In the Aftermath of Operation Pillar of Defense

The Gaza Strip, November 2012

Shlomo Brom, Editor

Memorandum 124

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Institute for National Security Studies (a public benefit company)
40 Haim Levanon Street
POB 39950
Ramat Aviv
Tel Aviv 61398

Tel. +972-3-640-0400
Fax. +972-3-744-7590

E-mail: info@inss.org.il
http://www.inss.org.il

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Introduction

Shlomo Brom

Israel launched Operation Pillar of Defense with the assassination of Ahmed Jabari, commander of Hamas's armed forces in the Gaza Strip. The operation lasted eight days, from November 14 to November 21, 2012, when a ceasefire was brokered through Egyptian mediation efforts. The primary reason behind the Israeli government's decision to embark on the operation was its assessment that the state of deterrence it had achieved through Operation Cast Lead (late 2008-early 2009) had eroded. As a result of this erosion, Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, had loosened its reins, enabling other armed groups to operate against Israel, and had even initiated its own actions and participated in joint operations against Israel. The backdrop to these developments was the growing potential threat from Gaza resulting from the accumulation of a large arsenal of long-range rockets capable of striking the center of Israel.

Not enough time has passed to enable an adequately credible assessment of the operation's full results and ramifications, which would include answers to the question of whether the central goals were indeed attained, namely, rebuilding the Israeli deterrent and dealing a serious blow for an extended period of time to the capability of organizations in the Gaza Strip to launch rockets at the center of Israel. We cannot yet assess whether the current ceasefire will last or whether the same factors that undermined and eventually shattered previous ceasefires will cause the collapse of this ceasefire as well, or when that might happen. Nonetheless, the Institute for National Security Studies has decided to issue a collection of short essays by INSS researchers, offering initial assessments of the operation, the goals attained and not attainted, and the operation's strategic and political implications.

This collection comprises two parts. The first includes essays that focus primarily on military and strategic analyses, as well as the military implications of the operation in the broader sense of the term, given that these days the home front is a principal frontline. In the military analysis, how previous engagements between Israel and Hamas and Hizbollah and the lessons learned from them influenced the thinking that guided the planners of Pillar of Defense and the constraints under which they operated emerges as a prominent theme. Another important theme of the military and strategic analysis deals with the new "star" of this battle, Iron Dome, the active anti-missile defense system. The discussion about Iron Dome seeks to clarify whether something important has been added to our understanding of the advantages and drawbacks of this approach and its relative weight within the basket of solutions designed to provide a good response to the problem of how to defend the civilian home front against ballistic threats.

The second part is devoted to an analysis of the political ramifications of the operation. Particular attention is given to three issues. The first is the unique and central role played by post-"Arab Spring" Egypt as a leading regional wielder of influence in the Israeli-Palestinian arena. The second is an evaluation of the role of the United States, the only remaining superpower in the world, and its influence in the Middle East in general and in the Arab-Israeli sphere in particular, as reflected in this operation. The third issue concerns the implications for the internal Palestinian arena. These three components could have a decisive influence on the conduct of Israeli-Arab dynamics in the future.

The volume concludes with a summary stressing the importance of an in-depth debriefing of the operation and a study of its lessons. Although the operation was brief and limited in scope, it can provide important lessons regarding future attempts by Israel to confront the challenges posed by the Palestinian arena and, possibly, other conflict arenas as well.

This volume does not claim to present a complete picture of the operation and its implications. We have simply tried here to focus on certain important and interesting issues on which our researchers can offer substantive insight despite the lack of a long-term perspective at this time. It will be necessary to continue to examine the operation and its ramifications. Future studies will provide a better perspective for the analysis of the same issues and will be able to address additional topics that are not covered in this collection.

Part I

Military-Strategic Perspectives

Operation Pillar of Defense: Strategic Perspectives

Giora Eiland

Given the short time that has passed since the conclusion of Operation Pillar of Defense, it is appropriate to limit the focus of this analysis to three issues: the definition of the operation's goals, the use of military force, and the crux of the understandings Israel reached with Hamas by the end of the operation. The extent to which the goals were met and the extent to which they are reflected politically in the understandings reached with Hamas are the yardsticks for measuring the operation's success.

The most important part of an operational plan is to define the operation's goal (or goals), the goal being the answer to the question, "What are we trying to achieve?" or "Why are we embarking on this operation in the first place?" The goal is meant to dictate the military mission (or missions), the mission being the answer to the question, "What do we have to do in order to achieve the goal (or goals)?" In turn, the mission is meant to dictate the method, the method being the answer to the question, "How will we carry out the mission (or missions)?"

An operation such as Pillar of Defense requires the political and senior military echelons to define – in advance and in very specific terms – the operation's goals, as almost every use of force is derived from this definition. Just as in Operation Cast Lead four years ago, there were three possible definitions of the main goal of the operation. The minimal goal was to attain deterrence, or in simpler language, to make the enemy not want to shoot at us any more. The second possible goal was to destroy the rocket-launching capabilities of Hamas and the other organizations in the Gaza Strip. This is a more ambitious goal because the desired outcome is not only to make the enemy not want to shoot but also to render it incapable of shooting. The third

possible goal was more political: to topple the Hamas government, thereby damaging not only current military capabilities but also future capabilities and aspirations.

In Operation Cast Lead, the real discussion about the operation's goal began only four days into the fighting, resulting in a lack of clarity and the operation's extension beyond what was strictly necessary. Eventually, under pressure from the defense minister, Israel's decision makers decided on the first of the possible goals. In Operation Pillar of Defense, to the credit of the political echelon, the main goal was clearly defined in advance as the minimal of the three goals, namely, achieving deterrence. It appears that this was the best decision, but an assessment of the extent to which this goal was reached will only be possible in several months.

Defining the operation's goal modestly and minimally allowed the political echelon a relatively large scope, both in terms of the mission assigned to the military and in terms of the possibility of concluding the operation in a short period of time. The use of ground forces for an extensive ground operation was an option we were able to avoid as long as the goal of achieving deterrence was met, but it would have been necessary had the goal of the operation been defined more ambitiously.

The main problem with the operation was not in the decision to forego a ground invasion but in the unexploited potential of the aerial attack. A ground operation, despite all its advantages, entails three serious drawbacks: it results in casualties among our troops; it creates friction with the civilian population, resulting in many civilian casualties; and it requires a relatively longer timeframe to achieve any outcome, thus extending the duration of the operation.

For the type of operation chosen, the situational assessment was made under the mistaken assumption that the only choice was between two types of specific targets for attack: obvious military and, therefore, legitimate targets such as rocket launchers, and any other target, which is civilian and therefore out of bounds. In practice, there is a third type of target: national infrastructures and strategic targets such as government buildings, police stations, bridges, fuel depots, communications infrastructures, and the like. These targets allow a state to continue fighting and are therefore legitimate targets for attack.

Thus, the Israeli error was twofold. First, Israel defined the enemy as a terrorist organization, which in fact it is not. Gaza is de facto a state in every

sense, and it is therefore proper to deal with it as such. One of the several reasons it should be regarded as a state is the consequent option of inflicting damage to its national infrastructures during a military confrontation. Second, there was an unfounded sense that expanding the operation beyond aerial attacks against tactical targets could be effected only by a ground offensive. This is simply not true. It was possible – and it would have been correct – to expand the operation by massively attacking all targets of infrastructure and governance in Gaza. It is a pity that this approach was not adopted. Despite all the errors and failures that characterized the Second Lebanon War, it entailed one particularly effective mission – the massive attack on Hizbollah's high command in Beirut, which created the so-called Dahiya doctrine. The deterrence vis-à-vis Hizbollah that has prevailed since then is largely attributable to the destruction of the Dahiya suburb in southern Beirut.

The third issue concerns the ceasefire agreement and the understandings achieved with Hamas and Egypt. Some say that Israel paid a steep price for this agreement because it granted Hamas a great deal of international legitimacy. But one could also argue that Israel paid no price whatsoever and that, on the contrary, this outcome is in Israel's interest, as the world will now relate to Gaza as a state entity. Moreover, it is in Israel's interest that foreign parties visit Gaza and infuse it with capital and generate an economic boom. Israel's opposition a few weeks ago to the Emir of Qatar's visit to Gaza and his desire to invest some $400 million there was something of a childish mistake. The more the Hamas government is required to meet the standard of state-like responsibility and the more the economic situation improves and construction of civilian infrastructures increases, the more the government in Gaza will be restrained in attacking Israel. All of the above assumes (in line with the conventional assumption of the current Israeli government) that Israel's interest vis-à-vis Gaza is only one of security and that it translates into two goals: ensuring peace and quiet over time and reducing as much as possible Hamas's ability to acquire rockets, especially long-range rockets.

The first of these goals will have been achieved if the deterrence proves to be effective (it has already been said that the price Gaza paid was too low) and if the government in Gaza will have something to lose should armed conflict resume. The fact that Israel is not enamored of the Hamas government or would prefer that a different entity controlled Gaza must not

be translated into political goals. Goals have to represent interests. A real interest is not some ideal aspiration but rather something important enough to be worth paying a price. According to this approach, the only interests vis-à-vis Gaza for which it is worth paying a price are security interests.

The second goal is more dependent on relations with Egypt and our ability via the United States to influence Egypt to take steps it has so far avoided. It must be clear to all that it is impossible to prevent the smuggling from Egypt into the Gaza Strip if efforts at prevention begin and end with the Philadelphi axis (the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt). This is a very narrow expanse, with members of the same families living on both sides of the borders, some in the Egyptian part of Rafiah and some in the Palestinian part of Rafiah. It is impossible to prevent the existence of smuggling tunnels connecting the two sides of the axis. Even when the IDF was in control of the area (until 2005), it was only partly successful. But there are two actions Egypt can take, the question of course being how much it will want to do so. One is to take more effective action deep in the Sinai Peninsula and even within Egypt itself. The second is tactically simpler but politically more sensitive: the Egyptians could build a barrier about four kilometers west of the Gaza Strip with only a single transit point under tight security control. Any equipment headed for the security zone would undergo strict inspection. As this area is a desert, an open and unpopulated expanse, ensuring the effectiveness of the barrier would be easy. Politically, the Philadelphi axis would remain the border between Gaza and Egypt, but in terms of security a fairly simple but conceivably very effective action would be taken (as no one would dig a four kilometer-long tunnel). It is more a question of will than ability. Given that this is a real Israeli interest, it would be appropriate to concede on other issues to both Hamas and Egypt (including easing the naval blockade) in exchange for more effective action on the arms smuggling front.

Following the Operation: The Balance between the Two Sides

Ephraim Kam

At the end of Operation Pillar of Defense both sides claimed victory. The Israeli government announced that all of the operation's goals had been achieved, whereas the Hamas leadership declared that all its demands had been met and that thanks to the rocket fire Israel would "think a thousand times" before attacking the Gaza Strip again. Clearly, at least one of the sides – most likely both – is presenting only a partial view. On the Israeli side, many claimed that Israel's successes were incomplete and that sooner or later Israel would have to take action in the Gaza Strip again. Hamas, for its part, must rely on lies in order to support its claim that it won this round.

This essay seeks to analyze the balance between both sides' successes and failures upon the conclusion of Pillar of Defense. At present, many questions still remain regarding the operation's outcome, including the details of a future arrangement between Israel and Hamas if such an arrangement is indeed reached. Therefore, this analysis must be viewed as an interim summary. It is possible that the balance of successes and failures between the two sides will look different in the future, as was the case with the outcome of the Second Lebanon War.

The Military Aspect

Militarily, Israel emerged from the confrontation in Gaza with the upper hand. During the operation, Israel dealt a heavy blow to the rocket systems of Hamas and the other organizations in the Gaza Strip, including their infrastructure, launch sites, and arsenals – and especially to the Fajr-5 rocket system – although some of the long-range rockets survived and continued to concern Israel until the ceasefire was reached. Hamas and the other

organizations in the Gaza Strip have invested considerable sums and years of work in these rocket systems. In addition, as part of the attack, many of the organizations' commanding officers and fighters were killed or injured. With this operation, the IDF proved that it has very far-reaching, high-quality intelligence helping it avoid unnecessary civilian casualties. In all, one must conclude that the conduct of the operation was careful and entailed no significant errors or mishaps.

A no less important component of the fighting, however, was the first deployment of the Iron Dome system, with a success rate of approximately 90 percent. That is, it proved to be a major success in reducing the scope of casualties and damage due to rockets, particularly in tandem with the residential secure spaces and other shelters and the discipline and resilience of the Israeli population. This success also provided an important lesson to the Palestinian side. High-trajectory weapons, especially rockets of the Fajr family, are Hamas's main weapon against Israel. The rocket system will remain an important tool for Hamas: even if most of the rockets fired are intercepted, they are still capable of disrupting normal life in the areas susceptible to their impact and causing casualties and property damage; in addition, the interceptions are relatively costly. But Hamas can be expected to understand that with the emergence of the Iron Dome system, Hamas to a very large extent loses its main means of attacking Israel, especially as the Iron Dome system will likely improve its performance and be deployed in more locations. Hamas is likely to understand that in trying to overcome Iron Dome, it will have to build a large reserve of rockets so as to launch a greater number of rockets in any single barrage and will have to find ways of ensuring the survivability of its long-range rockets.

Besides disrupting life in southern Israel, Hamas claims success in having fired rockets at Tel Aviv. Perhaps in the battle over consciousness Hamas has earned some points in Palestinian public opinion. In practice, however, such points are few or even non-existent. The launches actually proved Hamas's impotence: the rockets launched were few, all were intercepted by Iron Dome, they caused no damage or casualties, and Hamas was forced to stop launching them even before the end of the armed conflict, possibly because it ran out of them. Conversely, Hamas can take credit for the fact that in the end, Israel was deterred from embarking on a ground offensive in the Gaza Strip, even though it had threatened to do so and was preparing for it. Israel's threat to enter Gaza with ground forces thereby lost some of

its credibility, although Israel's reservations stemmed not only from concern over a long-term stay in the Gaza Strip and the international repercussions that would result from civilian casualties in Gaza but also from worry that such a move would be a serious blow to Israel's relationship with Egypt.

The Political Aspect

If at this stage the military balance seems clearly to be on Israel's side, politically the picture is more complex. On Israel's side, one must note that throughout its duration the operation garnered extensive support from the governments of the West, for several reasons: Hamas and the other organizations in the Gaza Strip are still viewed by most Western governments as terrorist organizations against which Israel has a natural right to defend itself; most Western governments accepted the Israeli claim that the Palestinian organizations had provoked Israel and that therefore its response was legitimate; the damage inflicted on the civilian population in the Gaza Strip was minimal; and the operation was relatively brief. There was a relatively high degree of mutual understanding between Israel and the American administration, which to a certain extent corrected the impression of ongoing disagreements that developed in the past year, particularly over the Iranian nuclear issue. This support could enable Israel to embark on another military move if seen as justified and proportional.

One must also factor in Egypt's role during and after the operation. Unlike Mubarak, who viewed Hamas as a threat and as Iran's vanguard, the current regime has ideological links to Hamas and gives these ties both practical and verbal expression. In this sense, the change in the Egyptian leadership plays into Hamas's hands; it may even be that before Operation Pillar of Defense was launched, Hamas's willingness to cross certain red lines with regard to Israel was influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood's rise to power in Egypt. Israel's increased concern about damaging peaceful relations with the Egyptian regime significantly limits its freedom of action in the Gaza Strip, including the leeway to engage in a ground offensive.

Nonetheless, from the perspective of the new Egyptian regime, there are also negative aspects to Hamas's conduct, which are liable to undermine Egyptian interests and its control of the Sinai Peninsula, as the Egyptian regime is concerned about arms smuggling from Sinai to the Gaza Strip. Moreover, President Mohamed Morsi viewed the confrontation between Israel and Hamas as an opportunity to assume a leading role in settling and

resolving the crisis. Morsi's interest in serving as the main mediator between the sides and maintaining his nation's interests vis-à-vis Hamas required him not to adopt an unambiguous stance in Hamas's favor, to take Israel's demands and needs into account as well, and to maintain close contact with the American administration – all the while trying to find the golden mean among the sides. These considerations prevented damage to Israeli-Egyptian relations from the operation; the Egyptian regime was satisfied with recalling its ambassador to Israel for consultations and sending its prime minister on a brief visit to the Gaza Strip, avoiding an escalation of its response. These considerations also facilitated a direct Israeli-Egyptian dialogue – even if not with Morsi himself – to resolve the crisis and determine future arrangements. In this sense, the emergence of the new Egyptian regime as the major mediator in the crisis and afterwards was an important positive move from the Israeli perspective.

Because Pillar of Defense did not set out to score a decisive military victory, it was clear that it would be impossible to arrive at an arrangement without talking to Hamas, even if indirectly, thus making Hamas a key player in the talks to settle and resolve the crisis. Therefore the parties involved were required to engage with Hamas, directly or indirectly, and this dialogue garnered points for Hamas as an entity with which one can and must speak, thus enhancing its international standing. Hamas's improved international status entails another result that, except for the radical elements, no one wanted: its strength grew at the expense of the status of the Palestinian Authority and Abu Mazen personally, at least temporarily. One may assume that Israel will have to deal with pressure from Western governments to help rebuild the PA's reputation.

At the same time, this success has another side. Hamas gained sympathy and expressions of solidarity in the Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian world because of its struggle and stance against Israel. But during the conflict, no entity came to its side in practice, not even its allies. Iran was incapable of doing much in any case, Hizbollah preferred to maintain the peace on its front, and the PA limited itself to expressions of identification but avoided incitement.

Hamas made another important gain. As a result of the Egyptian mediation of a ceasefire, Israel agreed to benefits for Hamas and to further discussion on a future arrangement in which some of Hamas's key demands of Israel would be met. In the meantime, even before an agreement has been reached, Israel

agreed immediately to ease some of the restrictions in the naval blockade of Gaza. In discussions about the future arrangement with Israel, significant commitments by Israel to Hamas may be on the agenda, including opening the border crossing, lifting or easing the naval blockade of the Gaza Strip, and not engaging in targeted assassinations and other military moves in the Strip, in exchange for Hamas refraining from firing rockets or carrying out attacks against Israel. These commitments enable Hamas to tell the Palestinian public in the Gaza Strip that it won the conflict with Israel and that this victory is already bringing palpable, concrete achievements.

There is, however, another side to these achievements. Hamas has already rushed to announce that it will rebuild and continue to develop its military capabilities, especially the rockets, and that towards this end it will continue to draw on the military and economic aid that Iran has promised and intends to deliver. Clearly, though, reconstruction of the rocket system, which will certainly entail the smuggling of arms into the Gaza Strip, will preclude any real possibility of Israel easing the blockade, not to mention lifting it. Moreover, Hamas has never wanted to be dependent on Iran and its assistance, even more so now that it is putting distance between itself and Syria and is seeking to forge closer relations with Egypt. Renewed arms smuggling activities from Iran to the Gaza Strip and closer relations between Iran and Hamas and other organizations are likely to be viewed negatively by Egypt and Sunni Arab public opinion as well as by Western governments, which have already condemned Iran for its contribution to the development of the recent crisis.

Ramifications for the Future

The analysis above of the military balance is not necessarily identical to the analysis carried out by Hamas upon conclusion of the armed conflict. One may assume that in Hamas's view the overall tally tilts the balance more favorably towards Hamas and underscores its survival of the conflict despite its losses, its actualization of the threat of rockets reaching Tel Aviv as well as its rocket system's residual capability, the support it received from the Gaza Strip population, and its political successes. If Hamas does in fact deduce that it emerged from the conflict with the upper hand, then it might conclude that it has the freedom of action to continue the conflict with Israel at any time it deems necessary.

As previously noted, this analysis of the two sides' success and failures is only an interim accounting, which might change over time. The key question at this point is: What if any arrangement will be reached between the parties? Clearly, as it has promised, Hamas will make a supreme effort to neutralize one of Israel's main successes and rebuild its rocket capabilities, thereby also rebuilding the main component of its means of deterrence against Israel. If it adopts this policy, it will be impossible to agree on the elements of a stable arrangement between the sides.

Even if an agreed-upon arrangement is reached, it will raise at least two difficult sets of questions. One, what effective means of inspection can be developed to prevent further arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip? Will Egypt be willing and able to prevent smuggling (something even the Mubarak regime was unable to do)? Two, will Hamas be willing to maintain a state of calm over time? If so, will it be willing and able to confront the smaller organizations in the Gaza Strip and impose a long-term ceasefire on them?

At this point, there are no satisfactory answers to these questions. It is reasonable to assume that, at least in the immediate future, Hamas will prefer to maintain the calm, for several reasons. The military blow it sustained will have a significant deterrent impact both because of the damage caused to its military infrastructure and because Israel demonstrated that it has the capability of inflicting serious damage while enjoying considerable political leeway, whereas Hamas received no practical external support during the operation. One may reasonably assume that Egypt will have a certain degree of influence in restraining Hamas, and if Israel is prepared to lift some restrictions on the naval blockade, Hamas will be interested in maintaining them. Moreover, after two large Israeli operations and numerous limited military actions, Hamas's leadership will have to engage in self-scrutiny and internal reckoning and ask itself whether it is prepared to continue leading the Gaza Strip and its residents towards a life of hardship and suffering in the future as well.

However, two elements are likely to offset Hamas's interest in maintaining the calm. First, as Hamas and the other organizations succeed in rebuilding their rocket capabilities and reinforcing the resulting state of deterrence against Israel, they will increasingly be tempted to provoke Israel once again. Second, unlike Hizbollah in Lebanon, Hamas cannot ignore the impact of the other organizations in the Gaza Strip, and it is safe to say that given Iran's ties with Islamic Jihad and Hamas's growing dependence on Iran's

promised military and economic aid, Iran will stir the pot in Gaza and will likely push for radicalism. If Hamas is truly interested in a long period of calm, it may be able to impose its wishes on the smaller organizations, but there is no guarantee of this, and the possibility of renewed deterioration will remain in the future as well.

These questions are part of a more comprehensive question: Did Israel achieve its goals in Operation Pillar of Defense? The goals from Israel's perspective were to strengthen its state of deterrence against Hamas and the other Gaza Strip organizations, eliminate the long-range rocket threat and impair the short-range rocket system, and attain a relatively long period of calm for the residents of southern Israel. It is too early to give a clear answer to this question, both because the political results of the operation are still taking shape and because it will take Hamas time to draw its own conclusions from the operation. Nevertheless, one may propose two conclusions even at this early stage. First, it seems that the military results of Pillar of Defense created conditions that could foster greater interest on the part of Hamas in maintaining the peace, both because of the military blow it was dealt and because of Egypt's involvement in the effort to prevent further deterioration. Second, even if the operation reinforced Israel's deterrence against Hamas, it is unclear how long this will last, as the results have not yet stabilized and there exist conditions liable to cause renewed deterioration.

The Campaign to Restore Israeli Deterrence

Avner Golov

Achieving a state of deterrence was a central goal of Operation Pillar of Defense, in order to restore calm to the south of Israel. The Israeli Defense and Foreign Ministers rushed to declare that the operation had achieved its goals fully, but when professionals and academics are asked to assess whether the peace will be sustained and for how long, they are loath to provide a systematic analysis or clear conclusion.

The reason lies in the problem of measuring deterrence. The purpose of deterrence is to cause player A to change its policy and prevent a planned action through a policy of threat on the part of player B. These threats are designed to change player A's cost-benefit calculation, thereby affecting the action that A takes in practice. The success of a policy of deterrence depends on the decision of the deterred player. Therefore, if player A does not change its decision and continues to act on the basis of its own desires, player B's policy of deterrence has failed. If player A does change its policy, then one may say that the policy of deterrence succeeded, though one must examine the role played by B's threats in A's change of heart. It is thus clear that the effectiveness of deterrence can only be measured in retrospect, and only from the perspective of the deterred party.

The success of a policy of deterrence depends on three conditions: 1. Communicating the threat: the deterring party must convey a message of threat to the party it seeks to deter. 2. Credibility of the threat: the threat must be seen as credible in order to influence the decision making process of the deterred side. If the threat is seen as empty, it will not affect the deterred side's process of decision making. This condition entails two components: the party to be deterred must believe the deterring party has the ability to implement its threats in practice, and the deterring party is resolved to act

should the other party undertake the prohibited act. 3. Strategic rationality: the decision making process of the deterred party must be guided by strategic rationality, that is, a process of examining alternatives in an organized manner that addresses the costs and benefits and then opting for the alternative with the best cost-benefit calculus. This condition is critical because the threats issued by the deterring side are designed to raise the cost of the prohibited action and reduce its benefit so that the action will not be worthwhile when compared to other alternatives, especially the alternative of preserving the status quo.

On this basis, it is necessary to examine which elements of Israel's deterrence vis-à-vis Hamas eroded or collapsed before Pillar of Defense commenced, and examine the extent to which they have been restored as a result of the military operation. This analysis of two points in time – before and after the operation – will focus on those elements that the Israeli leadership sought to strengthen, the messages of deterrence conveyed by Israel to Hamas, and the attempt to assess how these messages were understood in Gaza.

The Relations between the Morsi Government and Israel

Before the operation: The concern in Israel was that the rise to power of the Muslim Brotherhood regime would lead to closer ties between Egypt and Hamas and impair Egypt's relations with Israel. According to Israel's assessment, Hamas believed that Israel's response to its provocations as well as to the provocations of other Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip would be limited, given Israel's desire to avoid undermining relations with the Morsi government in Egypt.[1] In other words, Hamas expected that Israel's concern about worsening its relations with Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood government would undermine Israel's resolve to realize its threats, and that the cost Hamas would have to pay for disrupting the status quo in southern Israel would be low and tolerable.

After the operation: Israel's massive aerial bombardment conveyed a message of deterrence to Hamas, which seems to have only partially rebuilt the element of resolve it attempted to project. On the one hand, Israel operated in Gaza for eight days despite the public opposition by the Egyptian government. On the other hand, Egypt's threats regarding an Israeli ground invasion in the Gaza Strip exerted significant pressure on Israel during the fighting, and this pressure will presumably be exerted in the near

future as well. Egypt proved that it can significantly limit Israel's response and reduce the toll Israel can exact from Hamas. Although the Egyptian influence did not tie Israel's hands as Hamas had apparently expected, it seems that Egypt has the ability to ensure that the cost Hamas will have to pay for future provocations will not threaten its rule and therefore will not be seen as intolerable.

A Changed Arab World

Before the operation: Hamas's leadership claimed that the Arab Spring changed the face of the Middle East, strengthened Islamic forces, and enhanced the influence of the populace on the decision makers of the region's various regimes. As a result, Israel's assessment was that Hamas expected demonstrations and riots to break out in the various Arab nations in response to an Israeli operation in Gaza. Such an outburst would force Arab leaders to try to rein in Israel's response, thereby damaging Israel's ability to make good on its threats and reducing the cost Hamas would have to pay for its provocations.

After the operation: During the fighting, Israeli TV analyst Ehud Ya'ari[2] reported that the Hamas leadership was disappointed with the responses in the Arab world to the Israeli attack and conveyed a message to Arab rulers to act to halt Israel's aggression. Despite the standard condemnations by Arab leaders and some demonstrations in the West Bank and Jordan, Arab nations did not produce any significant pressure on Israel. On the contrary, Arab leaders and some of the Arab public demonstrated a degree of indifference, preferring to stay focused on Assad's ongoing massacre of his own people in Syria. The Arab media reflected this trend when it published pictures from the Gaza Strip depicting the horrific destruction wrought by Israeli air force planes while simultaneously continuing to publish equally horrific pictures from Syria. Accordingly, the Arab public's exposure to events in Gaza was more measured than in the past, the pressure on most Arab leaders did not increase much, and their policy in response to the Israeli attack did not change dramatically. As a result, the pressure that they in turn exerted on Israel was limited. The sense of frustration expressed by senior Hamas representatives during and after the fighting is a possible indication of their understanding that the potential for this element to reduce the toll Israel will exact of the organization is still very limited.

Weak Response Policy on the Part of the Political Echelon

Before the operation: Since the beginning of its term in office, the current Israeli government has conveyed that it does not wish to focus on the threat posed by Hamas and is not determined to act against it, preferring instead to focus efforts in the international arena on Iran's military nuclear program. Despite repeated threats by senior officials in the defense establishment – from the chief of staff to the Prime Minister – that Israel would respond with resolve to any act of terror against its citizens, in practice Israel's response was restrained. In the months before the operation, the Israeli government was willing to tolerate several daily rocket attacks launched by terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip against towns and communities in the Gaza environs. Israel generally limited its response to a symbolic attack on the organizations' infrastructures. Even after Hamas began operating openly against the IDF, Israel's response was limited and avoided a severe blow to the organization or its members. As a result, Hamas's leadership could draw the conclusion that Israel's threats were not credible and that the cost Hamas would have to pay for undermining the status quo would not be high. One of the purposes of Operation Pillar of Defense was to restore credibility to the Israeli threat.

After the operation: The Israeli Prime Minister and Defense Minister proved their resolve to respond forcefully to the rocket attacks, thereby realizing their threats. The Israeli operation cost Hamas dearly, particularly in the killing of Ahmed Jabari, the commander of the organization's military wing, and the severe damage to the organization's strategic weapons, as well as the destruction of some of its infrastructures in the Gaza Strip. Israel conveyed the message that it was no longer willing to tolerate over the long term attacks against its citizens and soldiers on Israeli soil, and that Hamas would be forced to pay a heavy price for its policy. However, this operation alone cannot completely restore this element of deterrence. While Hamas may have suffered a severe blow, the armed conflict enabled Hamas to extract concessions from Israel that it had been unwilling to consider in the past, such as an agreement to ease restrictions at the border crossings. Alongside the message of a heavy price, therefore, Israel has conveyed the message that escalation provides Hamas with significant leverage and benefits.

Israel's post-operation policy and its response to terrorist activity by the Palestinian terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip in the foreseeable future will determine the credibility of this element. Is there a new policy

of actualizing the threat to exact a steep price for every act of terrorism, or will there be a fallback to the Israeli policy of after Operation Cast Lead, which in practice tolerated a steady drizzle of rockets from Gaza. The bottom line is whether the price Hamas pays in the future for it actions (even if limited) is higher than in the past. This question will form the basis of Hamas's calculus as it tries to assess the credibility of Israel's deterrence in the coming months.

Israeli Elections

Before the operation: Setting aside Israel's lack of resolve in recent years, Israeli officials assessed that Israel's deterrence had eroded in recent months because of the shadow cast by the forthcoming elections,[3] even though Operation Cast Lead was also launched just before the February 2009 elections. These argue that Hamas leaders thought that the current Israeli leadership, unlike the Olmert government in late 2008, would try to avoid a significant military operation in Gaza before the elections, for fear that an operation would incur a high political cost that would translate into electoral failure. According to this line of thought, Hamas assumed that despite the repeated threats by senior Israeli officials that rocket fire from Gaza and terrorist activity near the border demand a decisive reaction even during an election campaign, Israel's decision makers would seek to avoid acting on these threats.

After the operation: Israel conveyed a clear message that it would not refrain from acting in the Gaza Strip even during an election campaign. While Israel conveyed this message in the past with Operation Cast Lead, apparently this time the message that its threats rest on firm resolve to retaliate, even with a Knesset election pending, was delivered more effectively. However, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman's statement that Israel must refrain from a large-scale operation in the Gaza Strip until after the elections indicated that while Israel is willing to take limited action, it is not prepared to act on its more severe threats and commence a full-scale operation to topple the Hamas government before the Israeli elections. Thus, the Israeli message is that Israel is resolved to retaliate against Hamas for its provocations, more than Hamas had assumed before the operation, but is not determined to pursue a comprehensive threat against the Hamas government and exact an overly high cost for its provocative policy.

The Strategic Threat to the Israeli Home Front

Before the operation: Over the years Hamas has built an array of long-range rockets capable of reaching Israel's two most populated areas, which had previously been beyond its rocket range: Tel Aviv and surroundings localities (Gush Dan) and the greater Jerusalem area. The Israeli assessment posited that Hamas had great hopes for this arsenal, believing that were Israel to act against it, it could launch rockets at these areas and thereby achieve two gains. First, it would deal a severe blow to Israeli morale, which would undoubtedly pressure decision makers to end the fighting. Statements by senior Hamas members before the operation indicate that Hamas apparently believed it could limit the Israeli response and perhaps even maintain a mutual balance of deterrence that would prevent Israel from exacting a steep cost from Hamas for its provocations. Second, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem have symbolic value for the Arab public, representing the most populated and vulnerable Israeli civilian areas. In the Arab view, a threat to these centers means a significant threat to the State of Israel. Therefore, using the strategic arsenal could advance the image of Hamas as a Palestinian organization capable of challenging the mighty Israel. According to this rationale, not only would Hamas be able to reduce the cost Israel would try to exact for its policy, but it would also be able to expand its strategic advantages beyond disruption of the status quo, by shaping a new reality for Israel, for the Palestinians, and for the Arab public.

After the operation: The current assessment of the Israeli defense establishment is that Hamas was surprised by the scope of damage to its strategic stock at the outset of the operation, the effectiveness of the Iron Dome system, which intercepted more than 80 percent of the rockets targeted at Israeli cities, and the resilience demonstrated by the Israeli population in the areas that came under rocket fire for the first time. As a result of Hamas's limited ability to hit Israeli civilian hubs, Hamas should realize that its influence over the decision makers in Jerusalem is limited. Therefore, its ability to reduce the price it will have to pay for future provocations will remain very limited until it decides to replenish its strategic reserves. Even if it restores its force, this round of fighting conveyed the message to Hamas that it will not be able to reduce the price paid for its policy, as it apparently believed before Operation Pillar of Defense. On the other hand, the responses in the Arab world to Hamas's demonstration of its ability to threaten Tel Aviv and Jerusalem indicate that Hamas's image has nonetheless

benefited, gaining the reputation of an organization capable of challenging Israel, even if the rockets did not actually hit Israeli cities. It was enough that the residents of Gush Dan and the greater Jerusalem area had to seek shelter in protected spaces. A statement made by Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Zahar[4] after the operation indicates that to Hamas, the very threat against Tel Aviv and Jerusalem is a success and an important morale booster. Even if Hamas was disappointed by its failure to reduce the cost Israel will exact in the future for disrupting the status quo, it learned that there is great strategic advantage in its ability to threaten the center of Israel, regardless of the actual success or failure in inflicting any real damage.

Challenges Posed by the Smaller Terrorist Organizations in the Gaza Strip

Before the operation: One of the explanations offered for Hamas's provocative conduct before Operation Pillar of Defense was the pressure exerted by the other Palestinian terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip.[5] These organizations have operated against Israeli civilians and soldiers and have publicly opposed efforts by the Hamas leadership to foil their activities and maintain the calm. Hamas was the object of much condemnation, and was accused of losing its legitimacy because it was preventing action against Israel. Apparently once Hamas estimated that the price it would have to pay for undermining the status quo would not be overly high, it was drawn by other Palestinian terrorist organizations toward a confrontation with Israel.

After the operation: Like Hamas, the other Palestinians terrorist organizations also sustained severe damage. Some of their senior commanding officers were killed, and their infrastructures and weapons arsenals were bombarded. Consequently, the motivation of these organizations to act against Israeli targets and to pressure Hamas into challenging Israel will presumably be low in the coming months. This is not to say that certain commanders in these organizations will not try, but the anticipated scope of such attempts will likely be significantly smaller than it was before Operation Pillar of Defense. Therefore, the price Hamas will be paying in Gaza for its policy of restraint is expected to be lower than it was before the operation.

Conclusion

This analysis supports the claim that Israel's deterrence was partially restored thanks to Operation Pillar of Defense, but it also indicates that this deterrence

remains unstable. Several parameters are critical in maintaining deterrence in Israel's southern area in the near future. The main failure of Israel's strategic deterrence before the operation stemmed from its failure to convey its resolve to exact an intolerable price from Hamas. Recent messages from Foreign Minister Lieberman and Israel's hesitation in using its ground forces in Operation Pillar of Defense will presumably undermine projection of Israel's future resolve as well. Therefore, Israel must develop a credible and uniform mechanism for conveying deterrent messages to Hamas and examine it periodically from the perspective of the deterred side, namely, Hamas.

Second, it may be that in the coming months the Israeli leadership will have to face difficult challenges posed by Palestinian terrorist organizations seeking to test Israel's policy. The government's willingness to show restraint in the face of a drizzle of rockets and mortar bombs launched at civilians or in light of terrorist activity near the Gaza Strip border is liable to erode Israel's deterrence rapidly. Israel must also, to the extent possible, prevent attempts by Palestinian terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip to equip themselves with rockets capable of threatening Israel's large population centers, a significant strategic asset for Hamas. Therefore, Israel must act to reduce Hamas's ability to deploy these rockets. By keeping the cost of terrorism high and reducing Hamas's advantages, Israel can preserve the organization's current cost-benefit considerations and reduce its desire to disrupt the status quo with Israel.

This analysis raises a further point for reflection. The Iron Dome system served as a deterrent by preventing rockets from reaching their destination, thereby reducing Hamas's leverage vis-à-vis Israel. Over time, however, the Iron Dome system may develop into a double-edged sword in deliberations about deterrence. While it reduces Hamas's ability to inflict damage on the Israeli home front, it also reduces the cost Hamas must pay for its provocations, as the actual damage Hamas is capable of inflicting is quite limited. The legitimacy of Israeli action against "failed" launch attempts is low and will handicap the country's ability to preserve the current balance of deterrence with Hamas. Israeli leaders will have to take this fact into account and prepare a strategy suited to the challenges that will emerge in the coming few months, which will determine whether the goal of deterrence – at the core of Operation Pillar of Defense – was in fact achieved.

Notes

1 According to Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Moshe Ya'alon, at a conference on Russia and the Middle East, Institute for National Security Studies, November 20, 2012; after the operation, Khaled Mashal claimed that "Israel is mute before Egypt," Elad Zini, "Haniyeh after the Ceasefire: The Middle East Has Changed, Israel Is Mute before Egypt," *Nana 10*, November 22, 2012, http://news.nana10.co.il/Article/?ArticleID=939634.

2 Ehud Ya'ari, *At Six with Oded Ben Ami*, Channel 2, November 19, 2012.

3 See note 1.

4 "Hamas: Jews will Think Twice before Attacking Iran," *Ynet news,* November 24, 2012.

5 Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, "Escalation in the South: Did Hamas Plan This Move or Was It Dragged in by Radical Elements?" *Haaretz*, November 11, 2012.

The Civilian Front: Learning from Success

Meir Elran

For the third time in six and a half years, the civilian front in Israel found itself under large-scale attack. The numbers speak for themselves. During the Second Lebanon War, in July 2006, Hizbollah launched almost 4,000 rockets at northern Israel during 33 days of fighting, for a daily average of some 120 launches, with fewer than one-quarter of them reaching populated areas. During Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009, according to its own reports, Hamas launched 558 rockets at southern Israel, for a daily average of about 23, with more than 70 percent falling in open spaces. During the eight days of the recent operation, Hamas launched more than 1,400 rockets at Israel, for a daily average of about 175, with rockets targeting Tel Aviv and Jerusalem for the first time. This operation also marked the first occasion that the Iron Dome active air defense system was put into use. According to an IDF statement, the system's success rate against effective rockets was 84 percent. These numbers clearly indicate an increasing trend of threats against the civilian population on each of the principal fronts. This essay aims to assess the development of the Israeli response to the growing challenge on the military and civilian levels.

On the purely military level, the operation reflected the positive effect of the combination of the IDF's offensive and defensive capabilities. In fact, this was the first major operation in which the active defense system that has been under accelerated development, production, and deployment in recent years was manifested in a concrete and successful way. It is clear and encouraging evidence of a shift in strategy in Israel's defense doctrine, giving the defensive dimension an important role in the conduct of the campaign. Along with due respect to the Iron Dome system and its developers and operators, it is important to point out that the offensive arm

of the air force made a distinct contribution to the operation. At the initial stages of the campaign, the air force inflicted heavy damage on Hamas's (relatively) long-range offensive capabilities, which can reach the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem areas. Later the air force was able to continuously suppress most of the enemy's launch capabilities. It thus suggests that under current circumstances, at least on the Gaza Strip front, the combination of Israel's defensive and offensive aerial power, the capacities of its intelligence agencies, and to a certain extent the deterring presence of large ground forces was able to provide a reasonable military response to the Hamas threat and achieve most of the operation's goals.

This success does not limit the importance of learning lessons for the future, including in the context of the active defense system. It is important to remember that the current operation was limited in scope and duration. The principal assumption must be that the arsenal of the enemy on the southern and northern fronts will continue to grow, especially in terms of rockets, both quantitatively and qualitatively (which might be significant mostly in the realm of precision). This will present Israel with a growing, more complex challenge. Therefore, to prepare for a full-scale military confrontation, including a two-front scenario, Israel must now examine several key areas on the basis of the positive lessons of Pillar of Defense. First, Israel must increase the number of Iron Dome installations to at least 13-15 batteries, in order to adequately defend military targets, the civilian population, and critical national infrastructure facilities. The contribution of American financial aid is important, but it will probably be necessary to increase the order of battle beyond the six additional batteries decided upon by the Israeli government during the operation. Second, Israel must improve the capabilities of the current systems and increase their effectiveness and interception rate. A first step in this direction was already taken during the operation with the deployment of an improved system to protect Tel Aviv, whose most critical component was the radar associated with the Magic Wand (David's Sling) system. Third, it is necessary to accelerate the development of the Magic Wand interceptor system for medium-range (70-250 km) rockets, so that it is operational before 2015. The successful test carried out immediately after the operation is a positive sign, with an important deterrent message to Hizbollah. Fourth, it is necessary to provide an adequate response to the need for reasonable defense against short-range (less than 4 km) rockets, which represent a gap in Israel's

defenses, particularly because of the use of lightweight mortars and short-range improvised rockets used against civilian localities in the immediate vicinity of the Gaza Strip. Now, after the public debate about the critical need for active defense is concluded, it is necessary to engage in accelerated construction of the operational force in accordance with the forecasts of the enemy's increasing quantitative and qualitative buildup.

Despite Iron Dome's successes, the last operation made it clear that we need also strengthen our passive defenses. The dozens of rockets that managed to penetrate the active defense system are indicative of its limitations, especially in future conditions entailing more dense and massive bombardments. It will be necessary to take into account that the northern front alone could possibly experience barrages of more than 600 rockets daily during a protracted confrontation. The recent events thus cast doubt on the validity of the categorical statement attributed to former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert that "we're not going to shelter ourselves to death." It would be more adequate to suggest that we should meticulously explore the expansion of passive defense, while taking into account priorities and budgetary constraints. In this context, it is necessary to increase the numbers and prevalence of the family shelters, both as a life saver and as a means – alongside public bomb shelters – to allow for an emergency routine under fire. The importance of this for the morale of the public was strikingly evident during Operation Pillar of Defense. Hence, we now need to renew the national effort to augment the residential shelters, which currently exist in only 30 percent of the apartments. Considering that the present legal framework (based on Plan 38) is not producing sufficient yields, it is necessary to draft a new plan to enhance its attractiveness and encourage large-scale implementation in crowded urban centers. Also, we will have to expand investments to provide physical protection for critical military and civilian installations. The lack of such sufficient protection is a flaw that might prove critical, given the foreseeable threat of more accurate rockets and missiles. The early warning system is another crucial area that must be addressed by advancing the implementation of the existing plan for expanding the number of warning zones and by completing the system of mobile device warnings via private text messages.

Considering the localized nature of the last operation, one can point with satisfaction to an acceptable level of success in terms of the civilian defense. One of the important elements was the positive functioning of the

Home Front Command and especially the dissemination of information to civilians, which was effective, clear, and properly measured, and made effective use of the updated means of mass distribution. Furthermore, the government ministries and the local authorities worked rather well, and in tandem with the rescue services – police, firefighters, and Magen David Adom – hence creating a professional network allowing for appropriate conduct. Implementation of the "Special Situation on the Home Front" (a legal mechanism for issuing binding regulations) immediately upon the commencement of hostilities helped regulate the few economic and market-related issues that arose during the campaign. The conduct of the public was also proper and disciplined for the most part, especially after the grave risk of not following Home Front Command instructions was demonstrated by the deaths of three civilians in Kiryat Malachi. Although the evacuation of civilians from the areas worst hit by rockets was extensive, it was also conducted appropriately and did not place an undue burden on the social services, which all in all functioned professionally well. As always, there were people with special needs who required personal attention, but the relatively limited pressure enabled the relevant systems to function satisfactorily.

The successful combination of the various networks resulted in a reasonable overall response to the short, limited challenges during the eight days of Pillar of Defense. In many ways, this was a multidimensional – and critical – exercise for the entire system in advance of future possible challenges. Assuming that Hamas's high-trajectory weapons arsenals are restocked and even enhanced and Hizbollah's arsenals continue to improve quantitatively and qualitatively – in terms of range, warheads, variety, concealment, and especially accuracy – Israel will require much greater and more plentiful military and civilian capabilities of the sort demonstrated in Pillar of Defense. Hence the importance of ongoing investments and preparedness, based on realistic priorities and carefully considered prioritization in the following key areas: greater military capability with emphasis on defense; improved cooperation among the various agencies in the military-civilian sphere and within the civilian realm; construction of a comprehensive, flexible civilian system of command and control; and especially the construction of a prudently designed systemic organizational structure capable of systematically coordinating responsibility and authority for the home front.

Operation Pillar of Defense demonstrated again the centrality and criticality of the civilian front alongside the military one in Israel's security envelope. One must take into account the possibility that future tests will be more difficult, more prolonged, and more dangerous than this last one, especially if they involve two fronts. To produce civilian capabilities that ensure functional continuity of the economy and infrastructures, alongside the necessary societal resilience under wartime conditions, it is necessary to formulate a multi-system, long-term national plan and implement it in stages. Many of the important elements for formulating such a national plan already exist and are operating successfully on the ground. In some of them, such as the formulation and implementation of projects for enhancing community resilience, which have been developed here since the 1980s, Israel has emerged as a world leader. What is still missing and worth addressing is the national formulation of an integrative defense doctrine for the civilian front, at the national and local levels, that will serve as the basis of a multi-year, budgeted working plan for the home front. Such a national plan would have clearly defined goals for the preparedness of all the systems before the next large-scale confrontation, which can reasonably be expected to occur and whose nature is already mostly known. Unfortunately, our experience in this line is not very promising. Israel is capable of brilliant improvisation. It is less successful when it tries to produce an integrated, holistic national plan based on multidisciplinary, multi-organizational collaboration. But the achievements of the recent past and the relative success of Operation Pillar of Defense indicate that if we maximize our existing conceptual, technological, military, and civilian potential, then we can overcome the political and bureaucratic obstacles and create an appropriate response to the threats that the civilian front is almost sure to face in the future.

Iron Dome: The Queen of Battle

Yiftah S. Shapir

Israel launched Operation Pillar of Defense on November 14 2012, inter alia in order "to improve the security situation and deliver a painful blow to Hamas." The main reason for striking at Hamas was to weaken – if not to completely destroy – its ability to launch rockets at Israel's civilian population.

From the outset it was clear that it was impossible to destroy that capability in the first strike. Thus it was also clear Israel would have to withstand rocket attacks by Hamas and other organizations operating in Gaza. But in contrast to previous rounds of escalation such as the Second Lebanon War or Operation Cast Lead, this time the IDF had an active anti-missile defense system, "Iron Dome."

This chapter will assess the contribution of the Iron Dome system and discuss the need for additional batteries of this type as well as other active defense systems.

Rocket Fire from Gaza

Rockets have been launched steadily from the Gaza Strip for some year, and Hamas in fact began firing its homemade Qassam rockets even before the IDF withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. Since then there have been repeated cycles of calm with occasional rounds of escalation. Thus, for example, there was a period of relative calm following Operation Cast Lead (December 2008 - January 2009). However, since early 2011, there have been occasional rocket attacks every month, with repeated periods of escalation. Such rounds occurred in April and August of 2011, and in March and June of 2012. During each of the last two rounds some 200 rockets were fired. The latest period of

escalation was longer, beginning in September 2012 and continuing through October into November, with 116 rockets fired in October alone.

The Threat

Terrorizing a civilian population with rockets is not a new phenomenon for Israel. As early as the 1970s towns in the Galilee panhandle suffered rocket attacks by PLO forces stationed in Lebanon. Hamas began firing rockets as early as 2001, when the IDF still controlled Gaza. The first Qassam rockets were homemade and primitive, with a short range only and a limited destructive effect.

In recent years, Hamas and the other organizations operating in the Gaza Strip have switched to using standard rockets smuggled into Gaza through a variety of routes. The inventory of rockets has gradually increased, and on the eve of Operation Pillar of Defense, it was estimated at some 15,000. Most of the rockets held by Hamas and the other organizations in Gaza are of military quality, 107-mm and 122mm Grad rockets. These rockets, of Soviet design, have been in use since the 1960s. They are manufactured in dozens of countries around the world (including most former members of the Warsaw Pact, as well as China, North Korea, Iran, and Egypt). The original 122mm Grad rocket has a range of some 20 kilometers; some of the recent versions of the Grad have an increased range, up to about 40 kilometers.

The close relations between Hamas and Iran led to concern several years ago that Hamas is also in possession of Fajr-3 and Fajr-5 rockets. And in fact, such rockets were fired at Tel Aviv during Operation Pillar of Defense. The Fajr-5 is an Iranian-made 333mm rocket with a range of about 75 kilometers.

The various organizations in Gaza have not made do with merely importing rockets. Weapons are smuggled into Gaza through a circuitous route vulnerable to preventive operations along the route – such as naval blockades or even attacks by the IDF. The organizations have thus also aimed to achieve self-sufficiency by producing their own rockets. As early as two years ago, for example, a rocket that struck Israel with a range of 21 kilometers was identified as a local imitation of a Grad. Further improvements in their indigenous capabilities was evident during Pillar of Defense, when Hamas boasted use of a homemade rocket called M-75, with a range of 75-80 kilometers, comparable to that of the Fajr-5.

The Defense Doctrine

Israel's doctrine for mitigating the threat posed by high-trajectory weapons is a multi-layered doctrine ("high-trajectory" is a broad term that includes a wide range of threats – from mortar and other artillery shells, through short-range rockets, long-range rockets, and various ballistic missiles). It comprises the following elements: deterrence; attacks on the enemy's launch abilities within its territory; active defense, which today includes systems of several layers: missile systems: Arrow 2 (operational) and Arrow 3 (under development), David's Sling (under development), intended to intercept long-range rockets (with a range of up to 200 kilometers), and the Iron Dome system (operational), discussed below; passive defense – protection of buildings and facilities;[1] and early warning – detection and warning systems for civilians.

The Iron Dome System

Iron Dome is a system for active defense against rockets with short ranges up to 70 kilometers as well as against artillery shells.[2] It was developed by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems in cooperation with Elta Systems, which produces the radar, and mPrest, which is responsible for the command and control system. Iron Dome uses an interceptor missile to shoot down rockets. One of the important characteristics of the system is its ability to calculate the trajectory of a tracked rocket. It does not engage rockets predicted to fall in an unpopulated area.

The system entered operational service in early 2011, and its first operational interception was of a rocket fired at Ashkelon on April 7, 2011. On the eve of Operation Pillar of Defense, there were four operational Iron Dome batteries in the IDF's order of battle. A fifth battery that was scheduled to be deployed in January 2013 was rushed into operational service during Pillar of Defense, and on November 17, it was deployed for defense of the Gush Dan area (the metropolitan area surrounding Tel-Aviv).

During Operation Pillar of Defense, 1,506 rockets were fired at Israel. Of these, 152 were failed launches, 875 fell in unpopulated areas, and 421 were successfully shot down by the Iron Dome system, which achieved a success rate of 85 percent. Only 58 rockets fell in built-up areas.[3] Overall, six Israeli citizens were killed – two soldiers and four civilians. The most serious attack occurred on November 15 in Kiryat Malachi, when three civilians were killed by a rocket. In addition, during the operation, some

500 people were treated in hospitals for injuries; most of them suffered light injuries or were treated for anxiety.

By the end of the operation's second day, the system was already regarded as a dazzling success, and by the conclusion of the operation, the public had come to believe that Iron Dome was the "queen of battle." The feeling among the public, the media, and officials was that the system saved lives, saved the country an enormous amount of money by preventing physical damage, and first and foremost, provided the political and military echelons with the freedom of action to make decisions without the pressure of ongoing injuries to the civilian population.[4] The success of the Iron Dome system was given as the main factor that obviated the necessity to initiate an IDF ground operation in Gaza. As a result of the system's success, a ministerial committee approved a budget of NIS 750 million to expand acquisition of the Iron Dome system, with the declared intention of acquiring 13 batteries.

Assessment

There is no doubt that from a technological and operational-tactical point of view, the Iron Dome system achieved tremendous success. Iron Dome is a unique system, and it has no counterpart anywhere in the world. The very nature of its success tends to make people forget, or even worse, to automatically dismiss criticism of the concept underlying the weapon system.

In the case of Iron Dome, the process of its development and acquisition was accompanied by considerable criticism on several levels: technological, operational-tactical, and conceptual strategy.

On the operational level, it was claimed that:

1. The system does not have the ability to intercept rockets with a range of less than about seven kilometers. (The real figure was never officially published.)
2. The cost of intercepting a rocket was too high. The cost of an interception missile is approximately $40,000-50,000, and in many cases, two interceptors are used against one rocket. This cost was compared to the estimated cost of the damage such a rocket would have caused.
3. As a result of the cost of interception, it is likely that inventories of interceptors available for the next conflict will be limited. There is concern that in the event of a prolonged war, the inventory of interceptors will not be sufficient.

4. The economic damage from rocket fire as a result of the paralysis of normal economic life is higher than the actual physical damage.
5. The system has a saturation point. It is capable of handling a limited number of concurrent targets (the actual number has not been published).

The lessons of Pillar of Defense do not in principle contradict any of these claims. The interception of 421 rockets undoubtedly saved human lives and prevented considerable physical damage, but at least insofar as human life is concerned, it is hard to separate the system's contribution from the combined contribution of early warning and passive defense. The system did not of course prevent the near-total paralysis of economic activity or the disruption of normal life in areas less than 40 kilometers from the border with the Gaza Strip. Schools were closed, parents remained at home, and businesses did not open.[5] An interesting exception to this was in Gush Dan. Even though Gush Dan was under attack for the first time since the missile attacks during the Gulf War in 1991, the assault was barely felt in daily life. Of course, this can be attributed to the success of Iron Dome, even though at the time of the first attack on the Gush Dan area, Iron Dome had not yet been deployed there. However, the more likely reason was that there were few attacks after the Israel air force succeeded in destroying most of the long-range rockets at the outset of the campaign.

The direct cost of using Iron Dome is estimated at about NIS 160 million.[6] This is a substantial amount, but considering the operation's estimated cost of some NIS 3 billion (to the defense budget alone, not including damage to civilian assets as well as the economy), this is a modest expenditure of some 5 percent of the cost of the operation.

The system operated until the end of the hostilities. Given the absence of non-classified information, it cannot be estimated how long the IDF's supplies would have sufficed, or how the State of Israel would be able to withstand a more massive missile attack. It can only be estimated that in future wars, the inventories of Iron Dome interceptors are likely to be an important factor in the deliberations whether to continue operations or try to conclude them.

As for the saturation point, it is not possible to conclude on the basis of open sources whether the system even came close to such a point during the operation. In several video clips that appeared in the media during the first days of the operation, particularly large salvos of rockets could be seen.[7] This may indicate a deliberate attempt by the enemy to try to overcome the

system by saturating it. If this was indeed the case, then it refutes the claim that deployment of anti-missile defense systems will deter the enemy from using rockets because the enemy will realize that such efforts will fail. In fact, deployment of the system actually made the enemy try harder to overcome it (and along the way, also to gain the propaganda advantage of defeating such a sophisticated system).

On the strategic level, a salient argument was that the system gave decision makers the freedom to act judiciously, and in particular, that the system's success made it unnecessary to launch a ground operation in the Gaza Strip. There is a problem in suggesting that Israel's leaders are otherwise not capable of acting judiciously. The State of Israel has endured attacks on the civilian population in the past as well, when an active defense was not available, yet Israel's leaders have never felt that they lacked the degree of freedom to decide whether, when, or how to attack. Similarly, today there are those who believe that a ground invasion of Gaza would have been preferable. They can turn the argument for Iron Dome upside down and claim that were it not for this system, the IDF would have pursued what was perhaps a better approach. It would appear, however, that in the case of Pillar of Defense there were important reasons to refrain from a ground operation in Gaza. Foremost among these was the fear of an Egyptian response and of prolonging the campaign, thereby causing more civilian casualties and subsequently, negative responses in the media and from the international community in the post-Goldstone Report era. It is not possible to substantiate the claim that without Iron Dome, the IDF would have entered Gaza.

Questions for the Future

When the dust settles and the feeling of euphoria over the system's success during Operation Pillar of Defense subsides, it will be necessary to seriously examine several questions that remain unanswered. First, what should be protected? Iron Dome was deployed to defend the civilian population. This choice was justified because the civilian population was the target of the rocket attacks in the current round. However, under severe circumstances such as those predicted for a future conflict with Hizbollah, which is equipped with a much larger number of rockets, some of which are significantly more accurate than the rockets Hamas possesses, the question will arise whether to protect the civilian population or to divert resources towards protecting strategic and military assets.

Second, how many batteries are needed? Are thirteen sufficient? The system's success will undoubtedly lead to political pressure from local leaders to protect their towns and cities as well. Will defensive systems be deployed at every possible site? And if not, who will be protected and who will not? The question whether we "defend ourselves to death" is still relevant.

Third, the success of Iron Dome questions the relationship between defense and offense. Last August, the IDF spokesman announced that a large number of recruits to combat units this year had expressed a desire to be assigned to Iron Dome units. In the past, the premier choices among recruits were pilot training, paratroopers, and reconnaissance units. This shift concretely exemplifies a substantive change in the security concept of the State of Israel. If in the past Israel based its security on its offensive ability, today its power and potency are increasingly devoted to defense. Resources, both material and human, are limited. Perhaps it will be possible to secure additional funds from the United States for a defensive system – funds that might not be granted for offensive purposes – but other resources are more limited.

Notes

1 This topic is discussed in detail in the article by Meir Elran in this collection.

2 This statistic is taken from Rafael's web site, which explicitly notes an anti-artillery shell capability of up to 155 mm. See http://www.rafael.co.il/Marketing/186-1530-en/Marketing.aspx.

3 IDF spokesman, November 22, 2012. The information appears only in the video clip attached to the article and mentions only the number of interceptions and the number of rockets that fell in open territory. It notes a success rate of 84 percent. See http://www.idf.il/1133-17723-he/Dover.aspx. The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Update No. 8, November 22, 2012, notes that 875 missiles fell in open territory. The total number of rockets (1,506) appears on the Nana10 web site, http://news.nana10.co.il/Article/?ArticleID=939466, and the NRG web site, http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/417/473.html. The numbers indicate a success rate of 87.8 percent, higher than the IDF spokesman's figure.

4 Uzi Rubin writes that the system's three objectives are preserving human life and property, providing a greater degree of freedom to the political leadership, and providing the IDF with time to prepare for offensive operations. Uzi Rubin, "'Iron Dome' vs. Grad Rockets: A Dress Rehearsal for an All-Out War?" *BESA Center Perspectives*, Paper No. 173, July 3, 2012.

5 In an assessment of the costs of the operation, it was noted that the direct damage to civilians was tens of millions of NIS, but the indirect damage – the result of people missing work and the impaired productivity of those who went to work – is

estimated at several hundreds of millions of shekels.

6 The cost of the interceptor was approximately $50,000. Two interceptors for each target multiplied by 421 interceptions is $42.1 million, which roughly equals NIS 160 million. This calculation does not include the cost of procurement, maintenance, personnel, and the like.

7 See for example http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kAyqbKwd1o or http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRgHIK_J6CQ.

Part II

Political Perspectives

The United States and the Middle East

Oded Eran

The American role in reaching the agreement that ended the military confrontation between Hamas and Israel in November 2012 contradicts recent analyses suggesting that US involvement in the Middle East is in decline. Although the focus of American foreign policy has shifted towards the Pacific, it is a mistake to overstate the impact of this shift on the Middle East.

The last two years of President Obama's first term in the White House were marked by a reluctance to invest politically in the Middle East, especially in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The public row with the Israeli government over ways of advancing the Israeli-Palestinian political process and how best to rein in the Iranian nuclear project left the US administration – and, indeed, American-Israeli relations – bruised. The Arab uprising, which presented the US with awkward options, and the pullout from Iraq and Afghanistan have contributed to the perception that the US has lost interest in the Middle East. Various estimates that by the end of this decade the US will surpass Saudi Arabia and Russia as an energy producer have further reinforced this perception.

The aerial conflict between the rockets launched by Hamas and other terror groups in Gaza and Israeli planes and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) created an almost textbook endgame for the US. All three regional actors – Israel, Egypt, and Hamas – were trapped by conflicting interests and dependencies that were ultimately linked to the United States. The latter used this link, the fact that the three regional actors were caught between domestic and external needs, and the lack of any decisive military conclusion in the offing to leverage the November 21 agreement.

Egypt

The 2008-2010 global economic crisis and the uprising that began in early 2011 have caused a serious economic deterioration in Egypt. The new Muslim Brotherhood regime faces a colossal task in attempting to achieve economic recovery. To meet this challenge it has to maintain reasonable working relations with the US. It certainly cannot heed the calls of the Muslim Brotherhood's rank and file to withdraw from the 1979 peace treaty with Israel and renege on the obligations Egypt took upon itself therein. It cannot, by the same token, allow Hamas to dictate the agenda regarding either Israel or the United States.

Furthermore, for years Egypt shirked its responsibility to exercise control in the Sinai, allowing the peninsula to become a free passageway for traffic in human beings, drugs, arms, and terror. Thus, Hamas and other terror groups in Gaza were able to rearm themselves with thousands of Iranian rockets after Israel's 2008-2009 Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. While the November 21, 2012, agreement can be viewed as a political success for Egypt, it will also put the onus on it. Failure to exercise full control in the Sinai and prevent the flow of arms to Gaza will put Egypt on a collision course with the US administration and Congress. Such a confrontation may very well add to other, unrelated, irritants in US-Egyptian relations having to do with human, civil, and political rights in Egypt.

The US has a key part to play in Egypt's economic recovery. It is a signatory to the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. It contributes more than $1.5 billion to Egypt's defense and economy, and it is the major shareholder in financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. In the absence of other financial alternatives, this will remain a major consideration in Egypt's attitude when dealing with political issues in its immediate neighborhood.

Hamas

To the extent that Hamas determined the timing of the military confrontation with Israel, it chose wisely in opting for this particular window of time. The showdown with Israel took place just days before the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority's petition for non-member observer state status in the UN General Assembly was to be debated, voted upon, and granted. This process granted Hamas's rivals for leadership among the Palestinians (Fatah) a political victory. With the perceived victory by Hamas in the confrontation

with Israel, it has seized the moral and political Palestinian high ground regardless of the ultimate decision of the UN General Assembly or the size of the supportive majority of states.

The confrontation also came a few days after President Obama was reelected. If Israeli troops had entered Gaza and had there been many casualties among the Palestinian population, Obama's second term would have opened with possible friction with Israel. At the same time, Hamas could count on the Israeli reaction being limited, as Israel is already in a pre-election mode, which makes the political leadership reluctant to initiate military operations that could entail high casualty rates in house-to-house battles in the narrow streets of Gaza. Hamas could also assume that Israel would refrain from a ground operation so as not to further strain relations with Egypt.

Hamas, like Israel, has to factor in the new regime in Egypt and avoid a situation whereby Egyptian support would clash with Egypt's interests. Neither the political support that Hamas receives from Turkey nor the financial support that it might obtain from Qatar, for example, can substitute for the role played by Egypt. The latter is Hamas's link to the outside world. Under the new circumstances in Egypt, Hamas's freedom of action will be determined by the extent to which it could jeopardize Egyptian interests, especially those tied to the United States. This assessment will be tested if and when Egypt decides to exert more effective control over the Sinai and over what military hardware may enter Gaza.

Israel

Beyond the reluctance to further strain relations with Egypt or suffer the loss of many Israeli soldiers (especially in the pre-election season), Israel's leadership sought to avoid having Obama's second term in the White House open with another public row over an issue of secondary importance. During this term the nuclear military designs of Iran, the political process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the ramifications of the Arab uprisings will remain higher priorities on the Israel-US agenda.

Israel's reluctance to mount a ground operation and inflict major devastation on the Gaza Strip left Israel with very few options for a formula that would enable an early end to the military campaign. American involvement, side by side with Egypt's, offered Israel a convenient exit that was almost independent of the terms of the agreement. Prime Minister

Netanyahu can breathe two sighs of relief, as he ended the military operation in Gaza with no damage to his prospects in the January 2013 elections, and as he opens the next chapter in his relations with President Obama on a positive note, at least with regard to this military confrontation. To this one should add the tremendous success of Iron Dome, the anti-missile system developed in Israel thanks largely to President Obama's initial decision to grant Israel $205 million and his recent addition of $70 million.

Conclusion

Through the agreement ending the military confrontation in Gaza, the US was able to demonstrate that it still maintains an interest in Middle East developments as well as the tools to wield its influence. Yet as is often said in statistics, the sample is too small to yield definitive conclusions. The skirmish in Gaza was isolated from the rest of the region and barely caused a ripple, especially as Israel sought to contain the confrontation with Hamas. The US success will not remove the dilemmas facing Washington in dealing with Syria, for example. This success helped foster better relations with Egypt, but it might not help if, for instance, the Egyptian constitution does not meet certain standards. In the long run, the gains earned by the US in finalizing the agreement between Hamas and Israel may be far from indicating a trend and guaranteeing further successes.

On the Israel-US agenda, the major issues that occupied the two governments remain unchanged. Although the cooperation between the two during late November was constructive, it does not automatically project full understanding and agreement onto the bigger, more significant issues such as Iran and the peace process. Even on the Israeli-Egyptian front, while US involvement helped remove a mine that could cause great damage, it did not heal the weak bilateral relations. In the major tests of relations between Israel and Egypt – such as the peace process with the Palestinians, an attack on Iran's nuclear installations, and other regional issues – the US and Israel may find it more difficult to coordinate and agree. If US involvement in this and other situations is seen as valuable by Israel, it might need to give more consideration to the US point of view in the future.

Beyond this analysis, it remains to be seen whether the agreement will be hailed as a success several months after it was reached. Israel unilaterally ended its military operation in Gaza in early 2009 with a similar result – UN Security Council Resolution 1860 – which Hamas rejected because it was

not consulted. This time Hamas is a party to the agreement, but it did not take upon itself a commitment not to rearm. As in the case of Operation Cast Lead, here too the US provided assurances to Israel that it will deal with the smuggling of weapons to Gaza. In order to deliver on this assurance, the US will need Egypt's full cooperation. Accordingly, the United States involvement in reaching the agreement of November 21, 2012, which drew on conflicting Egyptian interests, has yet to be justified as a success and harbinger of a renewed US posture in the Middle East.

Note

Many thanks to Cameron Brown for his comments.

The New Egyptian Regime and the Campaign in the Gaza Strip

Udi Dekel

Operation Pillar of Defense was the first confrontation between Israel and Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip since the Muslim Brotherhood rose to power in Egypt. As such, the campaign allows us to examine the policy and conduct of the new regime during a crisis. In military terms, this type of examination is akin to "learning under friction," whereby a clash enables exploration of the evolving situation, unintended ramifications, primary considerations, and new rules of the game.

In the new Egypt, foreign policy is characterized by continuity as well as change. Where the Gaza Strip is concerned, continuity dominates. The Muslim Brotherhood regime has refrained from opening the Rafiah crossing to unrestricted movement of people and goods to and from the Gaza Strip, adopted a pragmatic policy that does not challenge Israel over the blockade on the Gaza Strip, and emerged to broker a ceasefire when violence erupts and the dynamic between Israel and Hamas or the other terrorists in Gaza escalates. On the face of it, this behavior is odd, given the special relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, which originated as the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, as the recent conflict made clear once again, the regime-related internal and political interests of the Muslim Brotherhood outweigh its sympathy and ideological and religious identification with Hamas. During the fighting, al-Shatar, one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, accused Hamas of entangling Egypt in a potential confrontation with Israel, charging that the first priority of the government in Cairo is to feed 85 million Egyptians, and only then can it worry about the 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Even harsher anti-Hamas statements

were made, such as, "the tail mustn't be allowed to wag the dog," and the accusation that Hamas was diverting Egypt from its main objectives at this time, namely, saving the Egyptian economy, primarily through foreign aid from the United States and the West that is expected to reach $10 billion.

Upon his election, President Morsi cited three overarching goals for the new regime: social justice, economic development, and security and stability. All three will be advanced by the consolidation of the Muslim Brotherhood rule. This approach prompted a series of steps, including the composition and formulation of a new constitution and the ensuing struggle for its ratification; curtailment of the army's influence, new parliamentary elections; reduction of the constitutional court's authority; and the firing of the attorney general. To realize these efforts, Egypt under the Muslim Brotherhood needs a state of calm as well as stability in matters of security vis-à-vis the world at large, and it cannot be dragged into the adventures of other entities, including Hamas, at a time inconvenient to the Cairo government. Therefore, President Morsi chose to act as an agent of mediation and stability, brokering an agreement on points of understanding between the warring sides in order to achieve an extended ceasefire.

At the same time, President Morsi understood that he had to appease the masses and demonstrate solidarity with Hamas's struggle. He recalled the Egyptian ambassador from Israel, condemned the Israeli aggression, sent his Prime Minister to visit Gaza as an act of solidarity with its residents, supported a meeting of Arab foreign ministers, and allowed a demonstration of several hundred protesters under the banner of "Implementing the revolution is intertwined with resolving the Palestinian problem." All these actions were chosen as low-key soft power measures that would not undercut Egypt's role as mediator between Hamas and Israel.

Communication with Israel was effected through the traditional channels, military and defense networks. Covertly, Egypt sent warning signals to Israel, indicating that it would not tolerate a military ground offensive in the Gaza Strip – which would require a response in the form of violation of agreements, hinting at the military annex to the peace treaty. The regime in Cairo was particularly concerned lest an Israeli ground offensive in Gaza provoke a popular outburst among the Egyptian public and place heavy pressure on the government to act in a way that would not serve Egypt's critical and immediate interests. To President Morsi's understanding, a crisis-inducing response to Israel on Egypt's part was liable to put an end to the

foreign aid Egypt so desperately needs. Indeed, aid from the International Monetary Fund was approved immediately after the start of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. In addition, senior figures in Egypt's defense establishment – the Ministry of Defense, the army, and the intelligence service – who maintain steady contacts with Israel made it clear that this was their trial period, and it was necessary to prove to Morsi and the new regime that the special security bond with Israel is vital for Egypt, and that only they have the ability to influence Israel's moves.

Despite the seemingly united front between President Morsi on the one hand and the military and security apparatus on the other, mutual suspicion and distrust have generated a type of deterrence, such that each side avoids acting against the other as long as it retains its fundamental authority. It is no coincidence that President Morsi only recently granted the Defense Minister, General Abd Al-Fatah Sisi, the authority to decide on military action, call up reserve forces, and mobilize military forces. Senior figures in the military and security services in charge of contact with Israel are currently operating with a sense of personal fear lest they be accused of being too pro-Israel.

At the same time, the conduct of the Egyptian regime indicates that President Morsi understands the advantages of the peace treaty with Israel, which gives Egypt significant leverage over Israel. In his view, Israel will do anything to preserve the treaty because it sees it as a critical strategic asset and because of the implications for Israel's treaty with Jordan. Above all, Egypt is not interested in a military confrontation with Israel. The reward Egypt sees in maintaining the peace treaty includes restricting Israel's military freedom of action, the assurance of American financial and military aid, and convenient access to Israel's leadership, which is critical for preventing misunderstandings or challenges that Israel might pose. The regime in Cairo finds it convenient to dictate the rules of direct communication with Israel: clandestine military contact rather than public diplomatic relations, along with a low profile without direct contact between the political leaders.

Although in the past as well as in the more recent rounds of escalation Egypt assumed the role of mediator between Hamas and Israel, this time the government in Cairo adopted a more significant role with greater responsibility. It brought Islamic Jihad and its leader, Ramadan Sallah, to the negotiating table, thereby committing the radical organization to the ceasefire, in part out of respect and commitment towards Egypt. This may signal the importance the Egyptian government attributes to reconciliation

and unification in the Palestinian camp, not only within the borders of the Gaza Strip but also between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority and Fatah in the West Bank.

The new Egypt assumed more responsibility as a guarantor of the ceasefire and the understandings achieved. But at the same time it continued to curb and reject any initiative that would have assigned it responsibility for the Gaza Strip, even if only symbolically. The manner by which President Morsi undertook the role of mediator allowed him to propose the first draft of the memorandum of understandings, which was slanted in favor of Hamas's interests: "quiet for quiet," the easing of the blockade on the Gaza Strip as a step towards lifting it, opening the border crossings between the Gaza Strip and Israel and granting freedom of movement of people and goods, stopping Israeli flights over the Gaza Strip, and allowing Palestinian farmers into the security perimeter to work their land. The proposed concessions did not entail a parallel Egyptian commitment to fully opening the Rafiah crossing on the Egyptian side or a commitment to an effective effort to stop the smuggling of weapons into the Gaza Strip, despite al-Shatar's statement that the army must do more to stop the smuggling into Gaza. The way in which Egypt tackles the smuggling will be an important test of its resolve to stabilize the situation and the ceasefire. Still, Egypt's limited ability to control the Sinai Peninsula and its lack of immediate solutions to the needs of the Bedouin population therein persist. As in the past, the Cairo government will likely not employ all the means required to stop the smuggling of weapons into the Gaza Strip and will prefer to continue to manage rather than to resolve the problem.

President Morsi used the confrontation in the Gaza Strip as an opportunity to reposition Egypt as the "elder sibling" and leader of the Arab world. Egypt is the only entity capable of serving as a mediator acceptable to both sides and of conducting the negotiations effectively and clandestinely. By contrast, Turkey under the leadership of Erdoğan and wealthy Qatar, which have challenged Egypt's involvement in the Gaza Strip, could not serve as mediators between Israel and Hamas. Indeed, in practice all of them huddled under Egypt's wing in the last round of violence.

Strategically, Egypt as ruled by the Muslim Brotherhood and headed by President Morsi was the big winner in the conflict. It played a guiding role, functioned as a leader of the Middle East and the Arab world, and served as a coordinator of regional and international political activity. Major world

leaders paid visits to Egypt, including UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, and Arab foreign ministers. In practice, only Egypt could have secured a ceasefire between the warring sides and formulated a memorandum of understandings designed to prolong the calm and maintain stability over time. It did so with the legitimacy of the Muslim Brotherhood regime (democratically elected by the Egyptian people), as the Muslim Brotherhood has much influence over Hamas, and thanks to the peace treaty with Israel. Pragmatism and the understanding that Egypt's political interests overrode the religious ideological interests of the Muslim Brotherhood, which he represents, characterized President Morsi's conduct.

Egypt has the power to neutralize negative radical elements, most of which are directed by Iran, significantly reduce arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip, and curtail the empowerment of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other organizations. This is one of the most serious tests of the intentions of the government in Cairo. Israel must take advantage of the positive trends arising from President Morsi's management of the crisis and stabilization of Gaza. If Israel is interested in promoting a positive role for Egypt in the future, it should honor the understandings contained in the agreement, as it promised the Egyptian government, and certainly not dismiss it as a "meaningless piece of paper." Israel should make a careful effort to understand the conduct of the new Egyptian leadership within the domestic arena and should avoid publicly criticizing actions of Muslim Brotherhood leaders that are directed at solidifying the organization's hold on Egypt and neutralizing future domestic threats. Israel must understand the sensitivity of the regime to the mood of the Egyptian public and avoid actions and statements liable to inflame the public and set Tahrir Square ablaze. Similarly, Israel must avoid challenging the regime in Cairo or setting up symbolic tests of its seriousness. The issue is not whether or not President Morsi publicly utters the word "Israel" or speaks directly with the Israeli Prime Minister, rather, Egypt's policy of containment and stabilization. It would be preferable for Israel to promote positive rewards for Cairo's contributions to peace and stability, maintain low profile contacts behind the scenes, and encourage Cairo to act pragmatically and in a statesmanlike manner, rather than to provoke ideologically-based hostility towards Israel. The more the internal situation in Egypt improves, the more one can expect the new regime's

capacity for outwardly directed containment – specifically in the Gaza Strip – to grow, as will perhaps its capacity to curtail the smuggling.

The development of internal rules of the game for the Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt – which are at odds with the democratic principles that propelled the movement to the helm – and its increasing level of confidence do not foreshadow a real, near-term danger that there will emerge a proactive and defiant foreign policy within the region generally or against Israel specifically.

Responses and Reflections in the Egyptian Social Media

Orit Perlov

On November 14, 2012, Israel launched Operation Pillar of Defense in the Gaza Strip with the killing of Ahmed Jabari, the commander in chief of Hamas's military wing. The operation ended a week later with the announcement of a ceasefire. Early into the operation, Defense Minister Ehud Barak announced its goals: "strengthening Israel's deterrence, delivering a harsh blow to the rocket array, delivering a painful blow to Hamas and the terrorist organizations, and reducing damage to our civilian home front."

During the eight days of Operation Pillar of Defense, the local Arab social networks (Twitter, Facebook, and blogs) reverberated with ongoing critical discourse. An analysis of this social debate reveals fascinating responses, insights, and ideas among the Egyptian and Palestinian public regarding the campaign in Gaza.

The ideas and trends discussed in this essay do not presume to represent all sentiments in the Gaza Strip and Egypt, rather, only the main insights of the approximately 12-15 percent of Palestinians and Egyptians active in the social media, those who contribute to the exchange of ideas on the social networks. The essay focuses mainly on the Egyptian users (based on their exchanges with their Gazan counterparts) and their views on the following issues: the effect of the operation on domestic Egyptian politics and on Hamas and Gaza, the performance of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Israeli move and Israel's policies.

Below are the six major ideas that dominated the discourse on Operation Pillar of Defense in the Egyptian social media.

The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt versus the Muslim Brotherhood (i.e., Hamas) in the Gaza Strip: True Brotherhood?

The discourse in the social media reveals a surprising picture of a growing and deepening rift between the movements due to a current clash of interests between the Muslim Brotherhood leadership in Egypt and the Hamas leadership in Gaza. During the operation, harsh criticism was sounded about Hamas's "egotistical" conduct in the Gaza Strip and oblivion to the needs and constraints of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

Put another way, the discourse shows a growing rift between the Hamas leadership in Gaza, "the wayward son," and the parent group, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Many Islamic politicians are critical of Hamas's irresponsible policy in Gaza, liable to drag Egypt into a direct and undesirable confrontation with Israel. Even more severe is that such conduct could endanger the financial aid Egypt is due to receive from the United States, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Union, or, as was explicitly stated on the networks, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has to feed 85 million mouths and will not allow Hamas's lawless conduct to put this endeavor at risk." In addition, there is much frustration among senior figures in the Muslim Brotherhood with the inability of the army to deal with the arms and money smuggling to Hamas in the Gaza Strip. It seems that the leadership of the political Muslim Brotherhood understands the need for finding a new mechanism to reduce this trend.

Among public opinion leaders on the networks it appears that Egypt is no longer willing to be held hostage to the Gaza Strip. It is currently focused on domestic issues and challenges, and has little energy and few resources to put out fires outside the country. The attempt by Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh to present Palestinian and Egyptian blood as one and the same is a total fantasy.

Another prominent point is Egypt's cynical use of the internal struggle between the Gazan Hamas leadership and the former Syrian Hamas leadership, i.e., between Haniyeh and a-Zahar, on the one hand, and Abu Marzuk and Mashal, on the other, as a way of applying pressure on Hamas to show flexibility on the ceasefire agreement with Israel and regarding Egypt. If in the past Gazan Hamas was seen as more pragmatic and Syrian Hamas as more hawkish because of its Iranian sponsorship, the "Arab Spring" has since reversed the situation. Today Gazan Hamas has become more hawkish and has leverage over the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, whereas the Syrian

branch (currently in Sudan) became more pragmatic the moment it lost Iran and accepted Qatari sponsorship. Therefore, the discourse in the social media contends that the Muslim Brotherhood summoned Abu Marzuk and Mashal to Cairo to participate in the ceasefire arrangements in order to exert pressure on the Hamas leadership. While the veracity of this claim is questionable, this is how the situation is seen by many Egyptian network users.

In addition to the rift between the leaderships, there is also increased criticism within the Egyptian public of Hamas. Many stress that Hamas and Gaza are not one and the same. While many in Egypt would be happy to see the Muslim Brotherhood weakened in Gaza, they are furious about the heavy price the helpless civilians are forced to pay. From conversations between Egyptians and their friends in Gaza, their sense is that Gaza is actually under dual occupation, i.e., under Israel and under Hamas. Some are even calling for the full opening of the Rafiah crossing in order to ease the suffering of Gaza's residents without any appreciation about the political and security implications of such a move for Egypt.

Morsi versus Mubarak: Two Sides of the Same Coin

While the populist rhetoric and aggressive tone of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi depart from those of Mubarak, the social media discourse clearly reflects the sense that the Egyptian public does not see any difference between Morsi's policy and that of his predecessor. On the contrary, throughout the eight days of the operation it became increasingly clear to many network users that Morsi's speeches and commitment to the demands of the Egyptian people and the revolution were nothing but empty words. Many mocked his protestation that he immediately recalled the Egyptian ambassador once the Israeli campaign began, and pointed out that in this, he was no different from Mubarak, who recalled the Egyptian ambassador to Israel in 1982, 1988, 2001, 2005 and in the middle of Operation Cast Lead. "There is nothing new under the sun," was often quoted, as was, "What you see from here you can't see from over there," meaning that what the Muslim Brotherhood could afford to say as an opposition movement, when some of its leaders were in jail, could not be implemented today. The ground they are standing on is shaky, and unwise conduct is liable to lead Egypt into the Gazan mire. Beyond this, some even said that Morsi, unlike his predecessor, honestly wants to deal with the issues of smuggling and Sinai security and therefore, if there is a will, a way will be found even if

this means security cooperation with the United States and Israel. In other words, it is understood that for now, in terms of foreign policy, if one looks at action rather than words, there is no essential difference between Morsi and Mubarak. The fact that Morsi has yet to mention Israel by name in his speeches is meaningless because in the end, he will cooperate with Israel even more closely than his predecessor.

The Rising Power of the Non-State Actor: The Arab Street

A day after the start of Operation Pillar of Defense, President Morsi addressed Israel by saying, "Stop this adventure, lest you will not be able to withstand the rage of the Egyptian people." Even among the intellectuals and opinion makers on the social networks, a very clear warning would emerge from time to time along the lines of "Israel had better watch out for the anger of the Egyptian public," and "Israel must start taking the Arab street into account in its strategic considerations." Unlike state-related (statesmen, military personnel, diplomats, and economists) and establishment players who uphold clear rules of the game and generally exhibit rational deliberations and logical moves, the Arab street is an actor whose rules of the game are not defined. According to the network users, the Arab street is not a stable or definitive element. It operates on the basis of emotions rather than rational thought and pragmatic considerations, and it is therefore impossible to foresee the timing, scope of damage, range of targets, and the course it might take the moment it becomes a factor in the equation. Therefore, all the conversations on the networks include the following recommendation to Israel: "When you make your strategic and tactical considerations and are about to make one decision or another, you must stop and consider the Arab street."

Israel-Hamas: Catch-22

The discourse on the social networks reveals two contradictory approaches regarding relations between Israel and Hamas and the direction in which Israel's policy is headed. The discussions reveal a sense that consciously or not, Israel is trapped in a web of interests on the issue and that it remains unclear how this will be resolved.

According to one approach, Operation Pillar of Defense strengthened Hamas's diplomatic, international, and intra-Palestinian standing. The more Israel continues to strengthen Gazan Hamas and grant it international

legitimacy, the more it weakens the opposing Palestinian camp, more secular and liberal in orientation, that still favors the two-state solution and recognition of Israel. Israel must not forget that the weakening of this camp strengthens the alternative Palestinian camp that believes in the one-state solution and in managing the conflict rather than resolving it.

According to the other approach, strengthening Hamas in Gaza gives Israel a credible address for what is happening in the Gaza Strip and in practice weakens the more radical players such as the Salafist movements and Islamic Jihad, financed and trained by Iran or al-Qaeda proxies. Past experience has proven to Israel that it is possible to arrive at periodic settlements and agreements with Hamas, and therefore, from Israel's point of view, this is a reality one can accept.

On this issue, the opinions in the social media diverge. Those in Egypt supporting the two-state solution are angry with Israel, which out of narrow interests and ignorance of the long term, is itself conferring political and international legitimacy on Hamas. In contrast, those who fear the growing strength of the radical movements in the Gaza Strip think this is the right step, that the dialogue between Israel and Hamas is inevitable, and it will ultimately make Hamas a more moderate and pragmatic entity.

Power, Deterrence, and Disproportionality

The discourse on the social networks clearly reflects the recognition of Israel's offensive and defensive military superiority. Many compared the battle between Hamas and Israel to the struggle between David and Goliath or, alternately, Tom and Jerry. This also gave rise to a genuine collective concern about a ground action in Gaza. All elements of the Arab public firmly opposed a ground incursion and claimed everything must be done to prevent it. The lack of proportionality and huge gaps between Israel's and Hamas's technology and weapons are so self-evident that it would, according to those active in the new media, be impossible to resolve the conflict through an armed struggle. Therefore, the impression is that the 12 million Egyptians active on the networks heaved a sigh of relief when the ceasefire was announced and it became clear that the IDF would not move its ground forces into Gaza.

More than once, the question was asked whom exactly Israel was trying to deter. Many made a point of stressing the impossibility of eliminating Hamas with one military step or another. Hamas is an idea and an ideology, and no

army can deter an idea. In other words, in their opinion, Hamas's political growth and the widening of its international base of legitimacy are actually what may finally lead the movement to give up on armed resistance in practice (even if not in rhetoric) because of pragmatic political considerations rather than the effects of a military campaign.

The Weakness of the Strong: A New Balance of Deterrence

The discourse in the social media paints a picture of a new deterrence triangle created in the wake of Pillar of Defense, comprising:

The Egyptian side: Because of Egypt's internal weakness thanks to the "Arab Spring," it has an urgent need for American and Western financial aid, along with peace and quiet along its borders in order to concentrate on domestic problems. Therefore, Egypt cannot allow itself to abrogate the peace treaty with Israel and also cannot allow Hamas to continue its policy of armed struggle.

The Israeli angle: Despite its military superiority, Israel is isolated and dependent strategically on the peace treaty with Egypt. Therefore, it is clear to many that Israel acted in a relatively restrained manner when it launched the operation in the Gaza Strip. Because of this dependence, many claim that Egypt has additional power and leverage it can use against Israel.

The Gazan angle: Since severing itself from its Iranian backing and establishing a new alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hamas is committed to new rules of the game. With its new patron, Hamas can no longer conduct itself solely on the basis of narrow organizational concerns; rather, every step the movement takes can affect relations with Egypt that as of now is a lifeline for Gaza (in weapons, money, goods, natural gas, and electricity) and therefore the organization must also take Egyptian interests into account.

The triangle has created a new reality in which every side is deterred and limited in terms of its conduct. Some network users compare this to playing with dice: a careless throw can make the whole structure collapse, requiring all the players to practice more caution than ever before.

Iran: Involvement from Afar

Emily B. Landau

Although Iran was not a direct participant in the recent round of fighting between Israel and Hamas, its strong military support for Hamas and Islamic Jihad was an expression of its indirect involvement in the conflict. In supplying rockets and other military assistance to the resistance organizations, Iran was following a path similar to the one demonstrated in the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead, but with a new impetus. When attention turns to the wider regional picture as well as the ongoing Iranian nuclear crisis, the contours of its current involvement come into sharper relief. These dynamics provide a framework for assessing some of the implications of the latest round of fighting from Iran's perspective and help explain how its interests and calculations came into play.

Military Support for Hamas and Islamic Jihad

The most direct and overt expression of Iran's involvement from afar was its supply of Fajr-5 long-range rockets to Hamas and Islamic Jihad. During the operation, the deputy leader of Islamic Jihad, Ziad Nakhleh, openly admitted for the first time that the rockets fired by Hamas and the "Palestinian resistance" were of Iranian origin; when subsequently questioned on this point, the spokesman of the Iranian foreign ministry, Rahmin Mehmanparast, responded ambiguously: his answer was that the question of how the rockets reached Gaza should be directed to Israeli intelligence officials. Because it is Israel's assessment that the rockets originated in Iran and were then smuggled into Gaza from Egypt, he seemed to be confirming Israel's view, with the implication that Iran was indeed supplying the resistance organizations in Gaza with rocket parts and technology. This interpretation is further reinforced by his assertion that it was the duty of all nations, and

especially Islamic nations, to help the Palestinian people in their struggle. Later, the speaker of the Iranian parliament, Ali Larijani, put to rest any lingering ambiguity when he proudly announced the significant military and financial assistance that Iran is providing to the resistance groups in Gaza.[1]

Regional Calculations

The context for assessing this assistance is Iran's regional hegemonic interests in the Middle East. As a non-Arab Shiite regime, Iran is not well positioned to draw support from the Sunni Arab states for its regional aspirations. The traditional mutual disdain that the Arab states and Iran have for each other makes them unlikely partners in any regional dynamic. Within the confines of this inherent political constraint, Iran tries to make inroads where it can. Positioning itself as the champion of the Islamic resistance and of the Palestinian cause has enabled it to make some progress in this regard. On this basis, alongside its very close relationship with the Shiite organization Hizbollah, Iran has been able to forge relations with Hamas even though the Sunni organization is not a natural partner.

In addition to the difficulty that Iran faces in any attempt to garner support or secure acquiescence from Arab entities for its bid for a hegemonic or leadership role in the Middle East, promoting its regional agenda also pits the Islamic Republic directly against the other prime contenders for this role, foremost among which are Egypt and Turkey. In the recent round of warfare between Israel and Hamas, the challenge posed by Egypt was most evident. President Morsi's success in mediating a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas earned him the potential for a new partnership with the Obama administration, with clear economic benefits for Egypt, which it desperately needs. But the role of mediator has also enabled him to score points in the regional sphere, which irks Iran. Morsi's take on the Gaza conflict positioned Egypt in direct opposition to Iran: as a clear supporter of regional stability, in contrast to Iran's embrace of "resistance."

Egypt's potential gains as mediator increased Iran's motivation to push itself more determinedly into the frame. As part of this effort, Iran was strongly emphasizing an image of closeness in its relations with Hamas – an image that was all the more important to project after the significant cooling of these relations earlier this year surrounding developments in Syria and Iran's support for the Assad regime. The new image of closeness was expressed by Iran not only in its very vocal messages of congratulations to the organization

and attempts to celebrate the latter's victory over Israel jointly, but also in the unusually open statements that it had supplied the longer-range Fajr-5 rockets to Gaza. Although Iran embraced the ceasefire once it was achieved, it had likely been hoping for a different outcome, namely, continued fighting that would weaken Israel's international position while deflecting attention from its own position on Syria as well as its nuclear advances. But Iran was most likely also disturbed by the fact that Egypt proved capable of scoring points through successful mediation. And as Egypt continues its mediation efforts in Cairo after the ceasefire – with delegations arriving in the Egyptian capital from both Israel and Gaza – Iran's frustration will only increase.

Iran also has to deal with a newer contender for regional influence: Qatar, which has recently pledged significant economic assistance to Hamas in Gaza. For its part, Hamas welcomes all offers of military and financial assistance, not concerning itself with the identity of the provider, but for Iran this is clearly another source of competition for regional influence.

Meanwhile, on the Nuclear Front…

Shifting to the nuclear front, the upshot of the combined effect of the US presidential elections in early November and Operation Pillar of Defense towards the end of the month was that another month had passed without any indication of a renewed effort to resume negotiations with Iran on the nuclear issue. Indeed, Obama was quoted as saying a few days before the release of the latest IAEA report on Iran in mid-November that he hopes to restart negotiations "in the coming months."[2] But with attention in the region focused on the Israel-Hamas conflict, the apparent lack of immediacy or urgency reflected in Obama's statement neither resonated nor elicited any response in Israel. The IAEA report itself – which indicated that Iran had increased its stockpile of 20-percent-enriched uranium from just over 90 kg in August to about 135 kg today – was also lost in the din of the warfare.

The supply of rockets to Hamas also comes full circle, extending to the nuclear realm, with a statement by a Hamas leader, Mahmoud al-Zahar, asserting that after it was proven that Hamas's rockets can reach Tel Aviv, Israel will think twice before attacking Iran.[3] This statement was undoubtedly well received in Iran, especially after Hamas had declared earlier this year that in the event of an attack on Iran, Hamas would not be involved. Al-Zahar's statement underscored that the lavish Iranian financial and military support was having the desired effect. Moreover, although the Hamas official

emphasized that this assistance was "for the sake of God," with no conditions attached, there should be no illusions about Iran's expectations from Hamas in its hour of need. Iran is desperately trying to beef up its deterrence against attack by concretizing the rocket threat and trying to prove the point that Hamas will use its made-in-Iran rockets against Israel in the event of an attack on Iran, regardless of whether there is a solid basis for believing that Hamas will indeed carry through. The recent admissions of its role in supplying weapons should be viewed in this context.

The ceasefire between Israel and Hamas does not include a provision for curtailing the continued smuggling of rockets into Gaza, and according to reports issued just a few days after the ceasefire, a fresh shipment of Fajr-5 is already on its way and reportedly might even include components of Shahab-3 ballistic missiles,[4] although this claim requires further validation. As long as this situation continues, and if the issue is not addressed effectively through a negotiated agreement, Iran's long arm will maintain its firm grasp in Gaza. In line with its regional agenda, Iran will be seeking to further build up its support for the resistance groups that it proposes to lead, to foment trouble from time to time with the aim of weakening Israel's resilience and legitimacy, and to bolster its own deterrence against an attack on its nuclear facilities by demonstrating that its ability to strike back hard from close geographic proximity to Israel is quite credible. For its part – after its stock of long-range rockets was mostly destroyed by Israel – Hamas will be even more reliant on Iranian-supplied rockets, which could very well strengthen those elements in the organization that oppose the move away from Iran as well as from Syria.

Notes

1 See Joanna Paraszczuk, "Islamic Jihad Leader: Hamas Rockets 'Iranian Made,'" *Jerusalem Post,* November 19, 2012; Joanna Paraszczuk, "Iran: Ask Israel How Fajr-5 Rockets Reached Hamas," *Jerusalem Post,* November 20, 2012; and "Iran Confirms Military Aid to Hamas, Sending Long-Range Missile Technology," *Russia Today,* November 21, 2012.

2 "Obama Pledges Diplomatic Push on Iran," *Global Security Newswire,* November 15, 2012, http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/obama-pledges-diplomatic-push-iran/.

3 "Hamas: Jews Will Think Twice before Attacking Iran," *Ynet news,* November 24, 2012.

4 Times of Israel staff, "Fresh Shipment of Iranian-Made Rockets Reportedly already en Route to Gaza," *Times of Israel,* November 25, 2012. The article quotes the British *Sunday Times*.

Between Hamas, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel

Anat Kurz

Like the previous large-scale confrontation in Gaza in December 2008-January 2009, the November 2012 conflict between Israel and Hamas had a major effect on the inter-organizational balance of power in the Palestinian arena. Both rounds of fighting severely damaged Hamas's military infrastructure and strengthened Israel's deterrence against Hamas (at least temporarily). Both, however, also highlighted and even enhanced the increasing popularity of Hamas, necessarily at the expense of the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA), and ended with ceasefire agreements that attested to Hamas's control over the Gaza Strip. The political backing that Egypt gave Hamas during the recent conflict and American support of the indirect dialogue between Israel and Hamas, aimed at arriving at understandings for a ceasefire, constituted a diplomatic achievement for Hamas, in addition to the credit it earned at the expense of Fatah by the very fact that it stood up to Israel militarily.

In terms of the likelihood of renewing a concrete dialogue between Israel and a Palestinian national representative body whose status among its own people would enable it to promote a compromise settlement with Israel, the result of this conflict is not encouraging. The petition for recognition of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders as an official UN non-member observer state, which was approved by the UN General Assembly ten days after the end of the conflict between Israel and Hamas, against the background of growing anxiety about a collapse of the PA in the absence of diplomatic progress, strengthened the PA's international status. As long as no breakthrough towards an Israeli-Palestinian settlement occurs, however, the PA will find it difficult to translate this achievement into a significant

change in the balance of power with Hamas, particularly if Israel responds to this diplomatic maneuver with severe economic sanctions.

The assessment that is reflected in belligerent rhetoric by Hamas leaders claiming complete victory in the recent confrontation with Israel can be disputed. Moreover, the understandings that made the ceasefire possible after eight days of fighting saddle Hamas with a heavy responsibility.[1] Maintaining calm on the Gaza border and preventing continued cross-border shelling by factions that do not accept its authority, foremost among them Islamic Jihad, with its close ties to Iran, will be a difficult task for Hamas. Failure to maintain the calm will ignite tension between Hamas and Egypt because it would demonstrate the limits of Cairo's influence on the organization and threaten to draw attention to the sensitive issue of Israeli-Egyptian relations and security coordination. Alternatively, it is possible that the effort by Hamas's security forces to enforce the calm – that is, attempting to halt continued cross-border rocket shelling by recalcitrant factions – could have a negative impact on popular support for the organization, particularly if the local population senses no substantive improvement in its situation.[2] It is also possible that in order to prevent escalation, Egypt will try to stop the arms procurement campaign that Hamas is determined to continue. An Egyptian component, consisting of logistical obstacles, would thereby join the deterrent effect that Israel sought to reinforce during the recent military offensive in the Strip.

If Israel is dragged into another round of hostilities in Gaza, Hamas will likely again be dealt a severe blow. Plans to invest resources in developing the Gazan civilian infrastructure, such as those expressed by the Emir of Qatar, would in all probability be suspended. It is also possible that when the dust settles above the ruined buildings and infrastructures struck by the Israeli air force's aerial assault, the festive air in Gaza could vanish, to be replaced by complaints about Hamas's belligerent policy that again brought death and destruction to Gaza's population.

The strategic significance of possible developments in the directions outlined above can only be assessed with the passage of time. However, more time is not needed to recognize that the confrontation between Israel and Hamas, including the political developments that made a ceasefire agreement possible, has further weakened the PA's already shaky standing.

The rate of public support for Fatah and the PA as estimated in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank a few months before the conflict was impressive.[3]

However, from the moment that Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2007, the PA lost any ability to restore its control over the area. It appears that only a concrete change in the political and territorial Israeli-Palestinian reality – namely, substantive progress towards Palestinian independence – is likely to decrease Hamas's popular support sufficiently to rehabilitate Fatah's standing in the Gaza Strip. Such a change would inevitably involve a struggle with Hamas forces, which would be loath to relinquish control over their territorial stronghold. An immediate indication of Hamas's increased self-confidence was the permission granted to Fatah supporters in the Gaza Strip to fly their organization's flags during the celebrations held after the ceasefire was declared. Shortly after the previous ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took effect, in early 2009, PA spokesmen expressed cautious expectations that the PA's involvement and influence in Gaza would expand, if only through cooperation in reconstruction. In contrast, at the end of the fighting four years later, no hope whatsoever was expressed that Hamas would allow Fatah a foothold in the area through the PA.

In fact, another round of hostilities was not necessary in order to confirm that Israel, the US, and Egypt regard Hamas as the party responsible for the Gaza Strip and, accordingly, recognize that the PA has no control over events there. Already upon cessation of the hostilities that took place in 2009, these parties as well as the EU demanded that Hamas keep the peace and bring the shelling to a halt. It was clear even then that two authorities existed in the Palestinian sphere: one in the West Bank, led by the PA, and the other in the Gaza Strip, headed by Hamas.

Furthermore, on the eve of the 2009 confrontation, some policymakers in Israel saw the overthrow of the Hamas regime as a key goal of the offensive. In 2012 no official Israeli spokesmen mentioned such an ambitious goal, which could not have been achieved without reoccupying the Gaza Strip through a major military effort incurring many casualties and heavy political and diplomatic costs. Furthermore, it would have been impossible to predict subsequent developments in the Strip, even had the goal been achieved. Any lack of clarity that might have existed regarding the status of Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the resources required to topple its rule there was not reflected in the situational assessment; rather, Hamas was recognized as an address for dialogue aimed at reducing tension in the area. This followed the various Egyptian-brokered ceasefire understandings reached between Israel and

Hamas over the years, even before the understandings that ended the 2009 confrontation were formulated and before indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas took place regarding the release of a kidnapped Israeli soldier held by Hamas for many years. Yet another testimony to the Israeli recognition of Hamas is the daily administrative contact between Israel and officials in the Gaza Strip, who are inevitably linked to the organization.

Moreover, de facto recognition of Hamas as the ruler of the Gaza Strip was confirmed after the recent conflict without Hamas having to make any significant ideological or political concessions. Demands stated by Israel and the Quartet as necessary conditions for a dialogue with Hamas officially remained valid. At the same time, Hamas was recognized as the partner for security coordination, even without its official recognition of Israel or the renouncement of its military struggle against Israel, in exchange only for consenting to a ceasefire (and without recognition of past agreements signed by Israel and the PLO).[4]

Coordination also takes place between Israel and the PA, particularly in daily security matters – this line of cooperation was consolidated significantly after the Hamas takeover in the Gaza Strip – and in the economic sphere. This coordination, however, even if it has served the goal of slowing the spread of Hamas's influence in the West Bank, has also undermined the PA's popular standing. In light of the PA's failure to compel Israel to suspend construction in the West Bank and thereby give it a ladder by which it could descend directly to the negotiating table, West Bank Palestinians have increasingly come to regard the security cooperation as serving Israeli interests, because it thwarts the eruption of a popular protest that could spur Israel to reduce its presence or perhaps even withdraw from the area.

The perceived exhaustion of the potential of the plan for building a state infrastructure, launched with much fanfare by PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad,[5] along with protest over the economic hardship, has compounded the political frustration. Before the recent confrontation between Israel and Hamas, a series of demonstrations protesting the economic situation were held on the West Bank. These demonstrations did not develop into an overall civil uprising, but may be a sign of events to come. Hardship also prevails in the Gaza Strip, far more so than on the West Bank. But the restrictions enforced by Israel on the movement of people and goods to and from the Gaza Strip, the naval blockade, and Israel's control over Gaza's airspace provide the context and cause of hardship in the Gaza Strip, where protest can

accordingly be channeled against Israel (and to some extent, Egypt). In the West Bank, however, the PA is perceived as Israel's partner in maintaining the bleak status quo.

In the absence of progress towards a political and territorial settlement with Israel, the PA has persisted in its efforts to secure UN recognition of Palestine, first as a member, then – when that effort failed – as an official non-member observer state. Concern over the fate of the PA joined international criticism of Israel for its lack of a diplomatic initiative to enlarge the circle of countries that voted in favor of or abstained on the PA's petition to the UN. This circle included European countries (except for the Czech Republic, which voted against the initiative) that had joined the US the previous year in opposing a Security Council vote on accepting Palestine for UN membership. Prior to the vote on the Palestinian petition at the UN, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also demanded that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refrain from punitive measures in response to the Palestinian diplomatic move.[6]

In addition to its international diplomatic activity, another route that the PA is likely to pursue in order to reinforce its standing at home is a renewal of the effort to advance "national reconciliation" by mending rifts with Hamas. The talks between Hamas and Fatah that were held following the signing in May 2011 of the "reconciliation agreement" under Egyptian auspices were unsuccessful: the declared goal of preparing for general elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was not achieved. At the same time, it is possible that the circumstances created in the Palestinian theater after the November 2012 military confrontation will aid Egypt in putting the reconciliation agreement into effect. Egypt has expressed interest in promoting Palestinian institutional unity, in order to highlight its involvement in Palestinian matters and encourage moderate tendencies within Hamas as well as to reduce Hamas's reliance on aid from Iran. It may be that the increased power of the Hamas leadership will make it easier to seriously consider sharing institutional authority with Fatah; furthermore, a positive response to the Egyptian appeal to Hamas to integrate with the PA could expedite implementation of the promise to open the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip.

From the PA's point of view, upgrading its international status is designed to improve its starting point in future negotiations with Israel and score an achievement that will enhance its standing at home. Renewed dialogue with

Hamas concerning institutional cooperation would also indicate an effort to halt the erosion of its domestic standing. From the Israeli perspective, security considerations necessitate a military confrontation with Hamas when the latter's behavior crosses a certain threshold of defiance and belligerence. Nevertheless, "punishing" the PA for measures taken in the international and home spheres in order to survive is unwarranted, unless it is aimed at reinforcing the diplomatic stalemate or renouncing the possibility of a single legitimate and functional national entity in the Palestinian arena. This intention, however, is not Israel's declared official policy.

Public opinion in Israel does not favor a fundamental policy change in support of UN recognition of Palestinian statehood or a PA-Hamas rapprochement. Refraining from "punishment," however – by rescinding the measures adopted in response to the Palestinian UN initiative – would actually constitute a policy shift with little or no public and electoral cost. If the Israeli government does this, it would avoid criticism of what is considered in the Palestinian and international arenas as rejection in principle of a Palestinian state and obstruction of a renewed diplomatic dialogue. A positive response to the constant international call for a renewal of the diplomatic process could foster greater acceptance of Israel's positions and increase support for the demands Israel would present at the negotiating table. Israel could avoid unnecessary tension with Egypt by not sanctioning the PA in response to the planned Egyptian-brokered attempt to bridge gaps between Fatah and Hamas.[7] Furthermore, eschewing "punishment," especially economic sanctions, would help the PA cope with the growing frustration and emergent popular protest on its home front, which its success at the UN is unlikely to relieve.

Deceleration of the PA's collapse will leave a chance – however slight, given the prevailing political circumstances in the Israeli and Palestinian arenas – of renewing a dialogue between Israel and a Palestinian national representative element committed to the two-state vision. Hamas's ability to dictate the agenda within the Israeli-Palestinian sphere, including the pace and quality of progress in the Israel-PA dialogue, has been evident since the diplomatic process was launched.[8] For its part, Fatah has grown weaker, inter alia, because of the lack of political progress. The vacuum has been filled by Hamas, whose violent struggle against Israel was among the main obstacles to an agreement between Israel and the PA. There have been a number of milestones in the process of Hamas's ascent, in which

the full-scale military campaigns in the Gaza Strip between Israel and the organization were particularly dramatic. It may well be that after the most recent hostilities in the Gaza Strip, the PA's ability to recruit public support for compromises that lean towards Israel's positions and thus facilitate a breakthrough in the diplomatic process has further diminished. The dissolution of the PA, however, would create a shortcut for Hamas to the helm of the Palestinian political sphere and hence would block the possibility of reaching a permanent peace agreement for many years to come.

Notes

1 "The Ceasefire Terms," *Washington Post*, November 21, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2012/11/21/full-text-terms-of-israel-palestinian-cease-fire/?print=1.

2 The intention to preserve calm is indicated by a religious ruling published by the supreme Hamas religious authority in the Gaza Strip. See Avi Issacharoff, "Hamas Religious Ruling Forbids Lull Violations," *Haaretz*, November 26, 2012.

3 In a public opinion survey conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on July 10, 2012, 30.9 percent of those questioned expressed support for Fatah, while only 18.1 percent expressed support for Hamas, http://www.imra.org.il/story.php3?id=57428.

4 In an interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour on November 21, 2012, after the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas had taken effect, Khaled Mashal stated his conditions for recognizing Israel: "We are ready to resort to a peaceful way… without blood and weapons, as long as we attain our Palestinian demands… I accept a state of the 1967. How can I accept Israel?…I need recognition. Not the Israelis… I accept a Palestinian state according to 1967 borders with Jerusalem as the capital, with the right to return."

5 A report published by the World Bank in April 2012 found that the economic infrastructure on the West Bank was not sufficient to support political independence. See *West Bank and Gaza – Towards Economic Sustainability of a Future Palestinian State: Promoting Private Sector-Led Growth* (World Bank, April 2012), pp. 35-36, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/GrowthStudyEng.pdf. Note that an earlier World Bank report on the situation in the West Bank concluded that the PA's economic activity justified treating it as a state authority. See *Towards a Palestinian State: Reforms for Fiscal Strengthening* (World Bank, April 13, 2010), http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/WorldBankReportAHLCApril2010Final.pdf. See also Avi Issacharoff, "The Death of Economic Peace," *Haaretz*, September 18, 2012.

6 The list of punitive measures used in the past against the PA in response to steps interpreted as contrary to Israeli interests focused on economic sanctions, increased limitations on movement of people and goods to and from the West Bank, and expansion of construction in Israeli neighborhoods on the West Bank.

On the day after the UN vote, the Israeli government issued a permit for increased construction in the Jerusalem area. This measure was perceived as the beginning of a punitive campaign against the PA and therefore drew severe criticism of Israel by its allies, including the US, France, and the UK, which regarded the measure as ingratitude given their support for Israel in the confrontation with Hamas in Gaza. See Barak Ravid, "Clinton Warns Netanyahu against a Measure that Could Make the PA Collapse," *Haaretz*, November 23, 2012. At the same time, the Secretary of State warned PA President Mahmoud Abbas that appealing to the UN would cause a crisis between the US and the PA. See Itamar Eichner and Roni Shaked, "Going to the UN at Any Price," *Yediot Ahronot*, November 25, 2012.

7 In any event, there is little chance that Hamas and Fatah could bridge their ideological and political differences and agree to share institutional authority in accordance with election results, if elections were indeed held.

8 Hostilities between Israel and Hamas during late 2008 through early 2009 in the framework of Operation Cast Lead stopped discussions between Israel and the PA regarding the management and resolution of the conflict (the Annapolis talks). Quite possibly the confrontation provided the PA with an excuse to suspend the talks just when it was seeking a way to avoid progress towards an end-state settlement. In any case, one may conclude that given the strengthening of Hamas after its confrontation with the IDF, the PA would not have succeeded at the time in garnering support for a compromise acceptable to Israel, even had it been determined to reach one. See Anat Kurz, "The Political Process in the Entangled Gordian Knot," *Strategic Assessment* 13, no. 3 (2010): 49-62.

Are Changes Expected in Israel-Gaza Relations?

Yoram Schweitzer

About a week after the end of eight days of fighting in Operation Pillar of Defense, the short-term, immediate assessment is that in spite of the fire and pillars of smoke on both sides, there appears to be no fundamental change in the violent game between Gaza and Israel. The main change that has taken place is a clarification of the situation and the principal players' role in managing the periodic rounds of fighting between Israel and Gaza, as well as a more exact definition of the price of violating the established rules of the game for periodic ceasefire agreements. Given the events that had taken place on Israel's southern border on the eve of the operation, the killing of Ahmed Jabari, the commander of Hamas's military wing, as well as the military campaign initiated in Gaza in its wake, were predictable.

The attack on the Hamas chief of staff and the preemptive attack on Hamas's long-range rockets were a tactical surprise. However, the massive rocket bombardment from Gaza against Israeli cities in immediate response to this killing and the IDF counterattacks in Gaza did not surprise anyone who had been paying attention to the reports that saturated the media in recent years regarding the arming of organizations in Gaza and the use of these weapons against Israel. In the past year, rockets were launched on a near-daily basis at border towns. This practice evolved into barrages of three rounds, each lasting for several days during which dozens of rockets were fired at cities in southern Israel. The declaration by Israel's chief of staff several weeks before the campaign that an operation in Gaza was inevitable, clearly signaled that the current campaign, which was intended to put an end to the intolerable situation in southern Israel, was fast approaching.

Operation Pillar of Defense was conducted almost entirely from the air and at the initiative of Israel, which fully grasped the ramifications of killing

Jabari and had prepared for this event from the military, civilian, and public diplomacy angles. The operation was intended to underscore once again to Hamas and the organizations under its auspices the red lines that Israel had established during Operation Cast Lead and that had gradually eroded since. Through Pillar of Defense, Israel again sought to clarify to Hamas that it has Israel's de facto recognition as the sovereign in the Gaza Strip and that it will pay a very heavy price if it does not fulfill its overall responsibility to stop terrorist acts by its members and prevent all acts of violence from the Gaza Strip aimed at Israeli territory.

The limited operation, which ultimately ended without an Israeli ground invasion of Gaza, was also intended to exact a heavy price for the ongoing violation of the rules of the ceasefire formulated in 2009 with Operation Cast Lead. In addition, it was meant to sear into the consciousness of Hamas leaders and the Palestinian public in Gaza the increasing cost that can be expected in each additional round of fighting in the future if the current ceasefire agreement, brokered in Cairo, is not fulfilled.

At this stage, of course, it is not possible to assess whether or when there will likely be another round of violence, which seems to have become routine in Israel-Gaza relations. However, it would appear that after the end of the utterly predictable round of victory celebrations and declarations – unconnected to the actual results of the fighting in Gaza – by the leaders of Hamas as well as its partners in rocket fire and supporters in the Arab world, the organization will have to undertake some soul-searching and decision making in the very near future regarding its military conduct vis-à-vis Israel. Its leaders are well aware of the military results of the battle and the damage the operation caused to Hamas and the residents of Gaza. At the same time, they are conscious of the challenges they face in light of the ceasefire agreement they signed in Cairo, which requires them to restrain the activity of the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, particularly Islamic Jihad and the Salafist-jihadi organizations.

In spite of the power of Hamas and its hegemonic position in the Gaza Strip, it has already become clear that this commitment is not simple to implement. For example, Islamic Jihad is inextricably linked to Iran, which has armed, trained, and funded it for many years, and even more intensively in the aftermath of Operation Cast Lead. Iran intended for the organization to strike and exhaust Israel independently in order to promote their joint interests, on the assumption that Hamas would act or refrain from acting

against Israel irrespective of Iranian interests. And in fact, Islamic Jihad did what was expected of it and was directly responsible for the escalation in Gaza in a number of incidents in the past year, which led to several of the rounds of fighting with Israel. In some cases, these acts were contrary to the wishes of Hamas, which feared that events might deteriorate into all-out war with Israel. Iran's declaration that it intends to rearm its allies and partners in Gaza (including Hamas) – alongside the weapons shipments already streaming to the Gaza Strip from Libya – indicates that the stock of weapons in Gaza will be replenished. Local organizations, particularly Islamic Jihad, are expected to rebuild their damaged infrastructure and resume their former operations.

The Salafist-jihadi organizations have in the past year played a major role in launching rockets and attacking IDF soldiers. They are also responsible for firing dozens of rockets during the operation and are expected to continue to challenge Hamas's monopoly on decision making regarding the manner and timing of the use of weapons against Israel. The most prominent of these organizations are the Shura Council of the Mujahidin, Jaish al-Islam, Jaish al-Umma, and Ansar al-Sunna. They have already proven their willingness to confront Hamas in order to fulfill their declared raison d'être – perpetual, unrestricted, and unconditional warfare against Israel. Furthermore, in light of their past, their uncompromising ideology, and the nature of their activities in Gaza and the Sinai, it is difficult to imagine them maintaining the ceasefire, and it is reasonable to conclude that they will be among the first to violate it. The statement published on November 24 by the Shura Council of the Mujahidin should be viewed in this context. According to the statement, the operation in Sinai against the Salafist-jihadi organizations by the security forces of Egypt, which brokered the ceasefire agreement, was conducted "with the approval of the Jews" and was the event that paved the way for the Israeli attack on Gaza. With this announcement, the Shura Council of the Mujahidin made clear that it is not part of the ceasefire agreement, and it called on Hamas to stop persecuting the organization's members in Gaza. There are also Salafist-jihadi organizations operating in the Sinai, such as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdes, that collaborate with their colleagues in Gaza. All of these groups can be expected to continue to operate against Israel from the Sinai. Their goal is to cause a deterioration in relations between Israel and Egypt and circumvent the restrictions in Gaza in order to strike at Israel. In particular, they aim to spark friction between Israel and Egypt in

the hope that relations between the two states will deteriorate to the point of a political conflict, and even a military one. Against this backdrop, the Egyptian authorities have reportedly begun contacts with Salafist-jihadi elements in the Sinai in order to recruit them too to preserve the ceasefire with Israel. Although Egypt has a prominent role to play in preventing, or at least slowing down, the rearmament of organizations in Gaza and Sinai and in curbing terrorist operations from Sinai against Israel, it is doubtful that it will fulfill this role with the effectiveness and determination sought by Israel.

The key question, whose answer is far from unequivocal, is: Will Hamas's wish to take advantage of the recent military operation, which further reinforced its control over Gaza, lead it to use its power and influence in Gaza practically and effectively in order to gain formal inter-Arab and international recognition of its sovereignty in Gaza and its inclusion as a main player in the internal Palestinian arena? Towards this end, it will have to prove that it honors its agreements and that it has the ability to maintain the calm on Israel's southern border. Conversely, Hamas cannot afford to completely desist from belligerence against Israel, lest it lose the jihadist identity it has worked so persistently to cultivate over the years, and in light of the criticism of Hamas on this issue by the organizations in Gaza. In addition, the Hamas military units that operate from Gaza, together with their peers in the West Bank, have a strong commitment to continue attempting to kidnap Israelis in order to secure the release of prisoners in Israeli jails not freed in the agreement to release Gilad Shalit, and this commitment eclipses any Hamas commitment to the ceasefire.

It would appear that if Hamas nevertheless demonstrates political responsibility and military or security-based determination, ensuring that its operatives and the other organizations in Gaza maintain a comprehensive ceasefire, then it is likely not only to prevent Gaza residents from experiencing the horrors of another round of fighting with Israel, but also, under certain circumstances, to gain international legitimacy as a partner in the regional political process for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Media Front: Networks in the Service of Public Diplomacy

Owen Alterman

In Operation Pillar of Defense, the IDF and the Israeli government made an unprecedented investment in the media front. After facing criticism for Israel's public relations performance in Operation Cast Lead and the *Mavi Marmara* incident, Israeli policymakers seemed intent to regroup, reorganize, and redouble their efforts to drive international public opinion. Towards this end, the IDF Spokesperson's Unit ramped up its efforts on social media platforms and on its internet blog. In parallel, as Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman noted in his post-operation press statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs drafted some 200 Israeli students and 1,300 students abroad to deploy throughout social networks and broadcast the Israeli message.[1] Israel thereby amassed the equivalent in numbers of more than a battalion to fight the media war. In addition to working through social media, Israel also adjusted its approaches towards the established press. The IDF deployed a new cadre of friendly, foreign-born spokespersons. Also, unlike in Cast Lead, the IDF decided to place no restrictions on the entry of the international media into Gaza.

In the aftermath of Pillar of Defense, the next step is to assess the return Israel received on its investment and on these policy decisions. A thorough assessment – quantifying the differences in media coverage between this campaign and previous incidents – is beyond the scope of this essay. The initial assessment, though, is of an intensified media campaign that on balance succeeded in affecting the outcome in leading media outlets. This conclusion is based on the prominence of IDF tweets, a comparison of editorial positions, and first impressions of pro-Israel media watchdog groups.

The IDF's use of Twitter received more attention than any other element of the Pillar of Defense media campaign. The @IDFSpokesperson Twitter account dramatically increased its number of followers, rising above 200,000 by the end of the campaign.[2] The Twitter feed also provided material for the established media. Comments from the Twitter feed landed in reports by CNN, al-Jazeera English, and perhaps other mass-media outlets. In one example, an article on the CNN website quoted the IDF's Twitter announcement, "Terrorists put an underground launch site next to a mosque. We targeted the site. The mosque was unharmed."[3] This was essentially Israel's core argument regarding the campaign, in eighteen words.

The prominence of the tweets in the established media demonstrates that the IDF's achievements on the media front might even have surpassed the army's stated goals. In their public comments, IDF officials said they turned to social media in order to bypass the filter of the international media, control the message, and reach audiences directly. Twitter also enabled Israel to provide information in real time on incidents as they occurred, as a preemptive strike against later accusations of improper behavior. In fact, the prominence of the Twitter feed may have achieved an additional objective: reaching not only social media users but also the established media itself. The rigid 140-character structure of Twitter disciplines the writer into packaging thoughts into crisp sound bites. Perhaps because of its resulting quality, then, the IDF's Twitter product found its way into the mainstream media, influencing coverage of the campaign even there. The IDF's tweets complemented representatives' verbal comments. The Twitter campaign also demonstrated the capacity to adapt, changing direction following justified criticism of its triumphalist comments in the opening days of the campaign.

That said, the positions of at least two newspaper editorial boards reviewed here indicate little improvement over previous Israeli campaigns. At the *New York Times*, the editorial position was remarkably similar to that in Cast Lead, backing Israel's right to self-defense while warning that a military operation would not solve the problem of Hamas rockets and urging Israel to do more in negotiations with the Palestinian Authority.[4] The *Washington Post* too had advocated an early ceasefire in Cast Lead with a new arrangement to stop weapons smuggling; in Pillar of Defense, it likewise worried that a military campaign would cause casualties without bringing about a political solution.[5] A further assessment of the Pillar of Defense media war should examine editorial positions at other newspapers,

including those in Europe and in emerging powers with a free press (such as India or South Africa). A broader sample will help to measure the media effort's impact on the views of opinion leaders. It may be that the innovations of Pillar of Defense – the use of social media, the warmer approach to the foreign press, the unimpeded access to Gaza – proved effective at responding to (and preempting) criticism of individual incidents but are less effective at influencing opinions on questions of overall strategy. It also may be that such perceptions only change with time and that an improved media effort will make inroads only if used repeatedly.

Initial impressions as conveyed by media watchdogs and observers are particularly positive. HonestReporting, a pro-Israel media watchdog, noted that "overall the media coverage was more balanced than we have seen in the past."[6] The Israel director of StandWithUs praised the work of pro-Israel Twitter users in identifying inaccuracies in coverage.[7] London's *Jewish Chronicle* said that "the Israelis seem to have turned a corner in their dealings with the media. In Cast Lead, they did their best to keep out and frustrate reporters. This time round, they devoted resources to keeping the media informed and took PR seriously."[8] The mainstream international press likewise noted the change, with a number of prominent articles on the IDF's social media effort. A report by *Der Spiegel* also emphasized the increased effectiveness of the IDF Spokesperson's Unit representatives.[9] The decision to grant free access for international media to enter Gaza was universally applauded and described as being in Israel's interest. The initial consensus view is that the presence of foreign reporters in Gaza reduced their reliance on local Palestinian stringers (some of whose professionalism and objectivity is open to question).

Initial signals, then, indeed point towards achievements on the media front of Pillar of Defense. That said, the reasons for the success are not yet clear. Pillar of Defense was a much more limited campaign than Cast Lead and one with fewer civilian casualties, to some extent because of concerns about media reaction. A thorough analysis must isolate this variable from the variable of a changed media strategy. These concerns reflect the ongoing debate in Israeli policy circles over whether policy decisions or public relations strategies have a greater impact on Israel's international standing. This question is in need of a more rigorous analysis, beyond the current public debate, which is based largely on personal intuition. One possible method of investigation is to measure the extent to which, within Pillar of

Defense, media coverage changed after incidents of civilian casualties (such as those of the Daloo family on November 18).

Assuming that investing in the media front was in fact worthwhile, a few general observations and recommendations may be offered. First, the central ingredient of the media success seems to have been, more than any individual decision, the broad openness of senior IDF officers to the input of younger soldiers who took the initiative of massive mobilization into social media. Throughout the course of Pillar of Defense, the "social media command center" itself became a focus of media attention, and the reporting consistently points to the efforts of Aliza Landes and Sacha Dratwa, two twentysomething soldiers who took initiative, lobbied their superiors for support, and then leveraged that support in order to build an increasingly sophisticated social media campaign.[10] Rapid technology-driven changes in the media arena will not end in 2012, and the IDF should continue to take signals from enterprising younger soldiers on how best to keep up with new developments.

Second, for all the worthwhile involvement of other arms of the Israeli government and the laudable efforts of pro-Israel groups here and abroad, the IDF commandeered the Pillar of Defense media effort and seems to have managed it successfully. This approach signals that the army has recognized that this decade's battlefield is multidimensional, comprising not only the military front but also the informational, legal, and diplomatic ones, among others. Moreover, it demonstrates that the IDF – whether because of its flexible budget, superior personnel, or suitability for large-scale campaigns – can be an effective address for the media war. Some have voiced concerns that posting and tweeting with the army's signature militarizes the communications, making them less suitable for an international public that already views Israel as overly militarized. Tweets from the opening days of the campaign did indeed follow this pattern, before the IDF's laudable change of course. Still, the initial assessment is that the benefits outweigh the costs: in future campaigns, it seems the IDF will, and should, be a central address for wartime public relations.

Third, all involved must recognize that Israel's apparent advantage on the media front may be temporary. Hamas and Israel's other adversaries likely watched the IDF's media moves with interest. In the next campaign, they will no doubt take steps to improve their own performance and try to stunt Israeli achievements. Adjusting for their asymmetry, non-state actors might

rely more on foreign or local activists and less on the type of centralized effort conducted by Israel. As one pro-Palestinian analysis piece already noted approvingly, in Pillar of Defense, "While Hamas's social media efforts have been clumsy, independent activists have driven the narrative on the Palestinian side, as young Gaza residents rush to hospitals to take and upload photos and video of the carnage."[11] With information technology becoming cheaper and more widely accessible, Israel's adversaries may even have a natural advantage given their sympathizers' superior numbers and geographical reach. This may not provide an advantage in generating the information – for that, speed and accuracy are important, not numbers – but numbers can matter for forwarding, sharing, re-tweeting, commenting on, and otherwise disseminating the information, a crucial part of the social media equation.

By the same token, some have argued that social media will increasingly make available sensitive real-time information on military operations. Already in Pillar of Defense, the Home Front Command asked Israelis not to report the locations of missile strikes. In the future, increased use of social media may lead both to disclosure of sensitive information and to disinformation campaigns intended to confuse the adversary. None of this warrants a retreat by Israel from the media front; as in any arms race, in this one too, each side will need to match the other in order to prevent defeat.

In short, the story of the media front in Pillar of Defense is of an increasingly multidimensional information arena. The older structure of paid journalists who report, verify, and package information has remained in place. Alongside it, the participatory world of new media has not only become increasingly popular but is itself affecting how journalists do their jobs. An initial assessment of Israel's media efforts in Pillar of Defense suggests that the engagement on both the new media and established media fronts is needed and useful, even if Israel's media advantage may be less decisive in future conflicts. Further analysis is needed in due course to identify points of particular Israeli effectiveness, but the initial reviews are positive: the informational war, it seems, is one worth fighting.

Notes

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Conclusion

Amos Yadlin

It rained the weekend before Operation Pillar of Defense. Israel endured the barrage of rockets from Gaza, did not respond, seemingly returned to routine, and prepared a tactical surprise for Hamas. When the skies cleared, Israel embarked on an operation with very carefully defined goals: to restore Israeli deterrence, to strike a serious blow at Hamas, and to restore peace and quiet in the south. The goals were remarkably similar to the IDF's objectives in 2006 during the Second Lebanon War. The main difference was that this time the political echelon, which had approved the IDF's recommendations for the operation's goals, did not subsequently lambaste the operation or differ on its modest goals. When the operation ended after eight days of blue skies, the storm returned, providing an additional reason to avoid a ground invasion.

As in the Second Lebanon War, some 200 rockets landed daily in the State of Israel, this time in the southern part of the country. Once again, the Israeli Air Force was the main means by which the IDF struck at the enemy, and once again, there was no decisive ground operation to stop the short-range rockets. The mechanism for cessation of hostilities, however, was different: no UN Security Council resolution, no pushing Hamas back from the border, and no UN force deployed to enemy territory in order to help maintain a ceasefire and deal with weapons smuggling or a renewed military buildup. And despite the similarity in the results and in the use of force, there was no commission of inquiry, and reserve generals did not blame the chief of staff for failing to carry out a ground invasion. Winograd 2 and Goldstone 2 have not been realized.

In terms of the goals set at the beginning of Pillar of Defense, the operation was successful, and appears to have met the modest goals

defined for it. Hamas was seriously impaired: in the first hours, its strategic arsenals were destroyed, primarily the long-range Iranian rockets that were intended to shock Tel Aviv by the dozens, and the arsenal of unmanned aerial vehicles was also damaged and taken out of action. Ahmed Jabari, head of the Hamas military wing, was killed, and a number of other senior officers were wounded; hundreds of concealed rockets were struck; homes of senior terrorists were destroyed; and important buildings in the physical infrastructure of the Hamas government were damaged.

It would be a mistake to take Hamas's victory celebrations to heart. On the contrary, if Hamas is not reading the situation correctly and is lying to itself, then the chances that it will lose the "learning competition" are great. Learning and implementing the lessons of every campaign are extremely important. After a round of hostilities, the winning side tends to neglect the learning process and is then surprised during the next round, whereas the losing side tends to undertake an in-depth investigation and intensive learning process, and it then prepares an appropriate response for the next round. Consider, for example, the Arab learning process after the Six Day War and the neutralization of the Israeli Air Force's power in 1973, in contrast to Israel's learning process after 1973 and its implementation of lessons learned, which led to the crushing defeat of the Syrian air force and aerial defense in 1982. Hamas's lies about hitting the Knesset, shooting down an F-16 jet, and striking Tel Aviv and Ramat Hasharon are reminiscent of the lies that Arab regimes told in the 1960s and 1970s.

Even if the IDF and the State of Israel believe that they won the battle, it is important that Israel conduct an investigation into the eight days of fighting. This would be an investigation rather than an inquiry: an investigation seeks information on how to conduct the next battle more effectively and properly, whereas an inquiry seeks to discover who is at fault. The political echelon can appoint its own internal Winograd commission, without public or media pressure and without the expectation that heads will roll or that a senior political or military figure will be removed from office. The chief of staff can also appoint a group of senior reservists to examine the systemic, strategic, operative, and logistical questions connected to the campaign.

What follows are a dozen major issues that should be studied so that lessons can be learned in preparation for the next battle, which will occur sooner or later:

1. Why did the Israeli deterrence achieved in Operation Cast Lead erode?

Four main factors that led to the erosion of Israel's deterrence can be named. One, the regime change in Egypt led to an assessment by Hamas that Israel would be very cautious in responding to rocket fire from Gaza. Hamas believed that in contrast to the Mubarak regime, which was hostile to it, an Egyptian government led by the Muslim Brotherhood would allow it greater freedom of action than in the past. Two, the strengthening of small terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip that fired on Israel created tension for Hamas, pitting its responsibility as a government against its commitment to the "resistance," which it values highly. From time to time, especially when Palestinian civilians were killed by the interception of squads from the small organizations that fired at Israel, Hamas was forced to join in the firing. Three, Hamas also built a strategic array of long-range rockets capable of striking Tel Aviv, and its self-confidence was partly based on the assumption that Israel was familiar with these systems and would seek to avoid escalation so as not to be attacked by them. The fourth factor that led Hamas to believe that it was deterring Israel was Israel's policy of weak and ineffective responses to the rocket fire in the south since the end of Operation Cast Lead, making clear to Hamas that the price for firing on Israel was minimal.

If it is difficult for Israel to address the issue of the Egyptian regime and the small organizations, then it is important to convey the message that despite Egyptian support, Hamas will not receive immunity and that Israel places responsibility for the activity of the more extreme organizations on Hamas. On the issue of the military buildup and Israel's responses, the lesson is clear: it is important to make every effort to prevent Hamas and Islamic Jihad from rebuilding their strategic arsenals, and if a trickle of rockets begins, the Israeli response must be such that it will affect Hamas's considerations in deciding whether to resume firing, that is, it must be a much stronger response than in the years between 2009 and 2012.

2. The military buildup: How could Hamas have been prevented from accumulating an arsenal of rockets that enabled it to fire missiles throughout the battle and even to threaten Gush Dan?

The Hamas military buildup after Operation Cast Lead is a main factor in the erosion of Israeli deterrence, and preventing future buildup is a key

parameter in assessing the results of the conflict with a territorial terrorist organization. There are three main strategies for preventing military buildup: physically blocking the channels within the Gaza Strip through a ground invasion; attacking the channels of the buildup at their origins in Iran and along the route to the Gaza Strip; or transferring the mission to a third party (as in UN forces in Lebanon on the basis of resolution 1701 or Egypt and the US on the basis of their commitments after Cast Lead). A ground invasion aimed at sabotaging the possibility of smuggling rockets into the Gaza Strip was not undertaken in either Cast Lead or Pillar of Defense. Attacks that are more decisive and effective than those launched in the past four years against routes used in the buildup and mechanisms of the buildup should be considered. It is still not clear whether there is a serious Egyptian or American commitment to address a future buildup. The issues of whether the incoming administration in the United States will be more decisive in acting on this matter than the outgoing administration, and whether the Egyptians recognized the explosive power of the arsenals in Gaza (which from Israel's point of view are strategic) have tremendous importance for the stability of the ceasefire that was achieved. Israel must have a more effective plan to address the buildup of Hamas's military strength if the Egyptians and Americans fail to handle this issue. In this context, it is important to emphasize that the buildup of Hamas's military strength also violates the important principle of the demilitarization of a future Palestinian state and reduces Israel's willingness to take risks in a future peace agreement.

A principled discussion of the State of Israel's willingness to act against the buildup of its enemies is also required. In the past, Israel acted against buildups that threatened its security: the Sinai campaign, the attacks on nuclear facilities in Iraq, and, reportedly, Syria. Refreshing the security doctrine on this issue and developing criteria for preventing a buildup is an important topic for examination.

3. Is the asymmetry with Hamas correctly understood? Is it clear what the systemic rationale of the enemy is and what would be considered victory?

There is an asymmetry in Israel's favor between Israel and Hamas with regard to armament and military capabilities. However, a battle must never be evaluated on the basis of the number of weapons fired or the number of casualties on either side. Alongside the asymmetry in armament, there are

reverse asymmetries that hamper the use of force and achievement of the operation's goals: asymmetry in goals, asymmetry in evaluating the results, and asymmetry in the strategic ramifications of the battle. Although Israel would regard a change in the security situation, improved deterrence, and securing a state of calm in the south as accomplishment of the operation's goals, it is also very sensitive to the loss of life among its civilians and soldiers and is curtailed in its use of force because of broad ethical and legal restrictions. Hamas, as a terrorist organization, has a much simpler goal: to avoid defeat and to maintain its ability to fire rockets at Israeli towns and cities while striking as many citizens as possible and – compared to Israel – without regard for its own citizens and infrastructures. Before embarking on an operation, this dramatic asymmetry requires broad thinking about the results that can be achieved and the way in which they will be presented by the asymmetric adversary. It is necessary to identify and assess the points of vulnerability that, if hit, will disrupt Hamas's rationale and cause it serious damage despite the asymmetry. From this point of view, the strike against the head of the Hamas military wing and the neutralization of its strategic arsenals is an important intelligence and operational achievement. Israel needs to identify additional arsenals, primarily the elements of power of the military wing of Hamas, for the sake of a wide-scale attack with a significant systemic effect.

4. The range of military tools available to Israel in relation to the goals of the operation

Israel seemingly has two levels of action: the low level – aerial attacks with the limited goal of restoring deterrence, and the high level – a ground invasion whose goal is to conquer Gaza and topple the Hamas government. This is a simplistic approach that does not allow a larger range of targets to be defined for the operation or greater flexibility for the political and military echelon.

In fact, Israel has at least two aerial levels of action and two ground levels of action. During Pillar of Defense, only the first level, a limited surgical aerial attack, was chosen. Undoubtedly, the ghost of the Goldstone report was hovering in the rooms where the list of targets was approved. The Israeli Air Force can actually carry out in one day the number of attacks it carried out in one week in Gaza. A more wide-scale and higher-volume attack on a larger number of valuable targets could create a more significant deterrent

effect. Care would of course be taken to act in accordance with international law and the appropriate ethical guidelines. The fact that Hamas is also the government in Gaza and that it can be regarded as a state entity makes it possible to define many more sites as legitimate targets of attack.

There are also at least two levels of a ground maneuver. The first level is a maneuver in open areas and the subdivision of the Gaza Strip through a number of ground efforts aimed at establishing blockades against smuggling, reducing the scope of rocket fire, generating friction with the military wing, and creating a bargaining chip for an arrangement at the end of the operation. The second level – toppling Hamas – requires conquering the entire Gaza Strip and destroying the terrorist infrastructure in the same manner as occurred in Operation Defensive Shield in Judea and Samaria (2002). Clearly there is a direct connection between the price paid in opting for a higher level of operation and the attempt to achieve more significant goals. The transition from the goal of restored deterrence to that of a new arrangement or defeat of the adversary requires that additional resources be invested, and it is fraught with risks to the forces who undertake the maneuvers as well as risks of escalation with Egypt and the Arab world and the loss of international legitimacy.

The art of war entails employing the correct combination and timing of firepower and maneuvers, thereby throwing the enemy off balance and achieving the goals of the campaign at a low cost. The most important question on this issue is the following: Did Pillar of Defense employ the correct combination of firepower and maneuvers, and were the timing and scope of the military moves sufficiently innovative and surprising, such that we can determine accordingly how to prepare for the next round in a manner that makes better use of the range of Israel's military, intelligence, and political tools in order to achieve its goals?

5. The rocket threat to Gush Dan: What is the significance of attacking Tel Aviv?

In Operation Pillar of Defense, for the first time in history, rockets were fired from Gaza at Gush Dan. This was not a surprise: as far back as 2010, the head of Military Intelligence reported to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that Hamas had rockets that could reach Tel Aviv. The residents of Gush Dan learned the meaning of a 90-second warning before the rockets fell, and they reacted in a satisfactory manner. Nevertheless, heavier salvos

in the future would paralyze the city economically and perhaps cause its evacuation. In this operation, the enemy did not pay any special price for firing at Tel Aviv. The possibility of defining rocket attacks on Gush Dan as a red line should be discussed.

That said, it is important to react with the requisite degree of proportion to Hamas's claim that the attack on Tel Aviv was "historic." Suicide terrorists caused death and destruction in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to a much greater degree than the rockets that did not even reach Tel Aviv.

6. The Iron Dome system: How not to become intoxicated by success

The concept of anti-rocket and anti-missile defense embodied in the development and operational deployment of Iron Dome batteries is a first-time and unique strategic achievement. A great deal has been written, and justifiably so, on the success of Iron Dome in preventing damage to the home front, enabling it and the military to function under fire and providing the political echelon with strategic flexibility, room for decisions, and more time. However, it is precisely as a result of this success that it is important to examine the cost-benefit ratio of the various components of this security concept and particularly offense versus defense, as well as the overall effectiveness of the system against high-trajectory precision weapons (against which we cannot afford an interception rate of less than 80 percent when directed at strategic targets) and the potential of this system to cultivate a tendency to avoid decisions about winning the battle.

7. Point of departure: What should have been the point of departure?

It is necessary to examine in retrospect when it would have been appropriate to end the armed conflict. The first question that must be asked is whether it was even appropriate to stop without a sufficient lever for an agreement and without hitting Hamas hard, dealing it a blow that would at least ensure that deterrence had been achieved. Both the political and the military echelons, especially the former, must investigate this issue. Even if it was correct not to escalate the aerial assault and not to carry out a ground invasion because of US pressure and weighty considerations vis-à-vis Egypt, it is important to examine the timing of the cessation of hostilities. If it had been decided in advance not to launch a ground invasion, would it not have been appropriate to end the operation after 48 hours and to leverage the Egyptian Prime Minister's visit to Gaza in favor of a unilateral ceasefire? There is always

tension between the desire to continue the operation in order to enhance the military success and create conditions favorable to bargaining for a post-operation settlement on the one hand, and the fear of entanglement, loss of life, harm to non-combatants, and regional escalation, on the other hand. In operations in which there are significant achievements during the initial aerial assaults (striking senior officials, destroying strategic arsenals), there is a great deal of logic to ending the operation early, especially if it is clear that international conditions do not allow for expanding the operation to a ground invasion. The advantages and disadvantages of every point of departure must be analyzed and compared, and conclusions must be drawn that will enable planners to formulate the manner of departure in the next round at the point that is most appropriate from Israel's perspective.

8. The regional environment: Another limited operation that successfully contained the battle to one theater

Since the end of the Yom Kippur War, the State of Israel has succeeded in containing the conflicts it initiated within one theater. This is a significant strategic achievement, but it should by no means be taken for granted. Strategic interests, proper communications with neighboring countries, limited operations, and strong deterrence of terrorist organizations like Hizbollah have given the IDF the freedom to operate on one front. It would be appropriate to delve deeply into the circumstances that made this possible, and before and during each such event to ensure that there is an accurate assessment of the potential for expansion and escalation and that Israel is prepared for this potential in terms of its deployment and ability to modify the goals of the war.

9. Egypt: The ceasefire agreement and containment of potential conflict

Egypt emerged as a main "winner" of the operation and proved its ability to serve as an effective mediator between Israel and Hamas. It would appear that the negotiations in Egypt were tilted in favor of Hamas. The first drafts presented by Egypt were unacceptable from Israel's point of view, and even the final document has elements that are disadvantageous for Israel. This is a major topic for investigation by the political echelon. Cooperation with Egyptian security agencies once again proved to be a prominent and crucial factor behind the positive discussions and the reduction in the risk

of escalation. However, it appears that Israel has missed the opportunity for direct dialogue with political figures in the government who are not in the security and intelligence services to establish a political relationship with the new regime in Egypt, headed by President Morsi. It is important to share Israel's considerations, concerns, limitations, and red lines with Egypt even before the next round of hostilities, in order to postpone it and to create an effective mechanism for ending the hostilities if they erupt.

10. Abu Mazen: How did the armed conflict affect the balance of power between Fatah and Hamas within the Palestinian arena?

The chairman of the Palestinian Authority was the main loser in the latest round of hostilities in the south. He was unable to promote Palestinian interests through his policy, whereas Hamas achieved a degree of success as a result of the policy of violent resistance that it promotes. However, it would appear that his being sidelined generated a strong desire among the international community to help him by voting in favor of a Palestinian state in the UN General Assembly. It is necessary to understand how the latest round of hostilities and its results will affect future elections in the Palestinian Authority and the chance for internal Palestinian reconciliation.

11. Israel-US relations: Identifying the limitations of US support

The United States has been an important factor in international support for Israel's defense of its citizens and recognition of the legitimacy of Israel's actions. The US has also contributed to strengthening Israel's ties with Egypt. It is important to examine the extent to which the US curtailed Israel's freedom of action during the operation (the time and the scope of the operation), or alternatively, the extent to which it allowed Israel freedom of action. The US probably played a key role in preventing a ground invasion. In addition, the contribution of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to achieving the agreement for cessation of hostilities should be analyzed. These factors were very important in the recent round of hostilities, and they can be expected to be important in the next round as well. If the right insights are not drawn from an investigation of the event, the advantages of the important strategic relationship with this superpower will not be maximized.

12. The limitations of the use of force in light of the Goldstone report

In the current round of hostilities, the IDF acted with extreme caution stemming from a basic desire to minimize the harm to non-combatants. It appears that this goal was achieved and that the scope of damage inflicted on terrorists from Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Resistance Committees was much greater than the harm to non-combatants. However, it is important to understand what price Israel paid for this policy: Did ethical and legal constraints excessively impair IDF operations and undermine achievement of the military goals? Was Operation Pillar of Defense conducted properly from the legal point of view? It is worth investigating and examining the costs and benefits of such a policy in preparation for comparable outbreaks of fighting in the future.

In Sum

For now, a state of calm exists in the south, and deterrence has apparently been restored, although its strength and duration can only be measured in retrospect. If indeed discussions on the provisions of an agreement (which were supposed to begin 24 hours after the ceasefire) are underway, they are being conducted far from the public view. Most of the agreement's clauses are problematic for Israel, and in the future it will be important to ascertain whether it is, as the Defense Minister claimed, "an unsigned and worthless document" or whether it is a document that constitutes a political achievement for Hamas, with the potential to undermine stability in the future (because of conflicts over buffer zones, the alleged siege, and smuggling), challenge Israel's legitimacy, and limit Israel's freedom of action.

It is important to remember that the battle in Gaza did not take place in a vacuum. The military success of Israel on the one hand, and the political success of Hamas on the other, rendered Abu Mazen the main loser in the operation, but also helped him recruit an overwhelming majority to upgrade the Palestinian Authority's political status in the UN.

Looking to the future, it seems that the most important parameter for determining the timing of the next round of hostilities is the military buildup of Hamas and the other organizations. When will the terrorist organizations in Gaza have sufficient self-confidence based on their restored strategic arsenals to allow them to engage in a military conflict with Israel? From Israel's point of view, the dilemma will remain: Should Israel act against

the buildup by Hamas and Islamic Jihad while it is taking place, or accept it and take care of it only during the next conflict?

A thorough investigation of the twelve parameters listed in this article and implementation of the lessons learned from the investigation can ensure better preparedness by the IDF and the State of Israel for the next conflict, including its political, military, and legal aspects.