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Challenges in The Mediterranean region
Challenges in The Mediterranean region

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Foreword

Security is often understood through the military prism, especially in the Mediterranean region, prone to conflicts. It is however necessary to add to this definition other dimension, in order to fully conceptualize security not only as defense, but also as societal stability.

From democratic upheaval in Tunisia to Türkiye’s strategy to use patriotic inheritance, societies are facing many hurdles. This issue will focus on new challenges in the Mediterranean region, born from the current Ukrainian–Russian conflict. However, old tensions are re-opening, leaving these countries to deal with both old and new wounds.
06/04/2022
Idit Silman leaves coalition, PM Bennett loses majority

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The U.N officially changes "The Republic of Turkey" to "The Republic of Türkiye"

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OHCHR stated that the fatal fire shots came from Israeli forces and were not the consequence of indiscriminate Palestinian firing

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Türkiye at a Glance

The newly renamed Republic of Türkiye finds itself center-stage in a world shaped by the rapid change induced by the coronavirus pandemic and the Russo-Ukrainian war, and is facing challenges to its economy, security and borders. Türkiye’s economy took an exceptionally hard hit from the Covid lockdowns and through what many economists would call a series of unforced errors on the part of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Meanwhile, Türkiye’s geographic proximity and political ties to both Russia and Europe gives it the leverage to extract balanced concessions from either side as they jockey for influence in the region. Furthermore, looking forward, Türkiye’s role as a backstop for migrants from the Middle East to Europe may be of strategic importance if/when the coming food crisis hits the vulnerable countries south of their border.

A Nation by Any Other Name

In a national rebranding effort, The United Nations officially changed the name of “The Republic of Turkey” to “The Republic of Türkiye” on May 22, 2022 (UN, 2022) in an effort; according to President Erdogan, to better represent the “Turkish People’s culture, civilization and values” (Wertheimer, 2022).

There exists a long history across many languages of naming the specific bird, “turkey” in English, after the country from which they know it. Other examples include in Polish, along with many Slavic languages, “indyk” and in Turkish, “hindi”, both suggesting they are from India rather than Türkiye. In Portuguese, it is referred to as “peru” and in Hindi, “turkee”. In an effort to decouple the country from the bird, perhaps after enduring years of middle school-like mockery by its association, Erdogan has invoked his nation’s right to be called as they wish much like Cote d’Ivoire or Chechia have done in the past (Alsharif, 2022).

Whether the new name catches on outside the halls of the UN remains to be seen, but for those of us with English keyboards in the meantime, the shortcut ‘ALT + 0252’ makes the letter ‘ü’.

Swimming Against the Economic Current

Many countries were experiencing inflation before the Russian invasion of Ukraine due to supply chain issues and central banks lowering interest rates. The economic thought behind this action is to make borrowing cheaper and lubricate the economy to help businesses and investors raise capital. For example, the federal funds rate (the rate at which the federal reserve lends money to banks in the U.S) went from 2.16% in 2019 to 0.08% in 2021 (Statista, 2022).

This economic decision pumps money through the economy by allowing banks to borrow more, thus letting them lend more to attempt to fill in the financial gaps left by pandemic lockdown policies. Likewise, the European Central Bank lowered it’s rate to 0% in March 2016 in the wake of the Eurozone crisis where it stayed until July 2022 where they raised it to 0.25% (Money Guide 2022).

This style of economic governance punishes people who save cash by maintaining a moderate amount of inflation and rewards those who can leverage large sums of capital into anything that generates a return on investment. Inversely, raising the interest rates has a cooling effect on the economy by making it more expensive to lend/borrow money and lowering inflation via less economic activity (Investopedia
Therefore, the current economic standard is: high inflation?
- Raise rates.
Low inflation/stagnant economy?
- Cut rates.

President Erdogan, despite the advice of many economists to the contrary, believes the inverse is true and that it is high interest rates that cause inflation (Pitel, 2021) and lower rates that stop it; a belief which stems from the tradition in Islamic faith that abhors high interest rates (usury) and sees them as sinful (Meyer, 2021). Before the pandemic even began, Türkiye was experiencing high inflation, so the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye raised interest rates to a whopping 24% in 2018 to combat the inflation (Pitel A, 2022).

He has fired two finance ministers, Berat Albayrak and Lütfi Elvan, in 2 years over this issue and has, via his power to appoint and fire finance ministers, continued to cut Turkish central bank interest rates from 24% in 2018 down to 14% as of July 2022. When the economic consequences of the pandemic hit, Türkiye couldn’t afford to lower rates further like the Europeans or Americans, because it would exacerbate their prior inflation problem, but they did it anyway at the demand of Erdogan. Like pouring gasoline to put out a fire, Erdogan has pushed the inflation in Türkiye to one of the highest rates in the world (currently at 73% (Pitel A, 2022)), wiping out the savings of the middle class and making all imported products (including international finance) drastically more expensive.

Other measures were taken in an effort to combat the high inflation and the consequences of Erdogan’s decision to lower interest rates in an overheated economy. The first was to offer a guarantee via the treasury and the central bank of the value of lira deposits against a foreign currency, namely the dollar, for 12 months (Daily Sabah, 2022).

This means that depositors with qualified accounts in Turkish lira are guaranteed to retain the value of their deposits against inflation over 12 months at the expense of the treasury and printing power of the central bank. The intention of the deal is to encourage Turks to keep their savings in lira and not trade them away for foreign currency, as more than half of local savings in Turkish society is held in gold and foreign currencies due to the historical unreliability of the lira (Devranoglu, 2021). To support their effort, the Turkish treasury spent a considerable amount of their own foreign currency reserves (FX), spending $7 billion in December 2021 (Pitel B, 2022) in order to pump up the value of the lira and encourage people to take advantage of the program.

After a lackluster start to the program, the offer was then extended to companies as well as offering them tax incentives in addition to the guarantees (Sonmez, 2022). At the time of the deal, $1 was equivalent to 11.4 lira (Sonmez, 2022), but currently, as of early July 2022, the ratio is $1:17.26 lira. This means that of the 591 billion lira in protected accounts (as of March 25, 2022) (Sonmez 2022), the treasury must spend and/or the central bank must print to cover the difference between the old and new values.

Furthermore, the Turkish government implemented a scheme to encourage citizens to invest their gold or sell it to select jewelers who would, in turn, sell to the state (Pitel C, 2022). This “under the mattress” gold buying project relies on the government, chiefly Erdogan, to convince Turks to part with their traditional hedge against inflation for currency in a highly inflationary period. There exists in Türkiye more than enough gold for such a plan to work (an estimated $250-$300 billion worth), and the government target is 10% of the massive figure (Dorsey, 2022). It remains to be seen if public trust, or lack thereof, in selling gold to the government at market price precludes the success of any such initiative.

The Russo-Ukrainian War and the Gatekeepers of NATO

The invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 marks a clear shift in the geopolitical landscape of Europe. European countries have banded
together to impose economic sanctions on the Russian Federation and some have dramatically increased military spending in order to counter the threat posed by Moscow. Türkiye, given its close proximity to both participants in the Russo-Ukrainian war, both geographically and politically, is capable of playing the role of mediator should the two sides ever decide to come to the negotiating table (Kusa 2022).

To this end, Ankara must carefully play both sides, keeping in mind the preservation of its geopolitical position (globally and regionally) as well as the reinforcement and expansion of their influence (Kusa 2022).

To preserve a multipolar approach to their geopolitical position in regards to NATO countries responses to the invasion, Türkiye could not go so far as to impose sanctions of their own because it would degrade their relationship with Moscow (Kusa 2022). Likewise, their formal position of mediator, established early on in the conflict, gives them more freedom to pick and choose policies on either side of the conflict that advance their own interests. For example, the ascension of Finland and Sweden to NATO was initially blocked by Türkiye’s veto (Erlanger 2022).

The purpose of the veto was to extract concessions, such as demanding that Finland and Sweden change their anti-terrorism laws and denounce the Kurdistan Worker’s Party ((PKK) - an armed, militant Kurdish separatist group that operates in south-eastern Türkiye and northern Iraq), as well as extradite a number of people (including Kurdish journalists) and end an “informal embargo on arms sales to Türkiye” (Erlanger 2022).

Turkish opposition to Finnish and Swedish NATO membership ended (on paper) at the NATO Madrid summit, where the three countries signed a trilateral memorandum in which Finland and Sweden will no longer provide support to YPG/PYD (Kurdish militia groups) and FETÖ (“Fethullahist Terrorist Organization” - a term used by the Turkish government to refer to the Islamist movement led by exiled preacher Fethulla Gülen) (NATO 2022). Furthermore, Finland and Sweden agreed to label the PKK as a terrorist organization and affirmed that there are no national arms embargoes between the three signatories (NATO 2022).

On the other side of the conflict, Türkiye has deepened its financial ties to Russia by allowing tourism and investment (capital flight included) to continue despite other NATO countries cutting their ties (Kusa 2022). Turkish companies have begun to replace western companies that have left Russia, and the energy exports from Russia continue to flow to Türkiye (Kusa 2022). This position may allow them to alleviate the blockade on Russian and Ukrainian wheat exports (Kusa 2022), and their geopolitical position may soon demand it as MENA (The Middle East and North Africa) braces for food insecurity and potential famine.

Türkiye and the Coming MENA Food Crisis

As explained in Issue 7 of the Mediterranean Peace and Security Monitor, the combined impacts of the blockade of Russian and Ukrainian wheat exports and the high cost of agricultural inputs like fertilizer have resulted in an acute wheat shortage and a sustained,
lowered agricultural output, particularly in the MENA region.

While Türkiye battles its own cost of living issues resulting from high inflation, its neighbors to the south stand to be devastated by the breakdown of the global agricultural supply chain. In Syria, the Russian Federation has used its UN security council veto to block the UN cross border humanitarian aid to the war torn country (Al Jazeera 2022).

This mandate, enacted in 2014 and which expired July 10th, 2022 was intended to allow UN aid to cross into Syria from Türkiye via the Bab al-Hawa crossing and bypass the Syrian government controlled areas of the country to reach civilians directly (Al Jazeera 2022). With the mandate’s renewal dependent upon Russia’s acceptance, Vladimir Putin’s gambit seems to be starting a famine and thereby a refugee crisis in the region to distract western resources from the conflict in Ukraine.

Türkiye has had its share of refugee influxes over the last decade, becoming the country with the largest refugee population in the world (3.6 million) (Leghtas, 2019). Türkiye also controls the flow of refugees into Europe, and has used this leverage to its advantage in the past, extracting concessions from the EU in exchange for stemming the flow of Syrian refugees from Asia (Terry 2021).

While a new refugee crisis would give Türkiye some leverage in this regard, their system for dealing with such a crisis is liable to be less welcoming than in previous years, as they could become swamped by the sheer number of refugees pouring over the border. In 2019, 1 million Syrians of working age (out of around 2 million) living in Türkiye had no work or residence permit and subsisted in the gray/black economy (Leghtas, 2019) and the addition of millions more would do little to solve the problem. Another huge wave of refugees could also have a politically destabilizing effect on both Türkiye and Europe, weakening NATO’s support for Ukraine by diverting their attention and resources to a new humanitarian crisis.

These pressures shaped, in part, the 2022 Tehran summit between Türkiye, Russia and Iran which concluded on July 19th (Politico 2022). There, Türkiye negotiated with Iran for their blessing to conduct a military operation in northern Syria and with Russia to allow Black Sea grain shipments to continue.

The purpose of the former agreement is to create a safe zone to resettle migrants displaced by the grinding conflict in Syria and to attract other would-be migrants there rather than over the Turkish border. The latter agreement, later signed in Türkiye by Ukraine and Russia, was intended to bring Black Sea grain shipments back onto the global market and perhaps assuage the looming food crisis in the Middle East (Politico 2022). This agreement, however, has been jeopardized by a Russian missile attack on an Odessa port (Bennett, 2022), and it remains to be seen if private companies are willing to insure vessels that travel to the Black Sea to transport the grain given the risk involved.

Conclusion

Türkiye faces a difficult transitory period both economically and geopolitically. With one foot in Europe and NATO and the other in Asia and Russia, one hand in the secular tradition of Atatürk and the other in political Islam, this decade will define Türkiye for generations to come. Will Ankara be able to maintain a balance between Russia and NATO, or will they be forced to choose sides in pursuit of their own national interests?

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The first half of 2022 has shown that tensions between Israel and Palestine remain at a steadily high pitch, with escalatory moves on both sides threatening a dangerous eruption of violence (Bassist, 2022; Khoury, Shezaf, Kubovich, Breiner, & The Associated Press, 2022).

In many ways, this escalatory view of the situation is cyclical, as both countries continue to go through repeated periods of repression, violence and victimhood year-by-year (Colombo, Sleibi, Van Veen, 2021). Although Israel has been spared the brunt of this vicious cycle due to its stronger military position, Hamas (Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah or Islamic Resistance Movement), the de-facto governing authority of the Gaza Strip since 2007 (Davis, 2016; Mukhimer, 2016), has sought to even the scales and match the capacity of the usually more dominant Israeli military (Abu Amer, 2022; Abou Jalal, 2022). Prominently, such maneuvers have been made especially clear by Hamas’s military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, which revealed in a documentary published on the 11th of June 2022, that it has amassed a large number of weaponized drones to use against Israel (Ezzedeen Alqassam brigades, 2022). Sequentially, this article will first present evidence that the development and launch of the rockets can be perceived as an accelerated weapons program, and then subsequently investigate the success of the
attack by the Palestinian side (Hamas) through a portrayal of the facts and context.

Interestingly, a major takeaway from this videographic display of military might, is that the weaponized drones, named Shehab drones (Jain, 2021), were fully manufactured and developed on the Palestinian territory, in the Gaza Strip (Abu Amer, 2022). Despite major restrictions on the movement of goods and individuals in/out of the Gaza Strip (Mohammed, Saul, Irish, Hafezi, 2021; Abu Amer, 2020), the manufacturing ingenuity of Hamas, and its ability to engage in accelerated or ‘crash’ weapon programs (CDP) has not been completely impeded by Israeli forces (Agencies, 2021; Abu Amer, 2020).

To be precise, Hamas’s engagement in a ‘crash’ weapon development program refers to its ability to dramatically accelerate the pace at which a weapon or defensive technology is developed (Prong, 2020, p. 2). The general value of such an acceleration relates to how it shortens the amount of time observer intelligence, acquisition and operational communities (in this case Israel and its military) have to interpret the change in production as a threat and subsequently counter it. Fundamentally, a major cause behind this failure on the part of the Israeli military, and alternate success on the part of Hamas, is insufficient intelligence availability and quality, specifically scientific & technical intelligence (S&Ti).

Scientific & Technical Intelligence (S&Ti) can be essentially defined as intelligence about weapons and equipment that addresses a broad range of data collected from the observation of the armed forces and related detachments of foreign nations (U.S. Department of Defense, 2013, pp. 119, 141, 182). Practically, S&Ti is used by an actor like Israel to identify when a perceived enemy would launch an attack and comprehend the exact nature of the attack and the factors that allowed it to occur. Altogether, when viewed through a security lens, S&Ti is a critical tool for identifying an enemy’s war-fighting potential at different points in time/stages of a conflict (Jones, 1939, p. 74).

Practically, S&Ti would be used by Israel to discover an impending offensive or the development of weapons that can be used for such an offensive and implement a counter. However, as noted earlier, the S&Ti collected by Israel has historically been unable to fully prevent Hamas’s militaristic efforts. A notable instance of this is the CDP that allowed Hamas to launch ~1000 rockets at Israel’s commercial heartland on the 12th of May, 2021. Taking this into account, this article will seek to argue that Israeli S&Ti will struggle to consistently predict large-scale offensives by Hamas.

With escalating acts of violence being visible in the first half of 2022, an impending large-scale violent episode is not out of the question, and understanding the potential success behind its incidence is vital towards further comprehending the complicated and conflictual relationship between Israel and Palestine. In order to illustrate why Israeli S&Ti strategies have limited utility when applied to Palestinian entities, this article will apply a model S&Ti toolkit for uncovering CDPs proposed by Pronk (2020) to a referential case study, namely the aforementioned CDP that allowed Hamas to launch ~1000 rockets at Israel’s commercial heartland. The decision to apply this methodology relates to its broad applicability to almost any case, and its recognition of the adversarial mentality. With the knowledge that adversaries understand and block many of the more rudimentary methods employed to discover CDPs, Pronk’s toolkit targets the supposed true nature of the crash program (2020, pp. 3–6).

In essence, through this toolkit, one would model the program’s inner workings through various analytical insights and infer what is hidden using collectible features (Clark, 2019, pp. 62–65). Altogether, this model demands both a detailed understanding of the problem (what kind of CDP is the adversary capable of / seeking) and a high level of coordination between collectors and
analysts to systematically scan for the presence of a CDP (Clark, 2019, p. 147).

As noted earlier, to investigate the event, and specifically the construction of the missiles/rockets leading up to 12/05/2021, the article will apply a model S&TI toolkit. Said toolkit encompasses prominent intelligence principles and methods that allow an actor to identify adversary (perceived enemy) weapon areas that could be improved, study industrial sectors to the extent where places, programs, or events that warrant close scrutiny are identified, and discover what an adversary is secretly attempting to accomplish (Prönk, 2020, pp. 7–10). Finally, this paper will conclude that Israeli S&TI will struggle to consistently predict largescale offensives by Hamas due to the unique features and politics behind the Israel-Palestine conflict, which pose a contextual limitation to conventional S&TI strategies.

**Conventional Crash Weapon Development Programs**

To begin, it is important to note that in order to field any weapon system, an entity must execute a Research and Development program (R&D), a manufacturing program and a deployment effort (Prönk, 2020, pp. 3–4). These steps can be either taken in the entity’s own country or a (third) state. Moreover, on the path from initial idea to end product, the entity must ensure a sequential transition from basic science to concept/design development, testing, production, and finally deployment.

Nonetheless, as the name implies, a crash weapon development program is one where all, or a significant portion, of these steps, have been rushed to field the weapon or system in the shortest amount of time possible. The net result of this compression, which can work to overcome a severe handicap or allow for the cultivation of overwhelming military superiority, is a strategic or capability surprise (Prönk, 2020, p. 3; Defense Science Board, 2009, pp. 5–7; Handel, 1984, p. 233).

As a general rule, CDPs are intense efforts where huge risks are taken, large amounts of resources expended, and significant shortcuts through the bureaucracy are taken (Prönk, 2020, p. 3). Substantially, such programs are disruptive to the standard way of doing things. Presumably, the decision to pursue a CDP becomes evident in the form of new buildings, increased people on the program, and a higher rate of testing. These factors lend themselves to the principle of a larger power or state embarking on a CDP due to the observable nature of the commitment, but what happens when a smaller entity takes on a crash program?

**The S&TI Toolkit and Hamas**

As noted earlier, Prönk’s toolkit targets the supposed true nature of the crash program, and models a CDP’s inner workings through various analytical insights, and infer what is hidden. Nonetheless, this toolkit also takes into account the difficulty inherent in understanding all foreign (adversarial) activities, and hence proposes a straightforward three-step process (Prönk, 2020, pp. 8–11).

The first two steps are dedicated to searching for the actual CDP, while the last step focuses on deeper analysis and collection. Step one can be abridged as “understanding foreign perceptions.” The observer identifies weapon areas an adversary might feel pressured to improve and the associated industrial sectors that could be mobilized towards this end. Step two, namely “searching for increased activity,” uses obtained information on industrial sectors and calls the observer to scan for notable changes. Such changes include additions to the infrastructure, money movement, technical base changes, and unexpected personnel activity.

The outcome of this step is an awareness of places, programs, or events that warrant scrutiny. The final step, termed “deepening the analysis,” simply calls on the observer to use every analytical tool available to determine the nature, and underlying secrets, of the highlighted activities.
Significantly, before applying the toolkit, this article would like to recognize several characteristics that make Hamas unique in the context of S&TI analysis.

First, despite Hamas’s status as the de-facto governing authority of the Gaza strip, it is not necessarily an absolute representative of the Palestinian territory or the Palestinian National Authority (the official interim self-governing body controlling parts of the Gaza strip and the West Bank). Pragmatically, Hamas is a militant and nationalist organization characterized as a terrorist organization by the European Union, Israel, Japan, and the United States (DW, 2018). Moreover, Israel and Hamas continue to clash monthly, with multiple civilian deaths on both sides ensuing in the process (Colombo, Sleibi, Van Veen, 2021; Shenhav-Goldberg, 2016).

The above features mean that Hamas cannot act in a conventional, state-like manner when it comes to a CDP. With this in mind, the contextual utility of S&TI, illustrated using the toolkit proposed by Pronk (2020), can be investigated, with each step working to demonstrate the difficulties Israel faced when collecting intelligence prior to the 12th of May, 2021.

Step 1: Understanding the perceptions of Hamas

Usually, step one would involve a careful scrutinization of Hamas to understand the organization’s worldview and the national security concerns it considers dire (Pronk, 2020, p. 8). Essentially, Israel would establish thresholds for how Hamas would function ‘normally’ and when in a state of urgency. However, Hamas does not (cannot) operate as a conventional state.

There are no periods of calm or crisis in the context of national interest. As the de-facto government of the Palestinian territory in the Gaza strip and a semi-defined terrorist organization, Hamas is always in conflict with Israel. Hence, it can be easily argued that every move made by Hamas is already being scrutinized. There is no room for the Palestinian organization to make observable ‘threatening’ actions when operating at Israel’s doorstep.

Knowing that Hamas will obscure its actions, Israel is then likely to take creative measures when gathering intelligence. As an illustration of this, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and intelligence officers have been seen to gather local perceptions and opinions (intelligence) by using tactics such as mobility restrictions, interrogations, raids, and detentions (Human Rights Watch, 2021; OCHA, 2020; Gvaryahu, 2020; Shenhav-Goldberg, 2016).

This is done to keep a close eye on the sentiments and perspectives of the Palestinian public, and provoke the release of vital intelligence on Hamas. Arguably, these rather brutal and inflammatory tactics are likely to exacerbate the pressures felt by the population, but they are part of a long list of intimidation tactics Israel considers necessary in the name of defense (Human Rights Watch, 2021; Haaretz, 2019).

Significantly, the actual utility of the information collected through such militaristic tactics has been hailed as impressive on the counter-terrorism front, but problematic as a long-term strategy, and statistically unable to provide high-quality estimates on the nature of impending attacks (Ari Gross, 2021; Bar-Joseph, 2010).

Israeli forces have no immediate physical manifestations that they can use to determine whether Hamas is embarking on a CDP and face even more difficulties when seeking to discover the industrial sectors that might host the potential CDP before it is employed. This is problematic, as most S&TI toolkits presuppose that CDPs have obvious or detectable ramifications regarding resources, people and energy (Clark, 2019; Handel, 1984; Pronk, 2020, p. 8).

This is not to say that Israel is not conscious of material imports, as demonstrated by strict mobility controls and a border lock enforced by a joint effort between Egypt and Israel (Abu...
Amer, 2020), but to indicate how guerilla tactics may escape distinct observation through the applied framework.

Step 2: Searching for increased activity by Hamas

Building on the step above, the industrial guerilla tactics employed by Hamas can be addressed in more detail. Through diligent observation and coercive, bordering on criminal, interrogation, Israel has established that most materials that can be used for a missile CDP enter the Palestinian territory through two pathways: by means of smuggling through underground tunnels in the Sinai Peninsula linking Palestine and Egypt, and direct imports which Israel monitors as a general policy (Mohammed, Saul, Irish, Hafezi, 2021; Abu Amer, 2020). These materials are then processed within a complex network of tunnels and facilities between key points in Israel, Gaza, and the Sinai Peninsula.

Conventional S&TI guidance expects that there will be a discernible flow of resources and leadership into the CDP effort (Pronk, 2020, p. 9), but Hamas’s behavior may indicate a different approach to the process. There is no boisterous transition as other programs are delayed in the face of the missile production initiative. There is no immediate change in resource allocation indicating a new priority. Arguably, Hamas tends to become more subtle with every CDP. Hamas has been fighting a pseudo-war against Israel since its formation in the 1980s, with the current level of armed conflict starting around 2001 (Freedman, 2019, pp. 90, 273).

Conceivably, Hamas has embarked on several CDPs in this period and sought to keep them all under wraps. An indication of this is the complexity of the missiles produced in the May 12th attack and their production method, as well as the recent advancement in drone technology demonstrated by the military wing of the organization (Abu Amer, 2022).

In earlier years, when Israel struggled to block smuggling through the Sinai peninsula entirely, Hamas imported most of its weapons (missiles) from Iran (Abu Amer, 2020). As border controls tightened on the Egyptian side and the IDF destroyed a big chunk of Hamas’s smuggling tunnel network, Hamas engineers grew creative and went underground. Reports indicate that since 2014/2015, 40% of Hamas’s military budget was invested in building tunnels and underground production facilities (Kubovich, 2019). Moreover, substantial cash infusions have allowed production and contraband smuggling to remain stable over the last decade.

This is then reinforced by the fact that Hamas engineers build rockets by repurposing old water pipes, unexploded military missiles from Israel, propellant from fertilizer, oxidizer, sugar, and other building materials (Agencies, 2021; Abu Amer, 2020). These are essential materials that cannot be blocked or controlled, and as a result, their movement is difficult to monitor and a quota on their import is impractical.

Altogether, in the case of Hamas, CDPs are not synonymous with a visible increase in activity. Pronk (2020, p. 9) argues that in circumstances where crash programs are hidden from direct scrutiny, insights from step one are applicable. Nevertheless, as established earlier, determining the existence of a CDP when the distinction between standard functioning and urgency is unclear is quite tricky. There are no immediate signposts of change that the IDF and intelligence officers can detect. Their only recourse is an endless reiteration of preventative measures. The Israeli government can continue a policy of raids and detentions to correct this imbalance of intelligence, but this policy comes with its own set of consequences.

This article does not seek to justify reprisal by Hamas, but a certain level of causality to Israel’s violence and Hamas’s response must be considered. In the immediate context of the given case, it can be argued that the tactics taken by Israel were one of the motivating factors behind the massive missile barrage on the 12th, with raids in Sheikh Jarrah and the
mobility restrictions in the al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem occurring right before the barrage (Colombo, Sleibi, Van Veen, 2021). In a general sense, controversial incidents like the shooting of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh on the 11th of May 2022 (Shoval, 2022), posit a similar risk for escalation, and in some ways, reprisal by Hamas which reinforces the cycle of repression, violence, and victimhood.

Step 3: Engaging in deeper analysis of steps 1+2

The final step of the standardized S&TI toolkit calls on the observer to bring out analytical methods to break into the truth that the adversary has hidden. It is important to note here that even though Israel may have struggled to prepare for a CDP using the above toolkit, they have taken alternative measures to ensure security.

The IDF works closely with intelligence officers (collectors + analysts) to anticipate any plans Hamas might have (Kuperwasser, 2007). Nevertheless, in terms of the above search steps, Hamas paints itself as a difficult target to investigate. Israel is capable of constraining material imports and smuggling to some extent, but since Hamas operates as both a state and an armed group, pinpointing clear features that can reveal the existence of a CDP is improbable.

Certainly, there are aspects that Hamas has chosen not to hide (i.e. their war tactics and import routes) (Abu Amer, 2020; Agencies, 2021; AlJazeera Channel, 2020), but building a pattern from this collectible information may not allow for a consistently reliable counter by Israel. It can be theorized that after this attack, Israeli analysts have collected the suitable tidbits necessary towards anticipating a similar attack in the future, particularly given the rigid structure of the Israeli intelligence service and its brutal tactics (Human Rights Watch, 2021; Kuperwasser, 2007), but predictions are never certain. Overall, the current approach taken by Israel may allow for relative security in the near-term (Freilich, 2017; Morag, 2005), but it erodes absolute effectiveness through discriminatory and alienating practices that promote a cyclical race to the bottom in the long term (Hasisi, Perry & Wolfowicz, 2019).

Concluding Remarks

All in all, this article has sought to investigate the utility of the three-stop S&TI toolkit for uncovering CDPs conceived by Pronk (2020). Specifically, this paper sought to examine the utility of S&TI in the specific case of the accelerated or ‘crash’ weapon program that allowed Hamas to launch ~1000 rockets at Israel’s commercial heartland on May 12th, 2021. After sequentially applying the three steps, this article determined that scrutinizing ‘standard’ and ‘urgent’ practices by Hamas would be consistently difficult given the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian organization.

The fact that Israel recognizes Hamas to be a terrorist organization means that the steps taken in a conventional S&TI approach are disrupted. Understanding the perceptions of Hamas becomes synonymous with engaging in broad and unspecified detention and interrogation of all Palestinian citizens, while searching for increased activity is equivalent to a repetition of the aforementioned preventative measures until enough collectible characteristics can be gathered. Nevertheless, the May 12th barrage is one of few on record that surprised the Israeli state. Despite brutal and inflammatory tactics, Israel has managed to keep Hamas in check, and the recent missile barrage has simply provided Israeli analysts with numerous bits of information that can display a pattern of future CDP activity.

On the whole, the applied S&TI toolkit demonstrates how difficult investigating an entity like Hamas can be. Still, this article also recognizes information limitations, scope conditions, and that sensitive (hidden) data that might indicate other interpretations. When looking to understand the behaviour and actions of organizations and groups similar to Hamas,
lessons learned from the application of this S&TI toolkit can allude to the fact that conventional beliefs on how CDPs are developed need to accommodate a broader range of actors. In order to ensure an accurate understanding of modern conflict actors, S&TI toolkits must adapt to new norms of weapons development and actor behaviour in increasingly hybrid conflict environments that deviate away from state-centric principles of engagement.

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On June 30th, 2022, the Knesset (Israel’s legislative body) voted 92-0 to dissolve the government and trigger a fourth election in the last three years (Keller-Lynn 2022). The political crisis shows scant sign of resolution in the coming November 1st, 2022 election as coalition after coalition crumbles between factional infighting and public scandals. This article will cover the reasons behind the political turmoil and touch on the main political factions running in the 2022 race.

The Knesset

The Knesset functions similarly to Western Democracies, but it has its own unique aspects that add a certain level of intrigue to the democratic process. The Knesset is the unicameral legislature of Israel with 120 seats, therefore a majority would consist of 61 members. Thus far in Israeli history, no party has ever achieved a majority on its own, and coalitions are the norm (Malhotra 2022). Knnesset members are not voted for directly, but voters vote for parties whose members are chosen in rank order from the party list as the party gains seats in a single national district (Huggard 2019). The President selects a member of the Knesset, usually the leader of the largest party but not necessarily, who they think would have the best chance of forming a coalition and mandates that they create a government within 28 days (Malhotra 2022). This member, if successful, becomes the Prime Minister of Israel. It is not unheard of that a

120

- Joint List: 8 seats
- United Arab List: 4 seats
- Meretz: 6 seats
- Labor: 7 seats
- Yesh Atid: 17 seats
- Blue and White: 8 seats
- Yisrael Beiteinu: 7 seats
- New Hope: 6 seats
- Yamina: 7 seats
- Likud: 29 seats
- Religious Zionists: 6 seats
- Otzma Yehudit: 1 seat
- Shas: 9 seats
- UTJ: 7 seats
prospective prime minister split their term in office with the leader of another party as part of a political deal in order to successfully create a coalition government. This is currently the deal between former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and current Prime Minister Yair Lapid, and it signifies a relatively weaker coalition that traded away time in office for a chance at forming a majority government.

Netanyahu and the 2019–2021 elections

Benjamin “Bibi” Netanyahu served as Prime Minister of Israel 5 different terms from 1996–1999 and from 2009 to 2021. He is the longest serving Prime Minister in Israeli history and the current leader of the opposition party, Likud (Lee 2022). His politics are described as “Right Wing”, and his predilections toward privatization, tax cuts and deregulation led his approach to be described as “Reaganesque” by Foreign Affairs magazine (Lee 2022).

His attitude toward the Palestinians put him at odds with proponents of the two-state solution (Lee 2022) - a political compromise wherein Israel and Palestine become two separate and independent countries as opposed to the current situation of one beneath the other. What spiraled his long reign into the current tumult, however, are the crimes he has been indicted for and the negative effects on his popularity therefrom. Coalition partners no longer wish to work with his party, as it could risk tarnishing their own reputations, yet there remain enough voters for Likud to hamper the creation of a coalition without them.

In February 2019, Israeli Attorney General, Avichai Mandelblit announced his intention to indict Prime Minister Netanyahu on charges of bribery, fraud and breaches of trust only 38 days before the April 2019 election (Huggard 2019) (Sachs 2019).

The traditional allied parties and Netanyahu’s Likud earned 65 seats, enough to form a majority, but they failed to form a new government, largely due to Netanyahu’s looming indictment, and triggered another election in September that year. Those elections resulted in no clear government coalition, and after the President received 55 Knesset members recommendations for Netanyahu (one less than his rival Benny Gantz), the president chose Netanyahu again to form a new government (Sachs 2019).

This attempt also failed as Netanyahu’s pre-trial hearings made headlines around the world and the President turned to Gantz, the leader of the Blue and White party, to form a government (Huggard 2019). Gantz also failed to form a governing coalition in his 28 day mandate (during which Netanyahu was officially indicted) and, after a 21 day period where any Knesset member could form a government proved inconclusive, a third election was triggered (Huggard 2019). This election ushered in the 36th government of Israel, the current government led by Naftali Bennett of the Yamina party and Yair Lapid of the Yesh Atid party.

The 24th Knesset Coalition

The results of the March 2021 election produced another hung Knesset, and Netanyahu was mandated a third time to form a government; and, for a third time, he failed due (JVL 2022) to his public trial dragging his reputation down and a tragedy in Meron where 45 people were killed in a stampede (ToI 2021).

Yair Lapid was given the next mandate to form a government, and with only 17 seats for his Yesh Atid party, he had to negotiate a long way to the 61 he needed. The coalition was formed between Lapid’s Yesh Atid (17 members), Naftali Bennett’s Yamina (7), Gideon Sa’ar’s New Hope (6), Avigdor Lieberman’s Yisrael Beiteinu (7), Nitzan Horowitz’s Meretz (6), Merav Michaeli’s Labor (7) and Benny Gantz’s Blue and White (8) (JVL 2022).

Together, this diverse coalition of 7 parties, stretching across the political spectrum from the progressives of Meretz and the social democrats of Labor to the national conservatives of Yamina
and the Russian speaking secular conservatives of Yisrael Beiteinu, came to only 58 seats. In order to bring their coalition over the line to 62 seats, Lapid also brought an Arab-led party into the governing coalition for the first time in Israeli history, sealing the deal with Mansour Abbas’ Ra’am (4 seats). In order to achieve this grand coalition of parties tired of elections and of Netanyahu’s reign, Lapid made platform arrangements and traded government appointments, including the first two years of his own term as Prime minister to Naftali Bennett (JVL 2022).

The Knesset finally produced a government after two years (in bold on the table and outlined in red on the graphic), but a fragile one amid the socioeconomic storm of the Covid-19 pandemic and later the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The fabric of the coalition did not last, as pressure from Netanyahu and the political right related to settlers rights, infighting and conflicting interests caused two members to splinter off (JVL 2022).

The last of these members to leave, Idit Silman, cited health minister Nitzan Horowitz’s decision to agree with the Supreme Court and allow patients to bring unleavened bread into hospitals on Passover. With that, the Bennett–Lapid government lost its majority with only 60 seats remaining, and with no way to move forward, it dissolved and another election is now slated for November 1, 2022 (TOI 2022).

Conclusion

The next election seems unlikely to produce any new government, with Netanyahu appearing to be the favorite to attempt a coalition. So long as he continues to run, dogged by scandals and economic crises, the political capital required to overcome these obstacles may prevent him from becoming Prime Minister for a sixth time, but it would be folly to count him out after the Israeli public saw the alternative play out over the last year and a half.

Sources


From the start of the previous decade till the present year, Tunisia has been under a state of anarchy coupled with shambling institutions, uncertain rights of the population and continuing political turmoil (Umar, 2022).

The tumult started with the Jasmine Revolution and the consequent change of Presidential Power from Ben Ali to Kais Saied, the current President of Tunisia, who set the date of constitutional reforms prior to the (now ongoing) referendum in July 2022 (Umar, 2022). President Kais stirred up further socio-political ferment in Tunisia in July 2022 through his restructuring of the constitution into a “Hyper Presidential System” - a change which was met with mass upheaval from the public (Sharan Grewal, 2022).

Older men and women filled the streets, many of whom had participated in the de-throwing of Ben Ali a decade ago in the Arab Spring, and are now against Kais’ draft constitution (France24, 2022). The protests are mostly led by The National Salvation Front, an alliance of opposition parties against Kais and his draft, for which the referendum is to be held on 25th July (Guesmi, 2022). The criticism of the draft is primarily based on its undemocratic nature while questioning its legality. The protesters once again label their struggle as an attempt to achieve “freedom and democracy”, as stated by Amna Fehty, who supports the Ennahda party - a conservative, Islamist party (Volkmann, 2022a). Amna added that they want to get rid of Kais’ dictatorship, which would be strengthened by his proposed constitution (Volkmann, 2022a).

The core reservation against Kais’s draft is the shift it would cause from a Parliamentary system to an absolute Presidential system. Kais Saied, however, rationalizes that this shift is rather a simplification of power and processes which shall eventually quell the lingering chaos (Abouaoun, et al., 2022).

In his view, the centralization of power would enable the President to take swift, prompt, and otherwise impossible decisions due to the political stakes of parties sitting in the legislature (Abouaoun, et al., 2022). But many oppose this move, as it provides them a glimpse of Ben Ali’s rule. The proposed constitutional arrangement will certainly amalgamate powers in the hand of the President (Amnesty International, 2022). Hence, there would be one man ruling the state with his arms extending to all branches of government: the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary (Yee, 2022).

This is a complete reversal of what changes came in as a consequence of the Arab Spring when in 2014 the Parliament was empowered; now it shall be stripped of its powers and authorities. With reference to the draft constitution, Article 101 ascribes to the President the power to select a Prime Minister and Cabinet members; in short, the absolute power to form a government shall be given to the President (Reuters, 2022).

Similarly, Article 112 explains that the government is responsible to the President, while Article 102 states that the President has the authority to terminate the government or its members (Reuters, 2022). This would restrict Parliamentary powers to the extent that a parallel institute with a similar role called the Council of Regions would be formed (Reuters, 2022).

Despite immense outcry by the public, the morning of 25th July brought victory for President Kais Saied, as, despite the low turnout the public...
voted in favor of the draft constitution (Arab News, 2022). According to Tunisian Independent High Election Authority, 94.6% of voters out of the total turnout of 30% voted in favor (Volkmann, 2022b). The low turnout is the result of the boycott agreed upon by the Tunisian Opposition. Although the draft constitution is the new constitution, in theory, the National Salvation Front opposes it, as one of its leading members Nejib Chebbi remarked the low turnout proves that it “de-legitimizes the overall process” (Volkmann, 2022b). The international community has also not responded significantly to the results. What is next on the table for Tunisia is yet to be discovered, while the struggle between Kais and opposition continues.

Sources


Killing of Shireen Abu Aklen, the Voice of Palestine, by Occupying Israeli Forces: Under the Realm of International Law

Fatima Umar

With a chronology of human rights abuses and violations of International Law for more than 8 decades, the Occupied Palestinian territories still suffer atrocities. Another episode of war crimes committed by the occupying party surfaced when Israeli Forces shot down a veteran journalist on 11th of May 2022. Almost after two months, the matter came into focus when U.S President Joe Biden visited Israel and the occupied West Bank on July 13th, which included a joint press conference with the President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmood Abbas, in Bethlehem (Israel, 2022).

This joint conference had a few takeaways, but a noteworthy arrangement of the presser’s venue was an empty chair with a caption in the Arabic language that can be translated as: “Shireen Abu Akleh, the Voice of Palestine” (NBC, 2022). Shireen Abu Akleh, a Palestinian-American with American citizenship, was an active journalist serving Al-Jazeera for more than two decades (The Times of Israel, 2022). She reported the sufferings of Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli Occupied forces through the lens of her own first-hand experiences, having been raised under occupation.

Shireen was exceptional in her field due to her credible work covering the Israel-Palestine conflict; particularly the Intifada, which gained her immense popularity (Hubbard, 2022). Her colleague, Nida Ibrahim, describes the Al-Jazeera journalist in the following words: “She was kind, dedicated and devoted. She knew the story through and through and she understood the nuances. She brought a wealth of information to her reporting.”

She is credited with several daring events of veteran reporting, especially those in Gaza in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021 (Al Jazeera, 2022). Her prodigious career came to an end when she was killed by Israeli forces on 11 May 2022.

Her death not only shook the Palestinian cause for which she has always been vocal, but the entire journalist community globally, causing a mass uproar against the Israeli Occupied Forces - Israeli Defense Force (Lawati, 2022).

It was the early dawn of 11th May when Shireen emailed the Al-Jazeera office in Ramallah that she was heading towards Jenin. Her motive was to report the raid carried out by the Occupied Israeli Forces in the Jenin refugee camp (The Associated Press, AFP, 2022). It is noteworthy that the journalists who accompanied Shireen that morning in Jenin pointed out that the shots were fired by the Israeli Forces.

The heinous crime of attacking journalists wearing press vests not only led to the cold-blooded killing of Shireen Abu Akleh, but another Al-Jazeera journalist who survived being shot in his back, Ali al-Samoudi. Hewas with Shireen when she was shot and claimed that there were no civilians or armed men where they were standing.

The shot that killed Shireen was deliberate and targeted, as it hit the area behind her ears that was not covered by the helmet (TRT World, 22). Soon after the news circulated, the Israeli Prime Minister, Naftali Bennet came out with a statement that there is a high chance that the shot was not fired by the Israeli forces but rather by Palestinian gunmen (Prime Minister’s Office, 2022).
However, the United Nations Chief Antonio Guterres called upon UN action to investigate and probe the killing of Shireen (UN News, 2022). Similar condemnations and the need for an investigation came from the Director General UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay; UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland; and his deputy - Lynn Hastings, who is the coordinator for the occupied Palestinian Territory (UN News, 2022).

While eyes were on the U.N. investigation over the death of Voice of Palestine, the United Nations came up with its report, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights concluded on 24th June that the fatal shots came from Israeli Forces and were not the consequence of indiscriminate Palestinian firing (UN News, 2022).

What adds to the agony, pointed out by OHCHR, is that it has been more than two months and the Israeli authorities have not opened an investigation (UN News, 2022).

The tragic event, a bloody blotch on the valor of free and fair journalism, is a blatant violation of International Humanitarian Law and its corresponding Israeli Law. Journalists are regarded as human beings who are entitled to basic human rights, the right to life, liberty, and the right to a free trial.

In times of war and conflict, journalists are granted all the due protection and rights as a civilian (ICRC, n.d.). The IHL explicitly mentions in Article 79 of AP I of the Geneva Convention: “Journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians” (...) and “be protected as such” under IHL, “provided that they take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians, and without prejudice to the right of war correspondents accredited to the armed forces to the status” (Abbas, 2021). 


Francesca Albanese who holds the position of UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine noted that Shireen’s killing is a "serious violation of international humanitarian law and is potentially a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.” (Albanese, 2022).
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