid to this aspect of their actions, and that comprehensive measures should be taken in order to correct this aberration in the behavior of uniformed soldiers during their activity in the IDF.

As part of the background for a discussion of this aspect of the abuse, I will relate to a phenomenon that I encountered during Operation Iron Swords. A few foreign media channels showed me several hundred clips they had found on social media in which soldiers filmed themselves during their military activity. I am often asked to give my opinion about what is shown in these clips from the perspective of IDF values. The very fact that such clips are being shown by soldiers is a breach of regulations and orders, but there is nevertheless a good reason for viewing them.

All of the clips they showed me display improper actions. These never approached the level of war crimes or the like, but they were clearly in violation of the IDF Code of Ethics. I took note of two general features of these clips. The first is that officers almost never appeared in them; in only one clip did I see a major and a captain. The second is that the soldiers in these clips were reserve soldiers. The hundreds of clips that I saw are obviously not an adequate basis for generalizations about hundreds of thousands of reserve soldiers, but I believe that natural caution should not deter us from discussing the possibility that the level of adherence to IDF values among reserve soldiers

is much lower than the adherence to these values among soldiers in the regular army: both soldiers doing their conscription army service and commissioned and noncommissioned officers.

It is not difficult to guess the reasons for this. Soldiers in the regular army undergo processes of instilling IDF values at various stations in their military training throughout the IDF. They all experienced these processes at the outset of their service during basic training and other initial programs. Many of them were also exposed to them in later training courses, include junior command courses, such as tank commander courses and squad commander courses. Quite a few also experienced them in command courses ranging from Training Base 1 to military colleges. On the other hand, a reserve soldier who completed their conscription service several years ago does not undergo additional intense instilling processes, especially when they are called up for reserve duty during a war. No one should be surprised if this difference is eventually manifested in the routine behavior of soldiers of both types.

The inevitable conclusion is obvious in principle; its implementation, however, is very difficult. In principle, frequently occurring behavior by reserve soldiers during their army service in breach of IDF values should never be accepted. Implementation requires intensification of activity or new activity aimed at training soldiers and commanders in reserve service to act in accordance with IDF values. During a period of routine action, familiarity with and understanding of IDF values among soldiers doing reserve service, should be renewed during the army exercises in which they regularly take part, and also in one-day reserve activities devoted to raising their ethical level.

In a period of non-intensive operational activity, part of each SOP can be devoted to the necessary presentation of IDF values, both independently and as a moral basis for the SOPs and various orders. In wartime, when time is short, it is sufficient to present emphases in

IDF values in the course of an SOP according to the circumstances of the planned activity. It is natural to devote part of each operational debriefing to an analysis of particular aspects of proper behavior in accordance with IDF values.

Implementation requires intensification of activity or new activity aimed at training soldiers and commanders in reserve service to act in accordance with IDF values.

In order to summarize the brief discussion of educational activity, it is worthwhile stressing the unique character of moral and ethical education. A command response is neither a legal nor a disciplinary response, and is not accompanied by a threat of punishment. It is designed to induce a soldier to act differently, because conduct in accordance with IDF values maintains the IDF's image in the eyes of its soldiers and commanders, their families, and the entire world. Damage to these values has a negative impact on the mutual trust between soldiers and commanders, the public's confidence in the propriety of actions by those wearing IDF uniforms, and international confidence in the IDF.

8. IDF Organizational Culture

Incidents revealed in events at Sde Teiman and Beit Lid have deep roots in the IDF's organizational culture and should be addressed not only in the context of a comprehensive review following the war, but also in local command actions to be implemented as soon as possible.

Over the years, assigning too many tasks to commanders has become a habit. The list of tasks that a commander must carry out, based on their professional judgment and following appropriate staff work, is so long that it is impossible for a commander to properly perform all of the tasks assigned to them. When overloaded with too many tasks, a commander cannot avoid arranging their tasks in order of

importance, urgency, etc. In such a state of priorities, some of the tasks are consigned to the bottom of the pile and receive less attention and may not be performed at all. If not totally neglected, they will be carried out in a different manner from the most important or urgent tasks. They will be carried out on the basis of a partial or poor process, or with no real process of preparation. At least some of them will be executed on a low level, as can be expected when preparation is perfunctory or incomplete. In this way, a habit of negligence has become rooted in IDF organizational culture.

This pattern of negligence is manifested in various ways, one of which is ignoring improper behavior by soldiers. A commander with more on their plate than they can possibly handle will not spend time enforcing values and norms having no clear link to tasks at the top of their list. The contagious nature of negligence should be highlighted here. It cannot be confined to marginal elements of the system. It may initially appear in the margins, but it naturally and continually spreads from there to the key elements of the system. The legendary spit and polish in the Armored Corps, for example, is one side of the concern that negligence in spit and polish in daily routine is liable to affect tank operations during a battle.

The behavior of soldiers, which has been consigned to the bottom of the commander's list of tasks, is an outgrowth of the soldiers' personalities, not only as expressed in conversations between the soldiers when there is enough time for personal conversation, but also when these personalities appear in the soldiers' conduct during their operational activity. Commanders will not engage in enforcement of the IDF's protocol in marginal cases, but it appears that some of the commanders are also not enforcing the protocol when the deviation from it occurs in the middle of operational activity. A prominent example is the graffiti written by soldiers on buildings in the Gaza Strip announcing Jewish settlement. Many examples are known of statements by religiously observant soldiers and commanders of an openly religious and prominent nature during the war. I have seen "Messiah" patches on the uniforms of soldiers in the Gaza Strip that give the impression that they are part of the uniforms. Had the commanders acted properly, these patches would not have appeared on their uniforms.

Processes of deterioration are slow and misleading, but it is easy to be swept along by them. The phenomenon of a group of soldiers suspected of sexual and other abuse of a prisoner in jail is an extreme manifestation of soldiers' behavior in the absence of appropriate conduct by commanders in enforcing IDF values. It is reasonable to assume that such coordinated abuse did not appear out of nowhere; it was undoubtedly preceded by other phenomena of similar types leading down the slippery slope.

When the dust settles, the war ends and the operational inquiry processes are concluded, it will also be appropriate to conduct a comprehensive and thorough inquiry into the IDF organizational culture. One place that such an inquiry could begin is cases of religious behavior by soldiers and commanders in contravention of IDF orders, regulations, and values. This is a sensitive area, and I would not be surprised if senior officers avoid dealing with it, but it must be a part of any responsible process of healing of IDF organizational culture.

9. Public Confidence in the IDF

The element of surprise in the Simchat Torah attack (October 7, 2023) and the conduct of the major military frameworks (the IDF as a whole, the Southern Command, the Gaza Division, etc.) in the first 24 hours of the war have caused substantial damage to public confidence in the IDF.

Let there be no illusions about the significance of "public confidence in the IDF." I am not referring to the complex attitude of many Israelis to the IDF, in which they and their families have served, and whose children are serving in the regular army or the reserve forces.

This attitude has many diverse elements, some personal and some general, some rooted in memories and others reflecting sensitivity. The significance of "public confidence in the IDF," which the IDF should address as soon as possible after the war and postwar inquiries, is something else. Civilian confidence in the IDF is the belief that the IDF is performing competently, and will continue to do so, in carrying out its missions. "Performing competently" refers to both the operational sphere and the moral and ethical sphere of maintaining the IDF's values.

The initial stages of the Iron Swords war, which began as a surprise, undermined the basis that civilians had for relying on the IDF—for thinking that the IDF would always act competently in carrying out its missions. The IDF did not act as expected in defending civilians and the state at the beginning of the war. Later in the war, the IDF acted professionally in executing missions of defending civilians and the state, thereby causing a substantial rise in civilian confidence, albeit not to the same level as in other periods.

More than a few events led to a decline in civilian confidence in the IDF insofar as the moral and ethical aspects of activity were concerned. There were numerous cases of soldiers behaving in a way that contravened the IDF's values and allegedly crossed the dividing line into criminal activity. The IDF must repair civilian confidence in the loyalty of commanders and soldiers to the IDF's values, after some soldiers clearly damaged it and won public admiration as a result.

There is no doubt that the IDF will undergo substantial reform in the effort to restore civilian confidence in it. It is generally known that this confidence is not an expression of affection or appreciation; it is an essential element in the relations between civil society and the IDF. Without such confidence, the IDF will be weak in both the operational and moral and ethical spheres. The IDF must extricate itself from this situation soon and do so with significant success. Anyone who can aid in this process

must do so. Senior officers in uniform who express personal views along the lines of "Our endurance is steadfast, in absolute contrast to Israeli culture" are hindering the restoration of civilian confidence in the IDF. Such a statement by an officer arouses doubt whether the orders that they issue really reflect professional military considerations, rather than their own private superficiality and arrogance.

When the time comes, both the IDF and the public will have a clear picture of the war, its political background, military readiness before 7.10, the military conduct in its first 24 hours, the political decisions about the war's continuation, the military activity during the many months of war, and above all the political policy and military activity with respect to the hostages. In view of this complex picture, the work of the commanders in making the necessary improvements in the IDF and restoring public confidence in the competence of military activity throughout the command structure will be difficult, prolonged, and full of diverse social and political obstacles. At this early stage, when public discourse has room for general demands and there is no place for subtleties, the duty of constant, complete, profound, and uncompromising adherence to IDF values should be stressed; and the obligation to defend these values against any danger of erosion or change that may bring us to resemble our enemies, rather than the soldiers of Israel's past wars in whose footsteps we tread.

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Not Just Dances: TikTok and Israel's National Security

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The TikTok app poses challenges for Israel in three main areas—security, privacy and Israel's public image—which present risks to Israel's security, to data security and to the private details of users, as well as a blatant anti-Israel bias. These challenges are expected to intensify due to the significant rise in the proportion of adults consuming news from social media, and to the sharp increase in the use of TikTok compared to other social networks. Due to concerns over China's exploitation of TikTok for its own purposes, many western countries have passed or are currently considering legislation to limit these risks. In order to reduce Israel's exposure to these risks, it should optimize the processes of monitoring and removing incitement and terrorist content from the app, formulate a user policy for government bodies and state employees, strengthen the dialogue with TikTok, monitor legislation on this subject in western countries, and cooperate with those countries and with other entities involved in this global effort.

Keywords: social media, TikTok, image, security, privacy, bias

The social media revolution has changed the way in which people communicate and send messages, but it has also, to a large extent, changed the way in which they consume information. In the past, in order to keep informed on topical matters, people turned to newspapers, the radio, and later television and then to news sites on the internet; but now, according to surveys of adults in various countries, many of them use social media for this purpose. The wide use of social networks as a source of news has negative and worrying consequences; and although people perceive social media as an unreliable source of information, they continue to use it for this purpose. To illustrate this, while traditional media is perceived by 64 percent of respondents

as reliable, social media is only perceived as such by 44 percent of respondents. It is interesting that in North America and Europe, social media is perceived as less reliable (34 percent) than in the rest of the world.

Over the years, as social media developed and took root, new platforms came into use, and each of them reduced the quantity of words in posts: While it is possible to find fairly long posts on Facebook, on X (formerly Twitter) they are usually limited to 280 characters, on Instagram they are even shorter and usually consist of a picture and a few sentences, while on TikTok most posts can be defined as a video followed by one or more words and hashtags (marking key words) with hardly any further explanation. As of 2023, the social network

used the most by American adults for news was Facebook (30 percent), followed by YouTube (26 percent), Instagram (16 percent) and TikTok in fourth place (14 percent), which has a relative correlation with the proportion of adults using each of these platforms, 68, 82, 46 and 31 percent respectively. However, while the proportion of users of the first three platforms as sources of news in the years 2020 to 2023 declined (Facebook), stabilized (YouTube) or slightly increased (Instagram, 6 percent), TikTok recorded a significant rise of about 21 percent, particularly among young people (aged 18-29), of whom 32 percent consume news content on the app.

The popularity of TikTok, owned by the Chinese company ByteDance, rose quickly and it was one of the first non-American social networks to amass over one billion active users worldwide: the number of users in the United States is particularly large—113.3 million, mostly aged 11-26 (Generation Z). On Facebook, however, the age group with the highest number of users is 25-34—slightly older than the TikTok users. The age groups of Instagram users are similar to those of TikTok users (18-24 and 25-34), so that there is a larger demographic overlap between Instagram and TikTok.

While TikTok gains public popularity, among some decision makers it arouses more weighty concerns than those aroused by other social networks, which are also worrying. The main concern of decision makers in the West focuses on the issue of privacy, but I argue that this social network challenges Israel in three central areas: privacy, security and Israel's public image.

Privacy

All social media platforms raise concerns over privacy, but in the case of TikTok the concern is greater because the app is owned by the Chinese company ByteDance. As such it is subject to the laws of China, including the National Intelligence Law, that obliges all organizations to cooperate with the state's intelligence effort; the Counter Espionage Law, that bans organizations from refusing the collection of information by the authorities; and the Chinese Cyber Security Law, which requires networks to share data about their users with the state authorities in the case of suspected damage to state security, the public interest or the rights and interests of all citizens and organizations in China. Concerns about privacy arose because the app collects data that the authorities in various countries do not want to reach the authorities in China and severely compromises the users' privacy.

> By adding an encrypted layer TikTok breached Google policy and collected information from users without their knowledge, and in some cases, even collected data on American journalists in order to track leaks.

In recent years, since this social media platform went live, studies by technology experts in various countries have exposed the nature of the data collected by TikTok. This includes extremely sensitive information extracted from users' devices, which can give a fairly accurate outline of their daily interactions and routine, and even reveal information they might prefer to keep private. While some of this data, including their contacts, calendar and locations, is apparently collected without their knowledge and consent, other information is collected with their permission, though perhaps without consideration, because it is well known that users do not carefully read all the terms and conditions before downloading apps. Thus it was revealed that TikTok had changed its rules about three years ago (2021) to allow it to automatically collect biometric and vocal identifiers (faceprints and voiceprints). Another cause for concern is the circumvention of rules accepted in the west and the tracking of users: By adding an encrypted layer TikTok breached Google policy and collected information from users without their knowledge, and in some cases, even collected data on American journalists in order to track leaks.

In response to criticism in the United States, the company claimed that user data is stored in the United States and insisted that the data it collects is not transferred to China. At a Congressional hearing in 2021 the CEO of TikTok repeated this claim, but recordings and documents leaked from eighty meetings in the company show that its employees have access to the user data in the United States. The recordings included 14 declarations from nine employees, testifying that engineers from China had access to data on American users between September 2021 and January 2022. The evidence shows that company employees in China accessed the data far more frequently, even after the reported date.

> "Just a year ago, a fitness app called Straba that is usually installed on smart watches managed to identify and reveal secret bases in Israel and elsewhere, and the TikTok operators have similar capabilities."

Security

The age of users and the wide usage of the app create an additional challenge, particularly for countries like Israel—a western country in which young people serve in the security forces at the same age as many of them use TikTok. Many soldiers document themselves in their bases in a way that could reveal military data and locations. In 2020, with this concern in mind, the American military banned its soldiers from using TikTok, while official elements also pressured soldiers to remove the app from their personal phones. The Israeli Border Guard also banned the use of the app. In 2020 Tomer Brook, a data security and cyber expert, said that the IDF should adopt a similar approach to the Americans and Israel's own Border Police, and ban its personnel from using TikTok: "Just a year ago, a fitness app called Straba that is usually installed on smart watches managed to identify and reveal secret bases in Israel and elsewhere, and the TikTok operators have

similar capabilities." He says "China has an interest in collecting information about the IDF, which is deemed to be a highly advanced army in many aspects. This very popular app is also very dangerous."

Through its Spokespersons' Unit, the IDF maintains a TikTok account with some 435,000 followers, on which it posts light videos together with videos of combat, including those of special units. Back in 2020, cyber expert Dr. Harel Menashri warned that since the IDF had decided to be active on TikTok, it should exercise appropriate caution. Such caution would be expressed by limiting the creation and posting of videos to devices that had no contact with other devices. In other words, TikTok should not be treated like a regular app, since it is capable of collecting additional data stored on the device from which the account operates. It appears that this recommendation is not being fully implemented.

Another security risk manifests in the way anti-Israel elements use TikTok to amplify content that incites to terrorism. Such content ranges from religious and nationalistic calls to murder Jews and Israelis, to videos posted by young Palestinians who document themselves carrying out attacks. Some of them become instant heroes when their videos go viral and are widely distributed, providing inspiration for other potential attackers. Even before October 7, 2023 Hamas used TikTok to collect data about the location of bases and villages in the south and to raise money directly and indirectly—directly by initiating live broadcasts by terrorists asking for donations, and indirectly through network influencers who conduct campaigns, for example asking their followers to purchase specific filters on the app, where the money raised is transferred to terror organizations.

Israel's Public Image and Influence

Legislators and activists are concerned that connections to the Chinese government could lead to censorship of content which the company and the parent state do not wish to

have published, as happened in 2019, when content mentioning the massacre in Tiananmen Square, Tibetan independence and the Falun Gong was removed from the platform. This was not a one-time occurrence. Research by Rutgers University compared the volume of posts on TikTok and Instagram including various hashtags and discovered that while on subjects relating to popular culture (such as #TaylorSwift) there were two posts on Instagram for every post on TikTok, for subjects considered "problematic" by the Chinese, such as #Uyghur, the ratio leapt to eight posts on Instagram for every one post on TikTok. More extreme examples were observed for hashtags such as #TiananmenSquare, with a ratio of 57 to 1, and #HongKongProtest with an astonishing ratio of 174 posts on Instagram for each post on TikTok. These figures show that certain hashtags do not behave organically on this social network, raising suspicions of manipulation of content. In China itself TikTok is not available, perhaps due to fears that Chinese citizens will be exposed to content opposed to the government, posted by users in the west. In addition to political content posted by TikTok users, there are also "challenges" for users, which have been widely criticized due to the risks they involve, songs and dances, and more. Instead of the TikTok widely distributed in the rest of the world, within the borders of China a "sterile" version called Douyin is offered, with content that is largely educational or deals with personal empowerment, while content originating outside China is not available.

TikTok is a particularly hostile arena for Israel, and the young social media platform has often been accused of anti-Israel bias and even antisemitism. These accusations were supported by an experiment conducted by the Wall Street Journal. The paper opened a number of fictional accounts on the app, and within a few hours nearly all of them were the target of pushed content linked to the Iron Swords War, with the overwhelming majority being anti-Israel. After publication of this experiment, the app blocked the tool that enabled researchers

to track bias on the app. The bias is expressed not only in content appearing on the app, but also in content that is absent from it—Israeli content. Creators of Israeli content claim that pro-Israel content and information that they post is blocked under the pretext of a "breach of community guidelines." One of them, Danny Buller, said that the exposure of content he posted on TikTok declined considerably after he spoke about the link between the app and communist China. At the end of January 2024, Barak Hershkowitz, the manager of TikTok Israel's public sector, resigned, claiming that he and others had complained to the management about the biased approach to violent content and anti-Israel incitement, with an emphasis on the decision not to publish posts from the Hostages and Missing Families Forum. Hershkowitz's resignation was cited in a hearing involving the TikTok CEO before the American Congress on January 31, 2024, which dealt mainly with protecting the privacy of minors on social media, something that the American legislators felt was defective.

Responses and Legislation Worldwide

Many countries are formulating responses to these threats, and they can be divided into two main groups: Those that have completely banned the use of TikTok, even if the ban is not fully implemented (Afghanistan, India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Somalia, including some that have blocked all social networks), and those that allow use of the app but have passed laws to regulate its usage and limit exposure to its risks (United States, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Belgium, France, Latvia, Norway, Taiwan and the European Union). In the United States for example, laws on this matter are at various stages in the legislative process, and some have already passed. For example, a bill that makes operating the app in the country conditional upon the sale of the platform by its owner and a ban on installing the app on government devices, among others. Meanwhile the European

Commission ordered its employees to delete the app from devices belonging to the Commission and from other devices storing material relating to the Commission.

What About Israel?

As of today, there is no single address in Israel responsible for all aspects of social media that demand attention. Moreover, there is no regulator to supervise social media, including TikTok, although there have been some initiatives on this matter, including an initiative by the former Minister of Communication Yoaz Hendel, that was proposed shortly before the end of his term in office and was therefore not pursued. The Foreign Ministry is in contact with the social networks to remove blocks from the Ministry's accounts, but not from the accounts of Israeli citizens or those who echo pro-Israel content and are blocked. According to a senior Ministry official, the Ministry is in contact with other social media but not with TikTok, because the anti-Israel bias in the app is deliberate, and it is felt that the company has no intention of cooperating with Israel. This is in spite of the declaration by the CEO of TikTok Israel, who in 2021 stated that the company was continuing to work with Government Ministries and the authorities in Israel.

Officially, when the Cyber Department at the Ministry of Justice receives notification of improper publications from security agencies responsible for monitoring them, it must contact the networks with a request to remove the offending content, including incitement to commit terror, and it works at two levels— voluntary removal and forced removal. With regards to voluntary removal, the Justice Ministry contacts the social networks and asks them to remove specific content. This course of action was officially approved in Supreme Court Ruling 19/7846, which determined that the Department was acting with full authority when contacting the social networks. According to data from the Justice Ministry Cyber Department, TikTok complied with about 87

percent of its requests, and according to senior officials, TikTok is more willing than in the past to remove problematic content. Forced removal derives its authority from the Law on Powers to Prevent Offenses Through a Website, which makes it possible to restrict access to certain content through the internet providers and not through the social media themselves. About 97 percent of content subject to forcible removal is linked to terror and the encouragement of terror. Notwithstanding the lighthearted and simple image of social networks, regulating and restricting the use of TikTok in Israel has serious implications. Firstly, this is one arena in the battle for Israel's image that the country must not ignore, and it is therefore right and proper for official government entities to have active TikTok accounts where they can present the country's arguments. Secondly, as a western democracy, Israel must maintain the freedom of expression of its citizens, including on social media. Not only that, a complete ban on the use of TikTok could create tension with China— Israel's third largest trading partner (after the European Union and the United States).

Israel should adopt the approach of the western and democratic countries that manage the risks and challenges posed by TikTok in a sophisticated way, without banning it completely. As a western country, Israel must prepare for a situation where sooner or later it is under pressure to adopt policies that regulate the network's activity within its borders. But also at an ethical level, Israel must formulate and communicate a policy that protects its democratic values, starting with freedom of speech, as well as reducing the risks. Israel should ideally adopt most of the policies implemented in the West while using its discretion to take account of Israel's unique risks as specified above.

Below are a number of moderate steps that Israel should take:

1. Formulate policy for government bodies: the National Security Council (NSC) and the National Cyber Directorate (INCD) should

draw up regulations for all government ministries, including terms and rules for operating accounts on TikTok, and oversee the implementation of these regulations in all ministries. They must find a balance between the risks and the informational importance of using TikTok accounts to spread Israeli messages worldwide. If there is a decision to continue using the accounts, steps must be taken to ensure they operate in a safe environment, to prevent undesirable information leaks, for example by using specifically designated and isolated devices.

2. Formulating policy for usage by state employees: the Ministry of Justice, the NSC and the INCD must draw up policy, regulations and enforcement mechanisms binding on all state employees, including soldiers and police officers, with precise definitions of who is permitted to use a TikTok account and in what way, making a distinction between government devices and private devices. This step will require regulations and enforcement and could be complicated when referring to soldiers on mandatory service, but it would help to limit the danger of exposing sensitive information and locations to a country that does not politically support Israel and has close relations with Israel's enemies, above all Iran. A realistic and balanced policy will enable state employees in non-sensitive positions, including soldiers and police officers, to use TikTok accounts, while banning the use of the app by employees in sensitive positions, or the uploading of content from state-owned devices and from military bases and other sensitive locations. It should be noted that the IDF already has orders banning the uploading of content from sensitive locations, and other bodies should adopt similar regulations. However, these orders are not being fully enforced, so there will be a need for an enforcement tool to ensure data security.

3. Monitor legislation and policy in western countries: Globally, legislation on the subject of TikTok is new and countries are still formulating their policy on this social network. Legislation being promoted in western countries should be tracked, to ensure that Israel is not left behind in this matter. Tracking should be the responsibility of a special team appointed to manage this subject and learn from the lessons of others in order to draw up and implement a policy suitable for Israel.

4. Cooperate with other countries and bodies: As a small country Israel has limited levers of influence to use on TikTok and its activities, so there is great logic in joining with other countries to exert pressure on TikTok to remove certain content and to counter the clear bias in its content. For example, the European Union is already working in this way with TikTok, and Israel can provide it with information about problematic posts or policy. This will help them in their dialogue with TikTok, without making Israel an official partner in these associations.

5. More dialogue with TikTok: Bodies such as the Ministry of Justice, the Israel Police, the General Security Service and other civil society organizations should increase their dialogue with TikTok to ensure the removal of content that incites violence and terror. The Foreign Ministry must also work with the company to resolve problems of limited exposure, blocking of pro-Israeli content, and the promotion of anti-Israel content. This effort does not require legislation but does demand better coordination between the various bodies that come into contact with the social network.

6. Monitoring and removing content that incites and echoes terror: The removal of some content from the app itself requires legislation to expand the powers and means of the Justice Ministry Cyber Department. At present the department is not qualified to compel the networks to remove material, and can only do so via internet providers. There is also a need to optimize the Cyber

> **In view of the threats to privacy, security and Israel's public image that have been demonstrated in recent months, Knesset Members and Ministers as well as figures in civil society are more aware of the risks, and there is a growing consensus across the whole political spectrum that action must be taken on this subject.**

Department's access to material monitored by the security services, or its ability to conduct independent monitoring. These steps are intended to limit the exposure of Israelis to content that supports terror and they will speed up the process of removing such content from social media, although they could also restrict freedom of speech in Israel. The adoption of these steps will not only enable Israel to act like other western countries but also improve its response to the TikTok challenge, in terms of its national security interests, freedom of expression, relations with China, the privacy of its citizens, its public diplomacy front, and more, although of course further steps will be required to fully protect these interests. While certain steps such as the appointment of a regulator were discussed in the past, they were never implemented, but the Iron Swords War has changed perceptions of the problem. In view of the threats to privacy, security and Israel's public image that have been demonstrated in recent months, Knesset Members and Ministers as well as figures in civil society are more aware of the risks, and there is a growing consensus across the whole political spectrum that action must be taken on this subject.

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Societal and National Resilience— Intermediate Insights and Recommendations during the Swords of Iron War

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This article presents insights from a seminar held by the Institute for National Security Studies on March 6, 2024, which brought together resilience researchers and practitioners engaged in promoting grass roots societal resilience. After preliminary discussions on the concept of resilience and a description of societal resilience in Israel during the war, the article suggests a series of recommendations and outlines for action, focusing mainly on the process of rehabilitating the evacuated communities. We regard this process as crucial, and it also has implications for other aspects of national resilience. We contend that the process of rehabilitation and recovery from the Swords of Iron war demands a comprehensive reorganization at state, local authority and civil society levels, to address the severe disruption and restore resilience. This means finding solutions for a wide range of issues, including reconstruction of communities in the north and south with maximum involvement of the inhabitants in decision-making processes.

Introduction

The attack of October 7 marked a turning point in attitudes to national security, and raised the need to rethink many accepted concepts and perceptions. One of these is the concept of resilience, whose definition and components must be examined anew, along with how they can be measured. The October 7 tragedy and the ongoing war are challenging Israeli societal resilience and constitute an important test case for its solidarity. Studies on societal resilience, and conversations with people on the ground dealing with the challenges created by the tragedy, can contribute to the shaping of strategies and ways of coping with the crisis,

helping Israeli society to recover and overcome these difficult challenges. The purpose of this article is to present relevant insights from a seminar held by the Institute for National Security Studies on March 6, 2024, which brought together researchers on resilience and content experts engaged in promoting societal resilience on the ground. The goal was to look at the October 7 tragedy and the ongoing crisis it has created as the possible starting points of processes that could lead to growth and empowerment in Israeli society, and to view resilience as a general term expressing the capacity for a multi-dimensional transformative process in Israeli society, which had been in

crisis for several years even before this war began.

The article begins with a discussion on the conceptualization of resilience, and particularly the challenge embodied in the question of whether the definition should include reference to preserving the social identity of the damaged systems. Subsequently, it ponders how to measure resilience, bearing in mind issues that arose during the seminar. The article continues with a presentation of the current state of resilience in Israel, as described in the seminar, based on studies and surveys that were presented, as well as on conversations with people in the field. Our description specifies both the encouraging signs relating to societal resilience and the worrying aspects. Finally, we offer a series of recommendations and outlines for action, focusing mainly on the process of rehabilitating the evacuated communities, based on an understanding that this process is crucial and has implications for other aspects of societal resilience, that were discussed in the seminar.

Conceptualizing Resilience

Resilience is an abstract concept that is often defined differently by scholars in different fields (Southwick et al., 2014), and certainly varies in its popular and inexact usage. The seminar participants provided a generic presentation of the concept: Resilience represents "the ability of (any) system to cope with a severe disturbance or disaster, either natural or caused by humans, to maintain reasonable functional continuity throughout the crisis, to recover (bounce back) quickly and grow (bounce forward) as a result, while keeping its identity and basic values." This definition is valid for various types of resilience, including national, communal and individual resilience. However, it is possible to be more precise and adapt it to specific aspects of resilience.

As stated above, there is relatively broad consensus that resilience represents the ability of any system to cope successfully and flexibly with a severe disturbance or disaster, whether natural (such as Covid) or man-made (such

as the current war being waged by Israel) and recover from it. Resilience is mainly a functional referential framework, enabling the system to operate during and after crises and emergencies. Resilience can refer to individuals, families, communities, societies or even organizations, economies and infrastructures. Together all these should produce national resilience (Kimhi, 2016). However, and as was stressed at the seminar, social or national resilience is not a "collection" of individual, communal or systematic resiliencies, or a simple technical amalgamation of them. There are usually significant gaps between the various components of community, society or nation and the resilience of their components. The puzzle is characterized by a variety of systems and environments requiring a differential approach to the analysis and measurement of the concept within as well as between them (Ungar, 2013).

The October 7 attack, as a particularly disruptive event, highlighted the need to carefully examine the link between societal resilience and the components of social identity of the affected systems at the communal and national levels. There was therefore a proposal to add a component to the definition whereby recovery and growth following a crisis must be done alongside the retention of the basic identity and values of the society. This was based on an understanding that when a crisis and its consequences cause a deep change of this identity and values, amounting to a material change in the society, it is doubtful whether such fundamental change testifies to society's resilience, or perhaps rather to its vulnerability. A deep change in the basic character of a system, society or country can be perceived as a crisis by itself. On the other hand, some seminar participants argued that an ethical change can also be perceived as a result of a society's growth and maturing.

For example, in the Israeli context, the basic character of the state—which is currently the subject of an internal debate that itself threatens the resilience of Israeli society—means preserving it as a Jewish and democratic-liberal

state. These are the basic values of Israeli society that should be preserved, notwithstanding disagreements over the interaction and hierarchy of these values. It is likely that any change in this character resulting from the current crisis will stand as evidence of the society's vulnerability and the depth of the crisis, more than of its resilience.

This component of retaining identity and values also presents challenges for research, as it is sometimes hard to define the identity and basic values of a society. Which values can change as part of the recovery process, and which should be retained? For example, there are indications that at present in Israeli society, there is not necessarily sweeping support for the idea of liberal democracy, and the question arises as to whether a shift in this element as an organizing idea of Israeli society would be evidence of its resilience or of its vulnerability.

Measuring Resilience

Apart from conceptualization, other serious questions arose at the seminar regarding the ways in which it is possible and proper to examine and measure resilience in general, and societal resilience in particular (Hosseini et al., 2016). The accepted approach states that a central aspect of the study of resilience is that it must be tested over time, and not at a single point in time. No less important is the comparative aspect (Cutter et al., 2010). This refers to other types of crises, their features and intensity, such as the Covid crisis or the political crises that struck Israel. This also applies to comparisons between Israel and other countries, such as the Ukraine during the ongoing war there. Even more important is the comparison between various groups and communities within Israel, such as kibbutzim, collective settlements, villages and towns, or between various populations such as secular, religious and Haredi, or between Jews and Arabs. In addition, there is a need for comparisons between groups that have been affected by the disruption in different ways,

such as comparisons between the evacuated communities or those that were directly affected by the October 7 attack, and the general society in Israel.

Resilience can be measured by combining two approaches. One is based on the (subjective) perception of resilience (Béné et al., 2019), studied mainly through surveys and questionnaires, focus groups or interviews. In addition to the usual problems that characterize studies based on questionnaires and surveys, such as social-desirability bias, some of the factors examined in research on resilience are also particularly hard to define and quantify. As mentioned at the seminar, some of the terms used in questionnaires and surveys can be interpreted in different ways and could create confusion. This is true for both elements of resilience and the concept of resilience itself, which is not very familiar to the general public, who do not generally distinguish between the concept of resilience and the ability to withstand disruptions. All these can affect the results of surveys, so it is advisable to combine a broad range of research methods to examine various populations. It was also stressed that it is best to use mixed methods, such as online questionnaires, telephone surveys and face to face interviews (despite their high cost). There is also a need for focus groups based on population sectors that are affected in particular ways by the situation, such as evacuees from the north and south.

The second approach is based on an examination—preferably ongoing—of the (objective) function of the system under study, in terms of resilience in the face of severe disruption (Enderami et al., 2022). With this approach it is possible to monitor the degree of functional decline expected immediately after the disruption against the expected stages of recovery, based on various measures that refer to the familiar routine of the system before the incident, and changes that occur during and after it. It is possible to use variables at communal, social or even national

levels to describe the return to normality (such as schools, workplaces, use of public transport, leisure activities), or recovery of the economy (stock market fluctuations, foreign currency exchange rates, use of credit cards) or demographic changes in specific areas, with a focus on those affected by the disruption being studied.

Research that combines these two approaches facilitates a sophisticated collection of data to create a credible, accurate and durable picture of societal resilience in all its aspects.

Societal Resilience in Israel since October 7—Research Findings and the Discourse at the Seminar

Since October 7, several studies have been carried out in Israel by various research bodies, examining the issue of societal resilience based on data and metrics, mainly from public opinion polls.[1] At the seminar we heard about longitudinal and latitudinal studies from the INSS, based on a focused effort to collect data by the Institute's Data Center and the ResWell Program at Tel Aviv University. For a deeper and more detailed assessment of societal resilience in Israel at this time, any evaluation of the situation should also incorporate the viewpoints and experiences of people and organizations working with those on the ground and most affected by the situation, such as the evacuees, families of hostages, regular and reserve troops, including the wounded and the bereaved families; but also of people working to remedy the situation, such as volunteers helping populations in distress, or established organizations and institutions such as the management of Tekuma, the Israeli Trauma Coalition and others, whose representatives attended the seminar. They can provide important information and raise issues that are not necessarily expressed in academic studies. The research findings and discussions with people in the field presented at the seminar indicated encouraging trends with respect to societal resilience in Israel, but also

worrying aspects. It should be noted that since the seminar, the INSS has conducted further surveys to examine other aspects of societal resilience in Israel. In retrospect it is clear that as the fighting in Gaza continues, the hostage crisis remains without a solution, and the uncertainty in the north continues, there is a discernible rise in signs of the erosion of societal resilience. The findings of these surveys can be found on the Institute's website.
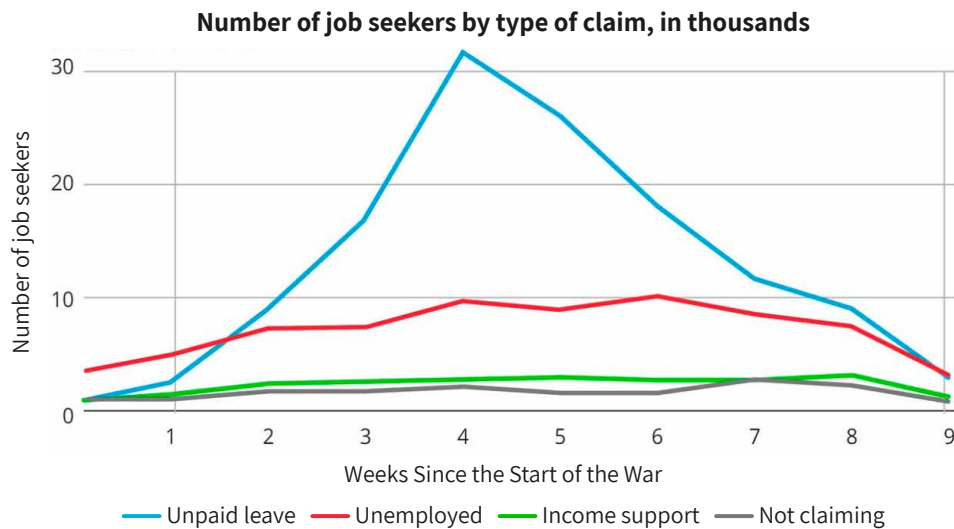
Before we look at the findings presented at the seminar and the various studies conducted since October 7, we should note that history testifies to Israel and the Jewish people's great societal resilience ability to recover, even in the face of particularly severe disruptions. The starting point of October 7 reflects a mixed trend regarding aspects of Israel's resilience. On one hand, the Hamas attack took place against a background of a deep social and political crisis and a clear polarization between different sectors. On the other hand, Israel's macro-economic situation (as an indication of economic resilience which is one of the components of societal resilience) was reasonable. In spite of the drive for judicial reform before October 7, Israel had a low debt to GDP ratio (about 61 percent), very large foreign currency reserves (some 200 billion dollars) and a low rate of unemployment (about four percent).
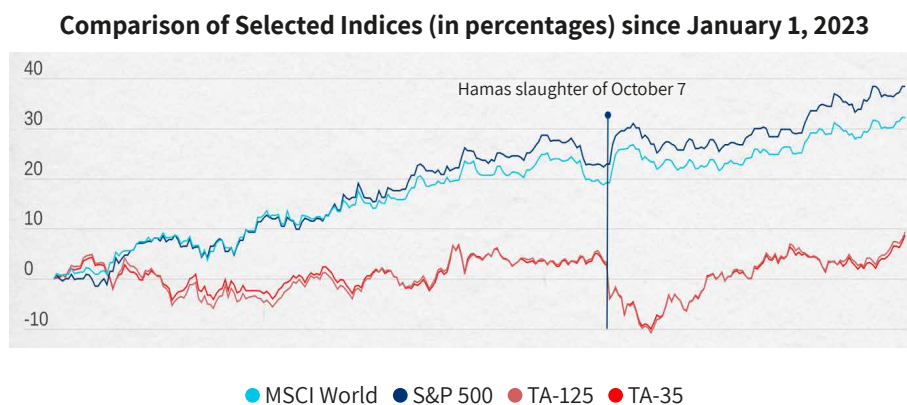
Positive Signs

An examination of Israeli societal resilience indicates a number of positive signs regarding the society's ability to recover. These factors involve Israel's economic resilience, the fast recovery of the army, the resilience of the relevant communities, the functioning of civil society organizations and the media. Below we will expand on these factors.

Economic Resilience

An examination of Israeli economic resilience shows that the positive starting position allowed the makers of fiscal policy in the government

Figure 1. Rate of Expenditure on Unpaid Leave

Number of job seekers by type of claim, in thousands

Weeks Since the Start of the War

— Unpaid leave — Unemployed — Income support — Not claiming

Source: The Employment Service

Figure 2. The Israeli Stock Exchange

Comparison of Selected Indices (in percentages) since January 1, 2023

● MSCI World ● S&P 500 ● TA-125 ● TA-35

and monetary policy in the Bank of Israel, to respond to the situation and reinforce economic resilience, and this had a positive effect on societal resilience. The situation was expressed in the easing of eligibility for unemployment payments for workers who were fired or went on unpaid leave after October 7, and housing grants for evacuees from the western Negev and northern villages. On the monetary level, in the first days of the war the Governor of the Bank of Israel Professor Amir Yaron, inspired faith in the markets when he announced that the Bank of Israel would intervene in the foreign currency market, and thus prevented a sharp devaluation of the shekel against foreign currencies.

Even in May 2024, in spite of the worrying circumstances, Israel is on a fairly positive economic track in many areas. For example, credit card expenditure has risen, which is a positive economic indicator and evidence of a certain degree of return to normality. The local stock exchange has also shown resilience against the fear of the flight of capital to overseas exchanges because of the war. After a sharp fall in the first days of the war, the local stock exchange indices are higher than before the war. The number of new job seekers has been declining since November, although it did begin to rise during May 2024. These figures indicate the resilience of the Israeli economy. But in order

to maintain this positive economic trajectory, in particular after Israel's credit rating was downgraded by several credit rating agencies, there is a need for a responsible budget policy from the government, and it's still not clear if that will be achieved.

Recovery of the Army

In addition to the positive signs of economic resilience, we can also point to the army's recovery a few days after the start of the war as an encouraging sign with a positive impact on societal resilience. The functioning of the army, and above all of the reservists, indicates very high recovery ability, evidence of the resilience of the military system. At the same time, in view of the close ties between the army and society in Israel, the swift military recovery also contributed to societal resilience, partly because it reinforced the public's trust in the IDF, which has been very high and fairly steady since the start of the war. This trust is significant for public resilience.

Resilience of Communities in the Western Negev

The conduct of communities in the Western Negev on October 7 and since then, are also positive signs. This was expressed by their security preparations before the attack (emergency squads) and in the stories of individual heroism on the Black Sabbath, in the border kibbutzim and in Sderot, Ofakim and Netivot. It is also manifest in the impressive arrangements in hotels to receive those who were evacuated from their homes, and no less significant, the way most strove to return to their homes and their communities as soon as possible—many began to return in early March, responding to calls from Tekuma and the IDF. All these are evidence of a reasonable degree of functional continuity in spite of the difficult circumstances after the tragedy, and are the first signs of recovery leading to rehabilitation. This is in contrast to the evacuees from the north,

who are still without a glimmer of hope that could awaken signs of recovery among them.

Civil Society and the Media

The functioning of civil society in the emergency was also very impressive, particularly in the initial period, and that helped to maintain functional continuity for communities and individuals, particularly considering the poor performance of government agencies. Apart from maintaining functional continuity, mobilization by civil society organizations also contributed to strengthening solidarity and feelings of personal security among those questioned, which are components of the perception of societal resilience. For example, in the first month of the war, over 70 percent of respondents to the INSS surveys stated that expressions of social solidarity, such as arrangements to collect donations, reinforced their sense of personal security.

As for the established media, although they sometimes arouse discomfort, their mobilization in the struggle was also a positive sign that encouraged social solidarity and identification with the aims of the war. Sometimes the media are criticized for not being critical enough, but their response to the war helped to unite society and reinforce public trust, which are central components of societal resilience.

Worrying Signs

Alongside the positive signs described above, the picture of societal resilience in Israel also includes worrying signs, arousing concerns for the necessary recovery, and consequently for societal resilience. At the seminar it emerged that these signs focused mainly on four aspects: The intensity of the collective trauma, expressed particularly among the evacuees, who had difficulty returning to functional continuity; the defective functioning of the government and fears for the ability of civil society organizations to take its place in the long term; public lack of trust in the government; and social polarization

that damages solidarity. Below we will expand on each of these aspects.

Evacuated Communities

The October 7 disaster is an ongoing trauma of considerable intensity. This trauma can still be felt among the citizens of Israel and affects their mood and conduct. There is no doubt that citizens who were directly affected, such as the evacuated communities in the south and the north, are suffering these effects more powerfully. Indications of this can be found in a survey conducted by Tel Hai College and published in January 2024, showing that 48 percent of evacuees and 54 percent of residents who independently left their homes in the north reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

In addition to the findings of surveys, we must refer to other indications. For example, there has been a considerable increase in inquiries received by Resilience Centers. In 2022 the Resilience Centers dealt with some 7,000 clients, while since last October more than 19,000 people have sought their help. In the Western Galilee Resilience Center, demand for assistance rose by 400 percent. This enormous rise in demand makes it hard for the Centers to continue providing professional help to everyone who needs it, affecting the societal resilience of the most vulnerable.

Reports from the field, as expressed at the seminar, indicated severe distress among residents of the western Negev due to the traumatic events, and made worse for the evacuated families by the challenges of feeling like refugees. This was apparently the case to a different extent for the evacuees from the north, whose return home is still uncertain, and they are extremely worried about the state of their villages. Above all this is the issue of the hostages, which affects the entire Israeli public in different ways, and of course has a very difficult effect on their families, who feel that Israeli society is "moving on" towards

normality and identifying less with their distress and their public campaign to bring back their loved ones. This can be seen in the decline in the numbers who participate in the rallies in Hostages Square in Tel Aviv. There is a fear of a "breach of the social contract." The more time that passes without the return of the hostages, the greater the negative impact of this issue on societal resilience, as an open bleeding wound in the fabric of Israeli society.

The issue of functional continuity of Israeli society must also be examined. In this context it is important to distinguish between the functional continuity of the larger section of society that was not directly affected by the October 7 attack and whose situation is relatively normal, and that of those who were directly affected, including the evacuees, the families of the hostages, the families of reservists and others, who are still far from a return to normality. Although the general expectation is for a slow recovery after the war, there must be clear segmentation of groups and institutions. This distinction is important since groups who were most severely affected by the October 7 tragedy and the war are not proportionately represented in surveys, but they have a huge impact on the public mood.

It should be noted that in the western Negev there are some preliminary positive signs of a return to routine, such as the renewed activity of the education system, allowing evacuees to return home. Schools in Sderot have been recording over 50 percent attendance since the beginning of March, and some evacuated families from the town have returned. Nevertheless, the return to these places also raises concerns, particularly in view of ongoing rocket fire from the Gaza Strip (although much reduced from previous levels). In addition, not only is there no progress in sight for the evacuees from the north, but in the absence of an action plan for their return, most are in a state of distress with no hope on the horizon.

Government Function

The problematic conduct of the government, including during the war and on civil issues, raises concerns for its effect on societal resilience. One example can be found in the dismantling of the civilian control center for the war, which was intended to be a non-ministerial body to integrate and guide the work of the various ministries on the civilian side of the war. In effect it was a body with no powers that ultimately disintegrated. Another example was the Defense Minister's decision in December 2023 to set up a Northern Horizon Administration, inter alia to work on the rehabilitation of infrastructures damaged during the fighting and complete projects to protect villages along the border. The administration raised expectations among residents of the north, who hoped it would operate in a similar way to the work of the Tekuma Administration for residents of the Western Negev, but so far they have been disappointed. These failures make it hard to maintain functional continuity for the relevant communities, as mentioned above, and undermines public trust in the government. While some of this lack of function was balanced by the impressive performance of civil society organizations, there are still substantial concerns over their ability to carry the burden for the long term, and reliance on them also casts a problematic light on the lack of functioning government agencies.

This problem has been intensified by the sense of foot-dragging in the fighting in Gaza, caused partly by the lack of a political plan for the period after the war. Assessments that the war will continue for many more months are deeply worrying for the public, as well as the real fears for functional continuity in the country. The situation on the northern border and the possibility that the fighting will develop into total war with Hezbollah is also a source of public concern, largely due to the organization's military capability to cause severe damage to the civilian hinterland. The seminar took place before the latest escalation with Iran (April 2024), but it is clear that this has also contributed to doubts over the future.

The multiplying question marks regarding the end of the war and the "day after," plus the signs of a retreat in international support for Israel, particularly by the United States, arouse considerable fears and criticism of the government's function. These fears have a negative effect on Israeli society's societal resilience in the long term.

Public Trust

The findings of the surveys conducted by the Institute for National Security Studies show a high degree of trust in the IDF and the Police, even more than in normal times. On the other hand, the data for trust in the government has been consistently very low throughout the war. This is a grave phenomenon that has a serious impact on societal resilience. It is particularly worrying in view of a recent preliminary study conducted by the Samuel Neaman Institute, led by Dr. Reuven Gal, which showed that respondents perceived trust in the leadership and government institutions as the most important factors in societal resilience.

It should be noted that the level of trust in the government is naturally higher among those who identify as ideologically right wing, although even here, the survey taken on March 10, 2024 revealed less than half express high or fairly high trust. While the general rate of those expressing trust in the government was 20 percent, among those who identified as right wing the rate was 37 percent, and only 10 percent among those who identified as politically center.

A similar picture emerges from the data on trust in specific individuals. Among the public, the Chief of Staff enjoys a consistently far higher level of trust than the Prime Minister. Political segmentation gives a slightly more complex picture. In the survey conducted on March 10, while the general rate of trust in the Chief of Staff stood at 63 percent, among respondents who identified as right wing this figure fell to

Figure 3. Respondents Who Expressed High or Fairly High Trust in Institutions

The INSS Swords of Iron Survey
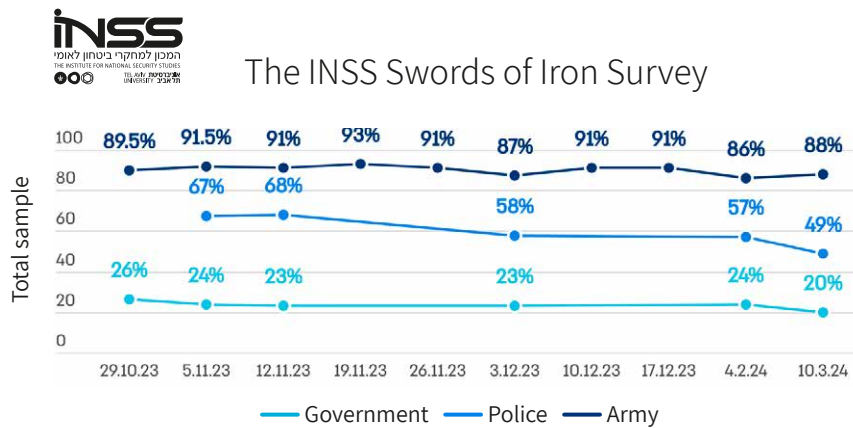
The latest Swords of Iron survey took place on March 7-10, 2024, led by the Data Collection & Analysis Desk of the Institute of National Security Studies. The field work was done by the Rafi Smith Institute, and included internet interviews of 500 men and women constituting a representative sample of the Jewish population in Israel aged 18 and over. The maximum sampling error is ±4% with 95% certainty.

Figure 4. Respondents Who Expressed High or Fairly High Trust in Specific Individuals

The INSS Swords of Iron Survey
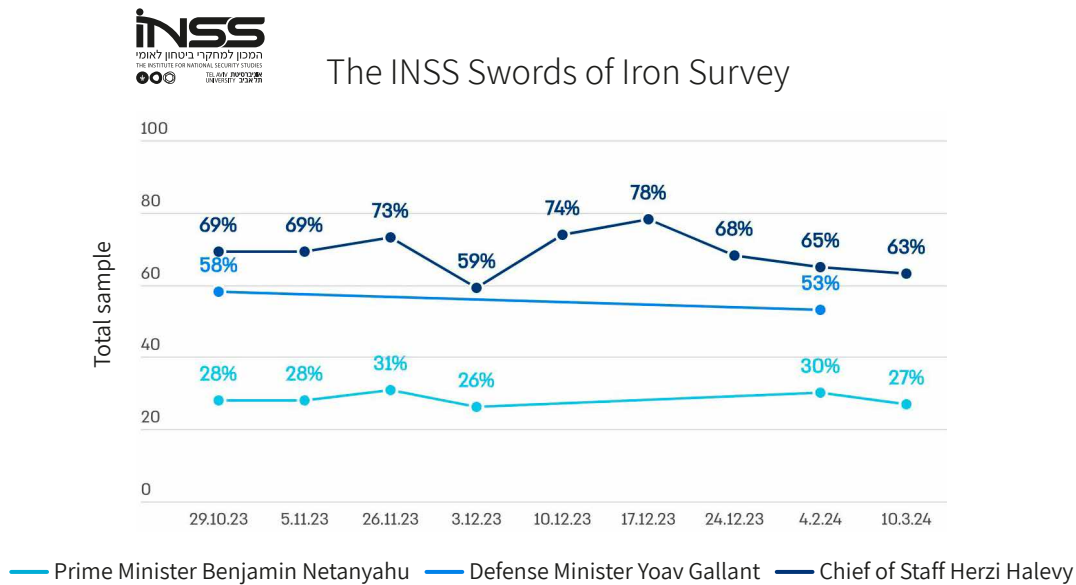
49 percent. On the other hand, among those who identified as centrist the rate rose to 73 percent. Indeed, while the rate of respondents in the sample as a whole expressing trust in the Prime Minister was 27 percent, among right wing voters it was 52 percent (more than for the Chief of Staff). However only 10 percent of respondents who identified as centrist expressed trust in the Prime Minister.

Political segmentation shows that lack of trust in the government does not necessarily derive from its conduct during the war, but is the result of political divides that existed before October 7. However, the existence of a low level of trust is a worrying sign in itself with reference to societal resilience. Moreover, and as we discuss below, such gaps in trust between those holding different political views are also a

Figure 5. In Your Opinion, Has There Been a Change in the Feeling of Solidarity in Israeli Society at This Time?
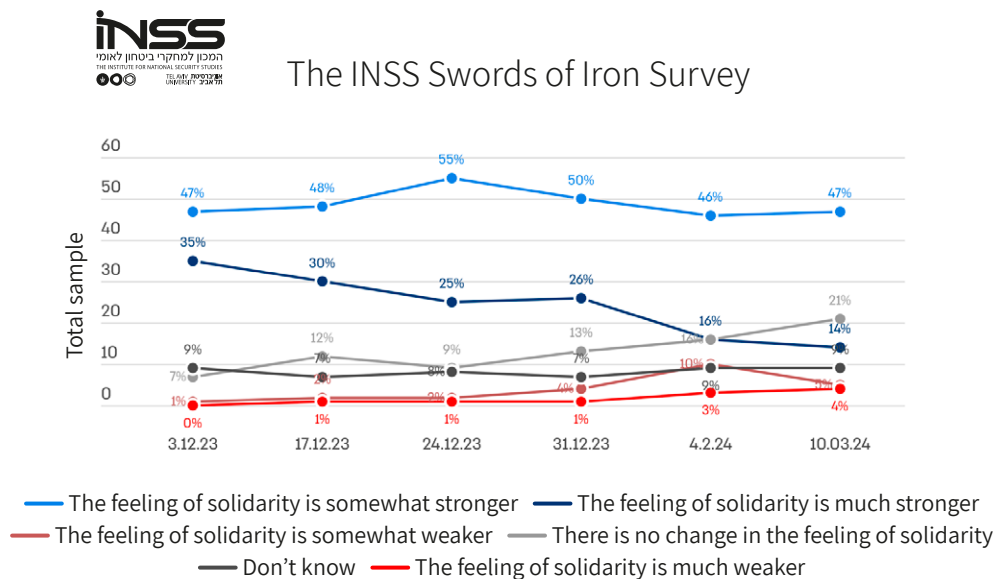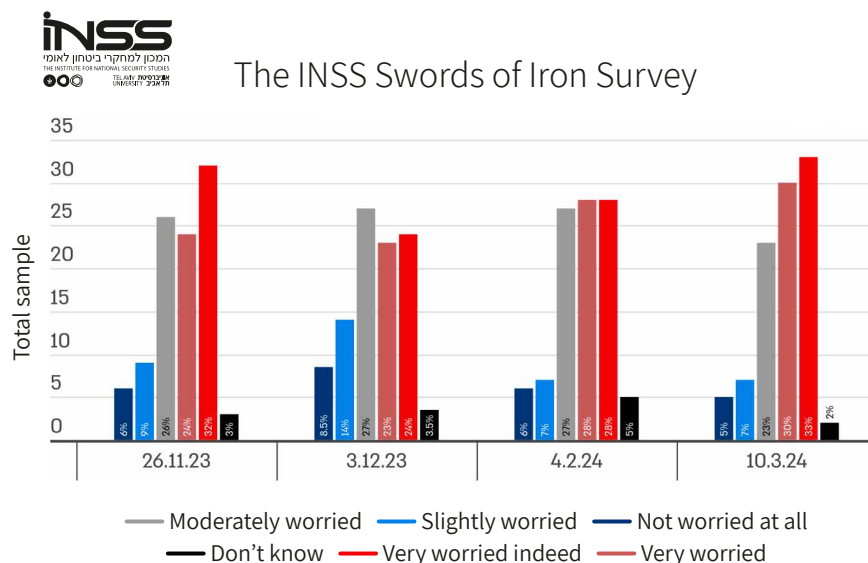
The INSS Swords of Iron Survey

The feeling of solidarity is somewhat stronger · The feeling of solidarity is much stronger
The feeling of solidarity is somewhat weaker · There is no change in the feeling of solidarity
Don't know · The feeling of solidarity is much weaker

Figure 6. How Worried Are You About the Situation of Israel on the Day After the War?

The INSS Swords of Iron Survey

Moderately worried · Slightly worried · Not worried at all
Don't know · Very worried indeed · Very worried

worrying sign, due to the fact that they intensify the polarization of society.

Social Polarization

In addition to these worrying signs, it is impossible to ignore the revival of the polarized political discourse, which is of particular concern for societal resilience. As already mentioned, the October 7 attack was preceded by a grave sociopolitical crisis, which eroded social solidarity and caused very serious damage to trust in state institutions. At the start of the war there was a clear reaction of "rallying round the flag" and it looked like Israeli society was putting the crisis to one side, but recently the polarizing political discourse has returned to center stage—with negative consequences for social solidarity and thus for societal resilience.

The findings of the INSS surveys show that since the start of the war there has been a decline of about 20 percent in the rate of respondents who believe that the sense of social solidarity has been reinforced. The data referring to those who believe that solidarity in Israeli society is quite strong are consistent throughout the survey period, but it could perhaps be said cautiously that this is mainly a sign of movement between two categories, and still indicates damage to the sense of solidarity. Not only that, but there has also been a significant increase in the number of respondents greatly worried or worried by the state of Israeli society after the war.

Fear of the renewal of the hostile, divisive discourse is reinforced by the study carried out by the ResWell Center, showing that there are considerable differences—in national resilience and in communal and personal resilience—between government supporters and those who define themselves as neutral or opposed to it (Kaim et al., 2024). It is important and interesting to note that among government supporters there were higher levels of resilience than among government opponents. This was also expressed in attitudes towards metrics such as hope and morale. On the other hand, for negative metrices—perception of danger, threats etc.—the levels were higher among government opponents.

It is important to stress that there is a measure of interaction among the factors that are seen as worrying signs with reference to societal resilience. For example, it is clear that the problematic conduct of the government affects both the ability of evacuees to return to normality and public trust in the government. In addition, and as shown above, there are mutual effects between social polarization and public trust in the government. These interactions intensify the worrying signs, increase their effect and stress the importance of finding a total systemic solution, as specified in the section on recommendations.

Recommendations and Outlines for Action

Societal resilience is a highly important factor in national security in general, and in the current crisis in particular. In order to repair societal resilience in Israel and lead Israeli society from crisis towards recovery and growth, it is vital to strengthen awareness of resilience among the public and national and local leaders, and create plans of action directed towards various objectives. Such plans must support the implementation of programs that combine research insights and theories on the subject of resilience, as discussed at the seminar, with government and local authority policies and with the perceptions and needs of the public in general, and of the groups directly affected by the ongoing crisis in particular. Against this background, we present a number of recommendations and suggested actions to strengthen societal resilience in Israel and help its society to recover from the October 7 tragedy.

First of all, the return of all the hostages, the rehabilitation of the border settlements that were damaged and the residents who were uprooted from their homes during this war, and the revival of their sense of security—all these must be included in the aims of the war. This is according to the perception that victory means achieving all the war aims, whose main purpose must be a significant and sustainable improvement in the security situation, with the emphasis on long term settlement along the borders. These concrete objectives must be prioritized while internalizing the basic understanding that the overriding aim of the process is not only rehabilitation or bouncing back, which means returning to the situation before October 7, but bouncing forward, which means multidimensional renewal and growth at the national and local level. The issues of the hostages and the damaged villages have a bearing on many of the worrying signs with respect to resilience. They affect not only the evacuees themselves, but how the public

perceive the actions of the government, and consequently public trust in the government, and are therefore a central building block in the process of strengthening resilience. They also have considerable impact on the functional continuity of Israeli society, and as a result, also on the functional measures of resilience, such as economic recovery.

The rehabilitation process, and above all recovery and growth, is expected to be long, challenging and full of pitfalls. It must be tackled with a total systemic approach, based on awareness of the time dimension and the responsibility of the state and the government to achieve these objectives. In view of the magnitude of the disaster and its unprecedented physical and mental impact, the process must therefore be understood as a long-term project. It is important to remember that although part of Israeli society is drawing near to the "day after," for wide sections of the population the war has not ended and this sensation was expressed by one of the speakers at the seminar who stated: "We are always before the event, in the event, and after the event." So even when the process of recovery begins, it will be multidimensional, since every section and group of the population require components of recovery and incentives for growth based on their needs, characteristics and wishes. This must be the working assumption for everyone involved in the task: Avoid a generalized approach to the public as a whole in favor of a differential and compassionate approach, by paying attention to each group separately.

Based on the lessons of previous catastrophes worldwide, the professional literature proposes a number of basic principles that can significantly improve the success of rehabilitation and recovery processes. These principles were presented at the seminar, and should be studied and implemented with respect to the current situation, and adapted to local circumstances. It is important to stress that the main recommendations in this context deal with the evacuated communities, based on the understanding that the crisis they are experiencing is the most severe and therefore requires most action, but also because the treatment of the evacuees will have a significant effect on other measures of resilience, and particularly those that were noted as worrying at the seminar.

1. The government has overall responsibility for planning, budgeting and directing the practical work of rehabilitation. This requires firstly an understanding of the task and its importance as a national priority to renew perceptions of national security. Just as the government must shape the future components of physical security, with an emphasis on the perception of military security and including financial components, so it is also obliged to include societal resilience as a component of security of the first rank. This requires a government that is aware, committed and working for optimum repair of the damage caused by the disaster. It is also important to understand that the rehabilitation process must be focused on growth—not just a restoration of the previous situation, but the recovery and rehabilitation of the relevant regions (although there are broad differences between them) in a way that constitutes a leap forward relative to their situation before the crisis.

2. The processes of strengthening social, national and communal resilience must start from below, from the people and communities themselves. Studies examining ways of making decisions in complex processes of recovery found that too often they are characterized by bureaucratic procedures with little representation of individuals, communities and minorities; often excluding women, people with special needs, and civil society organizations. The first and most important step is to optimally integrate all these elements into the process of making decisions, planning and implementing rehabilitation; just as the Tekuma Administration is already operating,

other administrations must be established for other sectors. Residents of the Western Negev and of the north stress again and again that they want and demand to be part of the process of decision making. Their practical involvement is necessary for decisions affecting the immediate, medium and long term. For example, a poll of residents of the Eshkol Regional Council stressed that many of them wished to live in one place in the Eshkol Region until they could return home, and that many sought to retain the familiar character of their villages before the disaster. This links to the principle stated above, of the need to maintain the identity and values of the system being rehabilitated.

3. The integration of citizens into the decision-making process has a number of important consequences. It increases the chance that the decisions and programs will faithfully reflect the wishes and needs of the inhabitants and the communities. Experience so far shows that this is not happening enough. Not only that, but incorporation of the residents also raises awareness of aspects that external decision makers do not always take into account. For example, when the villages were evacuated, not enough thought was given to all the implications of the long-term housing of evacuees in hotels, which present difficult challenges to the family structure. It should be noted that as of March 26, more than 20,000 evacuees from the north and about 7,000 from the south were living in hotels. Thus many evacuated families have been living for months in a challenging and frustrating physical situation. Conversations with the evacuees create the impression that decision makers are not sufficiently aware of these difficulties and are not looking for more suitable solutions. Involving the public in the processes will also restore to the residents a sense of competency and control over their lives, something that was badly damaged by the trauma. It should also restore their faith in the system.

4. It appears that members of the Tekuma Administration are aware of this need and its representatives are therefore careful to state that it involves the public in its decision making from the start. Thus they reported on meetings with residents and "round table" discussions with experts, including contacts with local authorities in the western Negev. Nevertheless the question arises of whether they are just listening to the residents, or whether decisions actually reflect the perceptions and needs that are expressed. Voices from the field indicate that there is still a long way to go in this vital aspect.

5. While the Tekuma Administration is taking the first steps to rehabilitate the western Negev towns and villages, there is no systemic organization to tackle the challenges of the many evacuated northern villages. Neither is there a national organization to deal with the present situation and potential challenges with the possible spread of the war to the northern arena. This is a clear omission requiring immediate steps to rectify the situation, and to improve all elements of national readiness for a lengthy war. The demand for such a systemic organization is also heard from the ground, as shown by the letter sent by the heads of northern local authorities to the Prime Minister on March 10, in which they demanded security solutions to the threat from Hezbollah and a plan to strengthen the north.

6. Another important principle for strengthening resilience is the emphasis on establishing the social capital of the affected communities. While most of the processes of recovering from disaster have a tendency to stress the physical dimension, thought should also be given to the fact that real resilience comes from the level of bonding, bridging and linking social capital in the community (Aldrich, 2017). Of these the most important is bridging social capital, which can be built via public spaces—parks, community centers, synagogues, restaurants and so on. This can

be seen for example in Ein HaBesor, which is rehabilitating itself independently. It is important to stress that in times of peace, the distribution of sites that give rise to social capital is not equal and there are gaps between communities. While some communities have many parks and public spaces, for example, in others there are fewer. Since many of the communities attacked on October 7 were part of the social and geographical periphery of Israel, the rehabilitation process must include the construction of social infrastructures to help these communities build the social capital that will help to repair their resilience. It appears that the bodies involved in the rehabilitation process are aware of this issue and are making an effort to include social aspects as part of the physical process. For example, the Tekuma Administration is striving to establish regional sports centers and cultural centers as part of the plans, as well as reinforcing the local education system, with attention paid to the needs of the residents.

7. In the field of mental health and psychosocial support, empowering resilience occupies an important place. In the immediate term, the trauma means there are many individuals suffering from mental illness of various degrees of intensity and requiring professional treatment. There is also a need for psychosocial first aid, which means training people on the ground to tackle these issues and reinforce social networks in the community. The network of resilience centers (which now also exist among concentrations of evacuees all over the country) are a central factor in this essential work. The fact that resilience centers were familiar to the communities and used by them for many years before the disaster makes them a very significant element in the current situation. Resilience centers offer therapists who themselves experienced the disaster and this makes it easier for them to create a shared reality, experience and therapeutic language with their patients.

8. Another principle behind successful rehabilitation is coordination and collaboration between the various elements. In this context it is important to note that the affected Gaza-border communities do not comprise a single legal entity and are not all included in the various local councils and local authorities with which the Tekuma Administration is working. Here there is the challenge of overcoming the differences between the towns and villages, in their character and their distance from the Gaza border, which stresses even more the need for coordination and systemic capacity. Reports from the ground sometimes indicate gaps and obstacles between government ministries and the government's Tekuma Administration, between it and the local authorities, and between them and the various communities and residents. Bridging all these gaps is a challenging task for all of the parties involved. In the current circumstances this requires sensitivity and a differential approach, including for small groups of citizens, particularly those with special needs.

9. The welcome activity of civil society organizations can be seen in their impressive readiness to provide a response to citizens in distress. This had far-reaching importance, particularly at the start of the war, when government ministries were having great difficulty in functioning. Recently there have been more signs indicating a degree of "fatigue" in these organizations and their difficulty in maintaining the level of assistance required for the long term. Clearly they are unable to provide a sufficient response to all the long-term needs of the residents, particularly with respect to general needs such as health, education, welfare and employment. In a situation where neither the government nor the local authorities have the absolute ability to meet all the needs, a way must be found to coordinate between them and the volunteer organizations in order

to maximize their efficiency and ensure that they are serving the needs of the residents.

If the parties responsible for rehabilitation adopt these recommendations, the process of rehabilitating the evacuated communities will likely be more effective. This will reinforce functional continuity and show that the government is back on track, which will have a positive influence on societal resilience. At the same time public faith in the government may improve and polarization in society may even be reduced. In addition to these steps, the government should act independently to reinforce these aspects of resilience, for example by avoiding toxic and harmful political discourse that bolsters polarization and undermines public trust.

To sum up, the process of repair and recovery from the Swords of Iron War requires the government, the local authorities and civil society to take immediate and comprehensive measures to tackle the severe disruption and rehabilitate societal resilience. In this paper we have outlined a conceptual framework based on in-depth studies and experience from Israel and elsewhere, as well as insights that arose from studies carried out during the war and conversations with elements on the ground as presented at the seminar.

This framework should set guidelines for overall planning and management of the effort that is required right now, and will be even more necessary in the coming years. At present there is a need for a new and different national civilian trajectory, based on components of national resilience, that can lead Israel and its citizens to extensive recovery and renewed growth as fast as possible. All this in conjunction with the security establishment's process of recovery. According to the research on civil society during war, it appears that such a trajectory can only happen if it is coupled with a multidimensional reboot of government systems and their connections to civil society, which would bring about a change in Israel's order of priorities.

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Notes

1   The INSS surveys can be found at https://tinyurl.com/3bmdjj63. For insights that arose from the surveys of the ResWell Program, see Kimchi et al., 2024a, 2024b; Kaim et al. 2024. There was also a presentation at the seminar of a preliminary unpublished study from the Samuel Neaman Institute led by Dr. Reuven Gal, and surveys conducted by Prof. Yftach Gepner among residents of the Eshkol Regional Council, that can be found at https://tinyurl.com/y3s7t94j.
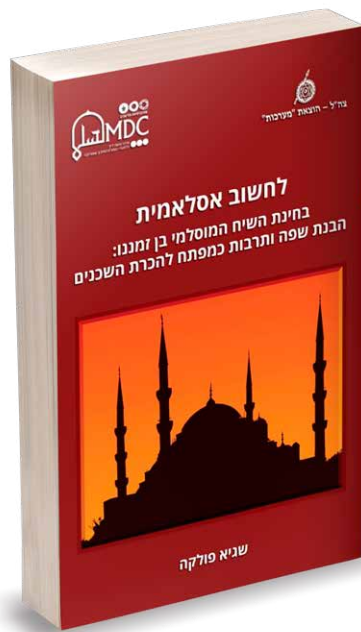
The Elephant in the Room When Discussing Intelligence Failures

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Thinking Islamic—Reviewing the Contemporary Muslim Discourse: Understanding Language and Culture as a Key to Knowing the Neighbors
By: Sagi Polka
Publisher: Ma'archot and Moshe Dayan Center, Tel Aviv University
Year: 2023
Number of pages: 440

Since October 7, many professional conferences have been held with the aim of deciphering the roots of the intelligence failure surrounding the Hamas attack. Most of the conferences have focused on the attempt to analyze the methodological errors of assessment agents, including the presentation of analyses by former heads of security and intelligence agencies, as well as academic researchers, most of whom deal with various kinds of theoretical aspects, such as the psychology of individuals and groups, philosophy, and decision-making processes. Conspicuously absent or marginally present were researchers that specialize in in-depth content, chiefly the culture and language of the "other."

This reflects a deep change that has taken place in the fundamental concepts of intelligence and of the portrait of the intelligence agent in recent decades. A very problematic picture emerges from books and journals published in the West, including Israel, which contain plenty of theories on logic, system analysis, and group behavior patterns, accompanied by an ongoing effort to quantify conclusions and render intelligence as a science. The "tools of the past" that aimed to decipher the mind and soul of someone who is not from your culture, in particular by gaining proficiency in their language, are pushed aside and seen as "background material" that is important but not critical for formulating a picture of reality, assessing the future and recommending action.

October 7 was a wake-up call for Israel as a whole, regarding its lack of understanding of the region surrounding it. The failure to decipher Hamas's intentions stems not only from mistaken decision-making processes or faults in the way information was transferred—a claim that aims to give the debacle the image of a technical or organizational failure—but from an extreme misunderstanding of the reality. At its center is the difficulty in "reading" an ideological organization and adopting the mistaken assumption that it is undergoing evolution by becoming more moderate and civilian-focused, such that its arm can be twisted via "economic carrots."

The fundamental problem cannot be detached from the fact that more and more Israelis, including in the intelligence agencies, tend to rely on technologies from AI or Google Translate, as tools for deciphering another culture, with little familiarity with its deep foundations. The concept of acquiring

knowledge through reading and exposure to new content has been replaced by the term "developing knowledge," meaning sitting in a closed group and holding "echo chamber"-type discussions, that is, with the participation of people whose way of thinking is fundamentally different from that of the "other."

> October 7 was a wake-up call for Israel as a whole, regarding its lack of understanding of the region surrounding it. The failure to decipher Hamas' intentions stems not only from mistaken decision-making processes or faults in the way information was transferred—a claim that aims to give the debacle the image of a technical or organizational failure—but from an extreme misunderstanding of the reality.

At this highly appropriate and quite tragic time, Dr. Sagi Polka's book *Thinking Islamic—Reviewing the Contemporary Muslim Discourse: Understanding Language and Culture as a Key to Knowing the Neighbors* appeared. The study presents readers with a broad panorama of all shades of green (the symbol of the Muslim Brotherhood) and black (the color that represents the global jihad stream). The book analyzes the historical development of the streams and their conceptual and practical characteristics. It does so while examining in depth their basic terms (for example, *Jihad, Istishhad,* or *Da`awah*) and core issues, that in Israel usually tend to be analyzed from a strategic realpolitik perspective while omitting their cultural dimension, such as the *Hudna* (whose deep meaning, which was not fully understood before October 7, is a lull for the purpose of enabling Muslims to gain strength and then to attack their enemies by surprise, while violating every existing agreement), or the attitude towards Iran (utilitarian cooperation alongside deep ideological and political hostility).

The volume is another link in the long chain of books published in recent decades that attempt to decipher the cultural bases of the ongoing unrest that characterizes the Middle East and radiates out towards the entire world— what well-known historian Bernard Lewis called "the unending crisis." Radical Islam is the most prominent and lethal representative of this phenomenon. Fundamentally, it expresses a civilization that has been in crisis for over 200 years that is accompanied by an incisive, violence-filled polemic over identity and purpose. The attacks on September 11, 2001, were a powerful expression of this civilizational crisis, as was October 7, 2023: the first created a short-lived reckoning that was quickly replaced by a sense of victimhood given the campaigns that the United States pursued to change the face of the Middle East; the second did not arouse sweeping criticism from intellectuals, religious leaders or journalists in the Muslim world and in particular in the Arab world. Instead, the commission of war crimes was conspicuously ignored and emphatically denied, alongside praise filled with dehumanization of Israelis and claims that they are all the enemy and a legitimate target.

Major General (res.) Gershon Hacohen chose a fitting title for the book's foreword: "The West's Conceptual Barrier in Understanding the Muslim World." Hacohen points out a fundamental problem in the Israeli discourse (including the military discourse) in its failure to understand the depth of the logic of the challenges surrounding it, and even worse—the tendency to impose our logic on actors from a culture that we do not understand. For example, in Israel people tend to see a contradiction between messianism and rationality—something that in practice exists together without contradiction in the brain of Yahya Sinwar. In the Israeli discourse in recent years, he has been called "delusional" and "detached from reality" but he has proved that he is rooted in it, and that the problem lies in his Israeli interpreters, who did not manage to decipher the yearnings of his ideological world.

The book takes readers on a 150-year-long journey, from the end of the nineteenth

century to the present time. In this framework, it provides an analysis of the development of political Islam as a response to the fundamental illnesses of the Muslim world and describes its conceptual and practical expressions in the modern Middle East, including the strategic challenges that Israel currently faces. Polka does not limit himself to the narrow frameworks of political or intellectual analysis; he also touches on issues related to the social and cultural realms. In this respect, the chapter on attitudes towards women in the various Islamist streams stands out. It includes a presentation of complex dilemmas for the Western way of thinking about women, some of which attempt to combine religious piety with feminism and to maneuver within a world that from the outset puts them at a built-in disadvantage.

Polka ends the book with an important chapter, which should have been expanded, that discusses, among other things, the significance of language and culture (and the lack thereof) as part of the effort to reduce the gaps in understanding between Israel and her surrounding neighbors. Like most Middle East researchers and commentators, he did not foresee the October 7 attack. However, on the eve of that trauma, he explained the complexity of Hamas's worldview and its ability to be simultaneously pragmatic and to maintain its long-term ideological vision. The following should be inscribed in the consciousness of Israelis, including decision-makers: "Studying the conceptual world and the ideas of our neighbors, some of which are our enemies, is no less important than learning about military values and different kinds of weapons or studying the politics of Islamic countries" (p. 340).

Knowledge of language and culture is not a magic formula that makes academic researchers or intelligence officers immune to mistakes. Throughout history, there were more than a few distinguished Middle East researchers whose strategic assessments collapsed, especially when they were involved in decision-making

processes, or their hearts' yearnings biased their professional assessments. Bernard Lewis stands out in this respect: when involved in the strategic planning of the conquest of Iraq in 2003, he defined it as the beginning of a stable and democratic Middle East. However, proficiency in the tools of language and culture supports a more accurate reading of the present and reduces the built-in alienation between the patterns of thinking of the researcher and the object of their research.

> Polka does not limit himself to the narrow frameworks of political or intellectual analysis; he also touches on issues related to the social and cultural realms. In this respect, the chapter on attitudes towards women in the various Islamist streams stands out. It includes a presentation of complex dilemmas for the Western way of thinking about women, some of which attempt to combine religious piety with feminism and to maneuver within a world that from the outset puts them at a built-in disadvantage.

These kinds of conclusions must not be pushed to the sidelines of the discourse on the roots of the October 7 debacle, as occurred in the discussion regarding the sources of the 1973 surprise, which also stemmed in large part from ignorance of the culture of the "other" and underestimating its capabilities. Every intelligence agent engaged in deciphering the other side must be proficient in its language and culture. The incoming director of the Military Intelligence Directorate, Brig. Gen. Shlomi Binder, would do well if, along with rehabilitating the directorate's units, he would begin with the study of Arabic and the history of the Middle East, make it mandatory in the directorate's basic courses, and thus serve as an example and a symbol of renewal. Reading Polka's book would doubly benefit Binder in particular and intelligence personnel in general: it would enrich them with essential content regarding the challenges that Israel is facing, and

> Intelligence is a reflection of Israeli society as a whole. Just as the 1973 conception existed within a public and political discourse that reflected deep contempt for the Arabs, the 2023 debacle embodies national defects. Chief among them is the reduced scope and standing of the study of other cultures

bring up fundamental problems and dilemmas that are relevant to the directorate after the upheaval of October 7.

Intelligence is a reflection of Israeli society as a whole. Just as the 1973 conception existed within a public and political discourse that reflected deep contempt for the Arabs, the 2023 debacle embodies national defects. Chief among them is the reduced scope and standing of the study of other cultures—which reflects a society that scorns the humanities, sanctifies material achievement and technology, and large parts of which turn their backs on the region surrounding us. Arabic, especially spoken Arabic, must become a mandatory subject in the education system, starting in elementary school. This is necessary in order to know our enemies better, but also in order to be able to create a deep and realistic relationship with friends.

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Price Tag

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Vengeance: The Story of Jewish Terrorism
Author: Roy Sharon
Publisher: Kinneret, Zmora, Dvir
Year: 2023
Number of Pages: 249

For years, there was a prevailing sense among the Israeli public that the terms "terror" and "Jewish" did not go together. Although the "Jewish Underground" carried out terrorist attacks against Palestinians for several years starting in the late 1970s, the phenomenon was perceived as unique and anomalous. Since then, however, with the expansion and increasing frequency of violent attacks against Palestinians by Jews from the radical right (perpetrated by organized groups, or individuals), the term "Jewish terrorism" has become accepted and entrenched in media and public discourse. There *is* terrorism carried out by Jews. This

phenomenon is the focus of the book by Roy Sharon, a journalist and commentator, who was formerly a correspondent in the Palestinian territories for Channel 10 and is now a military and security affairs analyst for Kan 11.

The book begins with a general chapter that provides a historical overview of the phenomenon and bears a quasi-theoretical nature. Within this framework, several definitions of terrorism, coined by widely-recognized experts on the issue, are quoted, highlighting the difficulty in reaching an agreed-upon classification. For example, Ehud Sprinzak describes terrorism as the use of severe violence against non-combatant civilians as a symbolic act and tool for conveying a frightening message to the broader public. However, this definition is problematic, especially from an Israeli viewpoint, since in Israel, even blatant violence against security forces, when carried out by Palestinian actors, is considered a terrorist attack. More appropriate for Sharon's book is the definition proposed by the American scholar Bruce Hoffman, of terrorism as "the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change."

The objective of Jewish terrorism is to instigate profound political change in the Israeli-Palestinian context through a sequence of violent acts—irrespective of whether these acts stem from the organized planning of a group or the spontaneous initiative of individuals. Regardless of the specific case or actor, terrorism perpetrated by Jews aims to mobilize a transformation within Israeli society and its political framework by intensifying friction and tension between Palestinians and Jews across the West Bank, thereby exacerbating relations within the broader conflict zone. According to Roy Sharon, the motivation for provoking this change is driven by three intertwined factors. Foremost among them, as indicated by the book's title, is the desire to avenge Palestinian attacks on Jews. The perceived legitimacy for

such revenge is grounded, according to the Jewish terrorists' perspective, in tradition and religious commandments. Another motivation is the preservation of the Land of Israel under Jewish-Israeli control and sovereignty. This motive was distinctly evidenced in the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 by a right-wing extremist, in the aftermath of a demonstration organized under the slogan "No to Violence [within Israeli society itself]." Rabin's assassination, which is not explored in the book, was a direct assault on the core of Israeli society, causing profound psychological and political damage. Historically, in the context of the collapse of trust in the potential for the Oslo Accords to reach their desired solution—namely, negotiations for a permanent settlement—the impact was devastating. The third motivation is the "hastening of the end," meaning the acceleration of the redemption of the people and the land through violent provocation that would inflame the conflict and galvanize the entire Jewish public into action to assert Israeli sovereignty over all territories of the land.

The importance of Roy Sharon's book lies in its sharp focus on the systematic violation of law and order, and the responsibility and obligation placed squarely on the Israeli government and security establishment to address related developments with greater urgency and determination. The writing is compelling, and the reading of the book is engaging, but beyond that, it should serve as a wake-up call to the Israeli public to pay more attention to this troubling issue that challenges the security apparatus, while the response of the Israeli public at large is often marked by indifference.

Roy Sharon's book centers on Jewish terrorist incidents and the individuals behind them. Their shared traits are evident and indeed represent a blend of the three motivational factors outlined above:

Over the past decades, extremist right-wing activists, proponents of Greater Israel, have taken matters into their own hands, carrying out acts of terror. Among them were activists known as "Kach," a minority with a superficial ideology rooted in hatred of Arabs. Most hailed from the religious-nationalist fringe, influenced by the strict and extremist teachings of Rabbi Meir Kahane. They included members of the settler generation, hilltop youth, with anti-establishment, post-Zionist, and zealous religious beliefs, acting out of disgust for the old guard of the religious bloc and disillusionment with the leadership of the established settlers and state institutions. Many did not complete high school, and some embraced the complex Chabad messianic ideology of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh.

The structure of the book aligns with this approach of illustrating and discussing cases of Jewish terror and their perpetrators, with each one meticulously detailed, covering the attacks themselves, the pursuits of the attackers, their arrests, and their encounters with their Shin Bet (the General Security Services) interrogators. The author, a media expert, brings a narrative-documentary style to the book. Essentially, it can be viewed as a series of articles that examine specific cases. This analysis of Jewish terrorist incidents in the West Bank as individual occurrences is also evident in the approach of the U.S. government towards them, opting to impose personal sanctions on extreme right-wing operatives.

However, beyond the individual incidents, a highly problematic phenomenon emerges both from the perspective of Israeli and Palestinian security and from a social standpoint within Israeli society. Its political and policy implications are numerous and complex. The

scope of the phenomenon is undeniably wide, and its frequency is currently increasing to the extent that it is now expected that in response to a Palestinian terrorist attack, particularly the murder of Jews, there will follow a swift, violent retaliation—a Jewish terrorist act against Palestinians. At times, it becomes a full-blown pogrom, involving numerous participants.

The importance of Roy Sharon's book lies in its sharp focus on the systematic violation of law and order, and the responsibility and obligation placed squarely on the Israeli government and security establishment to address related developments with greater urgency and determination. The writing is compelling, and the reading of the book is engaging, but beyond that, it should serve as a wake-up call to the Israeli public to pay more attention to this troubling issue that challenges the security apparatus, while the response of the Israeli public at large is often marked by indifference. Furthermore, the attacks are often tolerated, if not condoned, by far-right factions, especially members of the communities in the West Bank from which they originate. Even in the media, Jewish terrorism is not consistently portrayed with sharp critical scrutiny, except in particularly severe cases.

Herein lies the weakness of the book: the processes of right-wing radicalization that Israeli society has undergone over the years, directly linked to the phenomenon of Jewish terrorism, as well as its problematic and cumulative implications for the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are not thoroughly explored. Such shifts are evidenced in the not infrequent calls, following a Palestinian terrorist attack, to expand the settlement enterprise in the West Bank. There have been instances where this call has been positively responded to, and it has translated into actual expansion of settlement construction in the Territories. Jewish terrorist activists cannot help but see in this response an institutional recognition of aspirations for vengeance, land redemption, and the coming of the messiah—motivations that also justify unauthorized violence against Palestinians.

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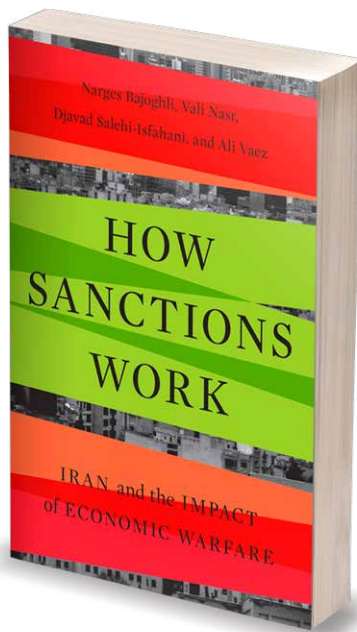
What Have the Sanctions Against Iran Achieved?

Itay Haiminis

Dado Center for Multidisciplinary Military Thinking

How Sanctions Work—Iran and the Impact of Economic Warfare
By: Narges Bajoghli, Vali Nasr, Djavad Salehi-Isfahani and Ali Vaez
Publisher: Stanford University
Year: 2024
Number of pages: 212

In the last two years, in the context of war between Russia and Ukraine and the struggle between the United States and China, there has been a growing research interest in the subject of economic sanctions. The West has waged an economic war against Russia for more than two years, which has not yet succeeded in stopping its aggression towards Ukraine, while China and the United States exchange economic blows as part of their strategic competition for technological and economic supremacy. However, sanctions are no longer the domain of superpowers only. More and more countries are turning to sanctions in order to achieve foreign and security policy goals, including Saudi Arabia, North Korea and even Israel (Drezner, 2023). This growing interest is reflected, among other things, in the publication of books by select academic publishers and articles in leading journals in their field, in well-publicized academic conferences and podcasts. Among the books published during the period,[1] the book reviewed here, "How Sanctions Work—Iran and the Impact of Economic Warfare" stands out in particular.

The book is part of an ongoing research project at Johns Hopkins University called "Rethinking Iran,"[2] within the framework of which a series of detailed reports on life in Iran under the sanctions regime have been published in recent years. One of the unique aspects of the project is its success in highlighting important issues that have so far received almost no attention from researchers or decision makers dealing with Iran (such as the effects of sanctions on the environment or on the use of drugs in Iran).

Although much has been written on the topic of sanctions against Iran, research has stalled for a long time because it fluctuates between two opposing approaches that cannot be reconciled. The first approach states that sanctions work because they harm the Iranian economy, destabilize the regime and even influence its decision-making, as is evident for example in the nuclear agreement signed in 2015. Those who take this approach call for tightening sanctions against the Iranian regime even now, following the recent escalation in the conflict between Israel and Iran (Levitt, 2024; Taghvaee, 2024). According to this opinion, making the necessary changes in the sanctions regime against Iran—from better enforcement of existing sanctions to the inclusion of additional entities within the sanctions framework—will ensure their effectiveness.

The second approach states that sanctions do not work because although the regime has

been under expanding sanctions since 1979, it has not abandoned the nuclear project. Indeed it has increased its missile stockpile and has persisted in a regional strategy that includes support for extremist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah. The supporters of this approach do not necessarily call for the removal of sanctions because they recognize their symbolic importance, and because despite their limitations, sanctions are apparently preferable in their view to the use of military force[3] (Drezner, 2022; Farzanegan & Batmanghelidj, 2023). In this respect, the book is important because it offers another approach, which turns the spotlight from an exclusive focus on clarifying the causal relationship between the sanctions and changes in Iran's policy, towards an examination of the sanctions as an integral part of the country's political, economic and social history since the revolution. It is not simply another study examining whether sanctions have strengthened the pressure on Iran regarding its nuclear project or intensified its internal turmoil. Rather, it is a study that turns our gaze first and foremost to Iran itself, with the aim of trying to present to us a richer description and analysis of the country than what appears in studies that focus solely on sanctions. For sanctions researchers, this is a model that can also be used for additional test cases of countries that have been under a comprehensive sanctions regime for many years.

The book thus presents a new and original approach to the question of whether sanctions against Iran are working. The main thesis is that Iran as we know it today is a consequence of the sanctions that have been imposed on it since 1979, and that sanctions play an important and central negative role in shaping the character of its society, economy, government and its policies. The book is of course not the first study that presents a sharp criticism of sanctions against Iran, but it deals with the question of whether sanctions work through a panoramic, multidisciplinary and in-depth look at Iran. In the words of one of the authors of the book, Vali Nasr, in the webinar on the occasion of its

publication, "Sanctions are a powerful tool of state building."[4] The question that arises from this is, of course, what kind of country the sanctions created.

Sanctions, the authors of the book state, are largely, if not exclusively, responsible for the radicalization of Iran's foreign and security policy, for the widening of socio-economic disparities in the country, for a retreat in the processes of democratization and political and economic liberalization in Iran, and for the strengthening of conservative and reactionary forces in it.

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Half of the book's chapters are thematic discussions on society (chapter one), politics (chapter two) and the economy (chapter four) in Iran. These are also, in my opinion, the most important chapters in the book. They were written by researchers from various disciplines and differ from each other not only in terms of their content, but also in terms of methodology and writing style. For example, the chapter on Iranian society was written by the Iranian American anthropologist Narges Bajoghli and accordingly contains a detailed description of the daily experience of many people in Iran under the sanctions regime.

In contrast, the chapter on the Iranian economy was written by the Iranian American economist Djavad Salehi-Isfahani and includes a large amount of data, numerous graphs and technical discussions. In response to the question of how the Iranian economy continues to function under the burden of sanctions, the chapter presents a useful comparison between

the Iranian economy and the more closed economies of North Korea or Cuba, arguing that the liberal characteristics of the Iranian model have prevented its collapse. Even if the notable differences between the book's chapters impairs the experience of reading the book to some extent, there are many advantages to the diversity, which make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. Reading these chapters raises serious questions about the feasibility of the ambitious goals set by the sanctioners in Washington, Brussels and the UN headquarters.

> Since the Iranian regime sees the sanctions against it as part of the West's ongoing effort to oust it, it may be possible to gain its trust and confidence through the complete and unilateral lifting of all sanctions against it.

The remaining three chapters of the book deal in a more focused way with the sanctions regime itself and include, among other things, a well-known historical description of its development over the years (the third chapter) and a less than innovative discussion of the consequences of the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" policy (the fifth chapter and part of the sixth chapter). These are to a large extent introductory chapters to the subject of sanctions on Iran, and anyone who has followed the subject in recent years and read some of the extensive literature written about it, will not find much interest in them.

For those who read the book in search of practical advice or lessons for the campaign against Iran, I fear disappointment is in store. The authors do not pretend to offer ways to improve the effectiveness of the sanctions regime, and generally express pessimism about the possibility that sanctions will ever succeed in realizing the hopes placed in them. One of the reasons for this pessimism is the authors' assessment that the decision-makers in the Iranian regime will not agree

to enter into negotiations in exchange for the promise of lifting the sanctions, in view of their painful experience on the subject. Here the authors dwell on a point that rarely receives sufficient attention—that the Iranian regime was disappointed even before the American withdrawal from the nuclear agreement. The process of removing the sanctions was very slow, very partial and far from met the early expectations of the Iranians. The stories about the attempts of then Secretary of State John Kerry to convince the major banks in Europe and the United States to agree to return to work in Iran, demonstrate that even when the decision makers in the United States and Europe decided to ease the sanctions regime, the ability to do so was not entirely in their hands.[5] Opponents of the agreement inside Iran saw this as evidence for their claims that Iran should not have agreed to it.

It may be that while there is no real horizon for the removal of sanctions, there is no basis to assume their effectiveness at changing the regime's policy, certainly regarding nuclear weapons. This is a sad conclusion, but in my opinion also one that embodies new potential for the effort to curb the Iranian nuclear project. The Iranian regime sees the project as a key component in its ability to ensure its survival, and recently also as a useful tool to enforce its will in the Middle East. Is it possible to convince the regime that its continuity will be guaranteed even without the existence of the project? Since the Iranian regime sees the sanctions against it as part of the West's ongoing effort to oust it, it may be possible to gain its trust and confidence through the complete and unilateral lifting of all sanctions against it. Beyond the fact that the step will ultimately demonstrate that the West is not opposed to the very existence of the regime, the changes in Iranian economy, society and politics following the lifting of the sanctions may, in my understanding, potentially also have an impact on the regime policies in the long term.

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The text represents the opinion of the writer only and does not represent the position of the IDF or of the Israeli security establishment.

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Notes

1 Among the prominent academic publications in the field of sanctions published in the last two years, the following books are particularly worth noting: Mulder, N. (2022). *The economic weapon: The rise of sanctions as a tool of modern war.* Yale University Press. Demarais, A. (2022). *Backfire: How sanctions reshape the world against U.S. interests.* Columbia University Press. McDowell, D. (2023). *Bucking the buck: US financial sanctions and the international backlash against the dollar.* Oxford University Press. Farrell, H., & Newman, A. (2023). *Underground empire: How America weaponized the world economy.* New York, Henry Holt and Company. The webinar held on the book held on behalf of the Crown Center at Brown University is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orp7F5tH_qU

2 More information about the project and full access to its publications can be found on the website https://tinyurl.com/2k2s53cu

3 An excellent example of the nature of sanction critics can be found in an article published in 2013, which is a summary of a report on the subject published by the National Iranian American Council. Although the authors of the report strongly criticize the sanctions regime, they also ultimately recommend perfecting and refining the sanctions as a mechanism of pressure on the Iranian regime. Khajehpour, B., Marashi, R., & Parsi, T. (2013). The trouble with sanctions. *Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, 92–93. https://tinyurl.com/59jyp84r

4 The webinar was held on behalf of the Crown Center at Brown University. It is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orp7F5tH_qU

5 There are, of course, other reasons why the economic benefits from the nuclear agreement were limited: Some of the sanctions were not lifted because they were imposed for other reasons (for example, due to claims regarding human rights and support for terrorism), and Iran was unwilling to take certain steps that could help it effectively exhaust the economic potential in the agreement (e.g. by joining the convention regarding money laundering and the fight against terrorism). The author thanks Dr. Raz Zimmt for his comment on this topic.

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The current era has seen many changes in fundamental conventions relating to national security and how it is perceived at various levels. As national security research evolves, it seeks to adjust to new paradigms and to innovations in the facets involved, be they technological, political, cultural, military, or socio-economic. Moreover, the challenge of fully grasping reality has become even more acute with the regular emergence of competing narratives, and this is precisely why factual and data-based research studies are essential to revised and relevant assessments.

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