Emily Sheppard

Policy Memo 2

Professor Matesan

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**Hamas as a threat to our ally:**

 Hamas threatens the United States closes partner in the middle East, Israel (Oren 2008). Hamas has never attacked the US domestic front and is much more focused on targeting their local arena which includes Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem. It is clear that Israel is “surrounded by a hostile, regional mix of state and non-state adversaries and has remained in an almost perpetual state of conflict since gaining statehood in 1948” (Vinson 61).

Scholars note that there are certain variables that make a country a prime target for wars of attrition: low-cost tolerance and constrains on retaliation (Kydd and Walter 2016). Israel has a low cost-tolerance and constrains on retaliation which puts them in a perpetual conflict with local terrorist groups who will continue to use violence until they achieve their political demands (Kydd and Walter 60, 2006). Although studies show that Israel has the military power to wipe out all of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, they have to use constrained retaliation in order to abide by international law and please their US and European allies. Constraints on violence make a war of attrition less costly for Hamas which has caused a prolonged attrition war (Kydd and Walter 2006 61).  More importantly, Hamas is motivated to continue violence because Israel has a low tolerance to violence and has responded to attacks with modest concessions in an effort to protect their people). Targets rarely concede to the terrorist demands when they have important interests at stake which is why Israel has not withdrawn from East Jerusalem and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has gone on for decades (Kydd and Walter 20016, 20). Israel is not showing signs of giving up their state, however, their restrained retaliation and low tolerance to violence has signaled to Hamas that their violence is slowly working. Thus, Hamas is continued threat.

**Overview of Israels Counterterrorism: moderate concessions**

 Scholars claim that governments that have already yielded to terrorist demands are more likely to experience more terrorist attacks (Kydd and Walter 2006, 63). Israel has granted Hamas and the PA moderate concessions which has only increased their confidence and inspired them to continue attacks. Specifically, the US withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 convinced Hamas leaders to initiate a second intifada in September 2000 because the withdrawal portrayed the Israeli leadership as weak. Israel made another concession in response to a series of Hamas’ suicide attacks during the second intifada; Israel withdrew from the Gaza strip. Hamas will not stop their violence until Israel fully withdraws all of its military and even then, Hamas might want more. Nonetheless, Israel’s partial concessions only made Hamas more confident that their violent missions were working.

**Overview of Israel’s Counterterrorism: targeted violence**

 Some scholars claim that targeted killing is an effective strategy in wars of attrition because it might reduce the operational capability of the terrorist group (Price 2012) (Kydd and Walter 2016), while others contest that communities with high levels of beaurocracy and low levels of public support should not use targeted violence because the organization is more likely to survive and regroup (Jordan 2014). Israel has used targeted violence which has been relatively ineffective; while it has prevented many terrorist attacks from taking place it does not address the motivation to resort to violence. Hamas publishes lists of ‘martyrs’ online that includes members of the organization killed by Israeli security forces in retaliation for their attacks. Without addressing the occupation, the population can still be radicalized to ‘die for the cause.’ After Israel killed Yahya Ayyash, one of Hamas’ most skilled bomb makers, “the 1996 suicide campaign was announced as a retaliation for Israel’s assassination” (Pape 2003 352). Hamas responded with a series of four suicide bombings which killed more than fifty Israeli’s (David 2002, 4). Israel’s targeted killings often come with increased oppression and the killing of civilians which only escalates the martyrs’ mission. The failure of targeted killings can be further observed after the second intifada. Israel responded to the series of lethal attacks with “military incursions into Palestinian controlled areas, increased use of checkpoints to control Palestinian movements, and a dramatic rise in slaying of Palestinian militants” (David 2002, 7). In 2002, after more than a year of these targeted killings which were supposed to reduce the capabilities of the terrorists, there was an increase of terrorist attacks and Israeli casualties (David 2002, 9). Politicians and scholars have critiqued Israel’s violent backlash for “inflaming an already volatile situation” (Richard Boucher 2001) without addressing the root cause. With the occupation still present, in addition to escalated Israeli violence, Hamas has been able to conduct new missions with new martyrs. Targeted killings of leaders and militants has not ended violence but instead it “provoked murderous retaliations, eliminated individuals who might have become pragmatic negotiators for peace, generated international condemnation, recruited new volunteers for terrorist acts, and promoted the unity of groups confronting Israel” (David 2002, 12).

**Overview of Israel’s Counterterrorism: denying access to resources**

 Other scholars claim that countries can harden likely targets to combat attrition, which can deny access to resources for suicide attacks. As noted in the previous policy memo, Hamas has survived for so long due to its capabilities and adaptabilities. Thus, thwarting Hamas’ capabilities is crucial to countering this group. Targeted missions and concessions are not enough to control terrorism, more defensive measures are also required (Pape). Israel built a wall which effectively reduced terrorism. Before the wall was built, it was very easy for Hamas to target their local adversary who they believed unlawfully occupied their land. The border between the Palestinian and Jewish settled areas are practically infinite and “have rendered even very intensive Israeli border control efforts ineffective” (Kaufmann 1998). Thus, a wall was necessary for further protection of the Israeli state. The Wall reduced the number of attacks as well as the capabilities of the terrorists. In the West Bank, where Palestinians were denied a sanctuary, terrorist attacks more than halved from 2002-2003 from 2089 to 1025 and in the following year down to 841. In this area, Israel losses decreased from 196 to 18. By contrast, Gaza allowed porous and insecure sanctuary for Palestinians and there was almost no decline in the number of attacks from 2002 to 2004. The wall made suicide attacks increasingly difficult and Hamas was forced to restructure their tactics.  From 2003-2004 Qassam rocket attacks increased by 300% and suicide attacks and there was a 40% decline in success of those attacks, (Frisch 2006, 24). This suggests that the separation wall has been effective in thwarting Hamas’ suicide bombings as well as the lethalness of their attacks, but the group is still committed to violence. As suicide bombings became more difficult, Palestinian ballistic and mortar activity increased compared to other means of violence (CRS Reports 2020).

**Policy Recommendations:**

*Israel has used a variety of counterterrorist operations that have produced short periods of calm, but have failed to achieve ultimate peace in the West Bank and Gaza. As noted in Policy Memo 1, terrorists resort to violence as a result of shared grievances from both the occupation and a corrupt PA. Israel’s targeted retaliation, moderate concessions, and hardening of targets does little to address the actual causes of violence. Going forward, Israel must better address the individual terrorists’ motivations through two new counterterrorist policies: ending the occupation and bolstering civil society through humanitarian intervention.*

**Policy Recommendation 1: Human Security through emancipation**

Scholars note that strategies to fight terrorists must be based on a thorough understanding of why they believe what they believe (Sageman 2009). The population in the West Bank and Gaza is motivated to terrorize against the occupation because it has led to horrible living conditions. Earlier this year, “President Trump announced his vision for Israeli-Palestinian peace, which provides for Israel to annex 30 percent of the West Bank and for a smaller Palestinian state.” This is not addressing the issue of emancipating the people in this territory. As covered in the last memo, Israel's occupation threatens Palestinians security and way of life and further annexation will only increase the issue. It is clear that the most effective way to end violence is to address the populations concerns and for Israel to end the occupation. Historic examples show that lifting occupations decreases violence, “since Israel withdrew its army from Lebanon in May 2000, there has not been a single Lebanese suicide attack. Similarly, since Israel withdrew from Gaza and large parts of the West Bank, Palestinian suicide attacks are down over 90 percent” (Pape 2010). Although necessary, ending the occupation might not be enough to stop violence. The poverty that was a result of the occupation and the corrupt Palestinian government must also be addressed.

**Policy Recommendation 2: Fight Poverty**

 Scholars have noted that terrorism can be effectively addressed through a multinational mission to fight poverty in the region; developing an economy reduces people’s grievances and gives them less of an incentive to resort to violence (Sageman 2009) (Pape) (Levitt) (Lindahl).

An international effort should be instituted, one that addresses the three pillars of development: water, electricity access and movement. International aid to Gaza and the West Bank has been disunited, partial and overall unsuccessful. Countries including the United States, express frustrations that their investment in infrastructure is often destroyed in military operations or used to advance terrorist missions against Israel (Efron and Goldenberg 177). Most recently, in 2018 the Administration and Congress reduced bilateral aid, and the Administration discontinued contributions to UNRWA in the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act of 2018. Through a collective effort to bolster the conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, international countries can work together to ensure that their aid is effective. In addition to providing direct aid, the United States should pressure Israel to revise treaties that limit the Palestinian economy. The 2003 World Bank report concluded that the key to reviving Palestine's economy is removing internal closures and increasing exports, as Palestinians real per capita fell by one-third between 1994 and 2017 as a result of tight controls on goods and people along the Gaza border (CRS Reports 2020, 2). Israel should eliminate the dual-use list which limits goods allowed in the Gaza Strip and allow vetted Palestinians to work in Israel. “The outlook for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations is bleak,” but scholars note that international pressure to aid the humanitarian crisis could be a more realistic policy to end violence.

The United States must continue to provide aid to address the economic concerns as well as pressure Israel and Egypt to Scholars focus on the poor economy as a catalyst for poor living conditions, the water crisis, and the

The 2003 World Bank report concluded that the key to reviving Palestine's economy is removing internal closures and increasing exports, as Palestinians real per capita fell by one-third between 1994 and 2017 as a result of tight controls on goods and people along the Gaza border, (CRS Reports 2020, 2). It is crucial that Israel makes an effort to improve the living conditions of people in Gaza and the West Bank. Although necessary, ending the occupation might not be enough to stop violence. A slew of Islamic Jihad groups can radicalize the population by aiding their grievances caused by the occupation and the corrupt PA.

Thus, the population would greatly benefit from increased aid that does not promote support of ‘martyrs’ families but instead promotes welfare for all (Levitt 233).

There have been issues with non-profit organizations aiding terrorist missions in the past. The international community must tightly monitor their transactions with Palestine to ensure that they are not being used to conduct terrorist operations. Increased aid alone, however, will not stop terrorism.

Successful humanitarian policy would ensure that Israel's own security does not come at the cost of others. In addition, the United States and Egypt should ensure that Israel and Egypt allow more exports to leave Gaza (Efron and Goldenberg 176).

Israel must omit the roadblocks, closures, and curfew that impede on free movement.

The most appropriate counter terrorism policy going forward would be a two-teared approach - an international humanitarian mission to bolster the civil society as well as emancipation. Not only will this greatly improve living standards and eliminate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the West Bank, however, it will hopefully decrease the incentive to resort to violence.