



Israel National Defense College
47th Class 2019-2020

**Conceptual Foundations
of National Security**

Final Assignment

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Question.

- 1. Select a political entity and analyze Israel's relationship of power with it in light of a national security challenge. In your answer describe the challenge, the different types of power, the interface between them and explain which type of power is most effective in this matter. Please also address the question whether values are relevant to Israeli interests in this case.**

INTRODUCTION

The paper will first recap the definition of the different types of power in international relations. The paper will then highlight the national security challenges in the Gaza conflict between Israel and Hamas. The paper will next examine Hamas's use of power against Israel and also Israel's use of power to deal with Hamas. The effectiveness of Israel's and Hamas's application of power to deal with each other respectively will also be discussed. The paper will then conclude with a view on the relevance of values to Israeli interests.

TYPES OF POWER

According to Joseph Nye, Power is defined as the ability to influence the behaviors of others to do what they otherwise would not so that you get the outcomes you want (Nye 1990, 153-171). There are several forms of power and the spectrum can range from hard power, soft power, smart power to sharp power. Hard power involves the ability to use the carrots and sticks of military and economic might to coerce or threaten others to follow your will. Soft power involves the ability to get what you want based on attraction and persuasion, rather than coercion or payments, through the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies (Nye 1990). Smart power involves the ability to combine hard and soft power to develop integrated strategies to get what you want. Smart power advocates understand the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships and institutions of all levels to expand one's influence and also to establish legitimacy of one's action (Nye, 2011). Sharp power is defined as the use of manipulative

diplomatic policies to influence and undermine the political system of a target country (Walker & Ludwig, 2017). In sharp power, the means used to gain favorable public opinion are via sophisticated information technologies and social media with a reliance on subversion, bullying and pressure. With this understanding of the definition of powers, the paper will examine Israel's and Hamas's approach towards each other through this power relationship.

NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE GAZA CONFLICT

The Gaza conflict between Israel and Hamas is one of strategic asymmetry where both sides have different definition of victory and asymmetric strategic goals (Yadlin 2018). Strategic asymmetry occurs when the two parties in conflict are asymmetric in their tactical and strategic approach to the conflict (Gallo & Marzano 2009). In the case of Israel, it is satisfied for “quiet in return for quiet” and the renewal of deterrence at the southern front. Whereas for Hamas, it is interested above all in breaching the “blockade,” in order to revive the Gaza economy, improve living conditions in Gaza, and enable it to enhance its military power, thereby ensuring the regime continues to rule in Gaza (Yadlin 2018).

Power asymmetry occurs whenever a strong imbalance in power exists (Gallo & Marzano 2009). In the Gaza conflict, this is the case in terms of hard power where Israel is much stronger both in its military and economy. Israel enjoys military superiority in the Middle East, with high quality intelligence, an advanced air force, state of the art defense systems against rockets and missiles, and a substantial technological edge. It also has a strong economy that continues to grow over the past decades. On the other hand, Hamas's military wing (the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades) relies on its arsenal of rockets and missiles, which are either smuggled into Gaza or self-produced, for its offensive operations. With the

continued Israeli and Egyptian blockade on Gaza, and the on-going internal struggle of power between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (PA), the economy in Gaza continues to deteriorate. As a result, Hamas is finding it increasingly hard to meet its budgetary needs and faces mounting challenges to provide badly needed goods and services to the Gaza population. This has led to the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

HAMAS'S APPROACH TO DEALING WITH ISRAEL

Hamas fully understands the strength (or lack of) its military capabilities viz-a-vis Israel's IDF. With this in mind, Hamas does not confront the IDF full force head-on. But Hamas also understands Israel's reluctance to engage in an all-out round of fighting (Yadlin 2018). Israel's refrain from a ground operations into Gaza reflects its interest in avoiding escalation and readiness to live with the status quo (Brig-Gen(Res) Kuperwasser 2019). So instead of taking on the IDF directly, Hamas's tactic is based on harassment where it chooses to terrorize the Israeli's population leaving near the Gaza border with rocket attacks or incendiary balloons. This approach seeks to undermine the IDF's abilities to provide security to the Israeli population. Even though Hamas's arsenal of military capabilities is no match for Israel's powerful IDF, it still gives Hamas enough power to disrupt the life of Israel's civilian population whenever it sees the need. Despite the power asymmetry, Hamas (and the militant factions within Gaza) continues the rocket attacks on Israel. The reasons could be Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad believe that the rounds of escalation serve their interests and are important in their own merit as they help demonstrate to their people the organization's commitment to the struggle against Israel. The escalations enable Hamas to boast of their military capabilities to their population, mobilize the population to the cause of fighting Zionism, and also distract the Gaza population from their daily miseries (Brig-Gen(Res) Kuperwasser 2019).

Given that Hamas could not match Israel force on force, it employs sharp power against Israel in order to gain sympathy in world opinion, and denunciation from world leaders against Israel in the hope that it could relieve the “blockade” imposed on it. This can be seen in the case of how Hamas exploited the “March of Return” events to obtain favorable media coverage to manipulate democratic Western views. Hamas presented the “March of Return” as an innocent and peaceful demonstration initiated by suffering citizens to protest their awful economic and social conditions. Hamas tried to portray that Gaza’s current humanitarian crisis is due to Israel’s economic sanctions on Gaza such as reducing the amount of supplies into Gaza and restricted movement of people into and out of Gaza. In reality, the march was initiated and organized by Hamas, not by oppressed citizens. Hamas invested millions of dollars in building an infrastructure for the demonstrators, and called for the breaking of the border fence and infiltration into Israeli territory (Gilboa 2018). When these actions triggered Israeli fire and Palestinians gets injured or killed, Hamas systematically disseminated outright fabrications and distortions to manipulate the social media and Western views. Hamas’s intention was to increase tensions and disagreements in Israel, cultivate support in Western democracies, and obtain one-sided, extreme condemnation of Israel in international bodies such as the UN Council on Human Rights (Gilboa 2018). Hamas’s employment of sharp power in this instance presents Israel with difficult dilemmas to deal with the event.

ISRAEL’S APPROACH TO DEALING WITH HAMAS

Israel’s national security concept is based on three pillars: deterrence, early warning, and decisive victory. This entails Israel having the military power that can deter any enemy; means that give early alerts of imminent hostile military action; and the ability to mobilize

reserve forces in case deterrence fails to deliver the desired results. It also counts on a powerful military machine that can quickly take the battle into the enemy's territory (Abdullah Swalha 2014). Despite its much stronger military might, Israel often avoided any massive response to Hamas's rockets attacks from Gaza using its hard power. Israel's response were calibrated and targeted as its objective in each of the retaliation was to achieve deterrence on Hamas. Hence, Israel will hit Hamas with only such force that Hamas is incentivized to check the growing boldness of the other factions (such as the PIJ) and keep their own military wing in check (Brig-Gen(Res) Kuperwasser 2019). To deter Hamas, Hamas's attacks on IDF soldiers or rockets/mortar fire on Israeli communities along Gaza's perimeter are met with retaliatory attacks by the IDF on its facilities such as rockets/missiles launch sites or weapons storage facilities. Besides making Hamas pay the price in material assets, Hamas's actions will also be met with the denial of entry of goods, fuel, and building materials to Gaza. The intent is to deter further rocket attacks from Gaza. However, as seen in 2008 where Israel's deterrence on Hamas was not effective and Hamas escalated the conflict with massive and intense rocket attacks, IDF conducted a full-scale invasion of Gaza. This was also the case in 2012 and 2014 where the IDF conducted similar large scale military operations into Gaza following a period of escalation arising from increasing rocket attacks.

Even though Israel is able to achieve a ceasefire and ensuing short-term relative peace after each of these massive ground operations, Israel is aware that it also needs to counter Hamas sharp power strategy. Therefore, Israel employs smart power, which can be defined as the minimal and careful use of force coupled with an intensive public diplomacy campaign to counter Hamas's sharp power (Gilboa 2018). While using its military might to respond against Hamas's rocket attacks, Israel also accompanied these operations with prompt media updates. The aim is to rally support by explaining to the world Israel's side of the story,

through coordinating messages and talking points from politicians and the IDF, that its armed operations against Hamas are proportionate and justified.

RELEVANCE OF VALUES TO ISRAELI'S INTERESTS

In response to rockets or incendiary balloons attacks from Gaza, Israel has also at times reduced the fishing zone which the Gazans can access to. This impacted the livelihoods of the Gazan fishermen as well as the other people involved in the fishing industry. Some viewed these measures, adopted so as to compel Hamas to scale back violence on the Gaza border, as collective punishment which is a price the Gaza population is made to pay for the terrorist acts committed by Hamas.

On the other hand, Israel takes concerns on the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza despite its military operations against Hamas in Gaza. Israel is constantly contemplating methods to help the Gaza population in order to improve their quality of life. Besides facilitating humanitarian aid for the residents of Gaza, Israel is also willing to encourage and facilitate foreign and Arab investments in the Gaza economy (Brig-Gen(Res) Kuperwasser 2018). However, one dilemma which Israel faces is that when Hamas is freed of the need to take care of the Gazan population, it could channel its efforts to keep arming itself to an extent similar to that of Hezbollah. This dilemma of values and Israeli interests continues to play up in Israel strategy towards solving the Gaza conflict.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, given the strategic and power asymmetry in the Gaza conflict, we can see that Israel and Hamas employs smart power and sharp power respectively to their advantage to achieve their goals. While the employment of hard power could help both Israel

and Hamas achieve the effects at the operational and tactical level, both sides are also contesting in another battle space in the form of shaping world and public opinions on the Gaza conflict.

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