

## Gaza 2014: Israel's Attrition vs Hamas' Exhaustion

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**ABSTRACT:** While Hamas adopted a strategy of psychological exhaustion of Israel's civilians, Israel employed physical attrition of Hamas' military capabilities. This article examines how these strategies interacted with each other, assesses the strategic gains and losses on each side, and suggests some lessons relevant for American strategists.

Operation "Protective Edge" is the Israel Defense Forces' name for its latest military operation against Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza during the months of July–August 2014. This article analyzes the competing strategies of Israel and Hamas in this specific bout of fighting and assesses how effective they were in achieving their political ends. By strategy we mean how each side attempted to optimize its physical and psychological use of violence in achieving its political goals. Strategy is the art of deciding what violent acts would best assist in bringing about one's political goal, and then executing them. In some cases, the actions chosen might be synonymous with the political goals (for example, when the political goal is conquest of territory) but often they are only a means of hurting the rival sufficiently so he agrees to acquiesce to the political demand.

Israel's military strikes on Gaza and Hamas were much more destructive in terms of loss of life and property than those of Hamas on Israel. However the efficacy of military action is measured not by how much carnage and destruction it wreaks on the enemy, but by the achievement of political goals and the cost in terms of resources expended and destruction suffered in return.

The similarity in military actions notwithstanding, the specific political context of Operation "Protective Edge" was very different from "Cast Lead" 2008 and "Defensive Pillar" 2012. By 2014, Hamas had suffered a severe financial crisis that threatened its ability to rule Gaza. As a result, we believe Hamas used force to cause the main actors – Israel, Egypt, the Palestinian Authority and others – to release their strangle-hold on Hamas' revenues. This desperation drove Hamas to endure a much higher level of physical damage before agreeing to a ceasefire. Israel failed to read this situation correctly, which led to surprise over Hamas' determination to fight.

In the first section, we analyze the wider context and the rivals' political goals on the eve of hostilities. In the second section, we describe how each developed its strategy to match its political goals and how the two strategies interacted with each other and were modified according to developments on the ground. In the final section, we assess the gains and losses of each side and discuss potential lessons for America and its allies.

## **The Wider Context: Political Goals Prior to Operations**

### *Hamas' Political Goal: Staying in Power*

The recent bout of fighting between Israel and Gaza is just the latest escalation against the backdrop of almost constant fighting between Jews and Arabs since 1920. Although Operation Protective Edge has an official start-date, 8 July 2014, and an official end-date, 26 August 2014, it would be inaccurate to portray it as isolated conflict. In fact, even with regard to the short-term processes that led to the Israeli decision to initiate another operation the aforementioned start and end dates are mere formalities. The fighting did not begin then, and is unlikely to end for any appreciable period of time. Israel's decision to initiate Operation Protective Edge was a response to Hamas' escalation of rocket and mortar fire – an escalation that began gradually from 13 June.

Hamas' ultimate goal, as declared in its charter, is to destroy the state of Israel and establish a Palestinian Arab state based on the Shariya – the laws of Islam.<sup>1</sup> However, Hamas leaders are fully aware attaining this goal is not feasible for now, and they must first achieve domination of the Palestinian nation as a whole. Therefore, the medium-term political goal of Hamas is defeating rival Palestinian factions – especially the only one roughly equal to it in political and military strength, the secular Fatah.

After winning a majority in the January 2006 elections and becoming the official government of the Palestinian Authority, Hamas seemed closer to this goal. However, over the following year the Fatah party, led by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, attempted to undermine the Hamas government. The political rivalry deteriorated repeatedly into violence and, finally, into a brief civil war in 2007. Hamas' largest constituency and source of strength lay in Gaza, whereas Fatah's (helped by Israel) was in Judea and Samaria. The Palestinian Authority split into two separate entities with only a tenuous bureaucratic link between them.

### *Hamas' Budgetary Crises*

Officially, the border between Gaza and Egypt has been closed since the Hamas takeover of Gaza. Unofficially, it is open to any and all types of goods, both civilian and military. To maintain the charade of a closed border, goods were transferred into Gaza via numerous tunnels dug between the Egyptian and Gazan sides of Rafiah. While officially frowning on this import of goods, both Israel and Egypt did little to prevent it, seeing it as a way to keep the Gaza economy afloat. What

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1 For a copy of the Hamas Charter in English see: <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/www.thejerusalemfund.org/carryover/documents/charter.html?chocaid=397>

worried the Israelis was not the import of civilian goods, most of which could in any case be imported through Israel itself, but the import of weapons and dual-use materials that could be used for military purposes. Trade with and through Egypt reached its peak with the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt.

The retaking of power in Egypt by the military regime of Abdel Fatah al-Sisi was disastrous for Hamas. The new regime saw Hamas as an ally of the hated Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamist groups attacking Egyptian troops in Sinai. In summer 2013, Sisi retaliated by strangling Hamas' financial windpipe; within months the Egyptian army located and shut down hundreds of smuggling-tunnels, and by June 2014 more than 1,500 of the estimated 1,800 tunnels had been shut down – approximately halving Hamas' annual revenues.<sup>2</sup> Iran's donations to Hamas had already been cut drastically after Hamas supported the Syrian Sunni rebels fighting against the Iranian-supported Assad regime.<sup>3</sup>

Hamas' immediate political goals were: removing all Israeli and Egyptian control over imports into Gaza by building an international seaport, an international airport, and allowing free travel through the land crossings between Gaza and Egypt and Gaza and Israel.<sup>4</sup> Assessing whether Hamas won or lost this war depends on whether it can achieve some of these goals.

#### *Israel's Political Objectives - Containment and Quiet*

Israel's political goal vis-à-vis Gaza can be summed up in one word – containment, that is a quiet border, or at least a reduction in the intensity of Palestinian attacks from Gaza to a level regarded as no more than an irritation.

Political anarchy in Gaza would prevent achievement of these goals; only a strong central government can impose its authority on rogue elements within its own ranks or smaller groups, such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Resistance Committees, to prevent them from provoking Israel. Since 2007, the Israelis have not seen any Palestinian group, Fatah included, capable of replacing Hamas as this central authority. Therefore, destroying Hamas is considered counter-productive. Better to “educate” Hamas that attacks on Israel damage its higher priority interests. Thus the goal is to punish it enough to hurt it, but not enough so that it loses control. Israel's use of force is not designed to throw Hamas out of power, only to deter it from launching further attacks on Israel.

However, there are constraints on Israel's use of force: (a) its sensitivity to Israeli casualties, (b) domestic cultural aversion to causing civilian casualties, (c) diplomatic and economic dependence on the United States, (d) diplomatic and economic ties with Europe, and (e) danger of a local escalation in Gaza spilling over to other borders. Together, these

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2 Eric Trager, *Sisi's Egypt and the Gaza Conflict*, Policy Analysis (Washington, DC: Washington Institute, July 14, 2014); “Egypt Army Destroys 13 More Gaza Tunnels,” *Ynet News*, July 27, 2014.

3 Hillel Frisch, *The Flimsy Palestinian “Unity” Government*, BESA Center Perspectives Paper, no. 251 (Israel: Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, June 26, 2014).

4 Ron Tira, “Operation Protective Edge: Ends, Ways and Means and the Distinct Context,” *Infinity Journal* (September 2014), 3.

constraints limit the range of military actions Israel can use in support of its policy.

### **A Clash of Strategies – Israel’s Attrition versus Hamas’ Exhaustion**

On 12 June 2014 a team of Hamas terrorists murdered three Jewish teenagers. Israel responded by arresting and interrogating hundreds of suspects – most affiliated with Hamas.<sup>5</sup> Initially, Hamas denied involvement, but later admitted the killers were indeed members of the organization, but that its leaders had no foreknowledge of the crime.<sup>6</sup> However, the Hamas leadership immediately sanctioned an increase in the rate of rockets and mortars fired from Gaza into Israel. The previous “dribble” of a few rockets and mortars fired every few days became a daily occurrence and gradually escalated from one to three rockets per day to a few dozen per day.<sup>7</sup>

This escalation was portrayed as an act of solidarity with the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria who were being “attacked” by Israeli forces searching for the teenagers. Israel’s initial response was minimal – a few air strikes each day attempting to hit the launcher teams. Israelis hoped once the bodies of the Israeli teenagers were found and the search called off, the fighting around Gaza would wane too.

On 7 July the dribble of rockets and mortar bombs became a flood: 134 were fired into southern Israel.<sup>8</sup> That night Israel’s government ordered a change in strategy. Instead of hunting active launchers and launch-teams, the air force was ordered to attack the military-terrorist infrastructure in Gaza: all known launchers, storage sites, command posts and individual commanders. The rate of air strikes jumped from a few per day to 150 to 200.<sup>9</sup>

There was one important difference between the initial strikes of Operation Protective Edge and those of Operations Cast Lead and Defensive Pillar – the latter two had surprised the Palestinians.<sup>10</sup> Surprise enabled the IDF to kill and destroy a significant number of personnel and equipment before the Palestinians employed them – shortening their endurance. This time, the Palestinians had the initiative, and the initial strikes by the IDF were less successful.

5 “News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (June 18-24, 2014),” *Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, June 24, 2014, [www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20661](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20661).

6 Jethro Mullen and Talal Abu Rahma, “Hamas Admits its Men Abducted Israeli Teens, says its Leaders didn’t Know,” *CNN*, August 23, 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/22/world/meast/mideast-crisis/index.html>.

7 December 2012 (one month after the end of Operation Defensive Pillar) to 12 June 2014 the Palestinians fired 208 rockets and mortar bombs from Gaza into Israel. From 13 June to 6 July they fired another 232, see: “Terror Data and Trends,” *Israeli Security Agency*, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/English/En/TerrorData/Reports/Pages/default.aspx>; “Monthly Summary-June 2014,” *Israeli Security Agency*, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionDocuments/Monthly%20summary%20-%20June%202014.pdf>; “Monthly Summary-July 2014,” *Israeli Security Agency*, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionDocuments/Monthly%20summary%20-%20July%202014%20docx.pdf>.

8 *Ibid.*

9 IDF Spokesperson Unit, News Updates, 3-9 July, 2014, <http://www.idf.il>.

10 Efraim Inbar and Eitan Shamir, “Mowing the Grass: Israel’s Strategy for Protracted Intractable Conflict,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 1 (2014): 85.

On the following days, the rate of Palestinian fire varied from a low of 115 rockets and mortars to a high of 177 per day.<sup>11</sup> The variance seems to be only slightly connected to the intensity of Israeli air strikes and had more to do with internal Palestinian logistical issues. To increase pressure on Hamas leaders and commanders, the IDF began to destroy their homes; the families were first warned to leave the houses. Unable to conduct a decisive knock-out blow, not wishing to cause significant collateral damage and protected by the Iron Dome, Israel adopted a strategy of gradual attrition of Hamas military infrastructure.

Israel expected a replay of Operation Defensive Shield (2012), meaning, an exchange of stand-off fire, in which Israeli casualties would be minimal, and Palestinian casualties would be considerably higher, with the Palestinians deciding they had made their point and calling a halt to hostilities. As a palliative, Israel would offer some concessions.

However, the Palestinian political goal and its commensurate strategy were not what Israel expected. Because of its dire financial situation, Hamas leaders decided to gamble on instigating a full-scale war in the hope of causing a major international crisis. Knowing the limitations of their artillery weapons versus Israeli defenses they prepared two complementary strategies:

*First: Match Israel's strategy of attrition with one of psychological exhaustion:*

Rockets might not cause many Israeli casualties. However, since they could reach 60 percent of Israel's population, they could disrupt Israel's welfare and economy for some time. Even if no civilians were killed, repeated disruption might damage Israeli morale and exert pressure on its government.

Furthermore, Hamas planned to bypass the Iron Dome and border defenses by using tunnels and amphibious raids on Israeli settlements near Gaza. A few successful infiltration attacks inside these settlements might cause significant psychological shock to the Israelis.

*Second: Igniting an international diplomatic offensive against Israel by deliberately increasing the collateral damage caused to Palestinian civilians:*

The Palestinians have been using human shields, hospitals, schools, UN facilities, mosques, hotels and private homes to hide and protect personnel and equipment since the late 1960s. Hamas reached new levels with the permanent embedding of bombs into the walls of many of these buildings, deliberately firing from them or adjacent locations at Israeli civilians and troops in order to provoke retaliatory fire that would harm Palestinian civilians, UN personnel or foreign journalists. In fact, from Hamas' political viewpoint, the more Palestinian civilians killed and wounded the better, as this would be more likely to cause international intervention against Israel.<sup>12</sup> However, this strategy has a culmination point since too many casualties break morale.

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11 "Monthly Summary-July 2014," *Israeli Security Agency*, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionDocuments/Monthly%20summary%20-%20July%202014%20docx.pdf>.

12 See captured Hamas doctrinal manual: Bob Frederick, "Hamas' Disturbing 'Human Shields' Manual," *New York Post*, August 5, 2014, <http://nypost.com/2014/08/05/hamas-manual-details-civilian-death-plan-israel/>.

*The Impact of Violence on Israel's and Hamas' Political Will:*

The disruption and casualties caused by rockets fired into Israel seems not to have shaken Israel's population. In central Israel, people took cover when necessary and then resumed everyday activities. The only significant success was fleeting – a two-day halt of foreign international flights into Israel when one rocket landed a few kilometers from Ben-Gurion International Airport. In southern Israel, where the intensity was greater, the economy suffered more, and there were more casualties; but general support for the government never wavered.

The two amphibious raids conducted in the first days of the war also left no lasting impressions. Both were detected as they reached the shore and all infiltrators killed. Conversely, the first infiltration attack through the offensive-tunnels to the outskirts of an Israeli border village on 17 July caused extreme consternation, despite the fact there were no Israeli casualties.<sup>13</sup> The very idea of such attacks terrified the majority of Israeli civilians living there in a way that thousands of rockets and mortars fired over the past decade had not, even before the introduction of the Iron Dome anti-rocket defense system. It should be stressed the existence of the offensive-tunnels was not a surprise to the Israeli government, the IDF or even the civilians.<sup>14</sup>

Ground fighting was much fiercer than in Operation Cast Lead when Israeli troops entered Gaza, and Hamas ground troops fled. This time Hamas fought to defend the tunnel system. Israeli forces searching for the tunnels inside Gaza suffered approximately 700 casualties (45 of them fatal). Casualties among Palestinian fighters facing them were significantly higher.<sup>15</sup> While the Israelis searched for tunnels, Hamas conducted more raids via yet undiscovered tunnels. Most of the raiders were killed, but the IDF suffered 11 killed and at least a dozen wounded in these actions. The ground battle did not stop the exchanges of Palestinian artillery versus Israeli aerial fire, but did reduce them considerably: the daily rate of Palestinian fire dropped to less than half the average before the offensive.<sup>16</sup>

On 4 August, after destroying 32 offensive-tunnels, the IDF withdrew and resumed its previous strategy of stand-off air strikes. The Israeli government considered, but rejected a full scale invasion of Gaza due to the expected number of Israeli and Palestinian casualties, and the lack of a clear exit strategy.<sup>17</sup> Aware of this decision, Hamas acted

13 There are three separate tunnel systems in Gaza: the smuggling-tunnels under the border with Egypt; the defensive storage, tactical, communication and command-tunnels scattered throughout the district and, finally, the offensive-tunnels which were dug under the border with Israel. Yochai Ofer, "Tzahal Sikel Pigua Khadira Gadol Derech Minheret Terror," (Hebrew), *NRG*, July 17, 2014, <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/597/355.html>.

14 "2013 Annual Summary," *Israel Security Agency*, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/English/EnTerrorData/Reports/Pages/2013AnnualSummary.aspx>; "News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (June 18–24)," *Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, June 24, 2014, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20661>. On the challenge of the offensive tunnels see: Eado Hecht, "Gaza: How Hamas Tunnel Network Grew," *BBC*, July 22, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28430298>.

15 IDF ground troops reported hundreds of Palestinian fighters killed and almost 200 captured. See: <http://ilv100.walla.co.il/?w=/22/2769412>; <http://rotter.net/cgi-bin/go-news.pl?file=27422.html>; <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/2689/2770804>.

16 "Monthly Summary-July 2014," *Israel Security Agency*, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollection/Documents/Monthly%20summary%20-%20July%202014%20docx.pdf>.

17 Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu Tried to Scare off Ministers to Get Gaza Occupation off the Table," *HaAretz*, August 6, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.609152>.

with impunity. Finally, on 26 August, Hamas agreed to a month-long ceasefire with no preconditions. In return, Israel, as a concession, agreed to increase the fishing-zone.<sup>18</sup>

### Analysis and Conclusions

Relative to previous rounds of escalated fighting between Israel and Hamas, this bout was much more costly to both sides. Casualties and damage were significantly higher.

Palestinian casualties are a major issue in the propaganda contest between the rivals, and so all numbers should be regarded critically. The Hamas government claims approximately 2,200 people were killed and 11,000 wounded in Gaza, and more than 75 percent of the dead were civilians. Israel claims approximately half the dead were combatants and many civilian deaths were caused by deliberate Hamas use of civilians as human shields.<sup>19</sup> Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians fled from their homes. Thousands of buildings were damaged and will take years to rebuild. Hamas' rocket arsenal was drastically depleted (about a fifth is estimated to be left), its offensive tunnels and some of its defensive tunnels destroyed. If published Israeli data is correct, at least 15 percent of Hamas military personnel were killed or wounded, including a number of high-ranking individuals. Also, Hamas' plans to raid Israeli villages were foiled.

On the Israeli side, 14 civilians and 67 soldiers were killed, and approximately 400 civilians and 705 soldiers were wounded. Several buildings were destroyed and a few hundred damaged, but most only superficially.

On the face of it, since Israel's only political goal was a ceasefire, it seems Israel was successful. The past seven months on the Gaza border have been the quietest in decades. The reasons Hamas agreed to, and so-far maintains, the long-term ceasefire are not known – there are, however, indications the Israeli strategy of attrition was working, whereas the Hamas strategy of exhaustion seemed to be failing. Also, there are indications of mounting anger and desperation within the Gaza population at casualties and the destruction of its property. During the fighting, Hamas reportedly executed political opponents under the pretext they were Israeli spies.<sup>20</sup> The expected international pressure on Israel did not occur and even some of the Arab regimes, not only Egypt, seemed to support Israel over Hamas. Finally, despite casualties and disruption of life, the Israeli public did not exhibit signs of pressuring its government to concede. The Israeli government apparently fended off calls by some for more extensive ground operations.

Israel again lost the media and the propaganda struggle – despite criticism of Hamas' use of human shields, Israel's actions are facing a propaganda and lawfare (hostile UN inquiry) backlash over the number of Palestinian civilians hurt and the damage to Gaza's civilian

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18 To prevent smuggling of weapons into Gaza by sea, Gazan fishermen are required to fish only in a specific zone.

19 Richard Behar, "The Media Intifada: Bad Math, Ugly Truths about New York Times in Israel-Hamas War," *Forbes*, August 21, 2014.

20 "Hamas Executes 30 Suspected Collaborators: Report," *I24 News*, July 29 2014, <http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/38508-140728-hamas-executes-30-suspected-collaborators-report>.

infrastructure. Hamas' resistance on the ground surprised the Israelis; casualties were higher than expected. Hamas was able to maintain fire throughout the operation, reaching Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and beyond, and temporarily halt international air traffic to Israel. Major rifts were exposed between the US administration and Israel on many issues. Israel's economy was visibly, though not significantly, hurt.

The current view in Jerusalem is toppling Hamas will only lead to anarchy or require Israel to govern Gaza – both undesirable outcomes. Therefore, maintaining a contained and weakened Hamas is Israel's least bad policy choice but then – how does it deter a resumption of harassment of Israeli border villages from Gaza?

This complex reality, coupled with the results of the fighting, may gain the Palestinians certain achievements presently unforeseeable. In Israel itself, parts of the population – especially those living near Gaza – voice fears of renewed fighting and question Israeli government assurances they can return to their daily lives.

To this point we have discussed only the leading protagonists, Israel and Hamas. However, the principal actor, whose actions, shutting the smuggling tunnels, precipitated this war, was Egypt. As the war progressed Egypt continued to discover and destroy dozens of tunnels. Egypt undoubtedly gained the most from this war – Hamas is weakened and beholden to it, American and European attempts to intervene diplomatically were rebuffed as were attempts by the White House to involve Turkey and Qatar (both Egypt's regional rivals) in the negotiations. It was Egypt's refusal to make any concessions to Hamas that gradually enabled Israel to force Hamas to accept a ceasefire for no tangible return. Egypt holds the keys to the political situation and most of Hamas' demands were actually directed at Egypt.

The political results of this operation are not clear-cut. Thus, the term victory in the sense of a clear win-lose situation is irrelevant in this case. It is possible both sides gained something each can call a victory. Whatever the perceptions as to who gained more, the principal Israeli-Palestinian conflict has not been resolved, and it is fairly certain some level of violence will continue.

#### *Potential Lessons for America and its Allies*

As shown by the evolution of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Islamic extremism cannot be overcome in the traditional sense of eradicating the enemy, or getting him to renounce his stated political goals. Thus, despite the many differences between the political and strategic contexts of America's war and that of Israel, both face similar situations. They must develop strategies for conducting protracted – theoretically unwinnable – wars.

Some defense experts have nicknamed Israel's strategy "Mowing the Grass." The analogy is clear. Operation Protective Edge should not be regarded as an independent event, it is part of a long-term strategy, a strategy that alternates continuous routine low intensity activities with occasional escalations, each in response to an escalation of hostile activity in order to cut the "grass" back to an acceptable height. Each operation has a short-term, a medium-term, and a long-term objective. The short-term objective is to achieve a de-escalation of hostile attacks;

the medium-term objective is to degrade the enemy's capabilities so as to deter him from renewing hostilities for as long as possible; the long-term objective is to achieve a cumulative deterrence that will, at an undetermined future date, gradually lead to a cessation of attacks.<sup>21</sup> The exact details may be different, but the general concept can be adapted to the needs of the United States.

To succeed, a "grass-mowing" operation must inflict a certain level of pain on the enemy. Israel's experience has been that the destruction of material assets is not particularly painful to its enemies. Material is easy to replace. What hurts these organizations is the killing of personnel, the higher the rank the better.<sup>22</sup> Most of these organizations have a limited number of trained personnel – they take longer to replace. Furthermore, although the ideology of these organizations eulogizes suicide-attacks, the leaders are usually less suicidal than the lower-ranks. A threat directed specifically at senior personnel often causes a reduction in activity. So searching for, and attacking, the senior commanders of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), for example, is more effective than killing a greater number of lower ranks. Still, the number of combatants killed, wounded or captured as a percentage of the total available, is an important tool for deterrence; the faster the casualties accrue, the more effective the tool.

However, as shown in Operation Protective Edge, the level of damage the organization is willing to endure at any specific time depends on a wide variety of factors. What was unbearable for Hamas in Operation Defensive Shield was bearable in Protective Edge, because the political context had changed. Understanding the specific context is crucial for planners. What worked in Iraq in 2007 might not be relevant in 2014.

Over the past three decades, Israeli strategists have attempted to reduce to a minimum the involvement of ground troops in major operations – the main incentive being the reduction of Israeli casualties. In some cases the use of air power has proven sufficient, in others not. There are tactical reasons why this is so: certain targets are not vulnerable to air strikes; when the only threat is aerial the enemy adapts his actions accordingly. However, it seems the most important reason is strategic: air strikes, especially when civilian casualties must be avoided, take longer to achieve the level of damage required to compel the enemy to request a cease fire. The necessary level of damage itself varies with the political context of each escalation. Moreover, the enemy adapts and consistently seeks ways to neutralize Western technological advantages. Thus, destroying the offensive tunnel system required a ground operation. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) continue to study the tactical

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21 On the Israeli concept of "Cumulative Deterrence" see: Doron Almog, "Cumulative Deterrence and the War on Terrorism," *Parameters* 34, no. 4 (Winter 2004-05); Thomas Rid, "Deterrence Beyond the State: The Israeli Experience," *Contemporary Security Policy* 33, no. 1 (April 2012).

22 For a discussion of the effectiveness of targeted killings, see Steven R. David, *Fatal Choices: Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing*, BESA Mideast Security and Policy Studies, no. 51 (Israel: Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, July 2002); This was also shown in Afghanistan and Iraq: Javier Jordan, "The Effectiveness of the Drone Campaign Against Al-Qaida Central: A Case Study," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 1 (2014).

lessons of the conflict, many of which are relevant to US forces.<sup>23</sup> One lesson, in particular, emerged clearly during the campaign – the need for heavily protected armored personnel carriers and tanks in order to increase survivability and reduce casualties.<sup>24</sup>

In sum, the United States finds itself fighting in similar wars under a growing set of domestic and international constraints. As a great power, it is less vulnerable than Israel to sanctions, propaganda and lawfare; but it must still take these into account. Accordingly, Israel's strategic concept, however limited, might suit America's current policy and strategic objectives in regard to its fight with various jihadist, non-state organizations.

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23 Brigadier General Tamir Hayman, Head of IDF Training and Doctrine at GHQ, "The Learning Process Amongst the General Staff" (lecture presented at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA Center) conference, "Operation Protective Edge: Military and Political Lessons," Ramat Gan, Israel, September 29, 2014.

24 Yossi Yehoshua, "Ya'alon approves addition of 200 advanced APCs for the IDF," *YNET News*, September 22, 2014, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4573814,00.html>