

Israeli Counterterrorism Decision-Making:  
The Causes and Costs of A-Strategic Incoherence

by

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

*“The United States would do well to emulate the Israeli model”* (Tucker “Strategies for Countering Terrorism: Lessons from the Israeli Experience,” 2003).

*“Why can’t we learn from Israel? Israelis are forced to confront this issue every hour of every day”* (Husick “Expert: U.S. Should Emulate Israel in Fight Against Terror,” 2006).

According to popular wisdom, Israeli counterterrorism works. Scholars and policymakers such as Tucker and Husick laud the Israeli counterterrorism model as an example the United States “would do well to emulate.” They assume that because Israelis “confront [terrorism] every hour of every day,” that is, because the terrorist threat combated is persistent and the stakes are high, Israel must have developed a coherent and effective approach to counterterrorism.

The evidence suggests otherwise. Israeli counterterrorism has been largely ineffective. It has been ineffective because Israel has failed to implement a coherent counterterrorism strategy consistently connecting counterterrorist tactics to end goals. Most rationalist scholars assume that states learn lessons over time, improving upon policies as they update their information (Reiter 2003). Yet, despite being one of the few states in the world that has been engaged in a protracted counterterrorism struggle, Israel seems to have exhibited little rational learning; it has not abandoned ineffective tactics or consistently implemented effective tactics as a means towards achieving clearly articulated objectives. Why not?

## Central Assertions

In this thesis, I argue that Israeli counterterrorism is incoherent because the improvisational routines of the Israeli National Security Establishment (NSE) and the sensitivity of Israeli politicians to international pressures preclude the rational strategic thinking integral to the formulation and implementation of a coherent counterterrorism strategy. I further argue that the inconsistent implementation of counterterrorist tactics resultant from the absence of a coherent counterterrorism strategy inflames Palestinian grievances without durably deterring attacks, and thus accounts for the inefficacy of Israeli counterterrorism.

I bring to bear a wealth of evidence from original, primary interviews to support these assertions.

Figure 1 represents the causal model outlined above.

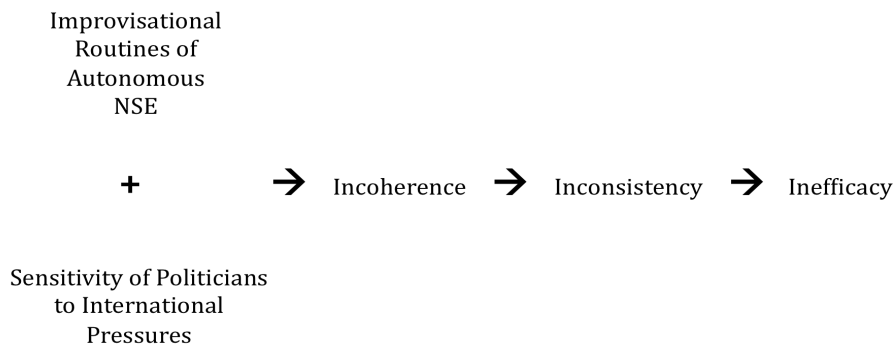


Figure 1

### To Illustrate

Consider, for example, the NSE practice of targeted killings. The Israeli Security Agency (also known as the Shin Bet or Shabak) routinely gathers the intelligence necessary to arrest or “intercept” (kill) Palestinian terrorist targets and passes that intelligence on to the Israel Police, appropriate Israel Defense Forces

units, or Mossad (depending on the location of the target). Rather than engage in a rational analysis of the efficacy of targeted killings, NSE organizations, which have developed improvisational routines that prize speed and flexibility over consistency, seek to demonstrate organizational proficiency by implementing successful interceptions, with little consideration for whether or not these short-term operational successes actually advance the long-term strategic objectives of the Israeli state.

While organizational routines account for the a-strategic incoherence of Israeli NSE counterterrorism decision-making, Israeli politicians<sup>1</sup> are concerned primarily with “appearing legitimate” in the international community and only secondarily with responding strategically to Palestinian terrorist activity. For example, in 2008, Israeli politicians went to remarkable lengths to delegitimize the barrage of Palestinian attacks so as to legitimate the Israeli entry into Gaza in October (David, interview with author, 12 January 2011), and then conducted the war with extraordinary attention to international law in order to demonstrate adherence to international norms (David, interview with author, 12 January 2011). In contrast, international pressures prevented Prime Minister Sharon from authorizing a similar strike into Gaza in 2005 following a comparable barrage of terrorist attacks in the wake of the Israeli withdrawal. Because preoccupation with international opinion rather than Palestinian terrorist activity is the primary determinate of politicians’ counterterrorism decisions, major Israeli military operations, for example, are implemented inconsistently, igniting anti-Israel sentiment without effectively deterring attacks.

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<sup>1</sup> I explain in Chapter Three that while most counterterrorism decision-making is concentrated exclusively within the Israeli NSE, Israeli politicians at times exert agency in the decision-making process.

Though this paper is explanatory and not prescriptive, my findings suggest that a reduction in the incoherence and ultimately the inconsistency responsible for Israeli counterterrorism inefficacy could be partially achieved through the development and clear articulation of a counterterrorism policy by the Israeli National Security Council.

## **Defining Terrorism**

Before creating a typology of Israeli counterterrorism decision-making, it is necessary to develop a definition of “terrorism” and a criterion for determining counterterrorism “effectiveness.”

In *Inside Terrorism*, Bruce Hoffman explains that the word “terrorism” has “insidiously worked [its] way into our everyday vocabulary,” and that there is no “precise, concrete, and truly explanatory definition of the word” (Hoffman 2006, 1). He chronicles the evolution of the word, points out that the Department of State, FBI, and Department of Defense all provide slightly conflicting definitions, and ultimately defines terrorism “as the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in pursuit of political change” (Hoffman 2006, 40). On the other hand, Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Hirsch-Hoefler assert that “terrorism is a politically motivated tactic involving the threat or use of force or violence in which the pursuit of publicity plays a significant role” (Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Hirsch-Hoefler 2005, 782). Many scholars assert that the development of an objective and internationally accepted definition of terrorism is impossible, and subscribe to the aphorism “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.” This school of thought imbues “terrorism” with moralistic connotations, and judges a perpetrator a

“freedom fighter” if his cause is just and a “terrorist” if it is unjust. I argue, conversely, that developing an objective definition of terrorism is not only feasible but indispensable to any serious attempt to combat terrorism, and that the perceived legitimacy of a cause is irrelevant to the definitional designation of the violence.

Neither the U.S. Government nor academia has developed a comprehensive definition of terrorism. The definition outlined by the Global Terrorism Database, an open-source database that presents information on terrorist incidents (date, location, weapons used, nature of the target, number of casualties, and perpetrator) around the world from 1970 through 2008 (Global Terrorism Database), most accurately reflects today’s conventional wisdoms and the modern contours of the terrorist threat. The first Global Terrorism Database (GTD1) includes attacks from 1970-1997, and defines terrorism as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.” On the other hand, for attacks ranging from 1998 to 2007 (GTD2), criteria allowing users to determine for themselves which incidents should qualify as terrorism replaced the GTD1 definition. The act must qualify as an “intentional act of violence or threat of violence by a non-state actor” and it must meet two of the following three criteria:

1. the violent act was aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal;
2. the violent act included evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) other than the immediate victims; and
3. the violent act was outside the precepts of International Humanitarian Law (START Data Collection Methodology).



Thus, all acts of violence perpetrated by Palestinian terrorist groups are encompassed within GTD1 and GTD2.

I do not evaluate the legitimacy of the underlying motivations fueling Palestinian suicide bombing and rocket fire into Israeli territory. By designating these incidents “terrorism,” I do not endorse Israeli repression of Palestinians. Rather, I categorize Palestinian suicide bombing, rocket fire, shootings, kidnappings, and other such tactics as terrorist attacks simply because they match the GTD criteria. In general, this paper seeks to identify the roots of Israeli counterterrorism inefficacy; it does not explore the moral complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## **A Brief History of Palestinian Terrorism**

Since its founding in 1948, Israel has faced terrorist attacks from Palestinian groups including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Hamas, Fatah, the Abu Nidal Organization, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. According to Boaz Ganor, executive director of the International Policy Institute for Counterterrorism in Herzliya, terrorist violence aims “to undermine the personal security of civilians, to sow fear and trepidation, and to sap public morale” in order to pressure decision-makers to make political concessions (Tucker 2003). Palestinian groups have stated, for instance, that their attacks are designed to force the release of Palestinian prisoners or the withdrawal from previously Palestinian territory. Such groups have implemented a diverse array of tactics, including but not limited to plane hijackings, stone throwing, lynchings, shootings, rocket-fire, and bombings. In addition to Israelis, Palestinian terrorist organizations have targeted other Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians, and other foreign citizens. An estimated 3,500 Israelis have

been killed and 25,000 wounded as a result of Palestinian terrorist attacks since 1948 (B'Tselem).

After the 1967 War, Palestinian organizations largely embraced armed struggle as the primary mechanisms through which to pursue their political goals vis-à-vis Israel. During the first Intifada (1987-1993), Palestinian terrorists killed 94 Israelis, while an estimated 1,376 Palestinians were killed (B'Tselem). During this period, in July 1989, a member of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad conducted the first suicide attack, seizing the wheel of an Israeli bus and driving it into an abyss, killing 16 Israeli civilians. Suicide bombing was also popularized during this period. In April 1993, Hamas' Saheer Tamam al-Nabulsi detonated his explosives-laden car between two buses in the Mehola Junction bombing, killing himself and one other Palestinian, and wounding 21. Between the Oslo Accords and Camp David (1993-2003), suicide bombings of Israeli buses and crowded spaces became the most frequently implemented Palestinian terrorist tactic, particularly by Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Attacks during this period included the Beit Lid massacre, a double-suicide bombing at a crowded junction that killed 21, and the Dizengoff Center massacre, a suicide bombing at a Tel Aviv shopping mall that killed 13.

The Second Intifada (2000-2004) saw a sharp rise in the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks. During this period, an estimated 1,053 Israelis were killed by Palestinian terrorist attacks (mainly suicide bombings), while Israeli forces killed an estimated 4,745 Palestinians. 577 Palestinians were killed by other Palestinians (B'Tselem). Targets of Palestinian terrorist attacks included buses, IDF checkpoints, restaurants, discothèques, shopping malls, a university, and civilian

homes. A particularly brutal incident occurred in October 2000, when a Palestinian mob lynched two non-combatant IDF reservists, Vadim Nurzhitz and Yossi Avrahami, who had accidentally entered the Palestinian Authority-controlled city of Ramallah in the West Bank. The photo of a Palestinian rioter waving his bloodstained hands to the cheering crowd below sparked international outrage and further intensified the conflict. Suicide bombings aimed primarily at Israeli civilians continued, climaxing in the Passover Massacre in which 30 Israeli civilians were killed at Park Hotel, Netanya.

After the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Hamas' electoral victory in 2006, Hamas took control of the Gaza strip. Since then and to the present, Hamas, funded and armed by Iran, has increased the firing of Qassam rockets, mortars, and Grad missiles on the Israeli villages located near the Gaza strip, Sderot, and Ashkelon. Attacks outside of the Gaza strip, such as the kidnapping of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, and the March 23 bombing in Jerusalem, continue as well.

## **Measuring the “Efficacy” of Counterterrorism**

The rubric for gauging the efficacy of a government's counterterrorism strategies is the subject of heated debate. Most commonly, political scientists (including Sheehan 2009; Reid and Chen 2007; and Miller 2007) gauge the efficacy of a counterterrorist policy by contrasting the number of terrorist attacks before a counterterrorist policy is implemented with the number of attacks after the policy is implemented. This method is simplistic in its failure to consider the lethality (number of killed + number of wounded) of the terrorist attacks. The lethality of the attacks is a crucial indicator of counterterrorism effectiveness, as the frequency of attacks may

remain constant while lethality may shift, or vice versa. For example, while the Israeli Security Fence is widely considered an effective counterterrorist tactic, its construction has had no impact on the frequency of Palestinian terrorist attacks. However, since its construction, the lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks has dipped, indicating that the Fence forced a tactical shift from more lethal suicide bombings to less lethal *katyusha* rockets. Were the efficacy of the Security Fence to be measured solely by the frequency of Palestinian attacks before and after its construction, the Security Fence would be considered ineffective. The Security Fence, though ethically and legally controversial, is largely lauded as an effective counterterrorist tactic not because it decreased the number of attacks, but because it, at least temporarily, forced Palestinian terrorists to use less lethal terrorist tactics.

While most scholars employ overly simplistic measures of efficacy, other measurements are unnecessarily complex. For example, Asaf Zussman and Noam Zussman measure the success or failure of targeted killings by fluctuations in the Israeli stock market, rather than by the frequency and/or lethality of terrorist incidents (Zussman and Zussman 2006). Similarly, Nadav Morag lists seven parameters to measure the efficacy of Israeli counterterrorism instruments, including “reduction in civilian casualties among Israelis and Palestinians, Israel’s ability to cope economically, Israeli social cohesion, the status of international and domestic support for the Israeli government and the extent of weakening of international and domestic support for the Palestinian leadership” (Morag 2005). While these are significant parameters, only the indicators of frequency and lethality (the number and casualty-count of non-thwarted attacks) actually measure the success of counterterrorism

instruments in reducing acts of terrorism, as opposed to proxy variables. To measure the effectiveness of counterterrorism by anything other than frequency and lethality of terrorist attacks is to “change the rules” (Sheehan 2009, 744).

I further assert that counterterrorism is ineffective if it decreases the frequency or lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks in the short run, but fails to reduce, or in fact provokes increased attacks, in the long run. The durability of the reduction in the frequency and lethality of Palestinian attacks is therefore the third, critical indicator of the efficacy of Israeli counterterrorism.

In Chapter Two I demonstrate that Israeli counterterrorism has not succeeded in durably reducing either the frequency or the lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks, and is therefore ineffective.

## **A Brief History of Israeli Counterterrorism**

Israel has developed a variety of measures to combat Palestinian terrorism.

Conciliatory Israeli counterterrorist tactics include the release of Palestinian prisoners, the provision of material aid to Palestinians, the easing of restrictions on Palestinian movement, withdrawal from occupied territory, and engaging in negotiations. Conciliatory tactics are reportedly designed to redress the Palestinian grievances that motivate terrorist violence and encourage peaceful diplomacy between the state of Israel and the Palestinian national movement. Israel has been widely criticized by international actors (such as its Arab neighbors and the UN) for failing to make as frequent and as significant concessions as is externally deemed appropriate.

Repressive counterterrorist tactics include targeted killings, conventional military strikes, and arrests. Repressive tactics are designed to punish and deter terrorist attacks such that rational Palestinian actors recognize that the costs of terrorism outweigh the rewards. It is important to note that Israel's use of targeted killings, military strikes, checkpoints, and curfews (among other tactics) have been widely condemned by vocal members of the international community.

Defensive counterterrorist tactics include the blockade of Gaza, the installation of metal detectors in airports, and the Security Fence. Such defensive (or, target-hardening) tactics neither assuage grievances nor deter attacks, but are rather designed to make it more difficult for Palestinian terrorists, regardless of their motivations, to successfully strike. Defensive tactics usually lead to a substitution of one type of attack for another. For example, when Israel installed metal detectors in its airports, the number of skyjackings plummeted but the number of kidnappings skyrocketed. Defensive counterterrorist tactics are therefore partially effective when they durably force the substitution of a less lethal type of attack in the place of a more lethal type of attack. For example, the construction of the Security Fence forced Palestinian terrorist organizations to substitute out suicide bombings in favor of less lethal *katyusha* rockets and kidnappings.

Israeli counterterrorist tactics can also be categorized according to the role of Israeli politicians in the decision-making process. Most Israeli counterterrorist tactics are decided upon and implemented exclusively within the NSE, particularly within the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the Israel Intelligence Community (ICC); the politicians prefer to defer to the NSE with regards the vast majority of Israeli

counterterrorist tactics. However, large-scale tactics that catch the attention of the international community are planned and authorized by politicians (i.e. the defense minister and even the prime minister, members of their respective offices, and Knesset ministers). The distinction is salient because the decision-making processes governing the behavior of the NSE differ from those governing the behavior of the politicians.

Figure 2 illustrates the categorizations outlined above.

|                            | <b>Conciliatory</b>  | <b>Defensive</b>                         | <b>Repressive</b>   |
|----------------------------|--|--|---|
| Implemented by the NSE     | Releasing prisoners<br>Lifting curfews<br>Provision of aid | Checkpoints<br>Fences<br>Metal detectors | Arrests<br>Targeted killings<br>Use of small arms                                   |
| Implemented by politicians | Negotiations<br>Territorial Concessions                    | The Security Fence/ West Bank Barrier    | Punitive military strikes (i.e. Operation Cast Lead and Operation Defensive Shield) |

Figure 2

Palestinian terrorism is not simply a product of Israel counterterrorist activity; internal Palestinian political contests, international intervention, and a host of confounding variables shape Palestinian behavior as well. However, in this paper, I focus on Israeli (not Palestinian) decision-making, and because I do not closely examine the confounding variables listed above, I do not claim to have identified the only source of Israeli counterterrorism inefficacy.

## **Theoretical Explanations of Defense Decision-Making**

How do Israeli counterterrorism decision-makers determine which tactics and combinations of tactics to implement? Do they rationally and systematically analyze the effectiveness of each counterterrorist tactic, eschew those tactics that fail to reduce Palestinian terrorism, and implement those tactics that are proven effective? Do they respond to international pressures to implement more conciliatory counterterrorist instruments and refrain from implementing counter-normative ones? Does the drive to seek reelection influence Israeli counterterrorism decision-makers? How do the organizational routines of the counterterrorism apparatus influence Israeli counterterrorism?

I will now briefly review the scholarship on government decision-making and outline the implications of each model with regards Israeli counterterrorism.

### **The Rationalist Model: Insufficient Information**

Rationalist scholarship maintains that governments behave strategically, consistently implementing those strategies that most effectively advance state security. Rationalists assume that: 1) states prioritize the national interest over ideology, morality, and social reconstructions; 2) the national interest is above all else state security and survival; and 3) states operate as unitary actors in pursuit of the national interest. Various derivations of rationalism have been propounded by realist theorists and scholars Thomas Hobbes, George Kennan, Kenneth Waltz, Stephen Walt, and John Mearsheimer. In “Exploring the Bargaining Model of War,” Dan Reiter applies rationalist thought to interstate warfare, corroborates Clausewitz’s claim that “war is politics by other means,” and explains that upon disagreement



about the allocation of a desired good, states prefer to settle peacefully rather than to incur the costs of war. Reiter explains that when states are fully cognizant of the relative strength of their opponents, they peacefully reach a settlement that reflects the distribution of power. Only when states cannot anticipate the outcome of a conflict, that is, when they lack adequate information about the distribution of power, do they seek to achieve their political ends through force (Reiter 2003).

If rationalist scholarship is salient in the case of Israeli counterterrorism, then the Israeli government operates as a unitary actor rationally pursuing state survival and security regardless of international norms, political agendas, and organizational routines. Israeli counterterrorist tactic selection is designed to signal Israeli credibility or resolve to the Palestinian population, and should be extremely correspondent to Palestinian terrorism; that is, Israel should respond consistently to Palestinian terrorist activity, because no factors besides Palestinian behavior are relevant to Israeli counterterrorism decision-making. Israel would, then, implement effective counterterrorist tactics even if they are domestically unpopular or counter-normative. Israel should exhibit learning over time- that is, Israel should increasingly eschew tactics that are demonstrably ineffective and favor tactics that are demonstrably effective. The fact that Israel has failed to durably reduce the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks must then, according to the rationalist model, simply be the product of insufficient information; that is, Israel has not yet determined which counterterrorist tactics most effectively reduce the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks.

## **The International Model: Norms and Legitimacy**

As opposed to rationalists, constructivist scholars assert that state interests and behaviors are subject to evolving and socially constructed domestic identities and international norms. Pioneers of the constructivist model include Alexander Wendt, Martha Finnemore, Michael Barnett, Kathryn Sikkink, Ted Hopf, and Peter Katzenstein. A key component of the constructivist model is the regulatory effect of international norms (often reflected in international laws) created through the interaction of state identities on state behavior. In his seminal work “The Second Image Reversed,” Peter Gourevitch explains that “The international system is not only a consequence of domestic politics and structures but a cause of them” (Gourevitch 1978, 911). Constructivists such as Hopf explain that states vie for membership of the “Community of Civilized Nations,” and so refrain from using force in such a way that would undermine their ambitions to project an identity compatible with that community (Hopf 1998). International norms against torture and avoidable collateral damage thus prevent states from using force as liberally (or indeed, as strategically) as they otherwise would.

In “Israeli State Violence during the Second Intifada: Combining New Institutional and Rational Choice Approaches,” Brym and Maoz-Shai explain how “domestic and international norms can constrain state violence against dissenting minorities” (Brym and Maoz-Shai 2009). James Ron further argues that while strategic interests may demand extensive use of force, “norms surrounding the use of state violence crystallize and become institutionalized...because the international community imposes such norms on states” (Ron 2000). Human rights groups, media

outlets, the UN, and European governments criticize states for using force that appears to violate international norms, and so states that aim to cultivate a normative identity seek, perhaps at the expense of strategic interests, to avoid using force in such a way that would violate international norms.

Unlike rationalists, constructivists assert that a state's use of force may be a- strategic; that is, states may refrain from implementing effective counterterrorist tactics if those counterterrorist tactics violate international norms. If constructivist literature proves explanatory in the Israeli case, the inefficacy of Israeli counterterrorism can be attributed to Israeli sensitivity to international norms at the expense of strategic considerations. That is, the opposition of the aforementioned human rights groups, media outlets, international institutions, and state governments to specific counterterrorist tactics limits Israeli counterterrorism decision-makers to a narrower, normative, and perhaps less effective range of viable responses to Palestinian terrorism.

### **The Political Model: Voter Preference**

Scholars who emphasize the influence of internal politics on a state's security strategy break down the unit of analysis from the state as a unitary actor, to the individual political ambitions of the decision-makers within the state. For example, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita argues in "Politics and the Suboptimal Provision of Counterterror" that

When there is divergence between voters and government preferences... the politically optimal counterterrorism strategy pursued by the government in response to electoral and institutional incentives is quite different from the security maximizing counterterrorism strategy (Bueno de Mesquita, 2007).

In short, political officials require voter support for reelection, and so, if a particular counterterrorist tactic is popular among a political official's constituents (the voting blocks requisite for reelection differ by candidate party), policymakers will likely endorse and implement the tactic regardless of its strategic merit.

In an interview for *Newsweek*, security expert Bruce Schneier said that certain counterterrorism expenditures are “an enormous waste of money” and are implemented because “Politicians tend to prefer security countermeasures that are visible, to make it look like they’re doing something. So they will tend to pick things that are visible even if they are less effective” (*Newsweek* 2004). Similarly, Alex Mintz argues that (contrary to the rationalist assumption that governments act unitarily and consistently to promote state security) electoral cycles influence both Israeli and American defense spending, and leaders work to balance domestic political pressures and strategic threats (Mintz 1988). James Fearon also argues that governments’ national security decisions are heavily influenced by domestic public opinion, as opposed to emphasizing the behaviors of security threats (Fearon 1994).

### **The Organizational Model: Faulty Routines**

Proponents of the organizational model break apart the unit of analysis from the state as a unitary actor, to the operational routines enacted within state organizations. According to the organizational model, articulated by Graham Allison in “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis” and also propounded by current scholars such as Frank Foley (2009), a state’s defense policies are not the deliberate decisions of rational and unitary state governments, but rather, they are the output of the routines enacted by the many large and loosely allied organizations that together

constitute the state. Because each organization is responsible for a certain area but few important problems (like terrorism) fall exclusively within the domain of a single organization, government activities reflect the independent outputs of a number of organizations (Allison 1969). Organizations develop proficiency in particular procedures, and so aggressively work to implement those procedures regardless of their overall relevance to national security. Thus, government behavior can be understood as the outputs of large organizations functioning according to standard patterns of behavior designed to achieve organizational survival, rather than designed to advance any coherent state strategy.

If the organizational model proves explicatory, the inefficacy of Israeli counterterrorism is the product of a-strategic routines implemented within the various Israeli organizations responsible for counterterrorism. The Shabak, for instance, has developed proficiency in intelligence-gathering, interrogations, and targeted killings, and all of its activities are designed to increase its capacities in these areas, rather than to ensure that these tactics will in fact help to bring about a reduction in Palestinian terrorist activity. In fact, a complete freeze in Palestinian terrorist activity would render Shabak irrelevant. According to the organizational model, the Israeli organizations responsible for various counterterrorist tactics are mechanically routinized to produce particular operations, and little effort is made to place these operations within a strategic framework or to ensure that they are conducive to the achievement of long-term end goals.

## Methodology

I employ a mixed-methodological approach to demonstrate the inefficacy and incoherence of Israeli counterterrorism, to examine the sources of the incoherence, and to illustrate the causal link between incoherence and inefficacy.

My research is primarily based on standardized, open-ended interviews. In January 2011, I conducted 16 interviews with Israeli counterterrorism experts in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. I asked each interviewee similar open-ended questions (questions varied slightly depending on the expertise of the interviewee)<sup>2</sup> in order to collect the same general areas of information from each and to allow interviewees to independently express the presence or absence of the variables under investigation. My method contrasts, for example, with a closed, fixed-response interview in which the interviewer asks interviewees to choose answers from among a set of alternatives, and thereby measures the degree to which investigative factors appear.

While a number of scholars have produced secondary literature examining defense decision-making, there are no studies of which I am aware that examine the particular question of Israeli counterterrorism decision-making by collecting and analyzing the insights of the decision-makers themselves. Although interview-based methodologies are limited by their reliance on small and potentially unrepresentative samples and by interviewee dishonesty or omission, interviews with Israeli counterterrorism decision-makers afford a depth of qualitative insight into the decision-making process that cannot be matched through secondary or quantitative research.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix for sample interview.

Per the stipulations of the IRB, I confined my list of interviewees to individuals accustomed to publicly discussing Israeli counterterrorism- that is, Israeli academics, senior-ranking IDF, Shabak, Mossad, or Police with expertise in the field of counterterrorism, rather than average Israeli civilians. I began the interviewee-selection process with a list of 12 names provided by Professor Erica Chenoweth, Director of the *Wesleyan Program on Terrorism and Insurgency Research*. I emailed each of these individuals (most of whom are university professors specializing in terrorism), summarizing my research and requesting that they connect me to any contacts they might have within the Israeli counterterrorism apparatus. They connected me with 26 Israeli university professors and think tank scholars. I emailed each Israeli professor and think tank scholar (many of whom spent decades in the political echelons or in the Services) offered to speak to me and/or connect me to additional contacts. Also, when reviewing literature on Israeli counterterrorism, I recorded the names of relevant authors and experts cited in the literature. I then “googled” these individuals and, if their contact information was publicly available, emailed them requesting a meeting.

Before traveling to Israel on January 1, I had arranged 11 interviews through this email-snowball process. Upon arrival in Israel, several interviewees connected me with their colleagues, and these colleagues accounted for the additional 5 interviews I conducted during my stay in Israel.

I was extraordinarily fortunate to sit down with senior-ranking former Israeli IDF, Shabak, and ministers. Most were extremely candid, and I attribute their candor primarily to their status as retirees.

Per the stipulations of my IRB approval, I began each interview by obtaining oral consent to proceed.<sup>3</sup> I recorded each interview on a digitized auditory recording device, deleting each recording from the device upon transferring them to a protected, encrypted device.

Also per the stipulations of the IRB, I maintain the anonymity of my interviewees in this paper, referring to them by pseudonyms and position titles. I provide brief profiles in Figure 3 below:

| <b>Subject</b> | <b>Pseudonym</b> | <b>Rank</b>       | <b>Former Position(s)</b>  | <b>Current Position(s)</b>                                  |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|--|---|
| A              | Chaim            | Major General     | National Security Advisor<br>Head of IDF Operations Directorate<br>Head of the IDF Planning Directorate  | Senior Research Associate at Israeli think tank             |
| B              | Noam             | Colonel           | Colonel in Research Division of IDF Military Intelligence<br>Assistant director of the Research Division for Evaluation<br>Senior Instructor at IDF's National Defense College | Deputy Head of Israeli national security think tank         |
| C              | David            | Major General     | Director General of the Ministry of Defense (second position after the Minister of Defense)  | Retired   |
| D              | Binyamin         | Brigadier General | Director of the IDF Strategic Planning Division in the Planning Branch of the General Staff<br>Deputy National Security Advisor  | Senior Research Fellow at Israeli think tank                |
| E              | Abraham          | Captain           | Deputy head of Shabak Protection and Security Division   | Vice president of Israeli national security consulting firm |

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix for consent script.



|   |          |                   |  |  |
|---|----------|-------------------|--|--|
| F | Levi     | Captain           | n/a  | Researcher at IDF in house think tank        |
| G | Roey     | n/a               | Deputy National Security Advisor   | Fellow at a top American policy school       |
| H | Gal      | Major General     | Commander of IDF's National Defense College and IDF Staff Command College<br>Head of IDF's Research and Assessment Division<br>Military Secretary of the Defense Minister  | Program director at Israeli university       |
| I | Nir      | Major General     | Director of Research and Development Department of Israel's Ministry of Defense<br>Director General of Israel's Atomic Energy Commission<br>Director General of Ministry of Defense Mission to Europe  | Senior Research Fellow at Israeli think tank |
| J | Yair     | Major General     | Senior consultant to NATO on matters of counterterrorism<br>Head of the International Terrorism wing of the IDF's Military Intelligence Division<br>Director of education at Herzliya's international institute for counterterrorism           | Senior Research Fellow at Israeli think tank |
| K | Meir     | Major General     | Head of IDF Intelligence service<br>Head of assessment department in IDF intelligence<br>Head of the unit for coordination of Operations in the Territories<br>Head of Military Intelligence Directorate<br>President of an Israeli University | Retired                                      |
| L | Yonatan  | n/a               | n/a  | Senior Research Fellow at Israeli think tank |
| M | Menachem | Brigadier General | Military commander in Hebron<br>Commander of IDF Forces in Judea and Samaria   | Retired                                      |

|   |         |     |   |  |
|---|---------|-----|---|--|
| N | Yitzaak | n/a | n/a   | Professor at Israeli university  |
| O | Daniel  | n/a | Member of the Knesset for the National Religious Party and Gesher- Zionist Religious Center | Retired  |
| P | Ori     | n/a | n/a   | Senior Fellow at American University specializing in criminal justice<br>Visiting Professor at Israeli University specializing in criminal justice |

Figure 3

## Thesis Layout

In Chapter One, I define key concepts, provide a history of Palestinian terrorism and Israeli counterterrorism, present the theoretical models that could account for the incoherence of Israeli counterterrorism, and outline my methodology. In Chapter Two, I demonstrate that Israeli counterterrorism is both ineffective and incoherent. In Chapter Three, I explain that the incoherence of Israeli counterterrorism is a product of the a-strategic routines of the NSE on the one hand, and the sensitivity of Israeli politicians to international pressures on the other. In Chapter Four, I establish the causal relationship between the inconsistency (a symptom of incoherence) and inefficacy of Israeli counterterrorism. In Chapter Five, I summarize my findings, discuss their implications, identify areas for future research, and conclude.

## **Chapter Two: Israeli Counterterrorism is Ineffective and Incoherent**

In this chapter, I review the extant findings on Israeli counterterrorism and I demonstrate that, contrary to conventional wisdom, Israeli counterterrorism is both ineffective and incoherent.

### **Extant Findings**

#### **Why Some View Israel as an Exemplary Counterterrorism Model**

Perhaps because Israel has faced terrorist adversaries for decades, and because the terrorist threat posed to Israel is unremitting and grave, many scholars and policymakers seem to consider Israel a model of effective counterterrorism. Certainly, Israeli counterterrorism literature is almost exclusively laudatory, and explains any seeming discord within Israeli counterterrorism as the necessarily fluid response to the ever-amorphous Palestinian terrorist threat. Hillel Frisch argues for example that Israeli forces' offensive counterterrorism operations effectively destroy the organizational capabilities of Palestinian terrorists (Frisch 2006). However, while Frisch cites the decline in the number of suicide attacks in 2003 and 2004 to instantiate his claim, he published his article in 2006, before the steep rise in the number of suicide attacks (and attacks generally) in 2007 and 2008 demonstrated the failure of Israeli counterterrorism to *durably* reduce the frequency and lethality of attacks. Similarly, Morag lauds the Israeli government for the success of its

counterterrorist policies, yet Morag relies exclusively on anecdotal evidence without examining empirical evidence or otherwise instantiating his assertion (Morag 2005).

The events of September 11, 2001, turned the eye of the American public, policymakers, and scholarly community to terrorism and counterterrorism. Infused with new resources and urgency, the volume of research examining the efficacy of specific counterterrorist tactics, particularly Israel counterterrorist tactics, has since skyrocketed. In “Strategies for Countering Terrorism: Lessons from the Israeli Experience,” American scholar Jonathan Tucker summarizes Israeli efforts in counterterrorism intelligence, counterterrorism operations, aviation security, defense against chemical and biological attacks, and psychological strengthening of the populace, and instructs US policymakers on how best to emulate the Israeli model (Tucker 2003).

Tucker points out that Israel’s circumstances differ from those of the US. For example, he cautions US decision-makers against passenger profiling due to the much larger volume of US commercial air traffic, the multi-ethnic nature of American society, the large number of passengers transiting through “hub” cities who catch connecting flights with short layovers, and the fact that personal interviews would be too time-consuming for Americans to tolerate. Regardless of his differentiation between the two nations, Tucker’s piece is representative of a larger body of literature that cites Israeli counterterrorism as an example on which other states’ counterterrorism policies should be modeled, without systematically instantiating the assertion that Israeli counterterrorism is even effective.

## **A Mixed Assessment of Specific Counterterrorist Tactics**

American scholars have recently begun to systematically measure the relative efficacy of specific counterterrorist tactics, particularly targeted killings and major military strikes. Most scholars have concluded that targeted killings are ineffective. No consensus has been reached regarding the efficacy of punitive military strikes.

### **Targeted Killings Are Usually Ineffective**

Scholars have reached a number of conflicting conclusions based on a variety of indicators regarding the effectiveness of Israeli targeted killing. For example, Zussman and Zussman argue that the Israeli market reaction to targeted killings demonstrates that the assassination of senior Palestinian military leaders is an effective tactic, while assassinating senior political leaders is counterproductive (Zussman and Zussman 2006). Jenna Jordan, on the other hand, argues that leadership decapitation is an ineffective tactic, and is more likely to incite backlash, particularly in larger, older, religious, and separatist organizations (Jordan 2009). Steven David argues that, though targeted killings do not appreciably diminish the costs of terrorist attacks and might even increase them, targeted killings are in the Israeli national interest because they provides the Israeli population with a sense of retribution and revenge (David 2002). Even Tucker cautions US decision-makers against emulating Israel's practice of targeted killings, due not only to the moral and legal controversy surrounding the practice, but also because of "Several practical drawbacks" including reputational costs, intelligence costs, and retaliatory costs (Tucker 2003).

### **No Consensus on Massive Military Force**

In addition to targeted killings, American scholars have paid special attention to the application of heavy military force, though their analysis is less localized to the Israeli experience. Gary LaFree, Laura Dugan, and Raven Korte examine the effectiveness of deterrence counterterrorist instruments implemented by the British in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1992, and conclude that of the six deterrence operations implemented, only one out of the six (Operation Motorman) produced the desired deterring effect, two did not significantly alter terrorist activity, and three actually produced a backlash effect, suggesting that military strikes designed to deter terrorists are more often ineffective (and sometimes counterproductive) than effective (LaFree, Dugan, and Korte 2009). On the other hand, Jason Lyall examines the application of massive force and concludes that heavy Russian artillery fire in 2000-2005 “led to a decrease in post-strike insurgent attacks” (Lyall 2009, 357). Charles Eppright examines the effectiveness of American conventional military force against terrorists and concludes that it has been an ineffective counterterrorist instrument (Eppright 1997, 340).

Several scholars focus specifically on Israel’s use of punitive military force. Jeremy Ginges argues that Israel’s implementation of punitive military force is usually ineffective due to the psychological makeup of the terrorists (Ginges 1997, 171). Bryan Brophy-Baermann and John Conybeare argue that only unexpected military retaliations will be effective in causing Palestinian terrorist attacks to deviate from their natural rate. They argue that the Israeli retaliation for the 1972 Munich massacre was the first Israeli retaliation of unexpectedly large magnitude, and it produced a temporary deviation of terrorist attacks from the natural rate. They

conclude that retaliatory military force has no long-term deterrent or escalation effect on Palestinian terrorism (Brophy-Baermann and Conybeare 1994).

## **In Sum**

The small body of literature examining collective Israeli counterterrorism generally presents a favorable assessment of the Israeli model, and many scholars even point decision-makers to Israeli counterterrorism as a model from which to develop their own practices. However, this body of literature is not based on rigorous, systematic analysis of the available empirical data, and was largely published before comprehensive datasets such as the Global Terrorism Database became available. In the absence of empirical analysis, such literature seems based on the assumptions that, because Israel has faced terrorism the longest, and because the terrorist threat posed to Israel is the gravest, Israel must have the most advanced system for combating it. Interestingly, the very fact that Palestinian terrorism continues to plague the Israeli citizenry and leadership demonstrates the failure of Israeli counterterrorism to defeat Palestinian terrorists.

The body of literature seeking to isolate and weigh the relative efficacy of specific counterterrorist tactics is young, increasingly quantitative, and marked by vociferous debate. There is no consensus, for example, about the merits of massive military strikes against terrorists. However, most scholars who examine the effectiveness of targeted killings conclude that this tactic is usually ineffective and sometimes counterproductive.

## **Israeli Counterterrorism is Ineffective**

Contrary to the conventional wisdom outlined above, Israeli counterterrorism collectively has failed to durably reduce the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks. I corroborate the claims of Jordan and Zussman and Zussman that targeted killings are ineffective, and I assert that, contrary to the findings of LaFree et al and Ginges, and in line with the findings of Lyall, massive Israeli military reprisals have proven temporarily effective against Palestinian terrorist activity, and would likely prove durably effective if implemented consistently.<sup>4</sup>

### **Collective Ineffectiveness**

The Israeli Security Agency (ISA) reported an increase in the number of Palestinian terrorist attacks in November 2010, December 2010, and January 2011. And, on March 23, a bomb exploded in Jerusalem for the first time in four years (*ABC News* 2011). Both ISA reports and recent headlines instantiate a former Deputy National Security Advisor warning that it is only a matter of time until “the next round” (Roey, interview with author, 13 January 2011).

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<sup>4</sup> I illustrate the logic behind this assertion in Chapter Four and examine its normative implications in Chapter Five.



## Incidents Over Time



Figure 4<sup>5</sup>

## Casualties Over Time

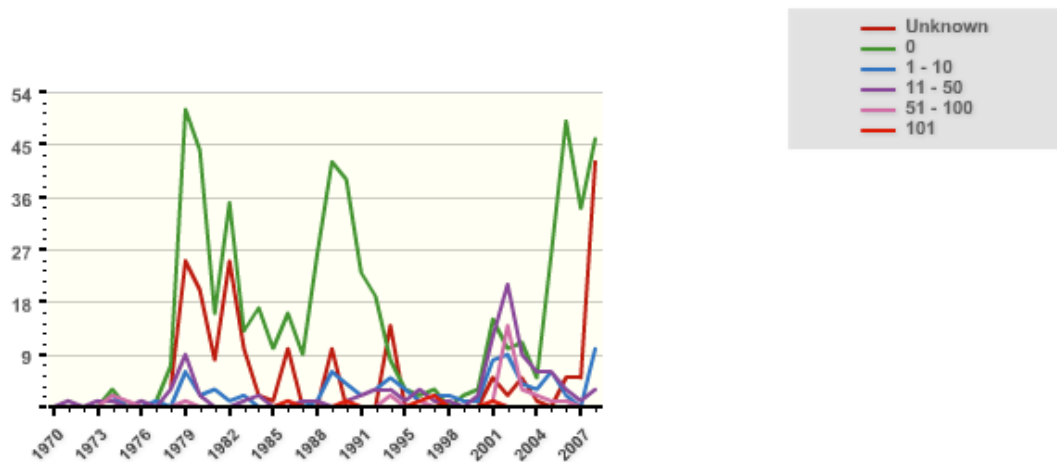


Figure 5<sup>6</sup>

The Global Terrorism Database is the most comprehensive unclassified data base of terrorist activity; it cites over 87,000 terrorist attacks worldwide, includes

<sup>5</sup> Global Terrorism Database Israel- Incidents, <<http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?country=97>>.

<sup>6</sup> Global Terrorism Database Israel-Casualties, <[http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=casualties&casualties\\_type=&casualties\\_max=&country=97](http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=casualties&casualties_type=&casualties_max=&country=97)>.

information on at least 45 variables for each attack, the most significant being the date of the attack, the city, the perpetrator, the number of fatalities, the number injured, the target type, the attack type, and the weapon type. According to the Global Terrorism Database, terrorists perpetrated 1489 attacks against Israelis between 1970 and 2008. Frequent perpetrators of attacks include the Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Hamas, and Hizbullah Brigades in Palestine. The most frequent attack-type was bombing/explosion, followed by armed assault (GTD Israel Search Results).

Figure 4 illustrates the fluctuations in the frequency and Figure 5 the lethality of terrorist attacks on Israeli soil from 1970-2008. Notably, Figure 4 demonstrates that the frequency of Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israelis has not diminished over the years, but rather, consists of a series of wildly fluctuating peaks and valleys. The frequency of Palestinian attacks fluctuated from about 10 in 1974, to 130 in 1979, down to 20 in 1985, back up to 100 in 1991, down to 10 in 1995, back up to 70 in 2002, down to 20 in 2004, back up to 130 in 2008. The Global Terrorism Database does not record the number of attacks past 2008, but, as mentioned above, the ISA publicizes monthly reports on the numbers of attacks and has reported increases in recent months.

Figure 5 demonstrates a similarly wildly fluctuating lethality line. Just as the number of attacks against Israelis has cycled up and down over the past four decades, so too has the number of Israelis killed and wounded by those attacks. The lethality of Palestinian attacks against Israelis also appears to be roughly correlated with the frequency of Palestinian attacks. That is, years in which Palestinian terrorists

perpetrate attacks more frequently are also years in which Palestinian terrorists perpetrate more lethal attacks.

Roey's testimony lends qualitative credence to the empirical evidence countering the conventional wisdom that there has been a decline in Palestinian terrorism. Roey explains that:

The last few days have been relatively quiet, but for a couple weeks people were saying uh-oh, are we heading for the next round? It's a question of time, when they've licked their wounds, when they decide they're willing to pay the price again, when they complete more of the arms buildup that they've done. On both fronts I think that the next round is anywhere between two minutes from now and a couple years from now, but it's just a question of when.

Roey's concern that "the next round" could be "two minutes from now" demonstrates his cognizance of the cyclical nature (rather than gradual decline) of Palestinian terrorist activity. Similarly, Gal explains that "Yes it got quiet after Cast Lead, but it's been quiet before, and then another wave [of attacks]. Have you seen? We've seen more activity in the last few months again. No it won't keep quiet."

Scholars and policymakers who laud Israeli counterterrorism might argue that Palestinian terrorist attacks would have been more frequent and/or more lethal in the absence of Israeli counterterrorism efforts. This could be true. Others might argue that the periodic dips in the frequency and lethality of Palestinian attacks are demonstrated responses to the implementation of effective Israeli counterterrorism. This could also be true. It is inarguably clear, however, that Israeli counterterrorism has succeeded in *durably* reducing neither the frequency nor the lethality of Palestinian terrorists attacks. Therefore, by the criterion outlined in Chapter One, Israeli counterterrorism has been ineffective.

## Targeted Killings

The ineffectiveness of Israeli counterterrorism can be attributed in part to the routine implementation of ineffective counterterrorist tactics such as targeted killings.

Though the policy began covertly in July 1956 with the Israeli targeted killing of Mustafa Hafaz, Israel has openly endorsed targeted killings since the inception of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000. Israelis have identified, located, and killed alleged Palestinian terrorists with helicopter gun-ships, fighter aircrafts, tanks, car bombs, booby traps, and bullets (David 2002). Dozens of Palestinians have been killed, and both the ethical implications and the questionable legality of the targeted killings have incited international opprobrium and local retaliation. Given the controversy and the costs of the tactic, it is necessary to consider whether this policy is worth pursuing. Has the policy of targeted killings been effective in reducing the frequency and lethality of Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians?

Purportedly, Israel has embarked on a policy of targeted killings in order to undermine Palestinian terrorist organizations' ability to plan and perpetrate attacks against Israeli civilians. Supporters of the tactic assert that the killing of terrorist operatives with special skills (such as Yehia Ayyash, a Hamas bomb-maker known as "The Engineer" in January 1996) and unusual charisma (such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad head Fathi Shikaki in October 1995) (David 2002, 4) both deters future terrorist attacks and interferes with Palestinian terrorist organizations' capacity to plan and perpetrate attacks. On the other side of the equation, many argue that targeted killings provoke Palestinian terrorist organizations to perpetrate more frequent and more lethal attacks in pursuit of revenge, or in an opportunistic drive to capitalize

politically on the wave of anti-Israel sentiment accompanied by the much-publicized targeted killings of Palestinian leadership.

Figure 4 illustrates the rise in the frequency of Palestinian terrorist attacks after the public initiation of the policy of targeted killing (also, of course, concurrent with the onset of the 2000 al-Aqsa Intifada), the decline in frequency of attacks in 2003 and 2004, and the rise and subsequent fluctuations in frequency from 2006. It is difficult to isolate the effects of targeted killing on frequency from the effects of simultaneously implemented Israeli counterterrorism tactics. One method is to identify “significant” (gauged perhaps by the media coverage) targeted killings and examine the frequency of attacks in the days, weeks, and months preceding the killing, and the days, weeks, and months immediately following the assassination. However, statistical analyses of varying lag times is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I refer to the work of Zussman and Zussman and Jordan, examine responses to two particularly significant targeted killings, and cite interviewee testimony to the backlash effect.

The claim that Israeli targeted killings do not lower the frequency of Palestinian terrorist attacks, and may actually increase them, is supported by the Palestinian reaction to several high profile targeted assassinations. For example, on December 31, 2001, IDF soldiers killed Dr. Thabet Ahmad Thabet, a high-ranking member of Fatah. The Israeli army had identified Dr. Thabet as the operator of a cell of Palestinian gunmen attacking Israeli troops and towns. After the assassination, Israeli cousins Motti Dayan and Etgar Seuituni were dragged from a restaurant in Tulkarem and shot by several Palestinians, including a nephew of Dr. Thabet.

According to one report, Muselma Thabet said that “If I ever leave prison I am prepared to kill 100 Israelis.” Days later, a Jewish settler was shot dead in a drive-by shooting near Ramallah, another revenge attack in the name of Dr. Thabet (*BBC News* 2001).

In this instance, the killing of one Palestinian leader prompted two retributive terrorist attacks killing three Israelis. Similarly David concedes that the 1996 assassination of Yahya Ayyash (“The Engineer”), a Palestinian bomb-maker in Gaza with a booby-trapped cell-phone, “unleashed four suicide bus bombings in the next two months, killing more than fifty Israelis” (David 2002, 4). Both incidents demonstrate that targeted killings of Palestinian leaders may provoke an increased frequency of retaliatory Palestinian terrorist attacks.

Additionally, there is very little evidence that targeted killings reduce the capabilities of Palestinian terrorists to plan and perpetrate terrorist attacks. In some cases, such as the West German Baader-Meinhof Gang and the Peruvian Shining Path, the arrest or killing of the top leadership effectively neutralized the organization. However, because Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah have a large pool of operatives and potential recruits, killing a few prominent individuals may be counterproductive. For example, During Operation Defensive Shield in April 2002, Israeli military forces arrested or killed a number of Hamas bomb-makers, seemingly dealing a serious blow to the organization. Yet Hamas bomb-makers from the Gaza Strip soon simply infiltrated the West Bank and began to produce explosives anew.

Even Abraham, a retired senior-ranking member of Shabak and commander of many targeted killing operations, conceded that the tactic is a “double-edged sword.

Of course, they won't like it and they will want to hit back" (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011). Similarly, Binyamin recounted his experiences interviewing apprehended attempted suicide bombers and their expressions of anger and resentment at the Israeli practice of targeted killings and arrests (Binyamin, interview with author, 18 January 2011).

Also, the consequences of botched targeted killing operations are grave. For example, on 24 September 1997, Mossad operatives carrying forged Canadian passports entered Jordan and injected Hamas political leader Khalid Mashaal with poison, yet failed to kill him. In the aftermath of this botched operation, the government of Jordan was able to extract political concessions from Israel, including the release from an Israeli prison of Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin.

In sum, the empirical evidence, the findings of Jordan and Zussman and Zussman, Palestinian responses to several high profile targeted killings, and the testimony of Israeli experts in the field to the backlash effect, explain why the Israeli practice of targeted killings has reduced neither the frequency nor the lethality of Palestinian attacks, and seems instead to have provoked retaliatory attacks. Despite the inefficacy and indeed the counter-productivity of the practice, the National Security Establishment (NSE), primarily the IDF and Shabak, continue to implement and the Israeli government to endorse the practice.

### **Punitive Military Strikes**

Israel has implemented a number of punitive military strikes, originally more frequently against state aggressors including Egypt and Jordan, and since 1967 more commonly against Hezbollah and Palestinian terrorists and terrorist infrastructure.

Below is a chronological list of notable (based on scale) Israeli military strikes against Palestinian terrorist targets.

- March 1978 Operation Litani
- 1985 Operation Wooden Leg
- 2002 Operation Defensive Shield
- May 2004 Operation Rainbow
- October 2004 Operation Days of Penitence
- 2006 Operation Summer Rains
- February-March 2008 Operation Hot Winter
- 2008: Operation Cast Lead

The largest IDF military strikes were Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 and Operation Cast Lead in 2008. These strikes were followed by the most striking decreases in the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks.

The strategic logic behind such punitive military strikes is similar to that of targeted killings. The purported intent is to both deter future terrorist attacks and to interfere with Palestinian terrorist organizations' capacity to plan and perpetrate attacks. But instead of targeting Palestinian leadership, punitive military strikes aim to deter and cripple by killing large numbers of Palestinian terrorists and leveling their infrastructure such that they no longer have the manpower, capabilities, or will to strike back. Lyall cites this logic in explaining the success of such strikes in Chechnya. On the other hand, the logic against such attacks is also similar to that against targeted killings- as explained by LaFree et al and Eppright, such strikes might prompt Palestinian terrorist organizations to perpetrate more frequent and more lethal attacks in pursuit of revenge, or perhaps in an opportunistic drive to capitalize politically on the wave of anti-Israel sentiment engendered by the strikes. However, while both targeted killings and large-scale military strikes will ignite Palestinian resentments, the former is based on the assumption (disproved above) that



decapitation is a sufficient deterrent and capabilities-crusher. On the other hand, large-scale military strikes such as Operation Defensive Shield and Operation Cast Lead suffice, at least in the short run, to crush capabilities and to convince terrorist leadership that the benefits of striking are outweighed by the enormous costs of Israeli retaliations.

### **Operation Defensive Shield**

The frequency and lethality of Palestinian attacks reached peaks directly before and plummeted directly after both Operation Defensive Shield and Operation Cast Lead. Operation Defensive Shield, initiated on 29 March 2002 and completed on 3 May 2002, was a large-scale counterterrorist operation conducted by the IDF in Palestinian towns and villages in the West Bank designed to halt the waves of Palestinian suicide bombings against Israeli civilians during the Second Intifada. The spark that gave rise to the Operation was the March 27 suicide bombing at a hotel in the Israeli resort city of Netanya, which killed 30 mostly elderly vacationers. Operation Defensive Shield began on 29 March 2002 with an incursion into Ramallah that placed Yasser Arafat under siege in his Ramallah compound, followed by incursions into the six largest cities in the West Bank. The IDF invaded Tulkarm and Qalqilya on April 1, Bethlehem the next day, Jenin and Nablus the next. From April 3-21, the IDF imposed strict curfews on Palestinian civilian populations and restricted the movement of international personnel.

I asked each interviewee to identify examples of effective Israeli counterterrorism.<sup>7</sup> 14 out of the 16 independently identified Operation Defensive

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix for sample interview.

Shield as an example of effective counterterrorism. Abraham of Shabak, for example, called Operation Defensive Shield “the turning point in the Second Intifada. Attacks disappeared for a while after that” (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011). Likewise, Gal, a retired Major General, explained that “control on the ground” is critical in counterterrorism, and that was why re-occupying most of the West Bank (and Gal explained that Operation Defensive Shield was essentially a reoccupation) was so effective (Gal, interview with author, 19 January 2011). Likewise, Boaz Ganor concludes that “the campaign was proven to be effective and contributed much towards preventing terrorism” (Ganor 2005, 71). Figure 4 corroborates the testaments of these individuals, as it is clear to see that attacks peaked in 2002 before the Operation and dropped in the wake of the Operation.

### **Operation Cast Lead**

Operation Cast Lead was a three-week Israeli operation in response to rocket fire from and arms import into the Gaza Strip. Israel opened the attack with a surprise air strike against the Hamas targets in Gaza on December 27, 2008, and followed this air strike with a ground invasion on January 3. Although too recent an attack to examine using the Global Terrorism Database (which includes data through but not after 2008), there is substantial qualitative support for the assertion that Operation Cast Lead, like Operation Defensive Shield, was followed by a sharp decline in the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israelis. Ethan Bronner of the *New York Times* reported that after Operation Cast Lead, “Hamas has suspended its use of rockets and shifted focus to winning support at home and abroad through cultural initiatives and public relations.” A Hamas leader and former fighter

explained that “The current situation required a stoppage of rockets. After the war, the fighters needed a break and the people needed a break” (Bronner 2009). Gal explained that the only way to deter Palestinian terrorist attacks is to convince them that they are better off “laying low,” and the best way to convince them is to “hit them hard” (Gal, interview with author, 19 January 2011). Since 2008 (perhaps until the past few months) Hamas has largely held its fire.

Skeptics might argue that it is impossible to attribute the declines in the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks to these two Operations, given the simultaneous implementation of countless additional counterterrorist tactics, the political situation in the West Bank and Gaza, and the role of the international community. Statistically isolating for confounding variables is beyond the scope of this paper (I focus on qualitatively examining Israeli counterterrorism decision-making), and I encourage other scholars to perform such rigorous quantitative research. It seems unlikely, however, that the sharp drops in the frequency and lethality of attacks following these massive Operations could be coincidental. The logic of deterrence (expounded in Chapter Four) and the accounts of my interviewees support the assertion that there is a causal relationship between heavy-handed punitive military strikes and reductions in the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks.

Important to note, however, is that the decline in the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks in the wake of Operation Defensive Shield was only temporary, and that the current period of relative quiet on the Israel-Gaza border is also, likely, only temporary. As Ethan Bronner put it, “How long Hamas will hold its

fire...remains unclear.” I posit, however, that such punitive military strikes would prove more durably successful if they were implemented consistently, rather than occasionally and sporadically. Though both operations were launched in response to waves of Palestinian attacks, Israel did not respond in kind to similar waves of attacks, such as the wave in 2005 following the disengagement from Gaza. As Abraham explained, “They shoot a rocket one day we bomb them, they shoot a rocket another day we do nothing. In one case we do one thing, in the same case we do another thing” (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011).

## **In Sum**

Israeli counterterrorism collectively is ineffective. Specific tactics such as targeted killings are usually ineffective and at times counterproductive, while punitive military strikes seem to reduce the frequency and lethality of Palestinian attacks in the immediately following months. The question, then, is why does Israel frequently implement ineffective tactics like targeted killings and rarely implement effective tactics like punitive military strikes?

## **Israeli Counterterrorism Strategy is Incoherent**

In Chapter Four, I explain that the collective inefficacy of Israeli counterterrorism is the product of the inconsistency resulting from Israeli counterterrorism strategic incoherence. In this section, I define strategic coherence and incoherence, and demonstrate that Israeli counterterrorism strategy is incoherent.

## What is Strategic Coherence?

With regards counterterrorism, strategic coherence signifies that the ends and the means match; that is, each counterterrorist tactic implemented is designed to help achieve clearly stated end goals. Stephen Sklenka explains that US failures in Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, and Iraq “are not coincidental.” Rather, failures

are to be expected when strategic vision is lacking. Clear, succinct, and obtainable ends must be articulated by national leadership prior to the commitment of force to ensure that force is actually representative of appropriate and corresponding means to achieve those ends. Moreover, only a unified strategic design can ensure that the means are properly employed and that the ends remain focused- especially when the environment changes in such a way as to engender a necessary adjustment to those ends that requires a commensurate adjustment in dedicated means as well...The principal lesson to be learned is that... success can only be achieved if...a coherent strategy is developed to coordinate the ends and means (Sklenka 2007, v).

He further specifies that the

ends-means mismatch has in turn posed predictable challenges to the development of a coherent strategy vis-à-vis Iraq...Strategy is defined as a “complex decisionmaking process that connects the ends sought (objectives) with the ways and means of achieving those ends.”...Strategy requires the assemblage and coordination of specified acts deliberately linked together in a manner designed to achieve a specific end or set of ends...a coherent strategy begins with the identification of a desired objective or end. Understanding purposes and objectives will not guarantee victory, but failure to understand them virtually guarantees defeat (Sklenka 2007, 5).

Sklenka attributes US failures in Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, and Iraq to the absence of a coherent strategy connecting clearly articulated ends with the requisite means to achieve those ends. He explains that a coherent strategy is one in which means, or, “acts” are “deliberately linked together in a manager designed to achieve” “purposes and objectives.” Similarly, Carl von Clausewitz wrote that “No one starts a war- or rather, no one in his sense ought to do so- without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it” (Clausewitz 1984,

579), while Liddell Hart asserts that “Strategy depends for success, first and most, on a sound calculation and coordination of the ends and the means” (Hart 1967, 322).

Coherent counterterrorism strategies are characterized by *long-term thinking*; that is, the implementers of counterterrorist tactics consider how tactics implemented today will contribute to the achievement of end goals tomorrow. Rational decision-makers thus eschew those tactics that they anticipate will undermine efforts to achieve long term goals, and implement tactics that they believe will help to achieve those goals. Additionally, and, perhaps even more critically, coherent counterterrorist strategies are characterized by *consistency*; that is, implementers of counterterrorist measures apply similar punitive measures in response to a specific terrorist tactic each time that tactic is implemented.

### **What is Incoherence?**

An alternative to a coherent strategy would be an approach in which the end goals are not articulated (which, according to Sklenka, “virtually guarantees defeat”), or one characterized by an “ends-means mismatch,” that is, by the absence of a “coherent strategy” to ensure that means match desired ends. Incoherent approaches to counterterrorism are characterized by *short-term thinking* and *inconsistency*.

#### **Short-Term Thinking**

In attributing US failure in Haiti to the lack of a coherent strategy, Sklenka notes that “the means employed were designed for the achievement of a short-term objective rather than the lasting ends” (Sklenka 2007, 15). Although in the Haitian example, long-term end goals were, in fact, articulated, in cases marked by the absence of clearly articulated end goals (such as the Israeli case), counterterrorism

decision-makers and organizations must necessarily either operate according to their own conceptions of long term goals, or, as is most often the case, focus instead on the achievement of the more easily agreed-upon and achieved short-term goals.

### **Inconsistency**

Sklenka further notes that “inconsistent policies in the application of certain means, predominantly the use of force, more often than not result from poor strategic vision” (Sklenka 2007, 13); that is, the lack of a coherent strategy often results in the inconsistent application of force. In the absence of a clear framework to link operational tactics with long-term objectives, the various organizations and individuals implementing defense tactics are free to preempt or respond to adversarial threats as they see fit. Different organizational structures, conceptions of defense objectives, personalities, internal and international pressures, and evolving perceptions of the adversarial threat over time cause different organizations and individuals to implement different tactics at different times, sometimes applying punitive measures in response to a particular terrorist tactic one day and rewarding that same tactic the next. Short-term thinking certainly contributes to strategic inconsistency. When relevant decision-makers are not held accountable for operating within a framework that matches today’s means with tomorrow’s ends, and instead concern themselves only with the short-term repercussions of particular tactics, they have little reason to rigorously ensure the consistency of their application of tactics.

### **A Glance at Coherent Strategies**

The U.K., the EU, and the UN have all developed coherent counterterrorism strategies. The U.K. counterterrorism strategy, known as CONTEST, typifies the

coherent strategic approach. The end goal of CONTEST is “to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.” CONTEST programs, originally outlined in 2003, and revised and greatly expanded-upon in 2006, are organized into four strands:

- 1) Pursuit- using intelligence effectively to disrupt and apprehend the terrorists. The UK has increased joint working and intelligence-sharing between governments and law enforcement agencies across the world. At home, the government aims to make UK borders more secure, to make identity theft harder and to curb terrorist access to financial sources.
- 2) Prevention- addressing underlying causes of terrorism in the UK and overseas. That means, among other things, ensuring that Muslim citizens enjoy the full protection of the law and are able to participate to the full in British society
- 3) Protection- ensuring that reasonable security precautions, including those needed to meet a CBRN threat, are in place, ranging from physical measures at airports to establishing Counter-Terrorism Security Advisers in each police force
- 4) Preparedness- making sure that the UK has the people and resources in place to respond effectively to the consequences of a terrorist attack (The UK counter-terrorism strategy).

The UK has identified its long-term counterterrorism goals, and it has delineated a four-pronged strategy by which the specific means for achieving those goals are organized. Responsibility for implementing CONTEST rests upon the contributions of a range of government departments, led by the Home Office, the police and intelligence services and other public bodies. The most recent version of CONTEST is 176 pages long. CONTEST is, in short, an exceedingly clear, thorough, and coherent expression of UK counterterrorism strategy designed to ensure that today’s means match tomorrow’s ends.

CONTEST is long-term thinking and the tactics implemented within the CONTEST framework are implemented consistently. One of the guiding principles in NSS 2008 was that “Wherever possible, we will tackle security challenges early.” In



line with this, the government stated that it was “committed to improving our ability to scan the horizon for future security risks, and to developing our capabilities for preventive action” and would therefore consider “How to strengthen the Government’s capacity for horizon-scanning, forward-planning and early warning to identify, measure, and monitor risks and threats” (Debate on 4<sup>th</sup> February: The National Security Strategy, 2010).

Supranational bodies concerned with combating terrorism, such as the EU and the UN, also seek to develop coherent counterterrorism strategies. For example, in a EU “Theoretical Treatise on Counter-Terrorism Approaches,” it is stated that modifications to current counterterrorism policy are necessary in order to develop a more “coherent counter-narrative and communication strategy” and the “efficient coordination of counterterrorism efforts.” Similarly, a *Transnational Terrorism, Security, & Rule of Law* Work Package discussed the need for the EU to develop a “coherent counterterrorism policy” (Towards a comprehensive, coherent, and ethically just European counterterrorism policy).

Finally, the UN General Assembly adopted a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in September 2006 in which they resolved to “develop State capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and enhance coordination and coherence within the UN system in promoting international cooperation in countering terrorism” (UN Action to Counter Terrorism).

### **The Strategic Incoherence of Israeli Counterterrorism**

On the other hand, Israeli counterterrorism strategy is entirely incoherent. Israel has failed to reach consensus on long-term end goals, and in the absence of end

goals, Israeli counterterrorism is characterized by short-term thinking and inconsistency.

### **Incoherence**

A number of interviewees testified to the incoherence of Israeli counterterrorism. As Abraham succinctly put it, “incoherence is the name of the game...we make careers of incoherence” (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011). Similarly, Levi, in speaking about the Israeli counterterrorism system, cautioned that “A system that runs on incoherence, as a pattern of action, gradually unravels” (Levi, interview with author, 19 January 2011). Finally, Chaim said “Of course it is incoherent. The threat is incoherent, the response is incoherent” (Chaim, interview with author, 18 January 2011). Although Chaim portrays strategic incoherence as the appropriate response to the amorphous Palestinian threat, he, also, deems Israeli counterterrorism incoherent.

Freilich, who is currently writing a book on national security decision-making in Israel, wrote in a recent *Middle East Journal* article called “National Security Decision-Making in Israel: Processes, Pathologies, and Strengths” that

Foreign embassies and officials wishing to understand Israeli policy have long been cognizant of this absence of coherent policy and consequently have adopted a “polling” approach- i.e., canvassing opinion among a comparatively large cross-section of agencies, officials, and ministers- in the hope of gaining an overall impression of possible directions and who might be responsible for their implementation (Freilich 2006, 252).

Also, in a section of the article entitled “There is No Policy,” Freilich wrote that “on most issues there is quite simply no Israeli policy, and ministries and agencies, and often the entire system, operate in virtual ignorance, relying on their own “guesstimates” of what they believe policy to be” (Freilich 2006, 252).

The incoherence of Israeli counterterrorism strategy is evidenced by Israeli exhibitions of short-term thinking and inconsistency.

### **Short-Term Thinking**

Israel has not articulated end goals to guide Israeli counterterrorism strategy.

Charles Freilich explains that in Israel,

The persistent threat of imminent or actual hostilities has led to a nearly total preoccupation in Israel with the ‘thundering present’ and to the development of a national security decision-making process geared toward ad hoc solutions to immediate problems. Many of the issues Israel faces present only a narrow range of options, require clear and immediate decisions in a highly charged and uncertain atmosphere, and do not lend themselves to incremental decision-making (Freilich 2006, 643).

Freilich further explains that Israeli short-term thinking results in a tendency toward reactive decision-making and crisis management rather than long-term strategic planning.

A number of interviewees corroborated Freilich’s characterization of Israeli counterterrorism as short-term thinking. Abraham, former senior-ranking official in Shabak, explains that when it comes to Israeli counterterrorism, “There is no policy, we don’t have a 5 year plan.” He also explained that “all of the influence are belonging- all the forces belong to the attack, to people who believe that we have to kill the Arabs...you have to put in this cook people who think about...what we are leaving for our children. What will be the symbol of Israel?” (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011). Abraham is implying that the Israeli counterterrorism apparatus does not include people who consider the future, that is, the legacy of Israeli counterterrorism in the generations to come. Roey explained that:

if you live in that kind of chaotic environment, then planning is even more important, if you have a stable environment, planning is easy. When it’s chaotic, and when the costs are enormous then you really have to try and think

about what you're going to do...you really should be doing pretty careful policy formulation to try and understand at least a big picture of what you're trying to achieve. And Israel doesn't do that (Roey, interview with author, 13 January 2011).

In sum, Roey asserts that Israel does not engage in careful policy formulation to try to “understand at least a big picture of what you're trying to achieve.” Like Abraham and Freilich, Roey characterizes Israeli counterterrorism strategy as myopic.

### **Inconsistency**

Israeli counterterrorism's strategic incoherence is also characterized by inconsistency. Abraham explains that “They shoot a rocket one day, we bomb them, they shoot a rocket another day, we do nothing. In one case we do one thing, in the same case we do another thing. There is no logic between to do this one or to do that one” (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011). Abraham is explaining that Israel does not respond to Palestinian attacks in a consistent way, but rather, Israel responds to one Palestinian attack type in one way one day, and to that same attack type on another day, in a different way. Likewise, Gal criticizes Israeli counterterrorism for its inconsistent application of force: “We don't do the hard, permanent, constant attacks that we need...Sometimes we do constant attacks, but not all the time. Since the last operation in Gaza, the way that we are handling it is that we are not crossing red lines” (Gal, interview with author, 19 January 2011).

The claims made by these high-ranking IDF and ICC are supported by a history of inconsistent Israeli counterterrorism. For example, Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield as a punitive military strike designed to halt the recent wave of suicide attacks against Israeli civilians during the Second Intifada. One would think, then, that Israel would initiate a similar strike given the similarly high

levels of attacks launched from Gaza in 2005. But Israel did not initiate such a strike in 2005. Yet, Israel launched a strike in response (Operation Cast Lead) to similar levels of Palestinian violence in 2008. Israel's application of punitive military strikes is quite clearly (and contrary to the predictions of the rationalist model) inconsistent.

### **In Sum**

Unlike the UK, the EU, and the UN, Israel has not articulated counterterrorism end goals and has certainly not carefully matched end goals with appropriate means. Rather, Israeli counterterrorism is characterized by short-term thinking and inconsistency. Indeed, when it comes to Israeli counterterrorism strategy, "incoherence is the name of the game."

In Chapter Three, I will explain how the improvisational routines of the NSE and Israeli politicians' sensitivity to international pressures combine to produce the incoherence and corresponding short-term thinking and inconsistency described above.

## **Chapter Three: Organizational Routines and International Pressures**

In this chapter, I explain that the incoherence of Israeli counterterrorism is (in keeping with the organizational model outlined in Chapter One) primarily a product of the a-strategic routines implemented within National Security Establishment (NSE) organizations. On matters of defense, Israeli politicians exhibit a preference for deference to the NSE evidenced by the lack of a government policy to guide NSE activities and by the shirking of supervisory responsibilities. Thus, the NSE enjoys *carte blanche* in the conduct of counterterrorism. The NSE has developed routines designed for speed, flexibility, and improvisation, which (although conducive to short-term operational success), produce counterterrorism incoherence and result in the inconsistent application of counterterrorist tactics. Secondly, in those few occasions of disproportionate significance when Israeli politicians *do* exert agency in counterterrorism, the incoherence of Israeli counterterrorism is (in keeping with the international model outlined in Chapter One), a product of Israeli politicians' sensitivity to international norms and pressures.

In the first part of this chapter, I provide an overview of the organizations responsible for the conduct of Israeli counterterrorism. Then I establish the autonomy of the NSE, examine the organizational routines of NSE organizations, and illustrate the causal relationship between NSE routines and Israeli counterterrorism incoherence. Finally, I demonstrate the sensitivity of Israeli politicians to international pressures and illustrate the causal link between said sensitivity and counterterrorism incoherence.

## Overview of NSE Organizations

Although the Israeli NSE consists of a vast array of organizations supposedly responsible for different components of the defense process, each interviewee listed the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Shabak (represented in Figure 6 as “GSS”), Mossad, and Israel Police (IP) alone as the major players in Israeli counterterrorism.

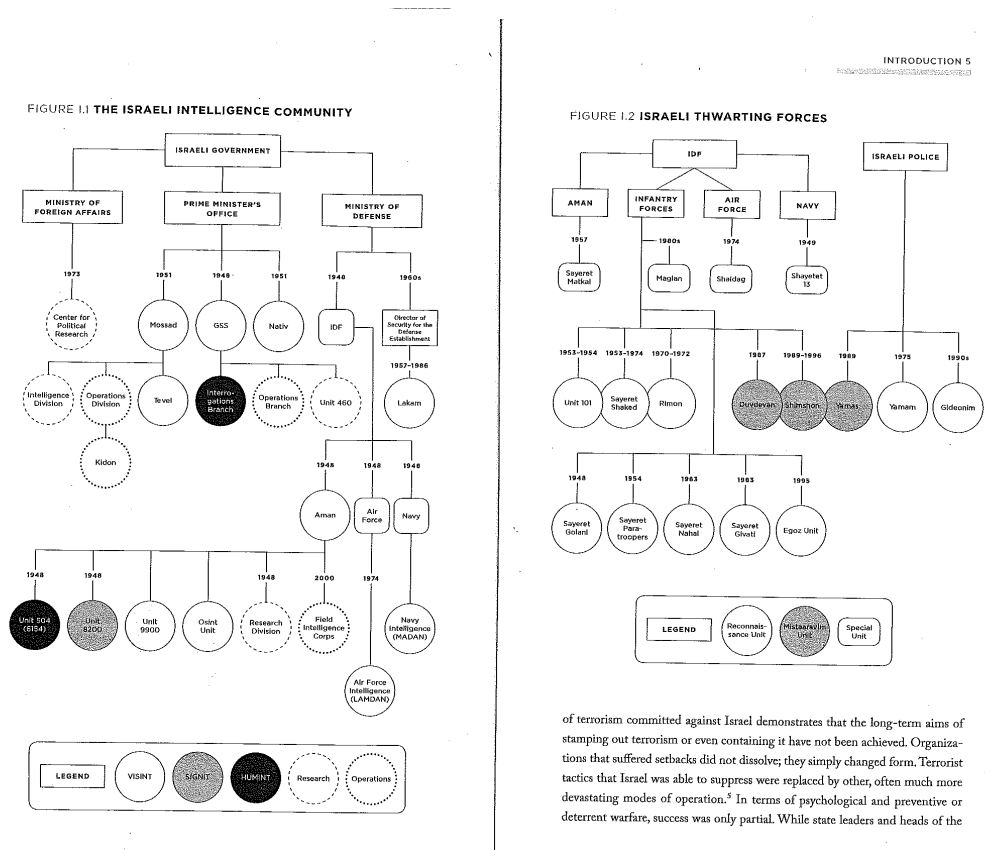


Figure 6<sup>8</sup>

## The Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

Primary responsibility for the conduct of counterterrorism operations is held by Israel’s ground, air, and naval forces, known as the IDF. The IDF formed after

<sup>8</sup> Pedahzur 2009, 4-5.

Independence in 1948 out of the paramilitary wing the Haganah, incorporating paramilitary organizations Irgun and Lehi. The IDF was immediately called into action during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, when Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria simultaneously attacked Israel. Though operating originally on three fronts- against Lebanon and Syria in the north, Jordan and Iraq in the east, and Egypt in the south, since the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, the IDF has shifted its activities to southern Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, marking the shift in Israeli military priorities from combating threats posed by neighboring states, to combating threats posed by terrorists within Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

The IDF is comprised of the ground forces, the air force, and the navy; all answer to the General Staff, the Chief of which is subordinate directly to the Minister of Defense. The IDF is divided into 4 regional commands- the Northern Command, the Central Command, the Southern Command, and the Home Front Command (the Home Front Command is less significant with regards counterterrorism). The Northern Command is responsible for combating Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, the Central Command for counterterrorism in the Sharon, Gush Dan, Shephelah, and, most significantly, the West Bank and Jerusalem, and the Southern Command for counterterrorism in the Negev, the Arava, and Eilat, and, most significantly, for all operations in Gaza.

The IDF is also broken into six branches: the Planning, Operations, Intelligence, Manpower, Computer Service, and Technological and Logistics Directorates. Of these Directorates, Operations and Intelligence (commonly called Aman) are most directly involved in Israeli counterterrorism activities. With units in



the Air Force, Sea Corps, Intelligence Corps, Field Intelligence Corps, Sayeret Matkal (General Staff Reconnaissance Unit), and in the four Regional Commands, Aman is the supreme military intelligence branch of the IDF. Within Aman, Unit 8200 is responsible for collecting signal intelligence and code decryption, the Visual Intelligence Branch for camera intelligence, and the HUMINT branch for intelligence gathered through the use of spies and informants. Aman is one of the three pillars of the ICC along with Shabak and Mossad.

## **Shabak**

Since the Second Intifada, the Israeli Security Agency (ISA), also called the Shin Bet, the Shabak, or the GSS, has led the ICC in counterterrorism intelligence collection. Shabak is responsible for internal security, including in the Israeli-occupied territories, and is charged specifically with safeguarding state security, exposing terrorist rings, interrogating terror suspects, providing intelligence for counterterrorism operations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, counter-espionage, personal protection of senior public officials, securing important infrastructure and government buildings, and safeguarding Israeli airlines and overseas embassies.

Shabak uses three types of intelligence- HUMINT (spies and informants), SIGINT (signal intelligence), and Vis Aid (camera intelligence). Shabak relies primarily on HUMINT to gather the intelligence used to prevent terrorist attacks, arrest suspected terrorists, or “intercept” (kill) confirmed terrorists. Shabak also extracts intelligence from informants and apprehended terrorists with enormous success, supplying the relevant IDF units with the requisite intelligence to apprehend, and if they can’t apprehend, kill, additional suspects. Shabak works closely with the

units of the Central Command and Border Police to arrest targets, and with the Israeli Air Force to intercept targets via precision air strike.

Informant intelligence facilitated the killings of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Abed al-Azis Rantissi, demonstrating how deeply Shabak penetrates into Palestinian militias. Consequently, Palestinian leadership, mainly the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, have killed many Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel. Abraham, former Head of the Shabak Protection and Security Division, described his experiences monitoring "target research," or, the gathering of information about suspected terrorists. He recounted how "I listened to a man that we killed. He was terrified. He can't think because he knew we were looking for him" (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011). This statement is illustrative of the penetration of Shabak intelligence- not only was Abraham able to track the movements of this target, but he was able, through SIGINT, to monitor his emotional state. Roey said that

after 2002, after Israel reinvaded the West Bank cities, the Shin Bet basically infiltrated the West Bank to the extent that a Palestinian can't have a cup of coffee without the Shin Bet knowing about it. And if they're not drinking coffee, if they're doing less nice things, the time it takes to interdict them, from the time that they pick up the info to the time that there is a helicopter or ground patrol on the spot is down to nothing (Roey, interview with author, 13 January 2011).

Shabak, in sum, is the backbone of the counterterrorism intelligence upon which the majority of Israeli counterterrorism operations are predicated.

## **The Mossad**

The Mossad is responsible for intelligence collection and covert operations beyond the borders of Israel and its Arab neighbors. In addition to protecting Jewish

populations worldwide and bringing Jews to Israel from countries where official Aliyah agencies are forbidden, Mossad gathers intelligence on suspected terrorists and conducts targeted killing overseas (i.e. the February 2010 targeted killing of Hamas functionary Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai). Chaim created a hypothetical to distinguish between the jurisdictions of the Mossad and the other two pillars of the ICC (Aman and Shabak):

someone who lives in England comes first to Egypt, and then to Gaza, and from Gaza he manage to penetrate to Israel, and at the end of the day he manage to carry out some suicide attack in a bar in Tel Aviv. Who is in charge of the intelligence? Everything that happens in England is under the Mossad. So the responsibility to get certain information about this person or his organization or people who support him is in the yard of Mossad. Now when he comes to Egypt, who is responsible for intelligence in Egypt? This is the Israeli military intelligence- Aman. Mossad is everywhere that does not belong to the Arab countries. When he comes into Egypt, he is Aman. When he comes to Gaza, it tend to be primarily Shabak. When he enter Israel, it is a combination of Shabak and Police (Chaim, interview with author, 18 January 2011).

In recent years, however, Mossad has shifted its focus to the Iranian nuclear program, and responsibility for counterterrorism intelligence-gathering is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the Shabak.

### **The Israel Police (IP)**

Because the IDF is not legally empowered to engage in ordinary police functions within the borders of Israel, the IP exercises sole responsibility for counterterrorism within Israel proper, and also assists the IDF in the West Bank and Gaza. The IP is charged with crime fighting, traffic control, maintaining public safety, and counterterrorism. It operates throughout Israel, the Golan Heights, and Area C of the West Bank; that is, in all places in which Israel has full civilian control. Although the IP is charged primarily with reducing crime and traffic accidents, since 1974,

following the rise in Palestinian terrorism and a major attack in Maa'lot, one of its listed missions is "Keeping the peace and combating terrorist activity- dealing with terrorist attacks, as well as thwarting them" (Israel Police). The IP focuses on early prevention, interdiction, and treatment of the sources of terrorism, response activities once the attack has been launched, and response activities once the attack has occurred (Weisburd 2009).

The Israel Border Police (commonly known as the Magav), the combat branch of the IP, is particularly active in counterterrorism. While its main task is securing Israel's borders, it routinely assists the IDF and engages in counterterrorism and law enforcement operations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Border Police has four Special Forces units that engage in counterterrorism: YAMAM (Counter-Terror and Hostage Rescue Unit), YAMAS (Counter-Terror Undercover Unit), YAMAG (Tactical Counter-Crime and Counter-Terror Rapid Deployment Unit), and MATILAN. These units rescue hostages, arrest suspected terrorists, and thwart attempted attacks.

These four organizations that comprise the Israeli NSE are each responsible for and dedicated to counterterrorism. David explained that "it takes all the combined efforts to do it effectively... This is a combined effort" (David, interview with author, 12 January 2011). Likewise, Meir stated "they are all necessary. You need the internal intelligence, you need the overseas intelligence, you need units on the ground, you need police. It's all working together" (Meir, interview with author, 18 January 2011). Chaim, notes then, that "the problem is not to identify who is

responsible for what, but the real challenge is to make the necessary coordination”  
(Chaim, interview with author, 18 January 2011).

## **An Autonomous NSE**

Elected officials within the Israeli government (Israeli politicians) play no role in coordinating the activities of the NSE, preferring instead to defer to the NSE in nearly all matters of defense. The preference for deference resulting in the autonomy of the NSE is evidenced by the failure of the Israeli government 1) to produce a counterterrorism policy to guide NSE operations and 2) to supervise NSE operations.

## **No Government Counterterrorism Policy**

The Israeli government has not articulated a counterterrorism policy. The absence of a counterterrorism policy is a result of the weakness of the national defense machinery in the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), and, more specifically, in the National Security Council (NSC).

### **PMO**

The PMO is the governmental administration office responsible for coordinating the activities of all government ministry offices and for serving and assisting the Prime Minister in his daily work. Among its other responsibilities, the PMO is charged with formulating the Israeli cabinet’s policy, conducting cabinet meetings, supervising and overseeing the implementation of the cabinet’s policy, and monitoring and shaping diplomatic relations with foreign countries. In addition, it supervises a number of other governmental bodies directly subordinate to the PMO, including the Mossad, Shabak, and NSC (the Mossad and the Shabak, however, are

little influenced by the political supervision of the PMO). The NSC, on the other hand, belongs firmly outside the NSE and is charged with formulating national defense policies, including a counterterrorism policy.

Charles Freilich, a former Deputy National Security Advisor, explains that “neither the prime minister nor the cabinet have significant policy-making machinery at their disposal” (Freilich 2006, 641). In fact, prior to the establishment of the NSC in 1999, the PMO consisted of merely several advisers serving more as aides charged with taking care of the prime minister’s day-to-day needs than as policy formulators conducting systematic policy formulation and coordination. Freilich further explains that the Cabinet Secretariat, the sole support mechanism serving the cabinet, is a purely administrative unit, responsible for the technical flow of issues and documents (Freilich 2006, 641). Moreover, the Foreign Ministry lacks the personnel and organizational processes needed for systematic policy formulation and focuses instead on the day-to-day management of Israel’s foreign relations. Freilich notes that “Its Policy Planning Division remains an organizational backwater, whose outputs are almost totally dependent on the individuals composing it, with few permanent and structured procedures to ensure relatively constant and uniform performance” (Freilich 2006, 642). In short, the PMO lacks the capacity to devise national security policies.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu sought to remedy the weakness of the defense policy-formulating machinery in the PMO by establishing the National Security Council in 1999.

### **An Ineffectual National Security Council (NSC)**

In January 1999, in accordance with Government Resolution 4889, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced the creation of an American-style National Security Council designed to coordinate military and intelligence strategy and to formulate national defense policies, including a counterterrorism policy. Located near the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in Jerusalem, the NSC operates on the basis of the Prime Minister's guidelines, and the Head of the National Security Staff is subordinate directly to the Prime Minister. David, after listing the IDF, Shabak, Mossad, and Police as the Israeli agencies engaged in counterterrorism, explained that the NSC "is coordinating all the activities of all the agencies concerned with international security, including fighting against terrorists" (David, interview with author, 12 January 2011).

Several of the NSC's most significant objectives are as follows:

1. To centralize the council work of the Government, of the Ministerial Committee on National Security matters, and of any other ministerial committee regarding foreign and security affairs;
2. To track the performance of the decisions of the Government and its Committees as stated in Paragraph (1), and to report on their implementation to the Prime Minister;
3. To propose to the Prime Minister an agenda and issues for discussion for the Ministerial Committee on National Security Affairs, and for any other ministerial committee or other ministerial composition on foreign and security affairs, and to recommend the invitation of participants and the echelon of those invited, to their discussions;
4. To be responsible on the part of the Prime Minister, for the inter-organizational and inter-ministerial council work on foreign and security matters, to present him with the alternatives in the field, the differences between them and their significance, as assessed by it, and its recommendation to the Prime Minister regarding policy in these matters, as well as to present to the Government as stated, pursuant to the decision of the Prime Minister;
5. To prepare and to present to the Ministerial Committee on National Security Affairs, at least once per year, an annual and multi-year

evaluation of the Diplomatic Security situation, as well as to prepare situational assessments regarding issues tangential to them, including opinions and analyses in the various fields of intelligence, as needed and with the approval of the Prime Minister situational assessments as stated, (The National Security Council).

At the time of its creation, military experts worried that the NSC could represent a significant structural change for the government, with potentially significant policy ramifications, including the subordination of military arguments to broader diplomatic considerations (*NYTimes* 1999). To date, however, the NSC has had little impact on the work of the PMO or cabinet, as the prime ministers in office since its establishment (Barak, Sharon, Olmert, and now Netanyahu), have continued to work through the traditional advisers and processes rather than to incorporate the NSC into the process. Moreover, the NSC has only a small staff and, because if its merely “embryonic policy formulation capabilities...has been relegated to a largely inconsequential position” (Freilich 2006, 641).

Abraham explained that:

the National Security Council are laughing. Nobody counts them. Believe me they do nothing. When the Chief of Staff is strong, and the Head of the Shabak is very strong, and the Chief of Staff is very very strong, nobody calculates the National Security Council. And someone needs to give the civilian thought, another angle of solutions. And that is why we need a strong National Security Council (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011).

Similarly, Daniel dismissed the NSC as “a good idea- they realized they needed a policy, a framework, something to coordinate the activities of the services, but it can do nothing” (Daniel, interview with author, 25 January 2011).

Unfortunately, Chaim, a former Head of the NSC, refrained from commenting on the role of the NSC in policy-formulation. However, during Chaim’s tenure as



Head of the NSC, a prime minister (nameless to protect Chaim's anonymity) implemented a large-scale military operation (which shall likewise remain unnamed), and, according to Abraham and Yonatan, the NSC was not consulted about but was rather notified of the plan. Chaim actually later resigned from the NSC, a move that seems, given the circumstances discussed by Abraham and Levi, to imply frustration with the Prime Minister's disregard for the input of the NSC with regards significant counterterrorism operations. Similarly, a September 2007 *World Tribune* article covers an unrelated incident and notes that "Three leading members of Israel's National Security Council have resigned. Officials said the resignations were sparked by frustration over lack of authority and access to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert" (*World Tribune* 2007).

Moreover, several efforts on the part of the NSC to increase its ability to actually formulate and supervise Israeli counterterrorism were quashed. A state commission led by former Justice Eliyahu Winograd that called for the NSC to play a larger role in government decisions recommended reforms to strengthen the NSC, but these suggestions were disregarded. For example, Sharon rejected a major policy formulation process initiated by the NSC- an annual net assessment of Israel's strategic posture. According to Freilich, Sharon quashed this initiative "over concern that its findings and recommendations might impose constraints on his freedom of maneuver, especially after some of the first report's findings were published in the press" (Freilich 2006, 647). Freilich argues that "the fear of leaks, of the politicization of the issue and of a consequent loss of freedom of maneuver, apparently outweighs the calculus of the potential benefits attendant to systematic policy formulation

processes” (Freilich 2006, 648). Also, when I asked Daniel to describe the role of the NSC in counterterrorism, he responded:

No no. forget them. Who told you they do anything? They’re completely out of the game. No, counterterrorism is Shabak, it’s IDF, it’s a little bit Mossad, some Police. There’s no committees that do anything. Yes Shabak and Mossad make reports to the Prime Minister, but they don’t sit down with him before operations, unless they’re really big operations. And the Council is supposed to make policy, and there is no policy. What are they supposed to do? Look at the size of the IDF, look at the Shabak! And that’s the great strength of Israeli counterterrorism, and of course its weakness (Daniel, interview with author, 25 January 2011).

Menachem responded brusquely “forget them they’re not important. Counterterrorism is IDF” (Menachem, interview with author, 20 January 2011). Similarly, Gal responded: “it was clear right away that they weren’t going to make policy. Shabak and Mossad still do their own planning and operations. And of course the IDF” (Gal, interview with author, 19 January 2011).

A telling indicator of the irrelevance of the NSC can be found in the Israeli Budget Bills. According to the 2011 Israeli Budget Bill, the total Israeli budget (in NIS Thousands) is 348,185,234. Of the 17 government and administration organizations listed, the NSC, at 32,832, receives, by a margin of 8905 (in NIS Thousands), the smallest budget. In contrast, the budget of the Knesset is 496,557, the Ministry of Public Security 10,118,480, the Pension benefits and severance pay 11,882,604, and the Ministry of Defense a whopping 49,132,073. The 32,832 allocated to the NSC by the 2011 Israel Budget Bill marks a 4,504 (in NIS Thousands) increase since the 28,328 allocated to the NSC by the 2009 Israeli Budget Bill (State Budget Proposal). Of course, the increase is marginal, and the paltry resources allocated to the NSC both reflects and compounds its weakness.

In short, the NSC, the organization charged with developing, articulating, and overseeing the implementation of defense policies, is an irrelevant government body that has thus far failed to serve its designated purpose.

### **Political Disincentives to Create a Counterterrorism Policy**

The absence of a counterterrorism policy typifies the Israeli practice of avoiding policy articulation. Freilich explains that in Israel:

policies are rarely formulated, even on issues of importance, let alone articulated (publicly or internally)...Hard to accept as this may be, on most issues there is quite simply no Israeli policy, and ministries and agencies, and often the entire system, operate in virtual ignorance, relying on their own “guesstimates” of what they believe policy to be. Typically reflecting the simple absence of a systematically formulated policy beyond the prime minister’s private thoughts or partially articulated public positions, as well as the fact that the prime minister and other ministers often express conflicting policies, this also reflects a conscious decision on the part of prime ministers to avoid articulating policy (Freilich 2006, 652).

That is, counterterrorism is not the only pivotal issue on which “there is quite simply no Israeli policy,” and Freilich argues that the dearth of Israeli policies is the result of both conflicts of opinion and political disincentives. Although rigorous inquiry into the structural, political, and psychological sources of Israeli reticence to articulate policy is beyond the scope of this paper, I posit that the instability of the multiparty coalition structure of the Israeli government is at least in part to blame.

Besides the 1968-1969 Alignment, the Knesset, Israel’s unicameral parliament, has always been comprised of coalitions. As of 2009, there are 12 political parties represented in the Knesset, spanning both the political and religious spectra. While each party attains one seat for 1 in 120 votes, there is a minimum threshold (recently increased to 2%) for parties to attain their first seat in an election. The low vote-threshold for entry into parliament, as well as the need for parties with

small numbers of seats to form coalition governments, results in a highly fragmented political spectrum, with small parties exercising extensive power (relative to their electoral support) within coalitions.

Roey explains that

policy formulation requires two or three things that do not mesh with coalition government. First of all, if you want to formulate policy, you have to know what your objectives are. And the objectives in Israel aren't agreed. When you have such a wide range of views in the government, it's very very very hard to agree on the objectives. And if you can't agree on the objectives and the priorities, then it is very hard to agree on the options for achieving them, and that is why Israel just about doesn't have a formulated policy in almost any area. It's quite amazing (Roey, interview with author, 13 January 2011).

Roey attributes the dearth of Israeli policies to the fact that, in a multiparty coalition government in which a "wide range of views" is expressed, it is difficult enough to reach consensus on "objectives and priorities," and "very very very" difficult to reach consensus on the "options for achieving" those objectives and priorities. In short, Israel often does not articulate policies because policy formulation doesn't "mesh with coalition government."

Not only does the Israeli government fail to create policies in all issue areas because of the lack of consensus in exceptionally politically-fragmented coalitions, but policy formulation in the field of defense, in a government characterized by perpetual reelection campaigns, is particularly problematic for government officials seeking political advancement. Roey notes that "it's very hard to formulate long-term policy when you're always running for reelection" (Roey, interview with author, 13 January 2011). Levi explains that

the Israeli political system is highly unstable, and provides no incentive for the formulation of long-term policy in any field, and certainly not in security. Because security policy is very easy to milk for political capital. Very easy to

appear tough. Very easy to appear- So the politicians don't have any real reason to formulate political policy when it comes to security issues. There are no rewards. It won't pay off in any real way. What you do is, you don't initiate, because initiatives are risky in terms of political gain because you might be wrong. What you do is you turn up the volume when the IDF responds. And when the IDF arrests or kills some terrorists, you turn the volume up and take advantage of what sort of political capital there is to be gained in the situation (Levi, interview with author, 19 January 2011).

Levi is explaining that while there are disincentives for political officials to initiate defense policies, because they might "be wrong," there is ample incentive to sit back and allow the IDF to take the lead, then "turn the volume up" at opportune moments to capitalize politically on IDF activities.

In short, the Israeli governmental bodies assigned the task of developing and articulating Israeli counterterrorism policy have failed entirely to do so because the instability of the multiparty coalition structure of the government does not provide incentives, and in fact provides disincentives, to formulate defense policies.

### **No Governmental Supervision**

Not only has the Israeli government (particularly the NSC) failed to produce a counterterrorism policy to guide the NSE, but it also allows the NSE to conduct counterterrorism with minimal supervision. The IDF, ICC, and IP are at liberty to, for instance, gather intelligence, make arrests, build checkpoints, install metal detectors, impose curfews, interrogate prisoners, and intercept targets with minimal supervision from the political spheres.

The elimination of bureaucratic barriers between NSE services is an example of the manner in which the Israeli government has allowed itself to be excluded from the conduct of counterterrorism.

### **Elimination of Barriers Between Services**

The only common authority to which the IDF, ICC, and IP are all subordinate is the Prime Minister. However, most of the counterterrorist tactics implemented by the IDF, ICC, and IP on a daily basis do not reach the desk of the Prime Minister, nor the desk of the Defense Minister, nor any political official, for that matter. In order to subvert the chain of command to facilitate cooperation and coordination between counterterrorist organizations, bureaucratic barriers in Israel were gradually softened as direct channels of communication and operation along low levels were opened. This process was quickened during the Second Intifada, when the significance of real time intelligence came clearly to light. The efforts of the IDF to respond swiftly to the barrage of terrorist attacks during the period were hampered by the existing bureaucratic barriers separating the organizations.

**The Elimination of Barriers Facilitates Speed and Flexibility:**

Abraham, former Deputy Head of the Shabak Protection and Security

Division explained that:

We would get intelligence about a meeting of eight terrorist leaders in a building, and it might take half a day to sit down with the Defense Minister, and another half a day for the Defense Minister to make a decision, and another half day to make move. And by then it's useless. The meeting is over and the building is just a building. Totally useless (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011).

Abraham explained that counterterrorism was considerably hampered by the bureaucratic process. He explained that upon gathering intelligence, Shabak would have to arrange a meeting with the Defense Minister, the Defense Minister would then deliberate and decide whether or not to authorize the strike, he would then contact the Air Force, but by then "the building is just a building" and the operation "totally useless."

Similarly, former National Security Advisor Chaim explained that during the Second Intifada:

We learned that you have to destroy all the walls and to enable, for example, a brigade commander who belongs to the IDF to be able to give orders to the right person of Shabak who is sitting next to him, and to the right person of the Air Force who is flying the attack helicopter, in order to be able to respond immediately to information that arrives in a few seconds (Chaim, interview with author, 18 January 2011).

He explained that during the Second Intifada, as the importance of real-time intelligence came to light, “direct channels between organizations in a very low level” were created.” Chaim lauded the NSE for the successful opening of these “direct channels,” saying that “this is what makes us good at what we do.” David also commended the services for their ability to “coordinate their activities. It really is amazing. The speed with which intelligence goes to action. Wasn’t always that way” (David, interview with author, 12 January 2011).

#### **Elimination of Barriers Allows for Exclusion of Israeli Politicians:**

The elimination of bureaucratic barriers facilitates coordination between NSE services and the swift translation of intelligence into operations. It also allows for the exclusion of Israeli politicians from the counterterrorism process. No elected officials are required to monitor Shabak intelligence-gathering procedures or Border Police arrests. Israeli politicians could, however, choose to more actively involve themselves in the conduct of counterterrorism, but instead, they prefer to defer to the NSE, in part because they recognize the “need for speed,” and in part because they have no political incentives to intervene.

#### **Political Disincentives to Supervise the NSE**

I argue that the Israeli government shirks its supervisory role because the unstable, multiparty coalition system offers few incentives for politicians to exert agency over the NSE.

Freilich explains that rapid coalition turnovers “compel ministers to focus on the immediate electoral ramifications of their actions, rather than on effective governance.” He further explains that

For most ministers, party politics demand a disproportionate share of their time, and indeed, are a primary focus of activity....Ministers must continually jockey to shore up their positions and ensure their political futures. With an extraordinarily frenetic 24/7 news cycle, volatile party politics, and short terms between elections, many ministers’ time must be devoted to intra-party politics no less than to the affairs of their ministry and of state. Indeed, ministers’ future political careers usually have far less to do with how effectively they run their ministries than with how well they pander to their party’s constituency. Though the Defense Minister, and to a lesser extent, the Foreign Minister...they too must devote an inordinate amount of time and attention to party politics (Freilich 2006, 646).

Because the future of Israeli politicians’ careers is a product of “how well they pander to their party’s constituency,” Israeli politicians have little time to interfere in NSE activities. Also, as explained above, they have little incentive to interfere, because of the ease with which they can “milk” NSE activities for “political capital” without lifting a finger.

### **The IDF Knows Best:**

Moreover, interference in NSE activities requires considerable exertion given the degree to which the military establishment is enshrined in the Israeli political system. Virtually all ministers served in the IDF (Levi notes that “we so enjoy having major generals serve as cabinet ministers”), both as conscripts and reservists, and many are former senior officers, creating a potent “old boys network” characterized



by the unchallenged assumption that the IDF knows best (Levi, interview with author, 19 January 2011).

Freilich explains that members of

the Foreign and Defense Affairs Committee (FADAC) are almost entirely preoccupied with their political activities- which, unlike parliamentary achievements, are the primary basis of their future Knesset membership and possible promotion to ministerial positions- and thus have little time, and even less incentive, to take on the politically unpopular task of challenging the national security establishment. Moreover, the committee lacks any staff of its own, making it almost entirely dependent on the national security establishment for information and thereby further limiting its oversight capabilities. Officials appear before the committee only with the approval of their respective agency heads, and information presented is cleared in advance, typically in a manner designed to obfuscate, at least as much as to clarify, and to make the committee's ability to delve into sensitive issues that much more difficult (Freilich 2006, 641).

Freilich explains that the politicians responsible for "oversight" of the NSE, consumed as they are by their political activities, have "little time, and even less incentive, to take on the politically unpopular task of challenging the national security establishment." Interestingly, Israeli politicians are not only uninterested in but also incapable of overseeing the NSE, due to their lack of staff and dependence on the NSE for all the information they use to make decisions.

In sum, Israeli politicians exhibit a preference for deference to the NSE because they lack both reason (political incentive) and recourse (capabilities- namely staff) to intervene.

### **Is the Preference for Deference Responsible for Counterterrorism Incoherence?**

The exclusion of Israeli politicians from counterterrorism is not sufficient explanation for the incoherence of Israeli counterterrorism. If the NSE stepped up to fill the void left by disinterested politicians and created its own strategic framework to guide its counterterrorism operations, then Israeli counterterrorism might operate

coherently, consistently, and effectively. Israeli politicians' preference for deference to the NSE signifies only that the NSE conducts counterterrorism with near autonomy, and that the efficacy or inefficacy of Israeli counterterrorism therefore rests primarily on the shoulders of NSE organizations.

However, the NSE has, like the NSC, failed to create a coherent counterterrorism strategy. Rather, NSE organizations implement improvisational operations with little regard for overall strategy or consistency.

## **Organizational Routines within the NSE**

### **A Short-Term Perspective Predominates**

Israeli NSE organizations reflexively conduct myopic counterterrorist operations with no demonstrable effort to ensure that these operations fit into a long-term strategic framework. Freilich explains that:

Even in the best of circumstances, Israel's highly compelling and volatile external environment would lead to decision-making with relatively short-term perspectives... The bottom line is that... the DMP [decision-making process] in Israel is focused almost entirely on the short term and thus on the operational agencies, rather than on those involved in policy formulation. Little attention is accorded to basic and long-term issues, and a short-term perspective predominates, which in turn further limits the ability to shape the environment (Freilich 2006, 644).

Roey explained that, by "the operational agencies," Freilich was referring to the intelligence and regional commands of the IDF, and by "those involved in policy formulation," he was referring to the NSC and the planning unit in the Foreign Ministry. Roey further explained that the imbalance between operational and policy-formulating organizations is not reflected in budgets, but rather, "it's a matter of

standing in the system.”<sup>9</sup> Freilich’s assertion that Israeli counterterrorism “is focused almost entirely on the short term” is supported by the statements of most interviewees.

Menachem explains that: “there isn’t a lot of strategic thinking behind [counterterrorism], but there is an incredible amount of day to day thinking” (Menachem, interview with author, 20 January 2011). Similarly, Gal asserts that

we can’t know what’s going to happen down the road, there’s no predicting anything, so we do what we can for today. We get intelligence about a planned attack and we stop it. We get intelligence about where is a terrorist and we arrest him (Gal, interview with author, 19 January 2011).

Menachem and Gal both corroborate Freilich’s assertion that the NSE operates myopically. Gal excuses the short-term thinking of the Israeli NSE by suggesting that long-term thinking is impossible because of the unpredictability of the conflict. Gal’s statement also corroborates the organizational model claim that organizations behave reflexively, unthinkingly implementing the operations they have developed the standard procedures to implement. Shabak gathers intelligence on the location of a terrorist and the terrorist is apprehended. There is no effort to anticipate what will “happen down the road” and “no predicting anything,” so, in the meantime, NSE organizations simply spring into routine operations.

Abraham explained that “We don’t have 5 year planning, in which these 5 years we want to do 1, 2, 3, 4, 5... .. You can’t work like a robot about right now, you have to think all the time about the end,” demonstrating his conviction that the

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<sup>9</sup> This second point illustrates the unique insight interview-based research affords in the Israeli case; while examination of Israeli budget and legislative documents might provide information about how the decision-making process is technically designed to function, the qualitative testimony of ranking Israeli decision-makers affords insiders’ perspectives into how the decision-making process actually functions.

Israeli counterterrorism apparatus indeed works like a “robot,” an unthinking machine, rather than a rational actor capable of learning and planning for “the end” (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011).

Roey argued that Israel

really should be doing pretty careful policy formulation to try and understand at least a big picture of what you’re trying to achieve. And Israel doesn’t do that... a process of sitting down to figure out what we want to achieve and how we want to get there is done mostly on the operational level not on the strategic level. I mean the IDF will say we wanna, says OK, we want to take out some target. That people think about very carefully, what’s the best way to take out some target, some military target, some terrorist target. But if you want to start getting into policy planning- what does Israel want in terms of counterterrorism- what is the terrorist threat that we face?... you don’t get into it (Roey, interview with author, 13 January 2011).

Roey distinguishes between planning on a strategic (long-term) level and planning on an operational (short-term) level, criticizing Israel for its weakness in the former and overemphasis on the latter.

Similarly, Levi sarcastically explained that:

If you have a chance of killing an Arab with terrorist affiliations in the territories, then you are going to go ahead and kill that person because if you are a military man, then that’s a military success! That’s an operation that you’ve planned and carried out and everything’s great- he was a scumbag terrorist anyway so he deserved to die... We don’t have an objective. We don’t have any idea what we want in the long term. There’s no direction to what we do. And so we fall into patterns of arrests, killings, border control, arrests, reflexively, that’s what the IDF does. That’s what the Shabak does. That’s what the police does. But there’s no consideration of where this will get us. No thinking about the future at all (Levi, interview with author, 19 January 2011).

Levi, like Gal, emphasizes the manner in which myopic operations are implemented reflexively by the organizations of the NSE. “Patterns” and reflexive routines dictate counterterrorism, rather than “thinking about the future.” Levi also begins to explain that NSE organizations (and he refers specifically to the IDF) have little incentive to consider the long-term implications of their operations. When operations are

completed successfully, “everything’s great!” it’s a “military success”! The NSE organizations are preoccupied with the successful implementation of routine operations, and they are unconcerned with how their operations affect the future.

### **An Organizational Explanation for Military Myopia**

In fact, according to an extension of organizational model logic, NSE organizations have vested interests in avoiding careful examination, of, say, the long-term ramifications of targeted killings. If the Shabak or the Mossad were to engage in systematic analysis comparing the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks before targeted killings and after them, and were to find evidence documenting the counter-productivity of targeted killings, then they could no longer claim success after each “successful” interception. Would they simply abort the practice? Given that targeted killings of Palestinian terrorists are a centerpiece Shabak and Mossad tactic, the salience of these two organizations could be severely undermined, and their funding or “standing in the system” compromised.

For that matter, the durable elimination of all Palestinian terrorist activity would certainly present organizational problems for the Shabak and the Mossad (particularly the Shabak, as the Mossad focuses primarily on intelligence-gathering in national security threats unrelated to terrorism). In the absence of Palestinian terrorist activity, Shabak would have to engage in a massive organizational overhaul to avoid the appearance of thumb-twiddling. I do not believe, and the interviews did not suggest, that NSE organizations conspiratorially undermine attempts at “learning,” that is, at systematic analysis of the ramifications of their operations. However I do argue, and the interviews do suggest, that NSE organizations have little incentive to

(for the reasons outlined above), and in fact do not, encourage such analysis. Indeed, many Israeli decision-makers expressed contempt for analysis (i.e. David, Abraham, Gal, and Menachem), while several criticized Israeli decision-makers for that contempt (i.e. Roey, Levi, and Yitzaak).

Just as Israeli politicians have little incentive to engage the NSE on matters of counterterrorism, the Israeli NSE organizations have little incentive to consider how their operations actually impact trends in Palestinian terrorist activity. Consequently, when Israeli politicians defer to the NSE, the NSE implements myopic operations.

In short, organizations rationally pursue organizational survival, which may or may not necessarily advance the objectives of the state. In the case of Israeli counterterrorism, where defense objectives are not clearly articulated, the NSE organizations' pursuit of organizational interests via myopic routines contributes to the strategic incoherence of Israeli counterterrorism and results in the inconsistent implementation of counterterrorist tactics.

### **The “Thundering Present”**

Moreover, the tendency towards myopia is compounded by the uniquely Israeli “preoccupation in Israel with ‘the thundering present.’” As noted in Chapter Two, Freilich explains that

The persistent threat of imminent or actual hostilities has led to a nearly total preoccupation in Israel with the “thundering present” and to the development of a national security decision-making process geared toward ad hoc solutions to immediate problems. Many of the issues Israel faces present only a narrow range of options, require clear and immediate decisions in a highly charged and uncertain atmosphere, and do not lend themselves to incremental decision-making... Since the environment is perceived as being...extremely dangerous, Israeli decision makers largely have come to accept their inability to foresee and shape Israel’s external relations and have adopted a reactive “sit back and wait to see how things develop” approach. Indeed, some observers

believe that the most conspicuous element in Israeli decision-making is its essentially reactive character... *Itur* [improvisation] prevails rather than forethought, planning, and prevention... trial-and-error decision-making and “fire-fighting” are the norm, and policies are tried and abandoned as events develop, without forethought, systematic analysis, and a basic strategic framework (Freilich 2006, 643-44).

In short, Freilich argues that the Israeli mindset, a symptom of Israel’s history of hostilities with each of its neighbors, is characterized by heightened perceptions of immediate, existential threats. This heightened threat-perception contributes to the frantic, myopic, “fire-fighting” approach characteristic of Israeli counterterrorism and incompatible with strategy formulation.

### **Improvisational Routines → Inconsistency**

While the predominance of organizational routines over strategic planning alone “virtually guarantees defeat” (as explained in Chapter One), the improvisational routines of the Israeli NSE results in the inconsistent implementation of counterterrorist tactics, which (as I will explain in Chapter Four) further undermines Israeli counterterrorism.

In the absence of government policy or oversight, NSE organizations are free to react to each terrorist act without ensuring that the counterterrorist tactic employed is consistent with past reactions to that same terrorist act. Again, Abraham’s statement that “They shoot a rocket one day, we bomb them, they shoot a rocket another day, we do nothing. In one case we do one thing, in the same case we do another thing. There is no logic between to do this one or to do that one” reveals the inconsistency of Israeli counterterrorism symptomatic of the incoherence caused by NSE organizational routines. Yonatan further explained that “of course we don’t do the same thing every time. It depends on so many things. And the flexibility is

critical. Absolutely the most important thing” (Yonatan, interview with author, 13 January 2011). Regardless of whether or not it is criticized or euphemized as flexibility, there is general consensus, that, rather than responding to the same Palestinian actions with the same responses, “in this case they do one thing, in the same case, they do another thing.”

Abraham and Ori emphasize the improvisational nature of NSE routines.

Abraham explained that

You have only an attack thought. And an attack thought is- get it done today. Not thinking about yesterday or tomorrow. You don't have time to think about yesterday and tomorrow and it often doesn't matter what happened yesterday because today is different, every day different. You have to build for quick-thinking, for making it up as you go, and we do that better than anyone in the world (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011).

Abraham also reiterates the assertion that the routines are myopic and emphasize speed and “making it up as you go” (improvisation). Similarly, Ori explained that

The people who work in the Border Police are trained to be ready for anything. They know that there are always going to be one of a million things that could go wrong, and they can't prepare for everything, but they are prepared to make it up as they go (Ori, interview with author, 24 January 2011).

While Abraham and Ori emphasize the improvisational nature of NSE routines, Roey and Abraham illustrate the causal link between the flexibility, speed-oriented, and improvisational routines of NSE organizations and the inconsistent application of counterterrorist tactics.

Roey explained that

I mean we're built for speed, and for flexibility. We're better at improvising than anyone else. But when you're built for speed and flexibility you're not going to be consulting the paperwork to make sure you're doing what you're told to be doing, that you're doing it the same way this time as last time- so what we do today is not the same as what we do tomorrow. And that's fine because speed is critical- and flexibility is critical for the operations- but it



does mean you're not consistent and you can't always consider the future (Roey, interview with author, 13 January 2011). Roey explains that NSE organizations build for speed and flexibility, and that this speed and flexibility are critical to operational success, but sacrifice consistency and long-term thinking.

Similarly, Meir explained that:

It's not- I don't know- I don't see from my personal experience that there is some kind of technical formulation that's saying A, B, C in this case and that case- it's much more flexible, it's much more open, much more a give and take. See the IDF does what it does, and it knows how to do it believe me it knows- and it has to improvise a lot and work fast- so yes they do it a little differently every time cause that's how they have to do it because that's what's necessary to move fast. Shabak is the same. And the police they've built themselves to be fast and flexible and to do it as they go (Meir, interview with author, 18 January 2011).

Meir also emphasizes how NSE organizations (and he refers particularly to the IDF and then to the Shabak) are built to be flexible, and to "improvise a lot and work fast," and this means that "they do it a little differently every time cause that's how they're built to do it."

In sum, the incoherence of Israeli counterterrorism is explained in large part (as Graham Allison's organizational model would predict), by the organizational routines of the Israeli National Security Establishment. Israeli politicians tend to exhibit a preference for deference to the NSE. The NSE has developed routines designed for speed, flexibility, and improvisation, which (although conducive to short-term operational success), result in strategic incoherence and in the inconsistent application of counterterrorist tactics.

## **Politicians' Sensitivity to International Pressures**

A number of scholars (enumerated in Chapter One) have examined the influence of international pressures on state decision-making. While organizational theories best explain the behavior of the NSE, constructivist theory seems to best explain the behavior of Israeli politicians.

## **When the Heat's On, the Politicians Are In**

Though Israeli politicians tend to defer to the NSE, under specific circumstances of disproportionate significance, they do exert agency over the counterterrorism decision-making process. The tactics that are implemented exclusively by the NSE without supervision from Israeli politicians are those that appear in line with western norms and do not incite the opprobrium of the international community. The vast majority of the routinely implemented, micro-level Israeli counterterrorist tactics (including all forms of intelligence gathering, arrests, installation of metal detectors, checkpoint monitoring, and housing demolitions, to name a few) fall into this category. On the other hand, high-stakes, complex, and publicity-generating counterterrorist tactics such as negotiations, the erection of the Security Fence, and punitive military strikes (I will focus on the latter) prompt Israeli politicians to overcome their disincentives to challenge the military establishment and exert agency in the counterterrorism decision-making process.

## Interviewee Reflections on International Pressures

I asked each interviewee to answer the following question: *How and to what extent do international laws, norms, opinions, and pressures influence and/or constrain Israeli counterterrorism decision-makers?*

### **If the Rational Model Held Up...**

Because Israel publicly endorses its practice of targeted killings, maintains the blockade of Gaza, and erects the Security Fence (to name several examples of opprobrium-generating counterterrorist tactics), I had predicted Israeli counterterrorism decision-makers would disregard international opinion and exhibit a “damned-if-we-do, damned-if-we-don’t” attitude. I therefore expected interviewees to express a prioritization of strategic concerns over concerns about international legitimacy. For example, Chaim responded to the above question:

Not really. When you do things of no choice, then the priority of the government is and it should be so first to make sure that we protect the lives of the Israeli people before we try to please the world. I mean it is essential. And generally speaking, if you have a real good security consideration, in the end of the day it is understandable, especially in Washington but not always (Chaim, interview with author, 18 January 2011).

Chaim asserts that the government prioritizes security considerations above “pleas[ing] the world.” Chaim maintains that Israeli counterterrorism is entirely strategic, and further suggests that international actors like the United States respect the Israeli government’s decisions as long as it has “a real good security consideration.” However, Chaim was the only interviewee to trivialize the significance of international pressures on Israeli counterterrorism decision-makers. Chaim was also the only interviewee who did not express contempt for the NSC, and

his responses to most of my questions were substantially more diplomatic than those of his peers.

### **The Constructivist Model Rings True**

Instead of additional responses like Chaim's in support of the rational model, most interviewee responses suggest that when Israeli politicians are involved in counterterrorism decision-making (for example, in the timing and conduct of punitive military strikes), they are motivated primarily by normative and only secondarily by strategic interests. Responses corroborating constructivist claims are as follows:

#### **Great Respect for International Law:**

Roey:

They are very very aware of international...I mean Israel for example caught hell for the whole Cast Lead Operation. In the history of warfare, I don't think there was ever an operation that was waged as carefully, I mean the attempt to observe international law...how you go and fight, street by street, battle by battle, house by house, and the people who really want to know what the IDF did to prevent civilian casualties know that no army has ever gone to the kind of lengths that the IDF did to prevent it. Now were mistakes made? Yes. And in war do things happen? Ya. War is about killing people. But for the most part it was unbelievable what they tried to do...There are moral considerations and then practical considerations of international opinion, not wanting to create even more fury and hatred on the Palestinian side than we already have, but we get criticized no matter what we do...In Cast Lead, the IDF was saying "you're lawyering us to death....every battalion commander has got a lawyer standing next to him saying you can't do this, you can't do that- no one has ever fought a war that way. No one has ever gone to the kind of measures the IDF has (Roey, interview with author, 13 January 2011).

Roey, former Deputy National Security Advisor, explains that Israelis are

extraordinarily cognizant of international law and go to unparalleled lengths to

remain within its bounds. He also implies that while normative concerns influence

Israeli politicians, members of the NSE do not share this sensitivity. The IDF

complaint of being "lawyered to death" is illustrative of the manner in which political

sensitivity to international law is imposed upon a contrastingly insensitive NSE. The fact that the IDF does modify its conduct of military operations at the demands of the Israeli government, however reticently, is illustrative of the exception to the general autonomy of the NSE with regards the vast majority of counterterrorist operations.

Noam:

they are influenced. The reaction of other governments, international law, public relations and the media, it's very important to them...regular operations bring about less criticism. Criticism comes up when there are large, extraordinary operations, and especially when it might bring about killing innocent civilians...Israel would have gone into Gaza earlier, more frequently, if they weren't worried about international opinion (Noam, interview with author, 18 January 2011).

Noam's response corroborates the claim that international pressures are only salient in those "large, extraordinary operations" in which Israeli politicians play a significant role. He, like Roey, draws on the example of Operation Cast Lead.

David explained that while the international laws of war are well-developed, there is a dearth of international laws regarding counterterrorism. In response to this legal void:

we created are own rules, rules that have been approved by the high courts in Israel, in which the behavior about fighting terrorism has been established. So there are legal limitations even to fighting terrorism, but they are not exactly as the traditional wartime limitations for waging war (David, interview with author, 12 January 2011).

The fact that Israel goes to the trouble to create laws to legitimate its conduct of counterterrorism testifies to the Israeli commitment to at least appear to respect international law. A number of Israeli counterterrorist tactics (i.e. targeted killings and the Security Fence) have gone to the Israeli high courts, and while the courts rarely rule against proposed tactics, the fact that there is a concerted attempt to demonstrate the legality of counterterrorist practices, that is, to "Create are own

rules,” demonstrates the Israeli commitment to being seen as legitimate in the international community. In addition to emphasizing Israel’s commitment to international law, David stressed the importance of maintaining congenial diplomatic relations. He explained that:

International opposition, especially of France, Russia in some cases, is important in international relations. What we try to do is to coordinate with them whenever it is a very serious matter that they are coordinated... Only recently, there were soldiers and officers put to trial because they acted against the rules that have been set up. For instance, there is something popularly called the Neighbors Act- the soldiers used to take one of the neighbors, when they had to go into a house that they suspected there are terrorists in there, they took one of their neighbors Palestinian and said, now go knock on the door, and if – he was the first- and if he was not attacked, they would just go in. this was prevented by the court, said an illegal act. Whenever this happened, and sometimes the soldiers did it to save themselves- they knew that if they went in themselves they would get shot at. But nevertheless the courts prevented it because they are inactive civilians not part of this, they should not be used as protection (David, interview with author, 12 January 2011).

David, like Noam and Roey, distinguished between “local issues” and “very serious matters,” explaining that Israel seeks to coordinate its actions with regards “serious matters” with foreign partners. He also emphasizes the extent to which Israel attempts to respect international law, and, in the absence of international law, to create laws (such as the Neighbors Act) to ensure Israeli compliance with international norms prohibiting avoidable collateral damage in the conduct of military operations.

#### **International Pressures Constrain Israeli Counterterrorism Decision-Makers:**

Abraham:

I’m not sure that Israel can make such an operation like we did in the Gaza in 2008 again, because of the international pressure, because we bombed Gaza, we almost destroyed it, a lot of Palestinians killed then, a lot of civilians killed...we didn’t calculate the world. In 2011, you can’t act without calculate the international situation (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011).

Abraham corroborates the assertion that international pressure is most salient when it comes to massive operations like Operation Cast Lead. His assertion that Israel is not at liberty to invade Gaza because of international pressure reveals the tendency, among Israeli decision-makers, to subordinate strategic concerns to international ones. Significantly, Palestinian terrorist activities against Israelis will not determine when Israel will strike Gaza. Rather, whether or not the international climate is permissive of such a strike, is the prime determinate of the timing of Israeli punitive military strikes into Gaza.

Meir:

Definitely yes. Of course there are levels of operations. But let me give you an example. Following the beginning of the Second Intifada, we were facing some very serious terrorist attacks, and Israel found itself in a difficulty to react with full force against those terrorist operations. Following 9/11, following the American operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, feeling in Israel was that we have a free hand now to operate. And only in the year 2003, almost three years after the beginning of the Second Intifada, we found ourselves more or less free to operate. And all along we noted that we are operating in a kind of room with glass walls that whatever we are doing is immediately seen in the outside world. We have to bear in mind the international media, and it's very much influencing our decision-making (Meir, interview with author, 18 January 2011).

Like his peers, Meir notes that international pressures are significant when it comes to large-scale operations such as punitive military strikes (though he cites Operation Defensive Shield rather than Operation Cast Lead). His reference to American activities in Afghanistan and Iraq supports the assertion that when international pressure on Israel ease (a product in this case of American preoccupation elsewhere and perhaps renewed empathy with the counterterrorist struggle), Israeli decision-makers feel less constrained and perhaps implement more repressive counterterrorist tactics. Meir explains that Israel, more-so than other nations, operates in a "room with

glass walls.” The perception of international scrutiny renders international pressures extraordinarily influential for Israeli politicians, who “bear in mind” conditions in the international community when deciding how to respond to Palestinian terrorist activity.

Gal:

There are two effects. One, on the low level, we are more strict with the orders to the military. We don’t let them space to maneuver because of the limitation that we don’t want them to cross. And the higher level, mainly relating to Gaza, we never take the full-scale reaction that should be taken, because we don’t want to lose ground in the area of legitimacy...we know that in some cases, for example in the Guardian, London, it doesn’t matter what will we do, we lost. But it is important to us not to lose ground in other places, and we restrain ourselves (Gal, interview with author, 19 January 2011).

Like Abraham, Gal explains that the Israeli counterterrorism apparatus sometimes subordinates strategic concerns to international pressures. That is, they don’t respond consistently and aggressively to Palestinian terrorist attacks, for fear of “losing ground in the area of legitimacy.” Although Gal suggests that international pressures may, in fact, influence “low level” tactics, he also emphasizes higher level operations, “mainly relating to Gaza.” In arguing that “We never take the full-scale reaction that should be taken, because we don’t want to lose ground in the area of legitimacy,” Gal lends credence to the constructivist assertion that governments will at times subordinate strategic interests in national security to matters of national identity in the international community.

In sum, the responses of most interviewees (with the exception of Chaim) contradict the rationalist model and suggest that Israeli politicians are extraordinarily sensitive to international norms, and that the timing and conduct of punitive military strikes are to a great extent dictated by considerations of the international climate.



## Explaining Sensitivity to International Pressures

What explains Israeli politicians' immense sensitivity to international pressures? Interestingly, when I asked *How does international criticism translate into tangible problems for Israel? That is, why does it matter if the international community criticizes Israel?*, most interviewees referred either to a concern about IDF officers standing trial, or to a vague anticipation that eventually such criticism will somehow matter.

Noam:

aspects of international law, to what extent Israeli officers might be called to trial- today it has become major issue... what would be the reaction of the international media... the assumption is that in Western countries, the media has an important role, and if the media is portraying that operation in negative, dark colors, eventually it might affect public opinion and eventually the government, so it has to be taken into account (Noam, interview with author, 18 January 2011).

The concern that Israeli officers might be called to trial demonstrates the salience of the constructivist emphasis on the cultivation of a national identity. While such trials in no significant way impede the ability of the IDF to conduct strategic counterterrorist operations, such highly publicized trials are embarrassing for the Israeli government and impede its efforts to project a legitimate national identity.

Gal:

In the present level, the price that we are paying is very low, it is mainly a nice word that we are losing in not important places. If that will grow and be stronger and we will feel it in not just liberal clubs around the world and not just in places where the Muslim Diaspora is very strong, but in other places, in the ordinary western citizens will believe that Israel is wrong morally, then we might suffer, and it is not our interests. The US is the most important place (Gal, interview with author, 19 January 2011).

Gal, like Noam (who notes the assumption that "eventually" negative media attention might affect the government) also expresses a fear of the "looming future." He

explains that international criticism does not, today, translate into tangible problems for Israel, but he alludes to the concern that the spread of said criticism might eventually cause Israel to “suffer,” though he fails to explain how, exactly, Israel might suffer.

David responded: “Only recently, there were soldiers and officers put to trial because they acted against the rules that have been set up” (David, interview with author, 12 January 2011), demonstrating once again the fear of soldiers being put on trial and the associated embarrassment. Meir likewise responded:

Israel is very much dependent on its international relations, at least with the western world, the free world, and from this point of view, public opinion in Europe, in northern America, in South America, in Japan, is of vital importance for us. And it does have an impact on our decision-making. The second level is much more a practical, almost tactical level. The fear that Israeli decision-makers, Israeli military officers, soldiers, may be brought to trial, maybe held up in this or that other country, and it’s very embarrassing (Meir, interview with author, 18 January 2011).

Again, concern for Israelis standing trial is raised, as is the vague concern about the importance of international relations in the eventual future, without the supplying tangible reasons why criticism is problematic.

Abraham responded simply: “No. It is just an anticipation of the consequences down the road. Now it is quiet,” demonstrating again the fear of the “looming future,” Abraham also asserts that material support from the US is insignificant, but US “backing” in the UN is critical:

The US supports Israel every year with \$3.2 billion. And by the way we don’t need it... When we take this money, for example we buy uniform from small uniform factory in Arizona, we close a factory in Israel. But the relationship with the US is important. The US supports Israel in the international community- we don’t need the money. We need the backing of the US in the UN, of course (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011).

Abraham emphasizes the significance of soft (as opposed to material) support from the US. He does not (nor do his colleagues) explain how exactly an erosion of US support for Israel would translate into tangible costs for Israeli security. It seems that the rational costs of violating norms are not the primary concerns. Rather, concerns about appearing legitimate, about avoiding embarrassment; that is, about cultivating a legitimate national identity, trump strategic concerns.

### **Sensitivity to International Pressures → Inconsistent Counterterrorism**

Because sensitivity to international pressures- and not Palestinian terrorist activity- is the primary determinate of Israeli decision-making regarding the timing and conduct of massive punitive strikes, Israel does not respond consistently to Palestinian terrorist activity. Abraham's concern that "I'm not sure that Israel can make such an operation like we did in the Gaza in 2008 again, because of the international pressure...you can't act without calculate the international situation" (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011) illustrates the a-strategic sources of Israeli counterterrorism decision-making.

For instance, Israel launched Operation Cast Lead and Operation Defensive Shield in response to waves of Palestinian terrorist attacks, yet Israel failed to launch similar operations in response to a similar wave of attacks from Gaza in 2005. Palestinian terrorist activity remaining constant, the determinate variable was likely the degree of pressure exerted on Israel by foreign parties. Indeed, Meir's note that American preoccupation in Iraq and Afghanistan gave Israel a "free hand to operate,"

a freedom of maneuver Israel used to launch Operation Defensive Shield, demonstrates the salience of this variable.

Although additional research closely examining Israeli foreign relations before large Israeli strikes and during periods when strategic interests would predict Israel to strike is requisite to support this assertion, it seems that Israeli politicians are more likely to authorize large-scale punitive strikes after “calculat[ing] the international situation” and determining it permissive of such a strike. Indeed, as Gourevitch asserted, “The international system is not only a consequence of domestic politics and structures but a cause of them.” Thus, as Gourevitch, Hopf, Brym and Maoz-Shai would suggest, Israeli politicians engaged in decisions regarding the timing and conduct of major counterterrorist operations are influenced and indeed constrained by international norms and pressures.

## **In Sum**

In returning to the theoretical models introduced in Chapter One, it seems that Israeli counterterrorism does not fit neatly into any of the proposed models. However, the rational model is a demonstrably secondary factor in Israeli counterterrorist decision-making. Israel does not engage in strategic planning to ensure that the tactics it implements are designed to achieve long-term end goals, and Israel neither responds consistently to Palestinian terrorist activity nor exhibits learning (the eschewing of ineffective tactics and more frequent implementation of effective tactics) as the rational model would predict.

My research did not yield evidence corroborating the political model theory that voter preferences and the drive for reelection motivate Israeli counterterrorism

decision-makers, in large part because the vast majority of Israeli counterterrorism decision-makers belong to the NSE and are not dependent on voter support. However, it seems that Israeli politicians' preference for deference to the NSE is at least in part a product of the political disincentives to challenge the NSE, and additional analysis of correlations in electoral cycles and tactics implemented is necessary to overcome the methodological constraints of interview-based research to determine the degree to which the Israeli politicians are influenced by voter demands when they *do* exert agency in counterterrorism.

The organizational model and the international model both prove explicative in the case of Israeli counterterrorism incoherence, but they explain different parts of the counterterrorism process. While organizational routines account for the a-strategic decision-making in the NSE, sensitivity to international pressures accounts for the a-strategic decision-making of Israeli politicians.

## **Chapter Four: Inconsistency Yields Inefficacy**

In Chapter Four, I explain how the inconsistency of Israeli counterterrorism (a symptom of the incoherence produced by the improvisational routines of the NSE and Israeli politicians' sensitivity to international pressures) contributes to the inefficacy of Israeli counterterrorism.

As I explained in Chapter Three, the a-strategic decision-making within both the NSE and the political echelons results in the inconsistent implementation of counterterrorist instruments. The erratic, unpredictable, and seemingly arbitrary nature of Israeli counterterrorism contributes to its failure to durably reduce the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks.

In order to understand why inconsistency is problematic, it is necessary to explore several theoretical explanations of terrorist behavior. I examine the grievance theory and the rational actor theory, and assert that inconsistency, no matter which theory is salient, will undermine any counterterrorism effort.

### **Explanatory Models of Terrorist Behavior**

A number of scholars have endeavored to explain terrorist behavior. Though this body of scholarship has produced a plethora of theories ranging from the psychological to the socio-organizational, from the state-level to the structural, two theories predominate in both the scholarly and the policymaking communities: the grievance theory and the rational actor theory.

## Grievance Theory

Proponents of the grievance theory assert that individuals join terrorist organizations and launch attacks when they sense they are the victims of injustice and seek to lash out at the perpetrators of this injustice.

In “Motivations for Conflict: Groups and Individuals,” Frances Stewart and Graham Brown explain that governments sometimes deliver public goods unequally (Stewart and Brown 2007). Perhaps they lack the capacity to deliver public goods equally, or perhaps they must deal with situations of scarcity. Regardless of the reasons, the resulting horizontal inequalities incite feelings of injustice in the relatively deprived populations, and these grievances motivate these populations to fight. For example, Stewart and Brown attribute conflict in Northern Ireland to unequal access to housing, education, and jobs.

Similarly, in *Why Men Rebel*, Ted Gurr examines the frustration-aggression theory and argues that though frustration does not necessarily lead to violence, when it is sufficiently prolonged and sharply felt, it often does result in anger and eventually violence. Gurr also cites “relative deprivation,” and argues that “the potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity” (Gurr 1970). It can be extrapolated that if mere deprivation incites grievances, so too would arrests, targeted killings, and certainly punitive military strikes, and much sharper grievances at that.

Jeffrey Ian Ross lists seven precipitants of terrorist activity, and ranks grievances as the most important precipitant. He explains that

Grievances, both actual and perceived, putative and general, are hypothesized to be the most important variable. Grievances, commonly the result of

coercion, discrimination, oppression and repression often against an identifiable subgroup of a larger population can lead to terrorism (Crenshaw, 1981, p 383; Gurr, 1990; Hamilton, 1978)...Grievances unheeded can lead to the development of a social movement, interest group, political party, or in extreme cases an individual, cell, group or organization that engages in terrorist actions. Alternatively, in a non-violent organization, the intensification of grievances or lack of success in obtaining the group's objectives may lead to organizational splits, and the development of different organizational levels that engage in terrorism. Finally, grievances can lead to support of terrorism (Ross 1993, 320).

Ross identifies grievances as the most important cause of terrorist activity and explains how grievances incite violence and support of violence. In sum, Stewart, Graham, Gurr, and Ross (as well as Crenshaw, Hamilton, and a number of additional scholars), assert that grievances are a critical cause of terrorist activity.

### **Implications for Counterterrorism**

Proponents of the grievance theory assert that repression increases terrorist activity because it exacerbates existing grievances and creates new ones, thus fueling and escalating the cycle of violence. It follows, then, that governments should endeavor to assuage the grievances of the dissident group such that that group is no longer motivated to lash out violently. In the Israeli case, then, the NSE should minimize its practices of arrests, targeted killings, military strikes, checkpoints, curfews, blockades, etc- all tactics that incite grievances in the Palestinian population. Rather, the NSE should implement conciliatory counterterrorist tactics; it should release Palestinian prisoners, accept the Right of Return, and concede to Palestinian demands whenever possible.

### **Rational Actor Theory**

Conversely, proponents of the rational actor theory posit that terrorists are rational utility-maximizers who use terrorist tactics as a means of pursuing a set of



ordered preferences. Palestinian organizations therefore launch rockets at Israeli houses or blow up Israeli bars when they calculate that the anticipated costs of the tactic (typically measured in the degree of state repression staged in response to the tactic) are outweighed by the potential benefits (i.e., the release of Palestinian prisoners, concessions on the Right of Return, or a territorial transfer). In sum, organizations perpetrate terrorist attacks when they think these tactics will “work.”

Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter argue that “Terrorism often works” (Kydd and Walter 2006, 49). They assert that al-Qaida, Hamas, and the Tamil Tigers use terrorist tactics “because it frequently delivers the desired response.” Although their assertion that terrorism works is questionable given the plethora of studies demonstrating the inefficacy of terrorism as a tactic for achieving political reform, their assumption that organizations implement terrorist tactics because they anticipate a payoff is a central rational actor theory assertion propounded by a large number of rational choice scholars.<sup>10</sup>

Lichbach articulates the rational actor model quite clearly in “Deterrence or Escalation?” He explains that actors have goals and receive payoffs and punishments as a result of their actions, and that dissidents rationally weigh the potential payoffs (perhaps the “provision of welfare services,” territorial concessions, gains in autonomy, among others)” against the anticipated costs of the tactic. Lichbach explains that

An opposition group’s direct costs coming respectively from its nonviolent and violent activities,  $n$  and  $v$ , result from the repression of the group’s dissident activities. Both violence and nonviolence beget government

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<sup>10</sup> See Perkoski 2010; Caplan 2005; Hoffman and McCormick 2004; Pape 2003; and Walter and Kydd 2006.

repression and the greater the repression, the greater the cost to the group. For example, police “crowd control” and “counterinsurgency” tactics are often used to contain protest demonstrations, terrorism, and guerilla wars. The  $n$  and  $v$  variables may therefore result from the number of injuries or deaths among opponents that the regime brings about during its response to an opposition group’s activities. Prices are thus paid by an opposition group in terms of the repression that the opponent’s tactics (inputs to its production function) induce from the regime. The opposition’s “budget” constraint is therefore really in part a political constraint- the amount of repression it is willing to incur to obtain the government output it desires (Lichbach 1987, 277).

In short, Lichbach explains that the repression represents the “costs” of a tactic, and that dissidents therefore anticipate the degree of repression, and refrain from implementing a tactic if the anticipated repression (i.e. police crowd control or counterinsurgency, and the number of injuries or deaths this repression produces) is larger than the anticipated payoffs. He further explains that “dissident groups are capable of continuous, calculating pursuit of their interests in conflict situations,” and that “Opposition groups thus select their tactics by balancing the relative repressive costs and accommodative benefits that come from governmental responses to their tactics.” In sum, Lichbach emphasizes dissidents’ capacity for calculation; instances of violent protest are thus the result of the perpetrators’ calculation that the potential payoffs (“accommodative benefits”) of the violence outweigh the anticipated repressive costs.

### **Implications for Counterterrorism**

States seeking to combat terrorism must consistently repress the perpetrators of all terrorist incidents in order to demonstrate convincingly that the costs of the violence will always outweigh the payoffs. They must never make concessions to terrorist demands, because, as perpetrators’ cost-benefit analyses are based on past state responses to terrorism, concessions would raise the anticipated payoffs of

terrorist incidents in the next round of calculations. Consistently repressive responses to terrorism will therefore effectively convince rational terrorist actors to abandon terrorism as a tactic.

## **The Palestinian Case**

### **Rationalist Model Trumps Grievance Model**

Though most interviewees conceded that punitive repression of terrorist incidents likely incites grievances among the Palestinian population, all identified deterrence as the most important feature of effective counterterrorism, thus demonstrating their adoption of the rational actor theory. For the most part, they considered Palestinian grievances immutable and outside Israeli control, and, grievances being held constant, advocated heavy-handed repression of Palestinian terrorist activity in order to raise the costs of terrorism to prohibitive levels.

For example, David argued that

One can maybe think that some of our actions may create additional incentives for the Palestinians to act. Our observation is that there is no such a thing that they, those that are active in terrorist activities, they will do whatever they can do, be it quiet period, be it for other- they have their own agenda- their agenda is to kill the Israelis, the enemy. Look at the present times, in Gaza, the Hamas is controlling the Gaza Strip. Up to two years ago, there were continuous shelling and rocketing from Gaza to Israel. Then, a military operation was taking place, called Operation Cast Lead, and after this operation, they realize that it is not worth it for them to continue this situation. So they undertook to keep this area quiet... there is always some kind of a retaliating element. But after each major operation that we carried out, there is a deterrent period for quite a long time that is quiet (David, interview with author, 12 January 2011).

David acknowledges the possibility that Israeli “actions” (implicitly, repressive actions), “may create additional incentives for the Palestinians to act.” He asserts, however, that Palestinians would act regardless of Israeli actions, and that the real

determinate of Palestinian terrorist behavior is whether Palestinian terrorists are convinced an attack is worth it, or, “not worth it.” David implies that Palestinian terrorists engage in a rational, cost-benefit analysis before striking Israelis. They weigh the potential payoffs of their behavior against the anticipated costs, and strike only if they deem the strike worth the costs. He further argues that repressive counterterrorism, in this case “Operation Cast Lead,” creates an effective “deterrent,” that is, it raises the costs of terrorism prohibitively such that an attack is no longer deemed “worth it.”

Similarly Yair said of repressive tactics (referring to arrests, aerial bombings, and targeted killings) “Of course it has repercussions.” He recounted his experience interviewing thwarted suicide bombers and their “senders,” and explained that “It was quite obvious that they were quite bothered to say the least, by the Israeli presence, and the targeted killings and arrests. And they were very angry...it is a double-edged sword. But counterterrorism is an orchestra, you need everything” (Yair, interview with author, 17 January 2011). Yair, like David, acknowledges the grievances repressive tactics incite, yet deems these grievances insufficient reason to refrain from implementing such repressive tactics. Similarly, Abraham asserts that

you can't not think about the reaction. When you go in and you kill them, you kill brothers and mothers, and then they angry. Of course they angry. And then we wonder why they attack us. Sometimes you have to kill them and it's OK. You have to kill them because you need to show them what happens when they do these terror. But you need to know the reaction (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011).

Like David and Yair, Abraham is aware of the Palestinian “reaction” to Israeli repression, yet believes this reaction is less important than “show[ing] them what happens when they do these terror,” that is, less important than deterrence.

### **The Conundrum**

Despite these officials' support for the rational actor theory over the grievance theory, both appear equally falsifiable. Although I do not prove a causal link between Israeli counterterrorist activity and the Palestinian response (because I do not systematically control for confounding variables such as internal Palestinian politics and international pressures), the following examples seem to illustrate that repression at times escalates and at other times deters Palestinian terrorist activity. For instance, in the immediate aftermath of the Israeli targeted killing of Dr. Thabet Ahmad Thabet, waves of retaliatory suicide bombings demonstrated the escalatory effect of repression, thus instantiating the grievance theory. On the other hand, grievance theory proponents would predict that Palestinians, in the wake of the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, a massive concession, would reduce their activities. Yet, rocket fire from the Gaza Strip jumped demonstrably following this withdrawal, instantiating the rational actor theory assertion that this concession raised the perceived payoffs of terrorist activity. Likewise, the periods of quiet in the wake of Operation Defensive Shield and Operation Cast Lead demonstrate the power of repression to deter attacks.

In the Israeli case (as well as in many cases of internal conflict worldwide) repression seems to yield both an escalatory effect (as predicted by the grievance model) and a deterrent effect (as predicted by the rational actor model).

## **Consistency is Crucial for Counterterrorism Success**

### **Extant Findings**

A number of scholars have endeavored to explain the puzzling fact that repression seems to yield both an escalatory and a deterrent effect. Some identify the regime type of the repressive agent as the critical determinate of deterrence outcomes (Gupta, Singh, and Sprague 1993). Others argue that discriminate repression is an effective deterrent while indiscriminate repression is escalatory (Perkoski 2010). Finally, a strong body of scholarship asserts that inconsistent repression is ineffective or escalatory while consistent repression is an effective deterrent.

In “Deterrence or Escalation: The Puzzle of Aggregate Studies of Repression and Dissent,” Lichbach outlines a rational actor model (surmised above) and asserts that “Consistent government accommodative and repressive policies reduce dissent; inconsistent policies increase dissent.” He further asserts that “The rule for government is: Don’t reward and punish the same tactic; reward one and punish the other.” (Lichbach 1987, 287).

Will Moore and Kathleen Cunningham and Emily Beaulieu corroborate Lichbach’s assertions. In “The Repression and Dissent: Substitution, Context, and Timing,” Moore tests Lichbach’s theory that dissidents will substitute violent protest for nonviolent protest behavior (and vice versa) when confronted with consistent repression, Gupta, Singh, and Sprague’s theory that repression spurs violence in democracies, but high levels of repression are effective in authoritarian regimes, and Rasler’s assertion that timing matters: repression is effective in the short run, but spurs protest in the long run. Moore finds evidence for neither Gupta et all’s nor

Rasler's theories, but corroborates Lichbach's rational actor substitution theory using quantitative analysis of dissent in Peru and Sri Lanka (Moore 2000).

Cunningham and Beaulieu build off Lichbach's rational actor model and assert that the consistency of repression is the critical determinate of its success or failure to curb terrorist activities. They argue that

the primary effect of inconsistency on dissidents' tactical choices will be to mute the deterrent qualities of repression that lead dissidents to substitute tactics. The central proposition by Lichbach and Moore is that the state can induce dissidents to shift tactics (violent to non-violent or vice versa) by increasing the relative costs associated with each tactic. However, dissidents must estimate the costs they will incur by examining past interaction with the state. When the state behavior is erratic, it sends a noisy signal to dissidents, making it hard to assess the likely costs of their actions. As such, an inconsistent use of repression will not clearly signal that costs to dissent will be higher, nor will it signal that there is some chance of repression but not a certainty (Cunningham and Beaulieu 2011).

Cunningham and Beaulieu examine dissent and repression in Northern Ireland to support their assertions that the consistency of repression is pivotal. They argue that dissenters engage in a cost-benefit analysis before implementing a tactic of dissent (such as terrorism). While consistent repression of a tactic raises the costs of that tactic perhaps prohibitively, forcing a substitution to a different tactic, "an inconsistent use of repression will not clearly signal that costs to dissent will be higher." In sum, they conclude that inconsistent state tactics that erratically shift between repressive and conciliatory, increase dissent in the long term, "whereas consistently repressive regimes experience fewer violent protest events over the short and long term" (Chenoweth and Dugan 2010, 5).

## **Israeli Inconsistency → Inefficacy**

According to the logic of Lichbach, Moore, Cunningham, and Beaulieu, Israeli counterterrorism has succeeded in reducing neither the frequency nor the lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks at least in part because Israeli counterterrorism is characterized by inconsistent repression. Although there is little literature examining inconsistent conciliation, Lichbach's rule "Don't reward and punish the same tactic; reward one and punish the other" extrapolates the logic of inconsistent repression to include inconsistent conciliation. Just as Israel ignores a Palestinian rocket one day, and retaliates massively the next, Israel may also release Palestinian prisoners (a conciliatory tactic) in response to a Palestinian kidnapping of Israeli soldiers one day, then invade Gaza to seize the hostage-takers the next.

Because NSE organizations implement improvisational routines prizing speed and flexibility over consistency, and because Israeli politicians prize international legitimacy over consistency, Israeli counterterrorism is predictably inconsistent.

Several interviewees identified the inconsistency of Israeli counterterrorism as its primary pathology. Gal says of arrests, targeted killings, and punitive military strikes (repression generally):

it is effective when you are doing it permanently. When it is one in a month, it doesn't work. Cause then they're not deterred, angry and not deterred. When it is permanent process, in which you arrest and if you don't arrest you kill, all those who are taking place in the chain of preparing the attacks, look a the last few months- we killed some in the West Bank, we killed some in Gaza, and nothing happened. Why? Because it is a constant effort- and a constant situation in which they know that if they deal in terrorism they will be killed...they know if they will cross some lines, our reaction will be very severe... and we don't want to lose ground in the area of legitimacy. So sometimes we don't kill them. when we need to kill them (Gal, interview with author, 19 January 2011).



In short, Gal essentially corroborates Lichbach's, Moore's, Cunningham and Beaulieu's assertion that only consistent repression will create an effective deterrent. He also attributes the inconsistency of Israeli counterterrorism to Israeli politicians' sensitivity to international pressures.

Similarly, Abraham explains that:

When they kidnapped Gilad Shalit, we did nothing...you don't have to give the population things and to convince them that the policy is right. They never think it is right. You need to hit them, show them they can't do it. When we withdraw from Gaza Strip in 2005, Sharon said, that if they start to shoot missiles to Israel, we are going to attack them. And we didn't do it! We didn't do it the first time, we didn't do it the second time, didn't the third time, and so it was habit, that they shoot missiles in to Israel, when we do nothing! Like you deal with your kids. Don't let them to open a wide door than you plan to open. You punish them, and it has to be the same every time, so they know not to do it (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011).

Like Gal, Abraham identifies the inadequacies of inconsistent repression, emphasizing the need to respond punitively in a consistent and predictable manner.

Roey also emphasized the consequences of the inconsistency of Israeli counterterrorism, arguing that:

so you do different things every time- you slap them on the wrist for an attack one day, you level a city for that same attack the next day. And sometimes we release their prisoners, and we withdrew from Gaza- And if we don't know how we're going to respond to their attacks, the Palestinians certainly don't know how we're going to respond to their attacks, and so they hope for the best. And sometimes they wait for our hands to be tied, when they the US is watching, the world is watching, and we can't hit them back (Roey, interview with author, 13 January 2011).

Roey notes the inconsistency of the Israeli responses to Palestinian attacks, that is, the fact that Israel often breaks Lichbach's rule ("Don't reward and punish the same tactic; reward one and punish the other"), and even argues that Palestinians consciously exploit Israeli sensitivity to international pressures in timing their attacks.

In sum, the inconsistent implementation of counterterrorist tactics inflames Palestinian grievances without durably deterring attacks, and thus contributes to the inefficacy of Israeli counterterrorism.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

### **An Overview**

Contrary to conventional wisdom, Israeli counterterrorism is ineffective. Israel has failed to durably reduce the frequency and lethality of Palestinian terrorist attacks. Also contrary to conventional wisdom, Israeli counterterrorism is a-strategic. Israel is not a unitary actor that consistently prioritizes national security. Rather, the organizations that comprise the NSE reflexively implement myopic and improvisational routines, and politicians subordinate strategic concerns to normative ones. The inconsistent application of counterterrorist tactics symptomatic of the resulting incoherence inflames Palestinian grievances without effectively deterring attacks, and thus accounts for the inefficacy of Israeli counterterrorism.

### **Policy Implications**

#### **Produce a Counterterrorism Policy**

Though this paper is primarily explanatory and not prescriptive, my findings suggest that a reduction in the inconsistency responsible for Israeli counterterrorism inefficacy could be partially achieved through the development, clear articulation, and implementation of a counterterrorism policy. The articulation of a strategic framework identifying long-term objectives and the means for achieving them is the first step towards ensuring that Israeli counterterrorism does not continue, as Sklenka warns, to “drift aimlessly.”

Figure 7 illustrates the proposed improvements to Israeli counterterrorism following from the articulation of said policy:

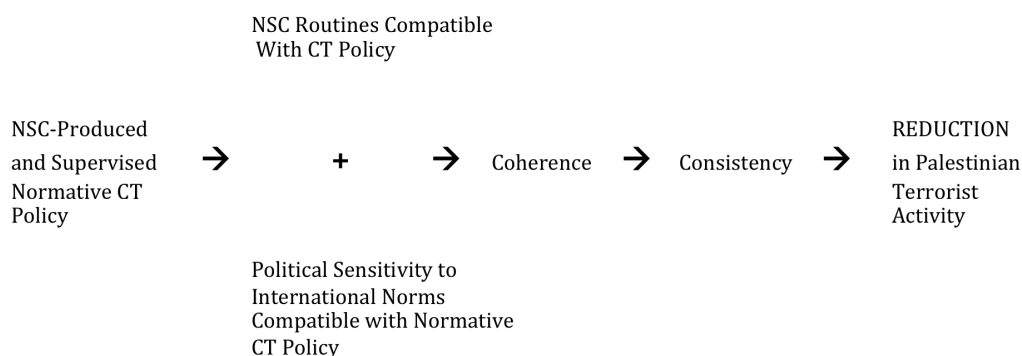


Figure 7

### **The Potential of a Policy to Minimize Incoherence**

Were the NSC to articulate and actively oversee the implementation of a counterterrorism policy, the NSE could not continue its practice of reflexively implementing improvisational routines. Rather, NSE leadership (the Chief of Staff, Chief of the Shabak, Chief of the Mossad, and Chief of the Police) would be obliged to first establish, in concert with the NSC, that those operations are, in fact, endorsed by the state counterterrorism policy as today's means towards achieving tomorrow's ends. The articulation of a counterterrorism policy would also oblige Israeli politicians to consider when and how the launching of a military strike would most effectively achieve the strategic objectives delineated in the policy, rather than allow them to continue focusing almost exclusively on how the timing and conduct of military strikes would be perceived internationally. The articulation of a counterterrorism policy would not eradicate organizational routines and political

sensitivities to international pressures. Rather, it could be the first step towards lending strategic direction to organizational routines and reconciling political sensitivities with the consistent application of normative tactics.

### **What Kind of Policy?**

I do not advise the NSC to articulate a counterterrorism policy endorsing the consistent application of massive punitive repression. Although it is likely that the consistent application of overwhelming military force in response to all incidents of terrorist activity would durably reduce and perhaps eliminate Palestinian terrorist activity, such a policy would cause enormous and morally intolerable collateral damage. Abraham said, “you can’t kill three million people” (Abraham, interview with author, 20 January 2011). In fact, Israel has the military capacity to kill three million people with relative ease. But Israel will not do so, because Israeli decision-makers would not tolerate it, the Israeli public would not tolerate it, and the international community would not tolerate it, and rightfully so. Conversely, Edward Luttwak argues that extreme government repression quickly and durably ends internal conflicts, ultimately saving lives that would have been lost over subsequent decades of prolonged conflict (Luttwak 1999). There is little data to support or disprove Luttwak’s claim, and in the absence of conclusive evidence demonstrating that lives lost in an overwhelming initial strike are dwarfed by lives lost over prolonged conflict of low intensity, repression of the suggested magnitude is unacceptable.

Rather than write a policy that discards international norms and devalues human life, the NSC need only write a policy to ensure that the NSE abides by Lichbach’s rule prohibiting the application of punishment and reward for the same

tactic, so that Palestinian terrorist leadership perceives the costs of terrorist activity as outweighing the benefits. Israel could therefore consistently but discriminately (Perkoski 2010) punish terrorist activity and consistently refuse to make concessions in the wake of terrorist activity. The NSC should, then, delineate a counterterrorism policy that incorporates international norms such that the NSE can consistently implement normative counterterrorist tactics, rather than implementing repressive counter-normative tactics erratically, as is the current practice. Creating a counterterrorism policy is thus not at odds with the political sensitivities to international pressures, but, rather, sanctifies normative sensitivities in policy to ensure coherence and consistency.

### **Exploring the Feasibility of this Prescription**

#### **Do the NSE organizational routines currently contributing to Israeli counterterrorism incoherence preclude the formulation of a counterterrorism policy?**

NSE organizational routines certainly preclude the formulation of a counterterrorism policy by NSE organizations. The Shabak, for instance, has no incentive to articulate a comprehensive counterterrorism policy because its current practice of facilitating arrests and targeted killings, that is, of achieving short-term operational successes, suffices to maintain its organizational credibility. The production of a counterterrorism policy based on rigorous analysis of the strategic merits of potential tactics is a challenge that NSE organizations have no incentive to take on. While NSE organizations are therefore unlikely to produce a counterterrorism policy, Israeli political organizations like the NSC can and should

take the reins and articulate a counterterrorism policy to guide the activities of the NSE.

**Do the political disincentives to take on the NSE and formulate defense policies preclude the formulation of a counterterrorism policy?**

The political disincentives (outlined in Chapter Three) to challenge the national security establishment and create defense policies to govern their activities are formidable- Israel has not created defense policies in the past because of these political obstacles, and Israel may continue to avoid articulating policies in the future because of the durability of these obstacles. However, Israeli politicians have, from time to time, exercised their authority to take on the NSE despite the political disincentives. Notable, of course, were Netanyahu's exertions to create (and during his current Premiership to delegate authority to) the NSC.

Moreover, these recent stirrings perhaps reflect growing recognition that the NSC offers an opportunity to make strides towards legitimacy in the international community. Were the NSC to produce a counterterrorism policy endorsing arrests while prohibiting, for example, targeted killings, the Israeli government could demonstrate its commitment to implementing normative and eschewing counter-normative tactics, and make strides towards securing international support for Israel. Although domestic political ambitions are certainly significant, the testimony of Israeli counterterrorism experts demonstrates that concerns about international legitimacy cannot be underestimated, and could thus override the domestic political disincentives to create policy.

**Can the weakness of the NSC be overcome?**

Though the Israeli NSC was created to develop an authoritative counterterrorism policy, today, the NSC is too understaffed and underfunded to serve its designated purpose. Fortunately, the NSC's capacity problem is in large part a product of its youth, and could be quickly ameliorated if Israeli politicians commit to addressing it. The NSC was established in March 1999, and only in July, 2008, did it become anchored in the National Security Council Law as the Prime Minister and the Government's staff forum for the foreign and security affairs of Israel. Before 2008, the Israeli prime minister and the heads of the services ignored the NSC, preferring instead to operate through traditional channels rather than cede authority to the new organization.

However, the 2008 legislation compels the prime ministers and the heads of the services to work with the NSC (The National Security council Act, 5768 – 2008). Though reality does not yet reflect the legislation, Prime Minister Netanyahu has, as Roey explained, “Made the National Security Advisor [Uzi Arad] his right hand man, and insisted that everyone meet with him and work with him” (Roey, interview with author, 13 January 2011). Roey also explained that the simple “fact that the legislation was passed is a revolution. It is at least a major change. Now it's going to take time. You don't bring in such new concepts...it really is a totally new way of going about things,” and expressed confidence that the NSC will, over time, become a prominent player in the political national defense machinery, and achieve its objectives and develop a counterterrorism policy to guide the NSE (Roey, interview with author, 13 January 2011). For now, however, the NSC's authority is vague and



the Prime Minister is not obligated to accept its recommendations, unlike with those of the Attorney General, for example.

In order to catalyze the strengthening of the NSC, the Knesset should approve a budget that allocates reasonable funding to the NSC. As noted in Chapter Three, of the 17 government and administration organizations listed in the 2011 Israeli Budget Bill, the NSC, at 32,832 (in NIS Thousands) receives the least funding by a significant margin. Although it would have to overcome political obstacles to do so, the Knesset should reallocate funds from the bloated Ministry of Public Security or Ministry of Defense to the NSC, enabling it to hire the staff requisite for serious policy formulation. Additionally, Israeli prime ministers, defense ministers, and the heads of the services must, essentially, break from their traditional patterns and work with the NSC as Netanyahu has done, for instance, by including the National Security Advisor in the weekly meetings heretofore attended exclusively by the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, the Chief of Staff, the Chief of the Mossad, and the Chief of the Shabak.

## **In Sum**

Israel must articulate and implement a counterterrorism policy. While the National Security Establishment will likely not take the initiative to develop a counterterrorism policy that could potentially constrain its freedom of maneuver, Israeli politicians could perhaps overcome the domestic political disincentives to produce defense policies upon recognition that the articulation of a normative counterterrorism policy would generate international approval and bolster the legitimacy of the Jewish State, thus reconciling formerly antithetical strategic and

normative interests. Members of the international community could also, for their part, carefully consider the impact of the pressures they exert on the Israeli regime. Although international pressures encouraging Israel to exercise restraint and make concessions are perhaps well-intentioned, such pressures (as explained in Chapter Three) cause Israel to respond inconsistently to Palestinian terrorist activity.

In short, the delineation of an authoritative and normative counterterrorism policy by the NSC would oblige NSE leadership to monitor organizational operations to ensure a coherent matching of articulated long-term objectives and tactical operations, while reconciling Israeli politicians' strategic and normative interests. Thus, an NSC counterterrorism policy could begin to reduce the inconsistency contributing to the inefficacy of Israeli counterterrorism.

## **Study Limitations and Future Research**

In this paper, I demonstrated that Israeli counterterrorism is ineffective and incoherent, identified the sources of incoherence, the symptoms of incoherence, and illustrated the causal connection between inconsistency and inefficacy. However, given the methodological constraints of my research as well as my commitment to remaining as close to topic as possible, I was unable to address a number of significant issues that demand additional attention.

### **The Political Model**

As I explained in Chapter Three, my research did not yield support for the theory that personal political ambition influences counterterrorism decision-making. However, given the constraints of interview-based research, I was unable to fully

assess the salience of the political model. Although I am confident that for the vast majority of routine, micro-level counterterrorist tactics, politics are of little import given the fact that these tactics are implemented entirely by an apolitical defense apparatus comprised of non-elected decision-makers, it is likely that political motives contribute to Israeli politicians' preference for deference to the NSE, and also factor into those few yet disproportionately significant counterterrorist decisions Israeli politicians *do* make.

Most of the Israeli counterterrorism experts that I interviewed argued that voter preferences are not factored into counterterrorism decision-making, and that counterterrorism is entirely apolitical. However, Levi's note that in Israel, "It is considered a pejorative, derogatory to refer to security policy as political" (Levi, interview with author, 19 January 2011), suggests that I might not be able to fully rely on the truthfulness of the respondents in this particular regard. Statistical analyses of the correlations between counterterrorist tactics and electoral cycles, such as the study currently undertaken by Erica Chenoweth and Laura Dugan entitled "The Electoral Determinants of Counterterrorism Policy," could help to determine the weight of the political model, as would an examination of the relationship between public demand for action in the wake of Palestinian attacks and the timing and conduct of Israeli counterattacks.

### **Examination of Specific Counterterrorist Tactics**

While I followed in the footsteps of a number of scholars and examined the efficacy of targeted killings and punitive military strikes, there is little literature assessing the efficacy of more conciliatory counterterrorist tactics (listed in Chapter

One). Few scholars have studied correlations between terrorist activity and, for example, the release of prisoners, offers of immunity, and negotiations. Professor Erica Chenoweth, Director of the *Wesleyan Program on Terrorism and Insurgency Research* and Professor Laura Dugan of the University of Maryland are currently quantitatively examining the efficacy of the entire spectrum of counterterrorist tactics, from the repressive to the conciliatory, enacted by Middle Eastern and North African governments to combat terrorist adversaries. Such research is critical, as, if conciliatory tactics prove capable of durably reducing the frequency and lethality of terrorist attacks, governments could effectively combat terrorist adversaries without implementing counter-normative tactics. Despite the significance of this gap in the literature, Professors Chenoweth and Dugan remain the only scholars of which I am aware seeking to examine the effectiveness of conciliatory counterterrorist tactics.

### **Additional Causative Models**

My research focused on Israeli counterterrorism decision-making, touching only briefly on the similarly complex motivations behind Palestinian terrorist decision-making. While I examined two of the most prominent theories of terrorist behavior, the grievance theory and the rationalist theory, I did not examine competing organizational,<sup>11</sup> psychological,<sup>12</sup> and state-level<sup>13</sup> theories. It is critical that scholars continue to explore the relative salience of these causative models of terrorist behavior, because the implications for counterterrorism differ widely between them. For example, if the organizational model were to prove explicatory in the Palestinian

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<sup>11</sup> See Bloom 2004; Pearlman 2008.

<sup>12</sup> See Post 1990.

<sup>13</sup> See Ross 1993; Piazza 2008.

case, then Israeli counterterrorist activity is significant only in as much as it renders terrorist activity a useful (or not useful) political tool for Palestinian leaders seeking to exert control over the Palestinian populace. The seemingly causal relationship between the inconsistency of Israeli counterterrorism and the continuation of Palestinian terrorist activity may, through the lens of competing models of terrorist behavior, be more complex than proponents of the grievance or rationalist model would suggest.

### **Corroborate International Argument**

I argue that sensitivity to international pressures governs Israeli politicians' counterterrorism decision-making, based primarily on the testimony of Israeli decision-makers and extant findings on the subject. While qualitative research offers insights that quantitative methodologies cannot, quantitative inquiry into correlations between the relative degrees of pressure exerted on the Israeli government and the nature of the Israeli counterterrorist tactics implemented would be a useful counterpart to fieldwork-based research. It would be useful to, for instance, create a Reuters compilation over time of international headlines mentioning Israel, and to conduct statistical analyses relating the degree of negativity (or positivity) expressed overseas, with the degree of Israeli counterterrorist repression (or conciliation) enacted.

### **Conclusion**

No other studies of which I am aware draw upon the personal experiences of ranking counterterrorism decision-makers to create a typology of state

counterterrorism decision-making. The testimonies of two National Security Advisors, a Director General of the Ministry of Defense, Head of Shabak Protection and Security Division, a senior consultant to NATO, Head of the IDF Operations Directorate, and Head of the IDF Intelligence Directorate (among other ranking Israeli experts) provided novel and surprising insight into the inner workings of Israeli counterterrorism decision-making.

In this paper, I have demonstrated the fallacy of two conventional wisdoms; 1) Israeli counterterrorism is effective, and 2) Israeli counterterrorism is the product of rational, unitary action.

My findings suggest that American policymakers should reconsider their hagiography of the Israeli counterterrorism model. Perhaps American efforts to enhance aviation security or to develop high caliber SIGINT technology could benefit from copying specific elements of the Israeli approaches in those particular areas. American policymakers should recognize, however, that the Israeli counterterrorism model overall is founded on a-strategic improvisational routines and normative sensitivities, has failed to reduce Palestinian terrorist activity, and therefore should not be emulated.

Though recently, scholars have begun to systematically analyze the relative efficacy of various counterterrorist tactics, much of this research is predicated on the assumption that once the most effective counterterrorist tactics have been identified, governments will promptly implement those tactics. However, rigorous analysis might reveal, for example, that American counterterrorism decision-making is plagued by the subordination of strategic concerns to electoral ones, or that Moroccan

counterterrorism decision-making is undermined by a misallocation of resources, or French by inter-agency rivalries. In order to prepare to bridge the gap between the growing literature examining the relative efficacy of counterterrorist tactics and the decision-makers selecting the tactics, American scholars and policymakers, as well as the scholars and policymakers of all states seeking to combat terrorism, must identify the obstacles within state counterterrorism decision-making apparatuses to the rational implementation of a coherent counterterrorism strategy. Only then can policymakers begin to develop the requisite mechanisms to overcome those obstacles and defeat terrorist adversaries.

## Appendix

### List of Acronyms

**ICC** Israel Intelligence Community

**IDF** Israel Defense Forces

**IP** Israel Police

**ISA** Israel Security Agency (also known as the Shabak)

**NSC** National Security Council

**NSE** National Security Establishment

**PMO** Prime Minister's Office

**Shabak** Transliterated Hebrew acronym for the ISA

### Consent Script

“The purpose of the study is to create a typology of Israeli counterterrorism decision-making, and to identify the obstacles in the Israeli decision-making apparatus to the consistent implementation of effective counterterrorist tactics.

“An important part of my study is interviewing current and/or former Israeli officials, academics, and IDF officers with information about the counterterrorism process. I will be asking you to orally answer a few questions, which will be recorded on a digital voice recorder. The interview should not take longer than 60 minutes. To protect your privacy, the files will be deleted from the audio recorder after being stored on an encrypted device. I will not cite you in the final published research, however, and will instead use designations such as ‘Subject A’ rather than your name in any publicly available material.

“Although these questions are not sensitive in nature, possible repercussions could include the possibility that someone gained access to the original data and therefore determine the identity of the participants. However, since all of the interview questions are innocuous, even a break of anonymity should not pose a risk to your reputation, employability, or financial status. Regardless, this interview is entirely voluntary and you can terminate the interview at any time. Thank you for your participation.”



## Sample Interview

- 1) Which Israeli counterterrorist tactics have most effectively reduced the Palestinian terrorist activity?
- 2) Have Israeli targeted killings of Palestinian terrorists effectively reduced Palestinian terrorist activity? What about the Security Fence? What about punitive military strikes like Operation Defensive Shield and Operation Cast Lead?
- 3) What are the biggest challenges that Israeli counterterrorist decision-makers must overcome?
- 4) What are the greatest strengths of Israeli counterterrorism?
- 5) What are the greatest weaknesses of Israeli counterterrorism?
- 6) Which organizations are responsible for Israeli counterterrorism?
- 7) What is the role of the Shabak? The IDF? The Mossad? The Police?
- 8) What is the role of the Defense Minister, the Prime Minister?
- 9) How and to what extent do international laws, norms, opinions, and pressures influence and/or constrain Israeli counterterrorism decision-makers?
- 10) How does international criticism translate into tangible problems for Israel? That is, why does it matter if the international community criticizes Israel?
- 11) How, if at all, are Israeli counterterrorism decision-makers influenced by domestic politics?
- 12) Does the Israeli public exhibit preferences for particular counterterrorist tactics over others? If so, which?
- 13) How, if at all, are Israeli counterterrorism decision-makers influenced by national defense think tanks such as ICT Herzliya or INSS?

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