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Contents

A Daunting Triangle: Turkey, the Kurds, and the ISIL Threat

By Buddhika 'Jay' Jayamaha

The rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has created an area where Turkish and Kurdish interests overlap: both parties are thoroughly alarmed at ISIL's expansion. However, delicate and sensitive cooperation against ISIL has to take place in the broader context of the complicated and evolving Kurdish-Turkish relationship. While Turkey develops its response to the ISIL threat and the Syrian crisis, it is also managing Kurdish relations as part of its effort to redefine the Turkish state and Turkish national identity. On their side, the Kurdish leaders — especially the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq — are compelled to deal with a complex and sometimes competing array of Kurdish organizational alliances and interests that cross international borders, while trying to deepen their relations with Ankara. Despite the complicated nature of the situation, there are reasons to be hopeful.

This article contextualizes what some observers refer to as the "Byzantine" nature of changing Turkish-Kurdish relations in the fight against ISIL. For example, the fact that Turkey gave permission to Iraqi peshmerga troops to cross into Syria by way of Turkey, as saviors of Syrian Kurds, and that Turkey is now training Kurdish peshmerga forces against ISIL,[1] came as a surprise even to some seasoned observers. However, decisions such as these are best viewed as contingent outcomes rather than signals of a re-alignment, reflecting

1 Humeyra Pamuk, "Turkey Trains Kurdish Peshmerga Forces in Fight against Islamic State," *Reuters*, November 22, 2014. Also see "Turkish Military to Train Peshmerga Forces, Kurdish Official Says" *Rudaw* (Kurdish news channel), November 22, 2014.

short- and medium-term tactical and strategic decisions by Turkish and Kurdish leaders. They can best be seen through the prism of regional networks of elites and rooted political rivalries. This article makes this claim through a brief discussion of Turkish-Kurdish relations before ISIL, how the rise of ISIL affected this relationship, and how the relationship is evolving to meet the ISIL threat.

"The rise of ISIL and the Syrian civil war threatened this growing rapprochement in Kurdish-Turkish relations inside Turkey."

Dynamics of Turkish-Kurdish Relations Prior to ISIL

Inside Turkey, Kurdish and Turkish relations have improved dramatically in the last decade under the leadership of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Kurds can finally be Kurdish in Turkey: in the predominantly Kurdish towns, street vendors can sell Iraqi Kurdistan flags and T-shirts adorned with Kurdish flags.[2] Diaspora Kurds can cross the Turkish border without being subjected to the level of scrutiny by Turkish authorities they were in the past.[3] As a result, Turkish Kurds have shown due appreciation at the ballot box in support of AKP.[4]

However, there is no shortage of critics of this current status of Turkish-Kurdish relationships. On one hand, liberal critics of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's administration call attention to Turkey's increasing emphasis on Sunni Islamist precepts at home and its neo-Ottoman muscle-flexing abroad. The expansion of Kurdish rights, however welcome, is aimed not at a liberal-pluralistic society, they claim, but at creating a hierarchy of citizenship with Kurds distinctly as second-class citizens.[5] On the other hand, conservative critics, invoking the founding principles of the secular Turkish state, resist both the Islamist redefinition of Turkish national identity and the expansion of Kurdish rights. They nevertheless support, though grudgingly and with some suspicion, the "intermittent" cease-fires with the Kurdistan People's Party (PKK).

The Syrian Civil War, Rise of ISIL and the Changing Nature of Turkish-Kurdish Relations

The rise of ISIL and the Syrian civil war threatened this growing rapprochement in Kurdish-Turkish relations inside Turkey. In the years prior to the PKK cease-fire and the capture of its leader Abdullah Ocalan, Assad's Syrian regime supported the secessionist PKK, by way of Iran.[6] Turkey persuaded Syria to end this longstanding relationship in return for Turkish economic assistance.[7] Parts of the PKK's armed wing then moved into the Qandil Mountains of Iraq, to wage the fight with Turkey from behind the Iraqi Kurdistan border. Other PKK elements moved to the Kurdish areas of Syria, without overt, official Syrian regime support.[8]

"The development of relationships with Kurdish military groups was the critical development that convinced the Turkish leadership that Assad must go."

The transition of the Syrian protest movement into a fierce civil war in 2011 altered the Syrian regime's tactical calculations. Many in Ankara claim that the Syrian regime immediately attempted to recruit the remnants of PKK to fight on its behalf.[9] The same suspicion fell on the PKK's Syrian counterpart, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG). The development of relationships with Kurdish militant groups, it is surmised, was the critical development that convinced the Turkish leadership that Assad must go.[10]

The rise of ISIL complicates matters for Turkey in two ways. First, Ankara believes that if the international

2 Author observations and conversations in Diyarbakir, Turkey, October 16-17, 2014; and parts of eastern Turkey, November 18-19, 2014.

3 Author interviews in Iraqi Kurdistan region with multiple Iraqi, Iranian and Syrian Kurdish people who have transited through Turkey, both legally and illegally, October 1-15, 2014.

4 Author interviews in Ankara, Turkey with party activists and members of the former Democratic Society Party, currently the Peace and Democracy Party, the latest incarnation of a Kurdish nationalist party with close links to PKK, October 17-18 and November 13-18, 2014. Also see Kadri Gursel, "Turkey's Kurds Key to Erdogan's Presidency Bid," *al-Monitor* (and also in the Turkish daily *Miliyet*) June 10, 2014; Orhan Coskun and Gulsen Solaker, "Turkey's Kurdish Peace Process Key to Erdogan's Presidential Hopes," *Reuters*, April 3, 2014; Soner Cagaptay and Ege Cansu Sacikara, "Turks in Europe and Kurds in Turkey Could Elect Erdogan," Policywatch 2291, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, July 23, 2014.

5 Arda Gucler, *Untimely Representation: Deliberation, Urgency and Democratic Theory*, PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University.

6 Author interviews in Erbil, Iraq, October 2-4 and 11-14 and November 27-28, 2014; in Suleimaniyah, Iraq, October 4-10, 2014; in Diyarbakir, Turkey, October 16-17, 2014; in Ankara, Turkey, October 17-18 and November 13-18, 2014; and in Istanbul, Turkey, October 18-21 and November 12-13 and 18-25, 2014. Also see Cengiz Candar, "Turkey Claims Iran Providing Logistical Support for PKK," *al-Monitor*, December 20, 2012; Soner Cagaptay, "Syria and Turkey, the PKK Dimension," Policywatch 1919, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 5, 2012.

7 Author interviews with Turkish officials and Kurdish lawmakers, November 16-18, 2014. For a detailed account of events leading up to the Adana Agreement of 1998 that ended official Syrian support for PKK, see F. Stephen Larrabee and Ian O.Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty*, (Center for Middle East Policy, Rand Corporation, 2003); and Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Struggle for Independence* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

8 The official borders are exceedingly porous. Numerous villages straddle the borders of Syria, Turkey, and Iraq, maintaining deep-rooted familial and economic ties. People cross the borders without official papers, with the complicity of local authorities. Countless Kurdish, Turkish, Iraqi, and Iranian people continue to travel to and from Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran without a single document. Author interviews and observations in Iraqi, Turkish and Syrian border towns, October 14-15, 2014.

9 Author interviews in Erbil, Iraq with Kurdish officials, October 2-4 and October 11-14, 2014; in Sulaimaniya, Iraq, October 4-10, 2014; in Ankara, Turkey with Kurdish and Turkish officials, October 17-18 and November 13-18, 2014; and in Diyarbakir, Turkey, October 16-17, 2014.

10 Author interviews in Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey with Turkish and Kurdish officials, October 17-18 and 19-21, 2014, and November 13-18 and 19-25, 2014.

community, and especially the United States, had acted at the outset of the uprising in Syria to change the regime, ISIL would not have found a foothold inside Syria. Turkey views ISIL as a spillover of a Sunni-Shia civil war inside Iraq, triggered by the slow collapse of the Syrian state. Because of this, Turkey therefore continues to view the solution to ISIL as lying in Damascus — not in Baghdad, as the United States insists.[11]

Second, ISIL's deliberate targeting of Kurds as "less than Muslims" has created a sudden coalescing of the Kurdish diaspora and its varied armed groups against a common enemy.[12] PKK affiliates in Syria and Turkey have managed to create a Kurdish safe haven inside Syria, around the Syrian Kurdish town of Qamishli, in a region where the Syrian state has collapsed. These developments, however, make Ankara nervous. If PKK decides to pursue secession once again, they would now have more tactical and strategic depth, with the advantage of a larger base in Syria with close proximity. Leaving no room for doubt, and perhaps allaying the conservative remnants of the Turkish deep-state, Erdogan recently stated (in reference to siege of the town of Kobani) that "the PKK and (ISIL) are the same for Turkey," and that Turkey will "deal with them jointly."[13]

Erdogan's comments, especially in the context of Turkey's hesitancy to save the Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani, appeared to damage the fragile rapprochement between Turkey and its Kurds. The PKK leaders (echoed by their jailed leader Ocalan) responded from their encampment in the mountains of Iraq, warning that civil war will erupt in Turkey if Turkey fails to intervene.[14] Behind the scenes, however, rumors abound that those same PKK leaders have sent word on the streets not to push things too far, for fear of empowering hardliners in Turkey who favor war against the Kurds.[15]

In Iraq, officials of the KRG are focusing on the long term — that is, combating the threat of ISIL while encouraging rapprochement between Turkey and the Turkish Kurds — while delicately managing the ongoing demonstrations by Syrian Kurdish refugees and Iraqi Kurds who demand swift action in support of the besieged Kurds in Syria, including the town of Kobani.

"The Kurdish struggle is led by several organizations that have overlapping and conflicting elite and patronage networks across national boundaries."

KRG officials, though they too wish for stronger military action against ISIL, appreciate the fact that the YPG (supported by other armed Kurdish groups) have effectively created a Kurdish safe haven inside northern Syria, centered on the town of Qamishli and extending all the way to the Iraqi border — and that they have accomplished this with the quiet complicity of the Turkish authorities. Many informed Kurdish officials claim that, despite the bluster, neither Turkey nor PKK will easily break the ceasefire, but will rather continue behind-the-scenes negotiations.[16]

Kurdish Tactical Cooperation with an Eye on the Future

The Kurdish leaders face challenges of their own. Their tactical decisions are shaped by their strategic goals of deepening the existing Kurdish autonomy. The Kurdish struggle is led by several organizations that have overlapping and conflicting elite and patronage networks across national boundaries. The PKK of Turkey is based both in the prison cell of Ocalan and in the Qandil mountains of Iraq; it maintains close links with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in Iraqi Kurdistan and the YPG in Syria, but also with the Iranian state and previously with the Syrian regime. Indeed, during the civil war between PUK and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Iraqi Kurdistan in the mid-1990s, PKK members fought side-by-side with PUK against the KDP, with Iranian support. On the other side, the Iraqi KDP had Turkish support in combating the PUK, PKK, and Iran; Turkish soldiers even fought alongside the PDK peshmerga inside Iraq.

Although that civil war has ended, around 1,500 Turkish soldiers still remain in Iraq (including an M60T Tank company), camped outside the Iraqi Kurdish city of Dohuk and "protected" by Iraqi peshmerga units affiliated with KDP.[17] This unlikely and little-known alliance came in handy (as Iraqi Kurdish officials note privately) when ISIL arrived, around 30 kilometers outside Erbil. They claim that some of

11 Author interviews in Ankara, Turkey with Turkish government officials, October 17-18 and November 13-18, 2014.

12 For the most recent public affirmation of this reality, see this YPG spokesman interview with the Kurdish news network: "Spirit of the times, Kurds united," *Rudaw*, November 18, 2014.

13 "Edogan: PKK, ISIS Same for Turkey,"*The Daily Sabah*, 4 October 2014.

14 Jonathan Burch, "Turkey Inaction over Kobane Threatens Fragile Peace Deal, Say Kurds," *Rudaw*, October 8, 2014; Jonathan Burch, "Kurdish Militants Warn of 'Violent Conflict' if Turkish Police Given More Powers," *Rudaw*, October 16, 2014.

15 Author interviews with Kurdish activists in Diyarbarkir, Turkey, October 16-17, 2014; in Ankara, Turkey, October 17-18 and November 13-18, 2014; and in Istanbul, Turkey, October 18-21 and November 12-13, 2014.

16 Author interviews with Kurdish Regional Government member of Kurdish Regional Government Parliament, and officials from the KRG Directorate of Foreign Relations, October 2014. Also, author interview in Istanbul, Turkey of a Turkish Parliamentary Committee member tasked with assessing the ongoing "Reconciliation Process," as the peace process between PKK and Turkey is referred to, November 19, 2014. The concept of the "cease-fire" here remains a very peculiar one. On the one hand, despite the ongoing negotiations between PKK and Turkish authorities, both parties keep testing the limits of the cease-fire with deliberate skirmishes. See for example, Jonathan Burch, "Killing of Fourth Turkish Soldier in a Week Threatens Fragile Peace with Kurds," *Rudaw*, October 30, 2014. On the other hand, Turkish and Kurdish officials clarify the seemingly fragile nature of the cease-fire, and the repeated threats of both sides taking turns to threaten to return to an all out war, as "part of the game." Skirmishes are part of the negotiating dynamics where both sides try to be astute managers of political brinkmanship with calculated use of violence, without letting it get out of hand.

17 Peshmerga soldiers point out that they constitute the perimeter defense of the Turkish enclaves inside Iraq, and that there is a *modus vivendi* between the parties on the ground, despite their broader differences. Some of the Kurdistan Regional Government Members of Parliament expressed the same sentiment. Author interviews in Erbil, Iraq, October 3 and 12, 2014; and in Dohuk, Iraq, October 14-15, 2014.

the Turkish soldiers assisted the Iraqi peshmerga in rescuing the Yazidis, with the support of air strikes by Turkish forces, and that the Turkish military delivered much-needed ammunition to the Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga against ISIL, while Western leaders were still deliberating the question.[18]

KRG officials also emphasize that Turkish and KRG relations today run deeper than tactical military alliances, as a direct result of policy decisions by the KRG. After the US invasion in 2003, the PUK and KDP put aside their differences and concentrated on building the KRG, dividing tasks between them. The PUK, led by Jalal Talabani (then the Iraqi president), took responsibility for maintaining a united front vis-a-vis Baghdad, while the PDK leader Massoud Barzani, assisted by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, actively worked to deepen relations with Turkey, utilizing PDK's wartime networks with Turkish military and political leaders. KRG officials insist that with the ongoing instability and political dysfunction in Baghdad, they can rely more on Ankara than on Baghdad, and that any chance of maintaining Iraqi Kurdish autonomy (let alone ultimate Kurdish independence) will have to come with Ankara's blessing.[19]

Today, Turkey remains the largest trading partner of Iraqi Kurdistan, at 75 percent, with Iran a distant second, followed by the European Union at a minuscule level.[20] Almost 85 to 90 percent of the Turkish trade and investments into Iraq flows to Iraqi Kurdistan, not to Baghdad.[21] Iraqi Kurdistan is also slated to furnish some of Turkey's energy needs, while Turkey will underwrite the revenue transfers necessary to accommodate KRG oil and gas revenues. In return, the KRG goes to great lengths to control PKK activities — just as it has assuaged the Syrian Kurdish leaders of YPG/PYD in the last few weeks.

"The KRG in Iraq at this moment appears to be uniquely situated to get and to manage Turkish support, while also playing a mediating role in broader Kurdish affairs."

Thus, the broader, high-level political cleavages do not always look the same on the ground. This is not necessarily a cause for optimism, however, in view of the deep-seated differences between the two sides. As KRG officials point out, Turkey is willing to support the Kurds against ISIL, but only as the dominant regional power and on their own terms; the weaker parties carry the burden of astutely maneuvering the relationships.[22] The sudden public statement by the Turkish authorities that it will allow Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga soldiers to cross into Kobani exemplifies the tactical alliances that exist between KRG and Turkish authorities. But it is also important to note that, as soon as the announcement was made, YPG mused publicly that they would rather have ammunition and supplies than the support of peshmerga units allied with KRG and KDP.[23]

The KRG in Iraq at this moment appears to be uniquely situated to get and to manage Turkish support, while also playing a mediating role in broader Kurdish affairs. Mazoud Barzani has become the *eminence grise* of Kurdish politics. It may indeed be a tribute to his skillful management of transnational relations and intra-Kurdish relations that Turkey has decided to allow Iraqi peshmerga to cross into Kobani. Iraqi Kurdish officials are confident that the two sides will somehow navigate a deepening rapprochement without unduly alarming the regional Kurdish diaspora. Nevertheless, they worry about the seemingly conflicting objectives of Turkey and the United States with regard to ISIL: is the proper military focus on Syria or Iraq? And it understands that a strategic conciliation between Washington and Ankara will again alter the dynamics of Kurdish-Turkish relations, for better or for worse.

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18 This story was initially discussed by peshmerga troops as if it were a conspiracy theory that bordered on the unbelievable, until President Barzani, on October 13, 2014, publicly affirmed the assistance, claiming that they (the Turkish authorities) "asked us not to make it public." Some KDP members, and peshmerga closer to KDP, are quick to point out that there is also a sizable Iranian presence left over from the civil war in the "green zone," albeit in civilian clothes (that is, in PUK territory, especially in Suleimaniyah), just as there are Turkish soldiers assisting KDP in the "yellow zone," (i.e., KDP territory).

19 Author interviews in Erbil, Iraq with KRG officials, October 11-13, 2014 and November 26, 2014. They also mention the joke in Iraqi Kurdistan, popularized by Talabani, when he referred to "our American friends and Turkish brothers." Friends can come and go, and they do; however one has no choice in one's brother, but has to deal with him as he comes.

20 Author interviews in Erbil, Iraq with KRG member of parliament and an official from the Directorate of Foreign Relations, October 3 and 11, 2014.

21 Bilateral relations have been almost non-existent between Ankara and Baghdad in the last ten years, as a result of former Prime Minister Maliki's sectarian outlook and his open displeasure with the Turkish involvement in Iraqi Kurdistan, along with the Turkish ruling party's Islamist outlook. Although under the new administration in both Ankara and Baghdad there is now renewed effort to improve relations.

22 Author interviews in Erbil, Iraq with KRG member of parliament and an official from the Directorate of Foreign Relations, October 3 and 11, 2014.

23 Author interviews in Turkey with Kurdish activists, and with multiple Kurdish news sources inside Turkey, October 18-19, 2014. The private musings by Kurdish activists on intra-Kurdish differences became public as many Kurdish and Turkish web-sites started publishing comments by YPG members. The depth of their distrust lies in the fact that the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq retains close ties to the Turkish government, while the same government that allowed for Peshmerga to transit through Turkey views YPG as "terrorists" and a threat to Turkey. See, for example, "Syrian Kobani Official; We Need Weapons not Kurdish Peshmerga forces," *ekurd.net,* October 21, 2014.

The Battle for Kobani Comes to the Fore

By Derek Henry Flood

Following the mid-2012 withdrawal of most of the regime forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the Kurds of northern Syria formed three distinct enclaves, or cantons, hugging the Turkish border.[1] The three cantons, collectively known as Rojava (meaning *"west"* in Kurdish), consist of Efrin, Kobani, and Jazira. They were established in January 2014[2] and are chiefly administered by the Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat [PYD]). The primary security guarantors of the evolving Rojava political system are the People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel [YPG]) and their female counterpart the Women's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Jinê [YPJ]), which has attracted intense attention from Western media.

The central goal of the Syrian Kurdish political model is to defend Kurdish autonomy rather than confront either the remnants of the Assad regime, with whom they have a tense détente in Jazira canton,[3] or Islamist groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Jabhat al-Nusra. But as we continue to see during the current battle over Kobani, Syria's Kurds have vowed to defend their regions with intense vigor when attacked by expansionist jihadis.

The ethno-political model of Rojava is quite different from that of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in neighboring Iraq. The three distinct regions controlled by Syrian Kurds are non-contiguous making them more vulnerable to military aggression by advancing forces of ISIL, who see the Kurds' secular, democratic system with its lingering Marxist-Lenist attributes inherited from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê [PKK]) as flagrantly heretical from a hardline salafist perspective.[4]

Though nowhere near as dramatic as the rivalry between opposing jihadist fighting groups such as that between Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIL, or the conflict between jihadist groups and moderate groups in Syria, solidified Kurdish unity has been difficult to achieve in Rojava's cantons due to differences between the PYD and a comparatively ideologically incoherent umbrella grouping called the Kurdish National Council (KNC), the latter being more desirable to Turkey and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

The Kurdish element in the conflict in Syria garnered immense international interest in mid-September 2014 when ISIL massed around the western, southern and eastern approaches to the border town of Kobani, which abuts rural districts of southern Turkey's Sanliurfa Province. In the lead up to the siege of Kobani, ISIL had overrun dozens of Kurdish inhabited villages during mid-September, 2014, gradually shrinking the YPG-protected canton to the urban settlement, all in plain view of Turkish forces situated on the tense border.

This article examines why the struggle for a once obscure border town has come to be perceived as being of paramount importance to local, regional, and international actors who believe they have a stake in the battle's outcome. The varied interests of these numerous stakeholders has led to a cacophony of divergent policies that have allowed the siege of Kobani, also known as Ayn al-Arab, to continue as of the time of this writing.

YPG's Military Capabilities and International Support

YPG infantry units were clearly outmatched for much of the siege. While they employed agility and deep knowledge of local urban terrain, their dearth of heavy weapons coupled with lesser force numbers put them at a great disadvantage. ISIL had massed numerous tanks and a plethora of "technical" fighting trucks around Kobani's perimeter to sustain the siege with overwhelming firepower, creating a battle of attrition. As international and local media congregated on the arid hills of the Turkish border village of Mürsitpınar south of Suruç, ISIL operators made sizeable efforts to hoist their infamous black banners on high points in and around Kobani to both intimidate the YPG and present a show of force to far-reaching cameras situated in the relative safety of Turkey. However, somewhat unexpectedly, ISIL was met in Kobani with a fierce opponent rather than the swift victory its jihadist bravado promised.[5] In the YPG, ISIL encountered a strong-willed if lesser-equipped competitor, in stark contrast to the disorganized and demoralized Iraqi security forces they had routed in Mosul in June 2014.[6] The YPG, like the PKK from which it inherits many of its traits, fights more for ideologically imbued Kurdish nationalism, as opposed to the debilitated Iraqi or Syrian militaries who receive meager pay and suffer an enfeebled command and control structure.[7]

"In the YPG, ISIL encountered a strong-willed if lesser-equipped competitor, in stark contrast to the disorganized and demoralized Iraqi security forces they had routed in Mosul in June 2014."

1 The exception to the total withdrawal of the Syrian state is in the ethnically-mixed Jazira canton where parts of urban al-Hasakah City and Qamishli still have remnants of a regime presence. This sometimes tenuous co-existence in Jazira is part of the charge by Islamist fighters that the Kurds are in league with pro-Assad forces on some level.

2 'Efrin Canton in Syrian Kurdistan Officially Declared Autonomy," *Firat News*, January 29, 2014.

3 Jamie Dettmer , "VOA Reporter Involved in Standoff Between Syrian Troops and Kurds," *Voice of America*, November 22, 2013.

4 The PKK, and thus the PYD, have moved away from their original focus on hardline separatism and a centralized, command economy and towards the idea of a more decentralized "confederation." Carl Drott, "The Syrian Experiment with 'Apoism'," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 20, 2014.

5 Roy Gutman, "Kobanê Kurds say Turkey Hasn't Responded to Appeal for Help Against Islamic State," *McClatchy DC*, October 3, 2014.

6 Patrick Cockburn, "Whose Side is Turkey on?" *London Review of Books*, November 6, 2014.

7 Ziad al-Sinjary, "Insurgents in Iraq overrun Mosul provincial government headquarters," *Reuters*, June 9,

The discrepancy in firepower between the dueling belligerents was clearly audible and in some instances visible through military grade binoculars being carried by Kurdish onlookers in Turkey.[8] As ISIL units bore down on western Kobani in technicals hitting YPG positions with heavy fire, hunkered-down YPG fighters could often only answer with small arms fire while economizing their finite ammunition stocks before the U.S. military air-dropped crates full of war materiel supplied by the Erbil-based KRG on October 20, 2014.[9] While not a lasting solution, the air drop helped to partially alleviate the YPG's depleting stocks and also bolstered morale.

"Turkish decision makers felt immense pressure from the international community to take some form of decisive action on Kobani, but were hesitant to embolden Kurdish nationalist aspirations."

In addition to deficiencies in their weaponry, manpower for the Kurdish forces was also restricted. Turkish authorities refused to allow Turkish Kurds into Syria to repel the assault, nor did they allow Syrian Kurds who had previously evacuated from Syria into Turkey to return home to defend their brethren. Turkey's refusal to allow the YPG to be aided or resupplied by nearby sympathizers led to protests by Kurds which resulted in violent suppression by Turkish police in Mürsitpınar, who used tear gas and powerful water cannons to forcibly disperse YPG supporters.[10]

While Turkish security forces focused on containing Kurdish resentment on the border while running busy patrols along the fence, the United States in turn greatly stepped up its air campaign in an attempt to halt ISIL from making further advancements into Kobani's shattered center.[11] This was a controversial move in the eyes of Ankara which resolutely equates the PYD with the PKK. But resupplying the YPG by air was the only feasible way to stem the city from falling to ISIL, as it was locked in by Turkey from the north and surrounded by ISIL to the south.

Despite the increased U.S. air power, however, the siege went on unabated. Turkish decision makers felt immense pressure from the international community to take some form of decisive action on this highly visible, festering battle on their southern border, but they were hesitant to do anything that might embolden Kurdish nationalist aspirations in any form. Rather than allow YPG or PKK fighters access to the Mürsitpınar border gate or send in Turkish ground troops, as the siege ground on, Ankara was forced to come up with a third option. A more agreeable choice for the government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was to allow a select number of members of the Free Syrian Army access to Kobani.[12] The YPG were also aided by a small Arab FSA brigade called Fajr al-Hurriyah (Dawn of Freedom) which joined them in counterattacking ISIL inside Kobani.[13]

Ultimately, Ankara became amenable to a third way solution whereby Iraqi Kurds, with whom Turkey have a strong economic relationship, would be allowed to transit Turkey.[14] This solution of sorts for Erdogan's government was twofold: it would serve to assuage the international community, which was frustrated with Turkish inaction, while undermining the PKK by empowering the much more palatable KRG peshmerga forces with whom it has a pragmatic understanding.

Throughout its deliberation about what to do regarding the fate of Kobani, Turkish leadership insisted it sought to avoid the city's fall to ISIL, with Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu stating, "We are assisting peshmerga forces to cross into Kobani. We have no wish at all to see Kobani fall."[15]

ISIL Unrelenting

Despite the international attention paid to Kobani, to include the air strikes, ISIL has proven unwilling to abandon the offensive. In fact, it is perhaps precisely this attention that drives ISIL not to withdraw. Rather than the bombing prompting a tactical retreat by ISIL units, they appear to have doubled down in their quest for Kobani. As American air strikes rapidly increased in and around Kobani, ISIL fighters ushered in reinforcements from their reservoir of recruits in ar-Raqqa and Aleppo, and ramped up their employment of vehicle-borne suicide bombers.[16] Unlike more remote battles in places such as Deir ez-Zor and al-Hasakah Governorates, Kobani quickly became of global interest early on in the siege in small part due to its being accessible by media outlets from around the world who descended upon Sanliurfa Province. ISIL has proven adept at using such media attention to demonstrate its capability and amplify its narrative.

In addition, ISIL's desire to eliminate the PYD and its YPG militia from Kobani is rooted in its ideology. ISIL not only views these entities as un-Islamic, but also conflates them with the Assad regime in Damascus. As the PYD's agenda is more concerned with communal self-preservation rather than overthrowing the government, jihadist groups view this as proof that the PYD is a tool of the Ba'athists.

Long before the emergence of the PYD as a serious Syrian Kurdish organization,

2014; "US stresses refusal to arm Syrian rebels," *al-Akhbar*, August 3, 2012.

8 Author observations, Mürsitpınar, Turkey, October 10-15, 2014.

9 Fulya Ozerkan with Sara Hussein, "US Air Drops, Turkey Boost Kurd Battle Against Jihadists," *Agence France-Presse*, October 20, 2014.

10 Constanze Letsch and Ian Traynor, "Kobani: Anger Grows as Turkey Stops Kurds from Aiding Militias in Syria," *Guardian*, October 8, 2014.

11 Author observations; and "Islamic State Crisis: US Intensifies Air Strikes in Kobanê," *BBC News*, October 14, 2014.

12 Alexander Whitcomb, "Joint Anti-ISIS Force Pushes West of Kobanê," *Rudaw*, November 3, 2014.

13 See: The Free Syrian Army's Eastern Front Leadership YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZQmoYIpf0g2Ggpa2W1kOPw

14 Humeyra Pamuk and Raheem Salman, "Air strikes hit Kobani as Kurdish peshmerga prepare to enter," Reuters, October 31, 2014.

15 Stuart Williams, "Turkey shifts strategy to help Iraqi Kurdish fighters into Kobanê," Agence France-Presse, October 20, 2014.

16 Author observation, Mürsitpınar, Turkey, October 15, 2014.

the Hafez al-Assad regime used the Turkish PKK as a foreign policy wedge in its conflict with Ankara over territorial disputes, to include Hatay Province and water rights with regard to the damming of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. To this end, the Syrian government had allowed the PKK and its leader Abdullah Ocalan to base themselves inside Syria in mid-1984.[17] This both overt and tacit support ended with the Adana Agreement, reached in 1998, in which Hafez al-Assad agreed not to allow the PKK and Ocalan safe haven in Syria.[18] This history has been forgotten by neither the Turkish government nor ISIL, with the former considering both to be threats to Ankara's interests and the latter asserting the two are colluding to hinder the spread of their virulent brand of Islamism in Syria.

An Asymmetrical Intervention

Despite ISIL's determination, the YPG has been able to hold off their advance with a combination of American air power and bold determination as it had been cut off from the outside world. The YPG had initially said that the limited air strikes were having little impact on ISIL, but as the air strikes increased in number, approaching 150 by early November,[19] the YPG's public tone became more enthusiastic. But a key remaining challenge appeared to be the lack of coordination in the targeting of the bombardments. With the October 20 aerial weapons resupply, lack of precise coordination appeared to continue when ISIL posted a video online of a trove of weapons and ammunition meant for the YPG that they had recovered.[20]

Coordination was also a challenge with the long-awaited arrival of a finite number of Iraqi peshmerga troops from Erbil. Before they formally arrived at Kobani's northern entrance, YPG statements insisted their militia needed weapons and ammunition rather than more manpower, but when the far better armed peshmerga met their Syrian Kurdish counterparts and agreed to play a supporting role, the YPG became less ambivalent about their participation in the fight.[21]

"The Erdogan government sees the PKK as the paramount threat to Turkish security, more so than that posed by an enlarging ISIL and a resurgent Jabhat al-Nusra."

One key reason for the YPG's original skepticism of these forces was Turkey's calculated support for them. In post-2003 Iraq, Ankara had developed a close realpolitik-based relationship with Massoud Barzani's Erbil-based KDP,[22] a group that is more patriarchal and clan-based than the leftist PKK-influenced PYD.

The Erdogan government, like its more secular nationalist predecessors, sees the PKK as the paramount threat to Turkish security, more so than that posed by an enlarging ISIL and a resurgent Jabhat al-Nusra along its southern border with Idlib Governorate.[23] Ankara seems to believe both the ISIL and Jabhat al-Nusra threats can be mitigated in the near term with these jihadist groups busy conveniently offsetting the empowerment of Kurdish nationalism and militancy while simultaneously keeping the Assad regime at bay in northern Syria.[24]

Turkey's leadership sees itself in perennial conflict with the PKK, while it also openly advocates for the toppling of the Assad regime in Damascus. But if ISIL solidifies its hold on the northern reaches of Aleppo and Raqqa Governorates and turns out to no longer remain the rational actor that released the Turkish consulate hostages it had captured in Mosul in June, Turkey may in fact be facing a far more ferocious third threat from the jihadists like ISIL to which it has turned a blind eye to their transiting its territory since 2012.[25] As Turkey's approach to Kobani has pragmatically, if slowly, adapted, it allowed a second unit of 150 Iraqi peshmerga to transit its territory to replace the exhausted deployment sent to defend the city in early November, indicating that Ankara was thus far satisfied with its strategic choice.[26]

"Kurdish politics are highly fragmented across the boundaries of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, but the plight of Kobani is fostering a new level of transnational interaction among competing movements."

The Multilayered Significance of Kobani

Kurds. The longer Kobani festers the more it may act as a centripetal force in the fissiparous Kurdish political sphere between regional parties and militant groups alike. Kurdish politics are highly fragmented across the boundaries of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, but the plight of Kobani is fostering a new level of transnational interaction among competing movements. Barzani's KDP has historically been at odds with the PYD and supportive of the less powerful

17 Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), p.308.

18 Bente Scheller, *The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game: Foreign Policy Under the Assads*, (London: C. Hurst & Co,.2013), p.113.

19 Elena Becatoros and Bassem Mroue, "Peshmerga Fighters Bring Weapons To Kobani, Prepare To Battle ISIS," *Associated Press*, November 1, 2014.

20 Dan Lamothe, "U.S. Accidentally Delivered Weapons to the Islamic State by Airdrop, Militants say," *Washington Post*, October 21, 2014.

21 YPG Media Center press statement, November 2, 2014.

22 Jim Muir, "Islamic State Crisis: Syria Rebel Forces Boost Kobanê Defence," BBC News, October 29, 2014.

23 "Jabhat al-Nusra Expands in Idlib as it Gains Control on New Areas," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, November 2, 2014.

24 Ramzy Mardini, "The Islamic State Threat is Overstated," *Washington Post*, September 12, 2014 ; Author interactions with Turkish officers in Mürsitpınar, Turkey, October 11 and 15, 2014.

25 Katherine Wilkens, "A Kurdish Alamo: Five Reasons the Battle for Kobanê Matters," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 10, 2014.

26 Ugur Ergan, "New Peshmerga Group to Replace Troops in Kobane: Turkish Army," *Hurriyet Daily News*, December 2, 2014; "Second Peshmerga Group reaches Kobane," *Dicle News Agency*, December 3, 2014.

KNC, which is also considered a far more suitable alternative in Ankara.

A significant constituent within KNC is the KDP-S, the Syrian branch of the KDP. The KDP-S has far more amicable relations with Turkey while its interactions with the PYD are often acrimonious. It has asserted that the PYD seeks to monopolize power in Rojava and is aligned with the Assad regime.[27] In late October 2014, Barzani acted as an arbiter between the PYD and the KNC in negotiations aimed at uniting the Syrian Kurdish factions, partly in hope that a deal between them would dilute the notion that the Kurds chiefly administering Rojava were deeply synonymous with the PKK.[28] It is hoped this may garner more support from the West if the agreement reached in Dohuk[29] can hold.

The political realm in Iraqi Kurdistan has been traditionally divided between the tribal-oriented KDP in its west and the leftist-oriented Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in the east, which has generally been more supportive of the PKK over the long term.[30] The Qandil range in Iraq's Suleimaniyah Governorate on the KRG's eastern frontier with Iran has been primarily ruld by the PUK[31] and acts as a refuge for PKK guerillas. Additionally, Qandeel serves as a rear base for the Iranian Kurdish movement the Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê (PJAK),[32] which confronts the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps in cross-border raids.

The KRG, headquartered in Erbil and led by President Barzani, with its recent history of mostly cordial economic relations with Turkey, is thus fundamentally divided on its stance toward the PKK and therefore the PYD. Though dominated by the KDP, the KRG today is in fact a tripartite body that includes the more PKK-friendly Gorran Movement and former Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's PUK.

The onslaught by ISIL in both Iraq and Syria has disrupted the divided status quo by creating a common foe among often competing Kurdish groups. Thus Kobani could potentially lead to a near-term paradigm shift with regard to Kurdish unity irrespective of existing schisms stemming from deeply entrenched ideologies, clan affliation and rivalry, and linguistic difference.[33] However, though its brief presence in transit brought adulation from otherwise irate Turkish Kurds,[34] the deployment of a small contingent of peshmerga from its KDP allies in Erbil has not been an immediate game changer.

Turkey. Despite Turkey's recent shift away from coup-prone militaristic nationalism toward political Islamism under the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) government of former Prime Minister-cum-President Erdogan, the stance toward the PKK remains largely unchanged. Hence Erdogan refused to distinguish between the PKK and PYD-YPG in his public statements. Rather he continues to unequivocally term Syrian Kurdish YPG fighters a "terrorist organization."[35] From Turkey's perspective, the Rojava cantons of northern Syria are not merely a laboratory for the PKK to spread Ocalan thought but also provide a geography from which the PKK itself can operate against the Turkish state.[36] In a recent television interview, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu did not acknowledge the PYD or YPG by name, stating only that Turkey sought to avoid a security vacuum in northern Syria that would be taken up by "PKK terrorists," while advocating that Washington take responsibility for training and equipping the Free Syrian Army.[37]

"Turkey's priority appears to remain maintaining its policy of containment of Kurdish autonomy movements rather than stemming the growth of jihadism in Syria."

Conclusion

The siege of Kobani, now well into its third month at the time of the writing, carries on unabated despite the aerial assistance from Operation Inherent Resolve and the additional yet finite non-YPG forces who have joined the fight.

Turkey's priority appears to remain maintaining its policy of containment of Kurdish autonomy movements rather than stemming the growth of jihadism in Syria. The fate of Kobani speaks not only to the fate of Syrian Kurds' democratic experiment, but also to Turkey's difficult relations with its own massive Kurdish minority, with which the Kobani issue has exacerbated tensions and incited street protests.[38] Despite an ongoing peace process between Ankara and the PKK that began in March 2013, and as global criticism of Turkish inaction on the siege of Kobani grew, Turkish warplanes pounded PKK sites in Hakkari Province near the Iraq border on October 14, 2014, an act that could potentially derail the peace initiative.[39] Ocalan declared from his prison cell that if Kobani were to fall to the jihadists, he would resolutely

27 Deniz Serinci, "Mustafa Juma: Syrian Opposition Accepts Kurdish Rights," *Rudaw*, July 22, 2014.

28 Isabel Coles, "Syrian Kurds Sign Power-Sharing Deal to Draw More Support," *Reuters*, October 23, 2014.

29 "Divided Syrian Kurds Reach Deal in Face of ISIS Threat," *Rudaw*, October 22, 2014.

30 Charles Recknagel, "Iraq: Fighting In North Spells No End To PKK," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, January 17, 2001.

31 The PUK's dominance in Suleimaniyah Governorate has been diluted with the rise of the Gorran Movement—a splinter group from the PUK led by Neshirwan Mustafa. See: "KRG Elections: KDP Wins but Gorran Becomes the Second Force," *The Kurdistan Tribune*, September 21, 2013.

32 Author observations at joint PKK-PJAK camp, Qandeel Mountains, Suleimaniyah Governorate, Iraq, October 13, 2009; Michelle Moghtader, "Iran Guards Killed in Armed Clashes near Iraq Border-Media," *Reuters*, June 25, 2014.

33 "Peshmerga Deployment a Move for Kurdish Unity and Kobanê's Defenders," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, October 30, 2014.

34 Fulya Ozerkan with Mohamad Ali Harissi, "Kurds Cheer Reinforcements for Syria's Kobanê," *Agence France-Presse*, October 29, 2014.

35 "Erdogan Opposes Arming PYD, Says it's a Terrorist Group like PKK," *Today's Zaman*, October 19, 2014.

36 Robert Lowe, *Conflict, Democratization, and the Kurds in the Middle East: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.239.

37 "Turkey PM Ahmet Davutoglu: 'We Will Help Coalition Forces'," *BBC News*, October 28, 2014.

38 "Thousands Protest in Turkey to Show Solidarity with Kobane Kurds," *Agence France-Presse*, November 2, 2014.

39 Dorian Jones, "Turkish Airstrikes on PKK Threaten Peace Process," *Voice of America*, October 14, 2014.

call off the peace talks, thereby linking the security of the Turkish state with the threatened future of Syrian Kurdistan.[40]

Though the PKK has not been delisted as a terrorist organization by the United States or the European Union, the group's rush to aid Kurdish communities under assault from ISIL in Syria and Iraq has improved its image internationally.[41] Though the PYD and PKK are undeniably affiliated organizations, the Kobani crisis begs for nuanced differentiations on a granular level by state actors concerning themselves with the crisis if the siege is to come to a timely conclusion leading to the defeat and expulsion of ISIL forces.

As the YPG and YPJ fight on, with limited assistance on the ground by Iraqi peshmerga and a small number of FSA fighters, Turkey may be forced to prioritize among its enemies. Kobani has had a debilitating effect on Turkey's international standing and puts it at risk of further decline.[42] Kobani being attacked on a daily basis by a dogged ISIL has infuriated Turkey's own Kurdish minority at a delicate juncture in the Ankara-PKK peace process. Finally, there are no firm indicators that ISIL will not set its sights on Turkey itself—if it has not already[43]—if it can solidify its control over the central sector of northern Syria's borderlands.

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40 "PKK Leader Threatens to End Peace Talks with Turkey if ISIS Massacres Kurds," *al-Akhbar*, October 2, 2014.

41 "Turkey's Syria Role Risks Instability at Home, Isolation Abroad," International Institute for Strategic Studies, October 2014.

42 Barcin Yinanc, "France Tells Turkey that Inaction in Kobane will be Costly for its Image," *Hurriyet Daily News*, October 14, 2014.

43 Fevzi Kızılkoyun, "Suicide Vests, Bombs Seized in Turkey Amid ISIL Terror Alarm," *Hurriyet Daily News*, October 23, 2014.

Hizb Allah's Lebanese Resistance Brigades

By Chris Zambelis

Since 2012, Lebanese Hizb Allah has actively supported Syrian president Bashar al-Assad's embattled Ba'athist government.[1] Hizb Allah's function as a forward combat force operating alongside the regular Syrian military and other irregular formations in Syria has drawn the most attention.[2] Hizb Allah has distinguished itself in strategically important theaters such as Syria's wider Qalamoun region in the southwestern Rif Damashq Governorate that sits adjacent to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley along the Lebanese-Syrian border.[3] Meanwhile, its function as both an enabler and facilitator of irregular paramilitary detachments loyal to the government in Damascus, including the Popular Committees[4] that preceded the National Defense Force and members of informal village defense groups made up of resident volunteers (essentially proxy militias with no formal partisan association with Hizb Allah), tends to be overlooked.[5]

"Hizb Allah has provided military and other forms of support to irregular militias in Lebanon composed of non-party members, including non-Shi'a Lebanese and units associated with its guerilla auxiliary Saraya."

Hizb Allah appears to have resorted to a similar strategy in Lebanon. There is evidence that Hizb Allah has provided military and other forms of support to irregular militias in Lebanon composed of non-party members, including non-Shi'a Lebanese and units associated with its guerilla auxiliary *Saraya al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniya* (Lebanese Resistance Brigades).[6] Hizb Allah's involvement in the Syrian conflict has drawn the ire of its enemies in Lebanon. In particular, the emergence of al-Qa'ida's Syrian affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra (Support Front) and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has raised concerns about their plans for Lebanon. Radical Sunni Islamists have already used Hizb Allah's foray into Syria as a pretext to launch terrorist attacks in Lebanon against locations where Hizb Allah draws significant support, including Beirut's southern suburbs of Dahiyeh.[7] Parts of northern Lebanon such as Tripoli and Arsal have also become the scenes of regular clashes

1 For an earlier assessment of Hizb Allah's role in the Syrian conflict, see Chris Zambelis, "Hizb Allah's Role in the Syrian Uprising," *CTC Sentinel*, 5:11-12 (2012): pp. 14-17. For an estimate of Hizb Allah's military activities in Syria, see Jeffrey White, "Hizb Allah at War in Syria: Forces, Operations, Effects and Implications," *CTC Sentinel*, 7:1 (2014): pp. 14-18.

2 In addition to Hizb Allah, foreign actors such as Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF) and a constellation of Iraqi-based Shi'a militias and volunteers, among others, have likewise proven their mettle as allies to the Ba'athist regime. At the same time, the factors that have contributed to the Ba'athist regime's staying power in the face of an increasingly muddled insurgency led by radical Sunni Islamist currents such as al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra (Support Front) and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant continue to be underestimated or disregarded outright. Indeed, the Ba'athist regime continues to count on a largely unified and loyal military and security apparatus that managed to weather an initial purge of defectors in the early stages of the conflict. For a discussion of the many reasons behind the Ba'athist regime's resilience, see Bassam Haddad, "Syria's Stalemate: The Limits of Regime Resilience," Middle East Policy Council, Volume 19, No. 1, Spring 2012. Also see Barbara Slavin, "CIA Director Brennan says Syria Army Remains Resilient," *Al-Monitor*, March 11, 2014; Joshua Landis, "Why Syria's Assad Enters Geneva Talks in a Position of Strength," *Al-Jazeera*, January 23, 2014; Zoltan Barany, "Why Most Syrian Officers Remain Loyal to Assad," Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies [Doha], June 17, 2013; and Barah Mikail, "Who Supports Assad?," FRIDE [Madrid], May 9, 2014.

3 Racha Abi Haidar, "Heavy Casualties in Qalamoun," *Al-Safir* [Beirut], October 14, 2014.

4 Nicholas A. Heras, "The Counter-Insurgency Role of Syria's 'Popular Committees'," *Terrorism Monitor* (Jamestown Foundation), Volume 11, Issue 9, May 2, 2013.

5 Bassam Mroue, "Hezbollah-backed Lebanese Shiites Fight in Syria," *Associated Press*, April 14, 2013.

6 Hugh Macleod, "Lebanon's Militant Hizballah Forging New Ties," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 1, 2007.

7 Laila Bassam, "Suicide bombing kills four in Hizballah area of south Beirut," *Reuters*, January 21, 2014.

between radical Sunni Islamists and Lebanese military forces.[8] Moreover, Hizb Allah positions in Lebanon draw fire from Syria-based militants.[9] A recent threat issued by Jabhat al-Nusra commander Abu Muhammed al-Julani against Hizb Allah further crystalizes Lebanese anxieties.[10] Consequently, Lebanese Shi'a and Christians who have watched their co-religionists be targeted with increasing ferocity in Syria are reportedly stockpiling arms with Hizb Allah's assistance.[11] In this context, a sense of growing insecurity in Lebanon has, for many Lebanese – irrespective of their confessional affiliation – vindicated Hizb Allah's claim that it acts to protect Lebanon.[12]

This article will examine the role of Hizb Allah's Lebanese Resistance Brigades – commonly referred to as the Saraya (Brigades) – in Lebanon. It finds that Hizb Allah's participation in the conflict in Syria coupled with the deteriorating security climate in Lebanon has compelled it to expand its mobilization of auxiliary paramilitary elements such as the Saraya. It also shows that, in addition to bolstering the Saraya, Hizb Allah appears to be devoting similar efforts to mobilize other paramilitary forces ranging from independent, loosely organized formations to self-defense detachments affiliated with its political coalition allies within the March 8 bloc.

"Hizb Allah's participation in the conflict in Syria coupled with the deteroriating security climate in Lebanon has compelled it to expand its mobilization of auxiliary paramilitary elements such as the Saraya."

Background

Founded in November 1997, the Lebanese Brigades of Resistance to the [Israeli] Occupation, as the Saraya was originally known, were emblematic of Hizb Allah's attempt to broaden its demographic appeal among a wider spectrum of the Lebanese body politic.[13] The Saraya, in essence, sought to enlist non-party members, particularly non-Shi'a Lebanese, to the cause of resisting Israel's occupation of Lebanon through armed resistance against Israeli forces and their South Lebanon Army (SLA) proxy. The Saraya disavowed religious, political, ethnic, class, and tribal affiliations in favor of a shared commitment to Lebanon and its unity and national defense. The Saraya's ambitious goals are notable in light of the inherent fissures that characterize Lebanese society. The timing of the Saraya's establishment is also notable. Hizb Allah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah proclaimed its formation one week after the death of his eighteen year-old son, Hadi, who died along with two fellow Hizb Allah members in a clash with Israeli forces. The impetus behind the Saraya's founding, according to Nasrallah, was to respond to the growing demands among Lebanese of all backgrounds to contribute to the resistance to Israeli occupation.[14]

A promotional video produced by Hizb Allah's *Al-Manar* (The Beacon) media outlet that contains footage of purported Saraya members engaged in training exercises and military operations highlights its appeal.[15] Interviews with purported Saraya members, including self-identifying Christians, Sunnis, Shi'a, and Druze (along with self-identifying "Lebanese") underline the group's multi-confessional nature and its unifying ethos derived from a sense of Lebanese nationalism and the determination to protect Lebanon from Israeli aggression.[16] Ostensibly acting as a paramilitary auxiliary of Hizb Allah, the Saraya's existence helped Hizb Allah display its Lebanese nationalist and patriotic credentials to go along with its prevailing religious and Shi'a Islamist pedigree from which it originated. The creation of the Saraya also reflected another example of Hizb Allah's progression toward political expediency and pragmatism after its formal entry into Lebanese politics.[17]

8 Hugh Naylor, "Fighting in Lebanon rages for 3rd day between military, Sunni militants," *Washington Post*, October 26, 2014.

9 BBC, "Hizballah repel al-Nusra attack on border," October 5, 2014.

10 Maruam Karouny, "Leader of Syria Qaeda Wing Threatens Strikes Against Hizballah in Lebanon," *Reuters*, November 4, 2014. Al-Golani is quoted as saying: "The real war in Lebanon is yet to begin and what is coming is (so) bitter that Hassan Nasrallah will bite his fingers in remorse for what he has done to Sunnis."

11 Bassem Mroue and Zeina Karam, "Some Christians arm as Mideast peril mounts," *Associated Press*, September 5, 2014. Also see Nadine Elali, "Christian resistance brigades?," NOW Lebanon [Beirut], September 25, 2014.

12 *Al-Akhbar* [Beirut], "Hizballah leader claims battles would have reached Beirut if party had not intervened in Syria," August 15, 2014. A recent poll conducted by the Beirut Center for Research and Information found that two-thirds of Christians surveyed believe that Hizb Allah is defending Lebanon from the radical Islamist currents that have by now become ubiquitous within the various Syrian opposition insurgent fronts. See Beirut Center for Research and Information, "Two-Thirds of Christians: Hizballah Protects Lebanon," October 2014, available at: http://beirutcenter.net/Default.asp?ContentID=859&menuID=46 (accessed November 2014).

On the other hand, Hizb Allah's detractors led by members of the March 14 coalition such as Future Movement leader Saad al-Hariri and Lebanese Forces leader Samir Gaegea see its active participation in the Syrian conflict as imperiling Lebanon's delicate stability and exacerbating an already disastrous situation in the Levant. See Hussein Dakroub, "Hariri Slams Hizballah's Explosive Message," *Daily Star* [Beirut], October 9, 2014. Also see *Daily Star* [Beirut], "Hizballah MP boasts victory over Nusra Front," October 6, 2014.

13 Amal Saad-Ghorayeb. *Hizballah: Politics and Religion*. London: Pluto Press, 2002. 84.

14 Blanford, Nicholas. *Warriors of God: Inside Hizballah's Thirty-Tear Struggle Against Israel*. New York: Random House, 2011, p. 196-97.

15 Al-Manar's feature on the Saraya, *Saraya al-Watan* (Homeland Brigades), is available in three parts at the following links, Part 1:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-hG3NQmu1U (accessed November 2014); Part 2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btXlzp6IMeg (accessed November 2014); and Part 3: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btXlzp6IMeg (accessed November 2014).

16 According to a 1999 study that examined the Saraya's demographic composition, 38 percent of its cadres were Sunnis; 25 percent were Shi'a; 20 percent were Druze; and 17 percent were Christians. See Naim Qassem. *Hizballah: The Story from Within*. London: Saqi, 2005. 123

17 There is a wealth of literature that documents the progression of Hizb Allah's ideology and discourse over the years from various perspectives. This process, commonly referred to as its 'Lebanonization' or *infitah* (opening), is reflective of Hizb Allah's formal entry into participatory and electoral politics and its concomitant departure from a strict emphasis on Shi'a Islamist-centric narratives and objectives for Lebanon in favor of broader themes that embody Lebanese and Arab

At the same time, the Saraya's capacity to organize and deploy independently has also allowed Hizb Allah to preserve the ideals it embodies through its Islamic Resistance military arm.[18] This reassures ideological purists among its constituency who may be wary of the potential influence of non-Shi'a and non-Islamist actors on Hizb Allah's purpose as an Islamic resistance movement.

"The creation of the Saraya also reflected another example of Hizb Allah's progression toward political expediency and pragmatism after its formal entry into Lebanese politics."

As an operational auxiliary of Hizb Allah, Saraya cadres were provided paramilitary training and other forms of operationally relevant support. The Saraya initiated military operations on March 14, 1998,[19] and were credited with scores of operations, including small unit ambushes, mortar attacks, and the deployment of landmines.[20] Saraya units also engaged in surveillance, reconnaissance, and intelligence operations. The Saraya boasts its own flag and emblem. Saraya members also participate in and are otherwise acknowledged in military parades and other public events hosted by Hizb Allah in locations such as Dahiyeh and elsewhere,[21] and are publicly recognized for their contributions to the resistance.[22]

To be eligible for consideration for membership, aspiring Saraya volunteers were required to meet two requirements: first, they had to satisfy the physical and psychological qualifications required for mobilization; and second, they had to be free of any links – direct or tangential – to Israel and its allies.[23] While the second requirement may seem like an obvious prerequisite to gaining membership in the Saraya, it is nevertheless illustrative of Hizb Allah's observance of rigorous operational security protocols in light of the legacy of the Israeli occupation and the locally-born SLA and other factions that acted as Israeli proxies. To connect with prospective recruits, a telephone number was established to field inquiries about how Lebanese can, according to Hizb Allah, fulfill their "national obligation to resist foreign occupation."[24] Hizb Allah's phones, according to some accounts, "rang off the hook" with calls from prospective recruits.[25]

Hizb Allah's operational relationship with the Saraya is illustrative of its tendency to forge operational ties with non-Islamist militias that subscribe to a host of different ideologies but nevertheless act under the rubric of resistance. This includes militants that promulgate secular, nationalist, socialist, and leftist ideologies such as the armed wings of the Lebanon-based Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP),[26] Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC),[27] and Lebanese Communist Party (LCP),[28] along with those deployed by fellow Islamist movements such as the Amal Movement and Palestinian Hamas, as well as Palestinian Islamist groups indigenous to Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.[29]

Sidon Flashpoint

A chain of events in Lebanon's southern city of Sidon in 2012 and 2013 brings the current role of the Saraya into sharper relief. An important center of Sunni cultural and political life in southern Lebanon, the port city has emerged as a center of incendiary sectarianism exacerbated by the conflict in Syria. The 2012 call by hardline Sunni cleric Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir for Lebanese Sunnis to join the armed insurrection against the Ba'athist regime under his *Kataib al-Muqawama al-Hurr* (Free Resistance Brigades), in response to Hizb Allah's entry into the conflict, would further escalate tensions.[30] Drawing from an extremist Salafist tradition that views Shi'ism as a form of heresy and apostasy, al-Assir's sermons lambasted Hizb Allah and Iran over their influence in Lebanon and events in Syria. Followers of al-Assir and Lebanese military forces engaged in armed clashes in and around Sidon in 2012 and 2013. The clashes in 2013 followed calls made by al-Assir demanding that Hizb Allah supporters, including active Saraya members, vacate two apartment buildings in Sidon.[31] There is evidence that a Sidon-based Saraya detachment, possibly supported by regular Hizb Allah fighters, fought al-Assir's followers.[32]

nationalist discourses, as well as social justice and anti-imperialism. For example, see Joseph Elie Alagha. "Primacy to Political Program." *The Shifts in Hizballah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program*. Leiden: Amsterdam University Press, 2006. 149-189. Also see Amal Saad-Ghorayeb. *Hizballah: Politics and Religion*. London: Pluto Press, 2002. 78-87. Also see Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh. *In the Path of Hizballah*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004. 108-135. Also see Naim Qassem. *Hizballah: The Story from Within*. London: Saqi, 2005. 187-205.

18 Amal Khalil, "Lebanese Resistance Leader: The Saraya is Here to Stay," *Al-Akhbar* [Beirut], October 19, 2013.

19 Naim Qassem. *Hizballah: The Story from Within*. London: Saqi, 2005. 122

20 Nizar Hamzeh. *In the Path of Hizballah*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004. 91.

21 Wael Taqi al-Din, "Lebanese Resistance Brigades... Remains and Expands," LebanonDebate.com [Beirut], September 1, 2014. For video footage of Saraya cadres honoring the late Hizb Allah commander Imad Mughniyeh, see "Radwan ya Radwan ... Lebanese Brigades" is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iz4dbtZK6LI (accessed November 2014).

22 Al-Ahd [Beirut], "13th Anniversary of the Launch of the Lebanese Brigades for Resisting 'Israeli' Occupation," November 4, 2009.

23 E. Al-Rihani, "Long Live Saraya," Al-Manar, March 15, 2011.

24 E. Al-Rihani, "Long Live Saraya," Al-Manar, March 15, 2011.

25 Naim Qassem. *Hizballah: The Story from Within*. London: Saqi, 2005. 122

26 Chris Zambelis, "Assad's Hurricane: A Profile of the Paramilitary Wing of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party," *Terrorism Monitor* (Jamestown Foundation), Volume 12, Issue 6, March 20, 2014.

27 Antoine Ghattas Saab, "PFLP-GC Steps Up Lebanese Border Presence," *Daily Star* [Beirut], October 30, 2014. Also see *Daily Star* [Beirut], "PFLP-GC Military Buildup Stokes Fears of Clashes," November 25, 2014.

28 Maria Abi-Habib, "Diverse Allies in Lebanon," Electronic Intifada, January 14, 2007.

29 Hugh Macleod, "Lebanon's Militant Hizballah Forging New Ties," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 1, 2007.

30 *Al-Akhbar* [Beirut], "Saida Salafi Cleric to Form Militia: Official," November 13, 2012.

31 Amal Khalil, "Lebanese Resistance Leader: The Saraya is Here to Stay," *Al-Akhbar* [Beirut], October 19, 2013.

32 Elie Hajj, "Lebanon's Assir Gone, But Problems Remain," *Al-Monitor*, June 26, 2013.

The events in Sidon are best understood within a broader context, particularly Hizb Allah's consistent efforts to demonstrate its self-proclaimed stance as a bulwark against violent Islamist extremism and sectarianism in Lebanon. For example, Nasrallah frequently addresses the danger of sectarianism that has sowed dissention between Sunnis and Shi'a across the Islamic world and threatened religious minorities.[33] In doing so, Hizb Allah is able to position itself as a unifying and even moderate stabilizing force in light of what is a catastrophic alternative promoted, according to Nasrallah, by the likes of Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf Arab monarchies.[34] Hizb Allah's support for the Saraya and analogous militias, especially those made up of non-party members, is a further case in point. As evidenced by the expansion of informal militia networks made up of Christians and Muslims – Sunni, Shi'a, and Druze – and others situated in vulnerable locations in the Bekaa Valley along the Lebanese-Syrian frontier and elsewhere in Lebanon, Hizb Allah's message appears to be resonating widely.[35] Equally important, there are indications that many of the Christian militias that have received Hizb Allah support are composed of supporters of the Michel Aoun's *al-Tayyar al-Watani al-Hurr* (Free Patriotic Movement), Lebanon's largest Christian party and Hizb Allah's chief ally in the March 8 coalition.[36]

Conclusion

There are indications that organized Saraya factions are currently mobilizing their own militia sub-networks, particularly ones operating on the village level in volatile areas in the Bekaa Valley that lie on the front lines of the conflict. The Saraya has reportedly established one such sub-network in the predominantly Christian village of Ras Baalbek, an area located in the northeast Bekaa Valley not far from the Syrian town of Qusair that bore witness to one of Hizb Allah's initial forays in Syria and only a few miles south of the flashpoint Lebanese town of Arsal. Ras Baalbek has come under attack by Jabhat al-Nusra and analogous elements. This prompted a regional Saraya representative to organize what they call a "self-defense committee" made up of local Christians. The "self-defense committee" is armed and conducts regular patrols of the area, often acting on intelligence information provided by Hizb Allah.[37]

"For many Lebanese, the inherent weakness of the military and the wider security apparatus leaves Hizb Allah as the only credible deterrent to the brand of violence being wrought in Syria."

In light of the multitude of threats that confront Lebanon, Hizb Allah's employment of the Saraya and similar militia formations is likely to expand. Hizb Allah's preoccupation with developments in Syria coupled with growing fears of Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIL will continue to compel Lebanese of various backgrounds to seek a security guarantor in the absence of other viable alternatives. For many Lebanese, the inherent weakness of Lebanese institutions, particularly the military and wider security apparatus, leaves Hizb Allah as the only credible deterrent to the brand of violence being wrought in Syria.

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33 Al-Manar [Beirut], "Lebanese Hizballah Leader Accuses Saudi Arabia of Promoting Takfiri Trend," October 27, 2014.

34 Al-Manar [Beirut], "Lebanese Hizballah Leader Accuses Saudi Arabia of Promoting Takfiri Trend," October 27, 2014.

35 Al-Monitor, "Hizballah Calls for Resistance against IS," August 27, 2014. Also see Saada Ouloua, "Christians in Eastern Lebanon Prepare for Worst," Al-Monitor, July 29, 2014.

36 Nadine Elali, "Christian resistance brigades?," NOW Lebanon [Beirut], September 25, 2014.

37 *Economist* [London], "Taking Charge: Lebanon's Border with Syria," June 15, 2014.

Libya's South: The Forgotten Frontier

By Geoffrey Howard

LIBYA'S SOUTH HAS long been a key area of political contestation. The region was at the heart of Col. Muammar al-Gadhafi's support base, providing a core constituency of the regime's armed forces and allowing the former leader to exploit tribal and ethnic divisions to cement his highly personalized form of governance.[1] His divide and rule tactics, manipulation of citizenship, and profligate stance towards the highly lucrative smuggling networks that traverse the region have left a considerable mark on the Sahel-Sahara region and continue to shape political and security dynamics following the 2011 uprising.[2]

"Whilst transnationanl militant groups are certainly present in southern Libya, their intent to engage in violence in Libya is likely to be lower than key communal groups in the region."

These complex dynamics are not well understood and developments in the region often go unreported. The ongoing crises in Libya's north, where more ideologically defined groups are battling for control of institutions, the formal and informal economy, and what remains of the fast collapsing political process has further deflected attention from developments in Libya's Sahel-Saharan region. Disproportionate levels of reporting have also focused on the emerging presence of transnational militants. Whilst these groups are certainly present in southern Libya,[3]

1 See Dirk Vandewalle ed., *Libya since 1969* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

2 See "Divided We Stand: Libya's Enduring Conflicts," Report No.130, International Crisis Group, September 2012.

3 These details are based on the author's interviews and research conducted in Libya in 2013 and 2014; see

their intent to engage in violence in Libya is likely to be lower than key communal groups in the region.

"The Arab political elite's inability to address the concerns of ethnic minorities, especially relating to political representation and citizenship rights, poses a critical threat to stability and risks driving these groups to engage in greater and more concerted levels of violence."

This article argues that the current focus on developments in Libya's coastal region and concern over the presence of transnational groups risk missing the pivotal role likely played by key domestic actors, including tribes and ethnic minorities, in determining longer-term stability in the south, and in Libya as a whole. This article focuses on two groups – the Tubu and Tuareg ethnic minorities – in order to highlight some of the key dynamics shaping stability in the region. It argues that the primarily Arab political elite's inability to address the concerns of these two ethnic minorities, especially relating to political representation and citizenship rights, poses a critical threat to stability and risks driving these groups to engage in greater and more concerted levels of violence.

This failure risks fueling a much larger conflict, which if left unchecked has the potential to severely destabilize Libya and its neighbors, including southern Europe which remains vulnerable to increasing flows of sub-Saharan African migrants traveling unchecked from Libya's ports. An unstable south will provide greater space in which transnational militants, as well as smugglers of illicit goods and people, are able to operate with impunity. Indeed, it is precisely the support of the Tuareg and Tubu, with their links across the Sahel, which will be essential in mitigating the threat from transnational militias. Losing this support risks losing control over the south.

Communal Dynamics in the South

Libya has two principal non-Arab ethnic minority groups that are present in the country's Sahara: the Tuareg and the Tubu.[4] They have different degrees of intermarriage with the numerically and politically dominant Arab population, which is split into a number of tribes, including the Gadhadhfa, Warfalla, Merghara, Awlad Suleiman, Fezzanis, Hassawna, and Zuwayah.

Gadhafi manipulated tribal affiliations for his own political ends; he sought the support of a number of groups to strengthen his support base in the absence of viable political institutions, and used a patronage system under which he promoted some groups while marginalizing others.[5] Three tribal groups emerged as the backbone of his support: Gadhafi's own Gadhadhfa tribe, which is based in Sebha and Sirte (having settled in the latter with Gadhafi's encouragement); the Warfalla, which is Libya's largest tribe and whose members are spread throughout the country; and the Merghara, whose members tend to be found in the south-west of the country around Sebha.[6]

Since the 2011 uprising, hitherto marginalized groups are attempting to supersede those groups that Gadhafi favored. This inversion of the previously established tribal power structures has contributed to significant communal tensions and led to frequent outbreaks of violence across Libya's south.[7] Groups are competing to control borders, strategic assets (such as energy infrastructure and roads), and the formal and informal economy, as well as gain political supremacy over their rivals. Complex dynamics between these key groups, the growing redundancy of political institutions, and the near collapse of the transitional process has reduced the willingness of domestic actors to engage in the political process and risks encouraging these groups to engage in a more concerted campaign of violent and disruptive action to achieve their aims.

The Tubu

The Tubu were the original inhabitants of the region around the south-eastern oasis towns of Kufra, Rebiana and Buzeyma. They also inhabit northern Chad and Niger. The Tubu population in the south has grown in recent decades, primarily as a result of immigration from Chad, in particular from the Tibesti region. The relative socio-economic marginalization and political disenfranchisement of the Tubu by Arab tribes has led to increasing antagonism between the Arab and Tubu groups. This has been particularly pronounced in Kufra with the Arab Zuwayah (or Zwai) tribe, where divisions between the Tubu and members of Arab community have triggered serious and persistent violence since the start of 2012, leading to the deaths of at least 200 people.[8]

These tensions stem from Arab tribes' economic and political dominance over the Tubu, mistrust between these groups, competition for political power, and clashes over control of lucrative smuggling networks, as well as widespread discriminatory attitudes among the country's Arab majority towards darker-skinned Libyans and black Africans.[9] Under Gadhafi, the Zuwayah became the demographic and political majority in the south-east as well as the principal landowners around Kufra. By contrast, the Tubu have had poor access to employment opportunities and social welfare. Discrimination has

Wolfram Lacher, "Libya's Fractious South and Regional instability," *SANA Dispatches*, February 2014.

4 A third non-Arab minority group, the Amazigh (Berber), resides mainly in coastal areas and parts of the Nafusa Mountains.

5 Wolfram Lacher, "The Rise of Tribal Politics," in Jason Pack ed., *The 2011 Libyan Uprising and the Struggle for the Post-Qadhafi Future* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

6 Hanspeter Mattes, "Formal and Informal Authority in Libya Since 1969," in Dirk Vandewalle ed., *Libya since 1969* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

7 See Geoffrey Howard and Henry Smith, "Will Terrorism in Libya Be Solely Driven by Radical Islamism?" *CTC Sentinel* 7:2 (2014).

8 See "Libya Clashes Kill Scores in Al-Kufra," *BBC*, February 21, 2012; "Fresh Violence Flares in Kufra," *Libya Herald*, April 10, 2013; and various articles at http://www.qurynanew.com.

9 Henry Smith, "The South," in Jason Pack ed., *The 2011 Libyan Uprising and the Struggle for the Post-Qadhafi Future* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

intensified since 2011 because of claims that Gadhafi employed sub-Saharan African troops as mercenaries during the civil war.[10]

Since the end of the 2011 uprising, the Tubu community has expanded its influence in the southern desert region, and now has a dominant position in providing security at energy infrastructure, in border areas, and on key roads leading into Chad, Niger, and Sudan.[11] This has bolstered their position and attracted greater migration of Tubus, particularly from Chad. This has heightened tensions with the local Arab communities, who fear that these demographic patterns may lead to an erosion of their economic and social dominance in the south. Perceptions that illegally settled transnational Tubus are attempting to exploit Libya's bulbous welfare state have stoked these tensions further.

The Tuareg

The Tuareg are indigenous inhabitants of the Sahara and estimated to number between two and three million. Traditionally nomadic pastoralists, they occupy a vast swathe of the Sahel-Sahara region – moving with relative ease across Libya's southern borders. Gadhafi incorporated some Tuareg into Libya's security forces from the 1980s onwards, and some members of the community fought for him during the 2011 uprising.[12] There are allegations – of varying degrees of credibility – that Tuareg from both inside and outside Libya fought as paid mercenaries for Gadhafi.[13] Nevertheless, some Malian and Nigerien Tuareg were long-standing members of Libya's security forces.

Elements of Libya's population perceive the Tuareg as mercenaries and Gadhafi 'loyalists' because of the ties that some of them had with the former regime. This has created considerable mistrust between the Tuareg and the broader Libyan population which, coupled with tensions over the control of borders, the informal economy, and political influence, sparked continued outbreaks of violence across the south since 2011, including in Sebha, Ubari, Ghat and Ghadames. Significant mistrust exists between the Tuareg and the inhabitants of Ghadames, where Gadhafi employed elements of the Tuareg to suppress unrest during the uprising. When the town was freed from Gadhafi control in September 2011, its Arab residents detained members of the local Tuareg population and razed their neighborhood in the town, forcing them to resettle, primarily in the towns of Dirj and Debaba.[14] Tit-for-tat attacks between Arabs in Ghadames and the town's remaining Tuareg community continue, and socio-political tensions there remain high.[15]

"Resentment over access to citizenship rights plays a significant role in fueling political disaffection amongst groups in the south."

Citizenship

Resentment over access to citizenship rights plays a significant role in fueling political disaffection amongst groups in the south. Gadhafi manipulated the granting of citizenship for his own political purposes, and made promises of citizenship to transnational Tuareg and Tubu units that fought in his security forces. For the most part, these promises did not materialize. As such, the post-uprising authorities have faced competing and unresolved demands for citizenship from these groups.

Shifting power dynamics between Arab and non-Arab groups in the region and entrenched prejudice from mainly Arab politicians towards non-Arab ethnic minorities have created a disjointed and incoherent government response that has served to deepen communal tensions and fueled disaffection towards the post-uprising political process.[16] Left unresolved, the continued denial of citizenship risks stripping a substantial number of people in the south of their rights, including access to social services and suffrage.

The increased migration of Tubus and Tuaregs from neighbouring Sahel countries following the 2011 uprising has created tensions amongst the local Arab, as well as Libyan Tuareg and Tubu, communities.[17] Given the porous nature of the desert region and the limited capacity of government institutions, many of these groups have settled illegally in towns in Libya's south. This has led to persistent tensions over perceptions that these groups are attempting to access the benefits of Libya's generous welfare state. Such tensions have fed into unstable communal dynamics across the south and triggered violence in several locations, including Kufra, Sebha and Ubari.

Both the Tubu and the Tuareg have long been pushing for greater political representation and citizenship rights. The transitional authorities' reluctance to grant full identity cards to members of these communities has increased resentment and fed into perceptions that they are being marginalized during the post-uprising transition process. This was seen most recently in the June 2014 elections for Libya's new interim legislature, the House of Representatives, when a large number of Tuareg and Tubu were unable to vote after the government ruled that people without full identity cards would not be allowed to take part.[18] Resulting violence disrupted polling in locations in the south, including in Sebha where attacks

10 "Divided We Stand: Libya's Enduring Conflicts," Report No.130, International Crisis Group, September 2012. Wolfram Lacher, "Fault Lines of the Revolution," SWP Research Paper, May 2013.

11 These details are based on the author's interviews and research conducted in Libya in 2013 and 2014.

12 See Ronald Bruce St John, *Libya from Colony to Revolution* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2012).

13 Wolfram Lacher, "Libya's Fractious South and Regional instability," *SANA Dispatches*, February 2014.

14 Rebecca Murray, "Tackling Conflict on Libya's Margins," *Al-Jazeera,* August 10, 2012; Rebecca Murray, "Tribal War Simmers in Libya's Desert," *Inter Press Service*, October 11, 2012.

15 "Ghadames Local Council Says Town is Besieged," *Libya Herald*, January 19, 2013.

16 Wolfram Lacher, "Libya's Fractious South and Regional instability," *SANA Dispatches*, February 2014.

17 "Libya: The Demographic-Economic Framework of Migration," Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute, June 2013.

18 "Elections in Libya," International Foundation for Electoral Systems, June 23, 2014; also see Wolfram Lacher, "Libya's Fractious South and Regional instability," *SANA Dispatches*, February 2014.

against polling stations meant that only three were able to open.[19] The High National Elections Commission also cited security reasons for its decision to only open five of the 15 polling stations in the area around Kufra.[20]

"Tubu military commanders have commented that they are only willing to wait a limited amount of time before they engage in more violent and disruptive tactics in order to force a response to their demands."

The transitional authorities have faced a multitude of competing demands from a broad range of domestic political actors, and the two Saharan ethnic minorities' demands for political representation and citizenship have so far fallen on deaf ears and have been overshadowed by groups who have received greater publicity, such as the Amazigh (Berber) with their boycott of the constitution drafting process earlier this year.[21] However, Tubu military commanders in particular have commented that they are only willing to wait a limited amount of time before they engage in more violent and disruptive tactics in order to force a response to their demands.[22] Both groups possess the capability and intent to engage in violent and disruptive activism. As the interim authorities become increasingly redundant and the political process nears collapse, the likelihood of greater political and citizenship rights for Tubus and Tuaregs reduces. This risks driving radicalization amongst these groups and increasing their intent to engage in violence.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has shown that dynamics in the south do not occur in a vacuum divorced from northern-centric political developments. Yet continued exclusion from the rights associated with political representation and citizenship risks fueling rising discontent, reducing the willingness of groups to engage in the political process, and increasing their intent to engage in violence. Although much of the focus surrounding the country's deepening political crisis and institutional fragmentation has rested on quasi-military operations in Tripoli and sustained violence in Benghazi, the south could yet be the greatest casualty of the current political malaise.

"Continued perceptions of marginalization are likely to encourage groups to engage in violence, or potentially encourage separatist sentiment."

Tackling the question of citizenship will also help to keep a lid on simmering ethno-nationalist tensions between the Tuareg and Tubu, divisions that relate to historic relations under Gadhafi, and relations between transnational and domestic groups.[23] There are already signs that these divisions are beginning to mirror political tensions between rival factions in Tripoli.[24] Continued perceptions of marginalization are likely to encourage groups to engage in violence, or potentially encourage separatist sentiment.

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19 Kareem Fahim and Suliman Ali Zway, "Violence and Uncertainty Mar Libyan Election for a New Parliament," *New York Times*, June 25, 2014.

20 "Libyan Elections: Low Turnout Marks Bid to End Political Crisis," *BBC News*, June 26, 2014; "Kufra Elections Stalled But No Tebu Boycott," *Libya Herald*, June 25, 2014.

21 Ulf Laessing, "Libya's Berber to Boycott Committee Drafting Constitution," *Reuters,* November 13, 2013; Taziz Hasairi, "Amazigh Supreme Council Continues Boycott of Constitutional Assembly," *Libya Herald*, April 12, 2014.

22 Based on the author's interviews and research conducted in Libya in May, June, and July 2014.

23 Wolfram Lacher, "Libya's Fractious South and Regional instability," *SANA Dispatches,* February 2014.

24 Tuareg militias on November 5, 2014 stormed Libya's major El Sharara oilfield, looting equipment, firing shots, and forcing the facility to close. Local media reported that the attack formed part of a wider attempt by Islamist groups that support the General National Congress to secure control of oilfields in the south-western desert. Local media also reported that some Tuaregs have sided with the Misratans and the Islamist Operation Dawn, and that some members of the Tubu have sided with the anti-Islamist forces. See Feras Bosalum and Ahmed Elumami, "Gunmen Storm Libya's El Sharara Oilfield, Shut Down Production," *Reuters*, November 5, 2014.

The "Seventh Stage" Of Terrorism in China

By Sajjan M. Gohel

On October 28, 2013, a new phase of terrorist violence emerged in China. On that day a man drove a jeep packed with explosives and carrying his wife and mother into a crowd in Tiananmen Square, in the country's capital Beijing. Two civilians were killed in the incident along with the driver and the two other passengers, the latter of whom were all ethnic Uighurs from China's western province of Xinjiang.[1] Following the attack, Abdullah Mansour, the leader of the Pakistan-based and Uighur-led Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) released a propaganda video praising the plotters and warned of future attacks.[2]

"The Tiananmen Square attack served as the initiation of the 'seventh stage' of Uighur-linked terrorism, a stage that will now include attacks outside the traditional area of Xinjiang."

The attack carried enormous symbolic significance as it took place meters from the giant portrait of Chairman Mao Zedong that hangs outside the main entrance to the Forbidden City in the heart of Beijing. On the west side of the square stands the Great Hall of the People, where a meeting of the plenary session of the Chinese Communist Party was planned.[3]

Chinese authorities believe that since 1990 there have been "six stages" of terrorism in Xinjiang and that over this time period the TIP's capabilities, to include its tactics, target selection, geographic reach, and international connections, have evolved and grown, as has the danger it poses in the country.[4] It is the opinion of the author that this Tiananmen Square attack served as the initiation of the "seventh stage" of Uighur-linked terrorism, a stage that will now include attacks outside the traditional area of Xinjiang.

This article explores recent trends in Uighur-linked militancy and terrorism. It specifically assesses the security threats on China's critical national infrastructure, primarily its railways, that emerged in 2013 and 2014 and how the violence that had previously been contained in Xinjiang has started to spread across the country. The article will also assess the evolution of the TIP and its media, and the role a small number of radicalized Uighurs have played in plotting terror attacks outside China and taking part in global theaters of conflict.

"For the Uighurs, China's minority policy ironically created a sense of shared identity in a historically divided people."

The Uighurs

The term 'Uighur' refers to the Turkic, predominantly Muslim people who are concentrated in Xinjiang, which is China's largest administrative region. Uighurs constitute 45% of the region's population whereas 40% are Han Chinese.[5]

Under the chairmanship of Mao Zedong, China revived the term 'Uighur' as part of a broader initiative to manage ethnic tensions. Under Beijing's policies, minority ethnicities received special recognition and limited discretion in governing specifically designated autonomous areas. This was intended to encourage them to support the Chinese state in the future.[6]

For the Uighurs, however, China's minority policy ironically created a sense of shared identity in a historically divided people. Xinjiang has rarely constituted a unified political entity but instead has been a collection of rural oases separated by mountains, clan conflicts, and clashes between farmers and nomadic herders.[7]

Kashgar – A Front Line for Conflict

Kashgar is the birthplace of the short-lived Islamic state of Turkestan, led by Islamic scholar Sabit Damolla in 1933, and the cultural center of Xinjiang's Uighurs, as well as the stronghold of the Uighur anti-state resistance activity.[8]

1 Jonathan Kaiman, "Islamist Group Claims Responsibility for Attack on China's Tiananmen Square," *The Guardian*, November 25, 2013; "China Sentences Three to Death for Tiananmen Square Attack," *Reuters*, June 16, 2014; Police found gasoline, two knives, steel sticks, and a white flag in the vehicle which drew a striking similarity to the one the Taliban used in Afghanistan inscribed with the shahada in black.

2 "TIP Leader Speaks on Suicide Attack at Tiananmen Square," Site Monitoring Service, January 15, 2014. For additional background on the organizational evolution of the TIP and its precursor groups see below.

3 Zhongnanhai, the red-walled leadership compound where the party elite live and work, was also very close to the location of the attack.

4 Personal interview, official from the Ministry of Public Security, March 28, 2011; Overview of the Stages: Stage 1: Creating an Atmosphere of Terror - On April 5, 1990, violent protests erupted in Baren, a township in Aktu County; Stage 2: Explosive Attacks - February 28, 1991, an explosion at a bus station in Kuqa County, Aksu Prefecture, killing one person; Stage 3: Assassinations - August 24, 1993, two men stabbed and injured Abliz Damolla, an executive committee member of the CPPCC Yecheng County Committee in Kashi Prefecture and imam of the Great Mosque; Stage 4: Attacks on Police and Government Institutions - August 27, 1996, six drove to the office building of the Jangilas Township People's Government, Yecheng County, where they killed a local administrator and a policeman; Stage 5: Organizing Disturbances and Riots - From February 5 to 8, 1997, rioters calling for a caliphate attacked people and destroyed stores and burned and damaged cars and buses in Yining, Ili Kazakh Prefecture. Seven people were killed, more than 200 people were injured; Stage 6: Poison Attacks – From January 30 to February 18, 1998, Uighur terrorists conducted 23 poisoning cases in Kashgar resulting in one fatality, and four others suffering ill-effects. For a more detailed breakdown of the stages see Justin V. Hastings, "Charting the Course of Uyghur Unrest," *China Quarterly*, Volume 208, December 2011, pp. 893-912.

5 "Xinjiang Profile," *BBC,* May 22,2014..

6 James Millward and Peter Purdue, "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), pp. 27-62.

7 Ibid.

8 James A. Millward and Najiban Tursan, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), pp. 76-78; Because of

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, returning Uighurs from Kashgar who had fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan were emboldened by the Soviets' departure and believed that they could also weaken Communist rule in China through violence.[9] These issues came to a head in April 1990 when a violent and bloody uprising started in Baren, a township in Aktu County in close proximity to Kashgar.[10]

Since that time Kashgar has played an important role for a variety of anti-state Uighur militants. For example, Kashgar was the scene of one of the biggest attacks in China when on August 4, 2008, two men crashed a dump truck into a group of police officers before throwing five homemade explosive devices into their barracks. Sixteen policemen were killed and 16 injured in the attack. The incident occurred four days before the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing. The timing of the attack was strategic and was likely designed to embarrass China on the eve of the much anticipated Olympics.[11]

Kashgar's significance as a center of gravity for Uighur-linked militancy is reflected in a statement made by Chinese President Xi Jinping this past July, in which he called Kashgar the "front line" for counterterrorism and asked for more local Uighurs to play a role in security operations.[12]

Ironically, perhaps as a sign of the challenge Beijing faces, the next day Jume Tahir, the imam of the historic Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar and a deputy of the National People's Congress, was stabbed to death just after leading early morning prayers. While the exact motivation for Tahir's death is not known, one possible explanation suggests that the killing of Tahir served as a warning to other local Uighurs who side with or associate with Beijing that there could be costs attached to maintaining such associations.[13]

"Similar to the Tiananmen Square attack, the incident in Kunming was timed just before a major political meeting."

Targeting China's Critical Infrastructure - The Railway Attacks

On March 1, 2014, a Uighur gang of eight knife-wielding attackers targeted commuters at the Kunming Railway Station in Yunnan province killing 31 and injuring 141.[14] The operatives, who were dressed in black, stormed into the railway station and began slashing and stabbing people randomly.[15] This incident illustrated that the October 2013 Tiananmen Square attack was not an isolated incident of terrorism outside Xinjiang. During the Kunming attack, police shot and killed four of the attackers and later apprehended several others. Two of the perpetrators were women. One woman was killed by police, while the other was captured. All of the suspects were Uighurs from Hotan in Xinjiang, although it is not clear what type of organizational connection – if any – they had to TIP.[16]

The decision to target the Yunnan transportation system was certainly significant. China's rail network is a cornerstone of its economy and Beijing views Yunnan as one of China's three key bridgeheads (*qiaotoubao*) into other provinces and nations.[17] The other two bridgeheads are Xinjiang to Central Asia and Heilongjiang to Russia.[18]

Similar to the Tiananmen Square attack, the incident in Kunming was timed just before a major political meeting. China's leaders at the time were gathering in Beijing for the opening of the National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Consultative Conference (CPCC) conventions.[19]

There also appears to be some other unique logistical factors that made Kunming an attractive target. For example, Kunming is the closest major city to Yunnan's border with Laos. Criminal networks have in the past operated out of Boten city in Northern Laos, where there is a casino north of the Laotian immigration and customs post. According to a Laotian official interviewed for this article, Chinese visitors do not have to pass through a Laotian checkpoint to access this city.[20] Given these reportedly weak security measures, it is not outside the realm of possibility that the Kunming plotters – just like criminal actors – could have also used Boten city as a safe-sanctuary before the attack.

"In the video the TIP leader threatens to conduct attacks across China rather than confining them to Xinjiang, as had been the group's previous narrative."

its geographical location and historical role as a trade and cultural nexus, Kashgar is also a target for drug traffickers coming in through the Karakoram Highway. Kashgar is a crucial part of China's vision for a "Silk Road Economic Belt" that will link China to Central Asia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, as well as the Middle East. Kashgar is also supposed to be the Chinese hub for the planned China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

9 J. Todd Reed and Diana Raschke, *The ETIM: China's Islamic Militants and the Global Terrorist Threat* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), pp.42-43.

10 Ibid, p.47.

11 Peter Foster and Richard Spencer, "Beijing Olympics: Security Stepped Up After Terror Attack Kills 16 Chinese Policemen," *Daily Telegraph*, August 4, 2008.

12 Shannon Tiezzi, "Counterterrorism, Ethnic Unity the Focus as Xi Visits Xinjiang," *The Diplomat*, April 29, 2014.

13 "Imam of China's Largest Mosque Killed in Xinjiang," *BBC*, June 31, 2014; Jume Tahir's predecessor, Arunhan Aji, was a target for a failed assassination attempt on May 12, 1996, suffering multiple stab wounds.

14 "Four Sentenced in China over Kunming Station Attack," *BBC*, September 12, 2014.

15 The Kunming attackers had in their possession a flag similar to the one that the Tiananmen Square plotters had used which also illustrated their agenda had political and ideological motivations. See Jacob Zenn, "Terrorist Attack in Kunming Reveals Complex Relationship with International Jihad," *China Brief*, 14: 5 (2014).

16 Mimi Lau and Mandy Zuo, "Police Name Kunming Massacre Mastermind as Three Suspected Attackers are Arrested," *South China Morning Post*, March 6, 2014.

17 Xiaobo Su, "From Frontier to Bridgehead: Cross-border Regions and the Experience of Yunnan, China," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37:4 (2013), pp. 1213–1232.

18 Ibid.

19 Nicholas Dynon, "Kunming: A New Phase of Terrorism in China," *The Diplomat*, March 5, 2014.

20 Personal interview, official from the Laos Ministry of Public Security, October 30, 2014.

Several days after the Kunming attack, Mansour, the TIP leader, released a video from his Pakistani base in which he expressed support for the attack saying the "blood of those who are killing themselves is not being spilled for nothing, for their blood will bring tens of more to carry out jihad."[21] Mansour went on to add that "China is not only our enemy, but it is the enemy of all Muslims....We have plans for many attacks in China."[22] What is significant about Mansour's comments, compared to previous statements, is that in the video he threatens to conduct attacks across China rather than confining them to Xinjiang, as had been the group's previous narrative.

One month later, in April 2014, the TIP took responsibility for a bomb and knife attack at the South Railway Station of Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang.[23] The timing of the attack coincided with a trip Chinese President Xi Jinping made to the province to discuss counterterrorism matters.[24] Similar to the Kunming attack, the TIP terrorists slashed commuters with knives. Unlike that previous attack, however, they also detonated several explosives.[25] Two TIP fighters died in the blasts and one civilian was also killed. Seventy-nine people were injured. All surviving members of the cell that conducted the attack were arrested by the Urumqi police.[26]

On May 6, 2014, there was another stabbing attack at Guangzhou train station by a single perpetrator. The timing of that attack could have been symbolic as the incident occurred just before the K366 train arrived from Kunming, where the first train stabbing attack took place.[27]

Urumqi and the Issue of Communal Violence

Despite the violent incidents across China, Urumqi remains the primary center for terrorism in China. Urumqi holds such a distinction because it is the axis of Xinjiang's cultural melting pot where Uighurs and Han Chinese live and work side-by-side. Due to this mix, there is a perennial fear in Urumqi of ethnic tensions spilling over violently into broader communal conflict, potentially provoked by attacks that aim to ignite such violence. On July 5, 2009, violent riots erupted in Urumqi which caused the deaths of 184 people and seriously injured more than 1,000.[28] According to press reports, Uighur rioters attacked Han Chinese businesses and people on the streets.[29] Significant numbers of Urumqi's Han population then took to the streets in retaliation.[30] While ethnic tensions eventually receded, they remained an issue in the ensuing months.

The Urumqi riots attracted international attention and became a propaganda battle between the TIP and separatists led by World Uighur Congress (WUC) president Rebiya Kadeer. Kadeer's reputation as a moderate leader of the WUC was tainted during the Urumqi riots when she appeared on international news channels holding a large photograph that she claimed was evidence of a harsh police crackdown on the Uighur protestors.[31] However, it later emerged that the photograph was taken by *Nanfang Weekly* at another unrelated protest in Shishou, Hubei province on June 26, 2009.[32]

Rabiya's misrepresentation of events provided the TIP with an opportunity to seize the narrative and call for broader violence. In the words of then-TIP leader, Abdul Haq al-Turkistani, "[The Chinese] must be targeted both at home and abroad. Their embassies, consulates, centers, and gathering places should be targeted. Their men should be killed and captured to seek the release of our brothers who are jailed in Eastern Turkistan."[33]

Al-Turkistani's ominous warning has manifested itself several times since then but perhaps most violently on May 22, 2014, when Uighur terrorists driving two vehicles crashed past barriers and rammed down shoppers while setting off explosives at a bustling outdoor street market in Urumqi. The cars then crashed head-on and exploded. At least 39 people died in the incident.[34] The death toll from this act of violence was the highest in Xinjiang since 2009.

"Despite the removal of several of TIP's leaders, the group has still been able to regenerate and foment broader violence in China."

The TIP and its Media

The TIP has approximately 300–500 fighters in Pakistan and also a network in Turkey and Central Asia.[35] The TIP claims to be the successor organization to the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) which had been led by Hasan Mahsum, an Uighur militant who had trained in Afghanistan and Pakistan and was part of the Baren Riots.[36]

21 "China Says Uighur Militant's Support of Knife Attack Proves Terror," *Reuters*, March 19, 2014.
22 Saud Mehsud and Maria Golovnina, "From his Pakistan Hideout, Uighur Leader Vows Revenge on China," *Reuters*, March 14, 2014; "TIP Commanders Speak on Kunming Knife Attack," Site Monitoring Service, March 18, 2014.
23 "TIP Claims Urumqi Bombing, Video Shows Briefcase Bomb," Site Monitoring Service, May 13, 2014.
24 Ben Blanchard, "China Says Three Killed in Attack at Xinjiang Train Station," *Reuters*, April 30, 2014.
25 Blanchard; Stephen Chen, "Seven Arrested in Xinjiang Over Deadly Attack May 1 at Urumqi Train Station," *South China Morning Post*, May 18, 2014; Sui-Lee Wee, "Chinese Police Blame Separatist Group for Urumqi Bombing," *Reuters*, May 18, 2014.
26 Ibid.
27 Charles Liu, "Knife Attack at Guangzhou Train Station Injures Six People," *The Nanfang Insider*, May 6, 2014; Tania Branigan and Jonathan Kaiman, "Chinese Police Arrest Man after Six Injured in Train Station Knife Attack," *The Guardian*, May 6, 2014; Jacob Zenn, "Beijing, Kunming, Urumqi and Guangzhou: The Changing Landscape of Anti-Chinese Jihadists," *China Brief*, 14:10 (2014).
28 Yan Hao, Geng Ruibin, and Yuan Ye, "Xinjiang Riot Hits Regional Anti-Terror Nerve," *Xinhua*, July 18, 2009.
29 Tania Branigan, "China Locks Down Western Province after Ethnic Riots Kill 140," *The Guardian*, July 6, 2009.
30 Ibid.
31 Cui Jia, "Using Wrong Photo, Kadeer Pleads Case," *China Daily*, July 10, 2009.
32 Jia; Shishou, Hubei province is some 3,330 km away from Urumqi.
33 "Militant Urges Targeting China over Uighurs," *Reuters*, August 1, 2009.
34 Andrew Jacobs, "Suspects in China Market Attack Are Identified," *New York Times*, May 25, 2014.
35 Jacob Zenn, "Beijing, Kunming, Urumqi and Guangzhou: The Changing Landscape of Anti-Chinese Jihadists."
36 Reed and Raschke, p.46.

The ETIM agenda, which has been continued by the TIP, has been to forcibly separate Xinjiang from China and to create an independent Islamic state called East Turkestan. Although the ETIM has never formally declared a change in name, the TIP is believed to be a continuation of ETIM after the coherency of the latter group faded in the early 2000s.[37]

Abdul Haq al-Turkistani, a former leader of ETIM and TIP fighters, was killed in a February 2010 drone strike operation in North Waziristan, Pakistan.[38] Abdullah Mansour subsequently took over the TIP leadership.[39] Despite the removal of several of TIP's leaders, the group has still been able to regenerate and foment broader violence in China.

Al-Turkistani formed and developed the TIP's media wing, Islom Awazi (Voice of Islam). Since 2012, the TIP has also co-issued videos with the media wing of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Jund Allah Studios. In 2008 the TIP also began publishing a quarterly Arabic-language publication called "Islamic Turkistan," a product designed to reach a broader audience in the Muslim world.[40] In 2013, Abu Zar al-Burmi, the spiritual leader of the IMU, promised the Uighur militants that China will replace the United States as the "number one enemy."[41]

The influence of TIP's propaganda machinery appears to have Chinese authorities concerned. For example, on June 20, 2014, Chinese Central Television (CCTV), the state broadcaster, released a 24-minute documentary on the connection between online terrorist propaganda and training videos and terrorist attacks within China. The video included footage from a number of terrorist attacks within China, including in Tiananmen Square, the Kunming railway, and the Urumqi market.[42] The documentary claims that the number of videos posted online by the TIP has sharply risen over the last few years and that the increase in online material is directly connected with the escalation of attacks executed inside China.[43] The documentary also emphasized the international dimension of the problem, noting that much of the TIP propaganda is located on servers outside of China.[44] Indeed, the TIP shows no signs of inhibiting its new media profile.[45]

"Radicalized Uighurs have begun to take part in terrorist-related activity beyond the confines of China."

Involvement of Radicalized Uighurs in Other Conflicts

In an August 2012 video, a Turkish TIP militant issued a video statement explicitly warning of attacks in China's major cities, illustrating that the TIP's agenda was no longer just locally-oriented. The militant, 'Nururddin Mehmet', boasted in the video that "Islamist flags will soon be raised at the White House and Beijing's Tiananmen Square."[46] In May 2013, Mehmet carried out an attack against U.S. forces in Afghanistan.[47] The TIP posted a video of his attack.[48]

Radicalized Uighurs have begun to take part in terrorist-related activity beyond the confines of China. For example, on January 30, 2012, a Norwegian court convicted Mikael Davud, a Norwegian Uighur, for planning to attack the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* because it printed cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. Davud was sentenced to jail for seven years. The judge in the case said that Davud had planned the attack together with al-Qa'ida, as representatives of the group trained him in the use of explosives at a camp in Pakistan. Davud admitted he was planning to attack Chinese interests in Norway.[49]

History has also illustrated that networks of fighters forged together in conflicts abroad often do not remain silent in the years to come, and the potential of blowback from the conflict in Syria will be an ever-growing concern for China, just like there has been blowback from conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[50] On September 3, 2014, the Iraqi Ministry of Defense revealed that the Iraqi Army captured a Chinese Uighur who was fighting with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).[51] Subsequently, it emerged that four Uighurs were arrested on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi where they were intending to link up with the Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT).[52] MIT's leader, Santoso, has reportedly sworn allegiance to ISIL.[53] It is yet to be established if the Uighurs had been sent by ISIL leaders to Indonesia, but this issue does show the broadening of the Uighur jihadist movement.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Jacob Zenn, "China is Not Used to Dealing with Attacks of the Magnitude it is Witnessing in 2013 and 2014," *Central Asia and Caucasus Analyst*, February 5, 2014.

41 Abu Zar al-Burmi, "To the Muslims of Turkistan: We Have To Prove Islam Is In Our Hearts," *Islom Awazi*, July 10, 2013.

42 "China releases Xinjiang terrorists video," YouTube, June 24, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IByWrxkMOmI;
"China releases footage of terrorist attacks," YouTube, June 24, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uOKEO2zvYw#t=14.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Lucy Hornby, "Xinjiang Leader Says Online Videos Spark China Separatist Attacks," *Financial Times*, June 6, 2014.

46 "Advice to Our Muslim Brothers in East Turkistan," *Islom Awazi*, August 2012; On August 24, 2014, Chinese authorities revealed that three of the "masterminds" of the Tiananmen Square attack had been executed as part of President Xi Jinping's strategy to create a "wall of bronze and iron" to fight against terrorism.

47 Jacob Zenn, "On the Eve of 2014: Islamism in Central Asia", Hudson Institute, June 24, 2013.

48 "TIP Video Shows Suicide Bombing in Afghanistan, Promotes Jihad," Site Monitoring Service, May 25, 2013.

49 "Norway Jails Two for Danish Newspaper Terror Plot," *BBC*, January 30, 2012; Lars Akerhaug , Bjørnar Tommelstad, and Tor-Erling Thømt Ruud, "Slik var e-post-kontakten med al-Qaida," *Verdens Gang*, January 30, 2012.

50 See above the example of Uighur suicide bomber Nuruddin Mehmet in Afghanistan.

51 Jaime A. FlorCruz, "Capture of Chinese National Fighting with ISIS Gives China Jitters," *CNN*, September 5, 2014.

52 Zachary Abuza, "Uyghurs Look to Indonesia for Terror Guidance," *Asia Times*, October 10, 2014.

53 Personal interview, Dr Kirsten E. Schulze, September 17, 2014; See also Evan Jendruck, "OSINT Summary: Indonesian Militant Islamists Pledge Allegiance to Islamic State," *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Monitor*, July 1, 2014; Rendi A. Witular, "Abu Bakar Ba'asyir Calls on Followers to Support ISIL," *The Jakarta Post*, July 14 2014.

"In order for the West to meaningfully engage Beijing on counter-terrorism issues, it must understand the TIP's capabilities and intentions, as well as the growing international dynamic of independent Uighur fighters travelling abroad for conflict."

Conclusion

Uighur extremism is no longer confined to Xinjiang alone. It has now become a nationwide Chinese problem following the terrorist attacks that took place in the country in 2013 and 2014. These attacks are symptomatic of new trends in Uighur militancy. Three targeting trends in particular stand out. First, Uighur militants have recently illustrated a preference for attacking soft, symbolic civilian targets where security is minimal, lax or non-existent. Second, the attacks are designed to cause maximum panic in an area with large crowds of people. Third, targeting of commercial and logistical facilities illustrates that groups like TIP want to damage, destabilize, and paralyze China's economy. Taken together, all of these trends aim to undermine the confidence people have in the Chinese government and its ability to keep its people safe.

One of Beijing's problems has been its inability to successfully articulate to the West the problem and threat of terrorism it faces. The reality is that there is an active Uighur terrorist movement that has developed an ideological agenda that is not dissimilar to that espoused by al-Qa'ida, and that has the ability for small cells to conduct operations throughout China. In order for the West to meaningfully engage Beijing on counter-terrorism issues, it must understand the TIP's capabilities and intentions, as well as the growing international dynamic of independent Uighur fighters travelling abroad for conflict.

To tackle this problem Beijing needs to step up pressure on the Pakistani military to play a more active role in rooting out TIP and other Uighur terrorists training within its borders. Such concerns will also be foremost on Beijing's mind after U.S. and NATO troops transition from Afghanistan. If China is not successful in pressuring Pakistan to act there is a danger that the TIP could possibly refit and expand its training and operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan, which could lead to a new wave of attacks in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China.

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A Classical Analysis of the 2014 Israel-Hamas Conflict

By Elad Popovich

On July 8, 2014, after more than 80 rockets were fired in one day from Gaza, Israel launched a military operation against Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in the Gaza Strip. The operation was preceded by a month of escalating violence that began with the abduction and murder of three Israeli teenagers by Hamas operatives in the West Bank, and continued with the widespread arrest of Hamas leaders and the dismantling of Hamas institutions in the West Bank by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).[1]

This article deconstructs the 2014 Israel-Hamas asymmetric conflict using classical levels of war analysis (strategy and doctrine, operational aspects, tactics and techno-tactics).

"One of the IDF's significant lessons learned from the 'Second Intifada' was Israel would not be able to achieve a decisive military victory in its confrontations with Hamas."

The Strategic Purpose: Restoring the Status Quo

One of the IDF's significant lessons learned from the "Second Intifada" (2000-2005) was Israel would not be able to achieve a decisive military victory in its confrontations with Hamas. It could only achieve a satisfactory security situation that would last an unspecified period of time. Following the 2005 Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip, a move that symbolized the end of the "Second Intifada," Israel and

1 Hamas's armed branch is the Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades. For consistency, this article uses just "Hamas."

Hamas went on to wage an additional six major military campaigns. The IDF's goal for most of these campaigns was to restore the status quo and deter Hamas from waging future violence.[2] The last of these "deterrence operations" was named "Operation Protective Edge" (the 2014 Israel-Hamas conflict). The operation's declared end state was "restoring security to Israeli civilians living under Hamas rocket fire."[3] After the discovery of increasing numbers of Hamas's cross-border tunnels—built so that Hamas combatants could surreptitiously emerge behind IDF lines or inside communities on Israeli land—signaled an immediate and significant threat, an additional military goal was introduced: "dismantling the Hamas tunnel network used to infiltrate Israel."[4]

"The effectiveness of the Iron Dome served as a strategic balancer, which allowed Israel's decision makers more time to develop Israel's response."

Strategic Balancer: Iron Dome

Hamas began firing rockets into Israel as far back as April 2001. These initial rockets were often homemade with a short range and limited destructive impact. In recent years, however, Hamas and other organizations operating in the Gaza Strip have switched to using military-quality rockets.[5] Since early 2011, the IDF has employed the Iron Dome system to intercept rockets and mortar shells within a range of three to 45 miles. The Iron Dome can calculate the trajectory of a rocket and engages rockets only when they are predicted to explode in populated areas. On the eve of the 2014 conflict, it was estimated that some 8,000 to 10,000 rockets and thousands of mortar shells had been stockpiled by Hamas and the PIJ.[6] The IDF had nine functional Iron Dome batteries (two of them had been rushed into operational service when the conflict began). During the course of the conflict, approximately 4,600 rockets and mortar shells were fired at Israel, threatening 70 percent of Israel's population. Some 3,600 rockets fell in unpopulated areas and 735 were successfully shot down by the Iron Dome anti-missile defense system, which achieved an unprecedented success rate of 90 perecnt. The rockets (and mortar shells) that breached the Iron Dome's defenses[7] resulted in four Israeli civilian deaths and the death of a Thai citizen in Israel on a work visa. The effectiveness of the Iron Dome served as a strategic balancer, which allowed Israel's decision makers more time to develop Israel's response. As Israel Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon noted, "…the Iron Dome system is saving lives and preventing enormous economic damage. It allows the decision makers to have vast leeway in managing the campaign and in the decisions that we make."[8]

Doctrine: Bottom-Up "Effects-Based Operations" and Joint "Network-Centric Warfare"

During the 2012 Israel-Hamas conflict, the IDF's initial war doctrine was a variant of the U.S. Air Force's "effects-based operations" (EBO). According to the traditional conception of EBO, the enemy's high-value targets are the first targets to be attacked in order to disrupt the enemy's strategic "center of gravity" (CoG). In contrast to this approach, in 2014 the IDF created a bottom-up approach. The new doctrine employed in the 2014 conflict posits that the enemy's CoG will be disrupted by increasing pressure via the gradual ratcheting up of the intensity of attacks and target value as perceived by Hamas. The message Israel wanted to signal to Hamas was to restore the status-quo or else. Hamas's offensive doctrine was to launch a full-scale attack on what they identified as Israel's CoG—Israeli political-civilian endurance (also known as "national resilience").[9] During the initial phase, however, Israeli doctrine did not work as anticipated. Hamas's defensive doctrine made the strategic difference. Due to Hamas's inability to counter the overwhelming power of the IDF, the organization transferred most of its activities (offensive, defensive, logistics, and command) underground. Just as the Iron Dome was the game-changer for Israel, the underground network complex became the strategic balancer for Hamas.[10] Reports also indicate that Hamas used "internationally designated safe-haven spaces," including hospitals, schools, mosques, even United Nations facilities, to house munitions used against Israel.[11] The Israeli military stated that Hamas also fired rockets from such facilities, and has released video and images it claims demonstrate such activity.[12]

Throughout the aerial phase, the IDF was unable to mitigate the emerging threat of the cross-border tunnels[13] and, in response, the IDF quickly shifted into the ground phase. The doctrine for the IDF's ground phase was the Joint "Network-Centric Warfare (NCW)" model. Military analysis of the strategic failures of the 2006 Lebanon War had led to a transition in the IDF operational concept. The coordination between ground, air, and naval forces, and intelligence, led to a vast combined

2 Efraim Inbar and Eitan Shamir, "Mowing the Grass: Israel's Strategy for Protracted Intractable Conflict," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37: 1 (2014); pp. 65-90.

3 "Special Report: Operation Protective Edge," *IDFblog*.

4 Ibid.

5 Yiftah S. Shapir, "Lessons from the Iron Dome," *Military and Strategic Affairs* 5:1 (Tel Aviv: INSS, 2013).

6 Most of these rockets were of the type 122mm Grad (maximum range of 12-25 miles and a 40-48 pound warhead). Hundreds of them were 333mm M-75/Fajr-5 (maximum range of 50 miles and a 130-200 pound warhead) and dozens were 320mm R-160/M-302 (maximum range of 100 miles and a 330 pound warhead).

7 And the Israeli bomb shelters' second line of defense.

8 "Iron Dome Breaking Records," *IsraelDefense* (Hebrew), July 26, 2014.

9 As Hizb Allah before them; see Ron Tira, *The Nature of War: Conflicting Paradigms and Israeli Military Effectiveness* (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), pp. 85-108.

10 See Eitan Yitzhak, "Underground," *Ma'arachot* (Hebrew), Vol. 422 (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachot, 2008), p. 27.

11 "Secretary-General, Outraged at Rockets Found in United Nations-Administered School in Gaza, Directs Full Review, Swift Implementation of Security Plan," *Secretary-General*, SG/SM/16045, July 23, 2014; "UN Admits its Schools in Gaza Were Used to Store Hamas Rockets," *WorldTribune.com*, July 23, 2014; Gili Cohen, "Mosques Used for Military Operations, Say Hamas POWs," *Ha'aretz*, August 26, 2014.

12 "Hamas Acknowledges its Forces Fired Rockets from Civilian Areas," *AP* and *Ha'aretz*, September 23, 2014.

13 There was intelligence on 31 tunnel starting points in the Gaza Strip, but none on their exit points were inside Israel.

training effort, the unification of military language, and an effective network connection between forces.

Operational Level: Air-Ground-Air

In the wake of the 2012 conflict, the IDF began prioritizing a list of targets throughout the Gaza Strip based on their degree of importance to Hamas.[14] During the first ten days of the aerial phase of the 2014 operation the IAF dropped hundreds of tons of ordnance and attacked 1,950 targets in the Gaza Strip.[15] One of IAF's major considerations was to respond in proportion to the operation's military necessity by using only precision-guided munitions (PGMs).[16] According to Palestinian official estimates, this phase's death toll produced approximately 223-240 fatalities.[17] However, due to Hamas's adaptation via asymmetric defensive doctrines (underground domain and human shields), the IAF failed to achieve its operational goal of diminishing Hamas's rocket fire.

On July 14, 2014, Egypt intervened in an attempt to broker a ceasefire (based on the agreement stipulated in 2012). Israel accepted this overture, but Hamas continued to fire rockets into Israel. On July 17, Hamas's Special Forces infiltrated Israel by means of a cross-border tunnel. Dismantling Hamas's tunnel network thus became a military necessity.[18]

Because the IAF could not resolve the tunnel threat from the air, the IDF shifted its operational activity from a campaign dominated by aerial precision standoff attacks to "military operations in urban terrain" (MOUT). During the ground phase, the IDF maneuvered two miles inside the Gaza Strip with five brigade task forces augmented by Special Forces battalions. During the 18 days of the ground phase, IDF forces succeeded in destroying 13 tunnels (six to seven of which were cross-border) and 60 fighting shafts, neutralizing 13 others and disrupting six.[19] The IDF ground forces withdrew from the Gaza Strip on August 4, 2014.

After several ceasefire attempts failed the IAF targeted four senior leaders of the Hamas armed branch, targeted Hamas's head of finance, and destroyed several of the largest buildings in the Gaza Strip.[20] On August 26, Israel, Hamas, and the PIJ accepted an Egyptian-mediated ceasefire as the first step in long-term truce talks.

"The Israeli ground phase had two major goals: creating severe damage to Hamas's tunnel complex and inflicting significant damage to Hamas's organization and its infrastructure."

Tactics and Techno-Tactics: Cycle of Adjustment

When Hamas realized that the Iron Dome system effectively intercepted its rockets, the organization tried to rebalance the asymmetric equation by deploying naval commandos to raid the southern shores of Israel and by using cross-border tunnels for attacks, capturing soldiers and kidnapping civilians. The IDF managed to discover and respond to some infiltrations while at three tunnel incidents Hamas's *Al-Nokhba* (elite forces) infiltrated Israel and killed eleven IDF soldiers before either escaping or being killed by the IDF.[21]

The Israeli ground phase had two major goals: creating severe damage to Hamas's tunnel complex and inflicting significant damage to Hamas's organization and its infrastructure.[22] The IDF ground forces were active mainly at nighttime due to their night-vision advantages. Daytime was spent resting and regrouping in shielded areas.[23] Their limited ground maneuver was supported with close-range artillery (even direct fire on several occasions),[24] attack helicopters, and ground-launched PGMs.[25] For the first time in the IDF's history, IAF attack planes equipped with diverse PGMs switched their operational role to providing close-range tactical support for ground forces.[26] The IDF also perfected its new approach of "intelligence-based warfare," which dictates that tactical intelligence is delivered constantly (even during the actual fighting) for the benefit of operational activities all the way down to company and platoon commanders through Command, Control, and Communications (C3) systems.[27]

Hamas's most common urban warfare tactics included rigging houses and even entire streets with improvised explosive devices (IEDs), supplemented by Rocket-Propelled Grenades (RPGs) and snipers. The IDF's countertactics were slow but very effective. They used massive firepower (artillery, tank fire, and mine-clearing line charge systems) to undermine Hamas from a safe distance. Additional countertactics included sending tanks and D9 bulldozers into Hamas compounds followed by infantry forces, which swept buildings for tunnels and weapons.[28]

14 See Amos Harel, "No End in Sight for Operation Protective Edge," *Ha'aretz*, July 9, 2014.
15 GOC IAF Maj. Gen. Amir Eshel, remarks made after Security Cabinet meeting, July 10, 2014.
16 Ibid.
17 "Ministry of Health Emergency Operation Room Sitrep on Gaza," State of Palestine - Ministry of Health, July 17, 2014.
18 Shapir, "Lessons from the Iron Dome".
19 "Target After Target: Operation Protective Edge Main Events,"*IDF Website* (Hebrew), August 29, 2014.
20 Nidal al-Mughrabi and Maayan Lubell, "Israeli Air Strike Kills Three Hamas Commanders in Gaza," *Reuters*, August 21, 2014.
21 Aaron J. Klein and Mitch Ginsburg, "Could Israeli Soldiers, Not Civilians, be the Target of the Attack Tunnels?" *The Times of Israel*, July 29, 2014.
22 Lt. Col. Eli, battalion commander (Givati Infantry Brigade), *IDF YouTube Channel*, July 27, 2014.
23 Lt. Col. Bark, reconnaissance battalion commander (Nahal Infantry Brigade), *Channel 1 News*, July 22, 2014.
24 Lt. Col. M., battalion commander (Artillery Corps), *IDF YouTube Channel*, July 27, 2014.
25 Unlike attack helicopters, which can support ground forces for limited time periods, the ground-launched Spike-NLOS system allows for the advantage of deadly long-range firepower, always accessible, day and night, and in almost all types of weather.
26 Brig. Gen. Nitzan, IAF intelligence group commander, as cited in David Greenwald, "Coming First, Going Last," *IAF Journal* (Hebrew), Vol. 218, August 1, 2014; Shir Cohen, "Fire from the Sky," *IAF Journal* (Hebrew), Vol. 218, August 1, 2014.
27 "IBW: Tactical Intelligence Down to the Junior Commanders at the Front," *IsraelDefense*, January 17, 2014.
28 The directive was to shoot a shell, fire a missile, or

When confronting anti-tank missile threats, the IDF used the Merkava MK 4m equipped with a Trophy active protection system (APS). The APS was able to handle modern anti-tank guided missiles such as the Russian Kornet.[29]

"The Israeli forces did not initially grasp the complexities of operating in close-quartered underground surroundings."

The IDF has been aware of the tunnel threat for over 10 years and knew the approximate location of 31 of them.[30] Over the course of the ground phase of the conflict the IDF learned of their exact routes and began to slowly dismantle them.[31] However, the Israeli forces did not initially grasp the complexities of operating in close-quartered underground surroundings.[32] Because of the IDF's environmental disadvantages, it took the IDF longer than expected to disable the tunnels. Hamas benefited from certain advantages that created two tactical problems for the IDF. First, Hamas was able to use cross-border tunnels in order to emerge behind IDF forces inside Israeli territory. Second, Hamas was able to navigate tunnels and attack shafts inside the Gaza Strip and accordingly surface in an unpredictable pattern.

With the exception of the Battle of Shuja'iyya, most of the close combat encounters during the ground phase were Israeli initiatives. Hamas's "regular" forces would typically withdraw as more IDF troops advanced, usually leaving their weapons and equipment behind and transforming into non-combatants.[33]

Another example of the asymmetric character of the battle was that while the IDF functioned in brigade task force formation and dominated the above-ground dimension, Hamas needed just one opportunity to capture an Israeli soldier in order to achieve strategic success.[34] Hamas almost managed to do so by means of tunnels in both Shuja'iyya and Rafah. The IDF responded to these kidnapping attempts with heavy fire, mostly delivered by artillery. The IDF was successful in averting soldier abduction; however, it is suspected that Hamas acquired the remains of two IDF soldiers. In the Rafah incident alone, 41 Palestinians were killed.[35]

Lessons: Technological Advantages and Improvised Solutions

As in the asymmetric conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, weapons such as mortar shells, anti-tank missiles, IEDs, and sniper rifles caused most of the IDF's casualties.[36] The use of APS-equipped tanks and heavily armored infantry fighting vehicles[37] reduced the potential casualty rate on the Israeli side. Main battle tanks proved their worth in the urban warfare terrain, as Hamas fighters withdrew from engagement when they appeared.[38] The IDF's "intelligence-based warfare" approach worked effectively, but the IDF still struggled to adjust to Hamas's tunnel-based warfare and found itself in an unfavorable position when lured onto a battlefield it did not control.[39] As part of the IDF's improvisational combat culture, soldiers from the Givati Infantry Brigade tackled the tunnel threat using an adaptation of the ancient Roman Legions' tactic during the Bar-Kokhba Revolt (132-136 AD)—smoke. Givati soldiers (followed by other units) used large smoke grenades and industrial fans to smoke out Hamas fighters from the tunnels and also to identify, using pillars of smoke, tunnel shafts.

At the operational level, over the course of the conflict Israel managed to attack 5,226 targets while Hamas and the PIJ managed to fire an average of 90 rockets and mortar shells per day throughout the conflict. Yet, by dismantling vast portions of Hamas's tunnel complex, the IDF destroyed one of the most strategic assets of the organization.[40]

As part of the bottom-up EBO doctrine, the Iron Dome missile shield provided Israeli decision makers with enough flexibility so they would not have to immediately attack rocket launchers located close to civilians—attacks that could have caused major collateral damage. As a defensive mechanism, the Iron Dome intercept system gave Israeli decision makers the option to build up Israel's international legitimacy by allowing them to accept several ceasefires while ensuring minimal damage to the Israeli home front. Hamas in its turn failed in most of its tactical actions and operational plans, yet it adjusted itself to Israel's doctrines by shifting the confrontation to an underground surrounding (both offensively and defensively). On August 26, 2014, all sides agreed to an open-ended ceasefire once again mediated by Egypt.

Conclusion

Over the past decade Israel and Hamas have engaged in six major military campaigns. IDF's main goal in these campaigns was not to achieve a decisive

send a D9 bulldozer through every house before sending in an infantry soldier; Col. Ofer Vinter, Givati Infantry Brigade commander, *Channel 1 News*, July 31, 2014.

29 The system managed to intercept at least 10 AT missiles.

30 In the aftermath, the IDF discovered 32 tunnels (6 to 7 of them were cross-border) and 60 attack shafts.

31 This was conducted by air attacks or by the IDF's combat engineering tunnel warfare platoon (SAMOOR) using standard issue explosives or the specially designated emulsion ("Emulsia") explosives injection system.

32 **Maj. Gen. (res.) Israel Ziv and Maj. Gen. (res.) Yaakov Amidror**, *Channel 2 News,* July 25, 2014; Brig. Gen. Nitzan, IAF intelligence group commander, as cited in Greenwald, "Coming First, Going Last." See also "Situational Surprise" in Zvi Lanir, *Fundamental Surprises* (Tel Aviv: Center for Strategic Studies, 1983).

33 Lt. Col. Bark, reconnaissance battalion commander (Nahal Infantry Brigade), *Channel 1 News*, July 22, 2014.

34 Col. Eliezer Toledano, paratroopers infantry brigade commander, *Uvda*, August 7, 2014.

35 "Debriefing 'Hannibal Directive' Incident in Rafah: Conclusions and Unanswered Questions," *IsraelDefense*, September 22, 2014.

36 Forty percent of the IDF's casualties were caused by mortar shells.

37 Such as the Namer IFV (Merkava chassis-based) and the Achzarit APC (T-54/T-55 chassis-based).

38 Author interview, Cpt. D., infantry platoon commander, August 27, 2014.

39 Rashid Khalidi, "War on Gaza: Military Strategy and Historical Horizons" [panel talk], The Center for Palestine Studies and the Middle East Institute, September 19, 2014; Col. Eliezer Toledano, paratroopers infantry brigade commander, *Uvda*, August 7, 2014.

40 IDF Chief-of-Staff Lt.-Gen. Benny Gantz, *IDF YouTube Channel*, July 27, 2014.

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military victory, but rather to restore the status quo and deter future attacks. Since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in 2007 (from the Palestinian Authority (PA)/Palestinian Fatah), the military campaigns have ended with Egyptian-mediated ceasefire agreements. In the 2014 conflict, Israel strived for a ceasefire agreement that would restore the security of its citizens for a lengthy period of time.[41] Due to the effectiveness of the Iron Dome anti-missile defense system, Hamas's imminent threat was shifted from rockets to infiltration via cross-border tunnels and short-range mortars. The IAF failed to resolve the tunnel threat from the air causing Israel to launch a ground attack. IDF's ground phase was slow but mostly effective. Although it took much more time than first expected, the IDF's ground phase managed to achieve its secondary goal and disable the imminent threat posed by tunnels.

"IDF's main goal in these campaigns was not to achieve a decisive military victory, but rather to restore the status quo and deter future attacks."

It is too early to know if Israel achieved its main objective, but as of the end of November 2014, Israel had severely damaged Hamas's tunnel network and infrastructure, denied Hamas most of its 10-point list of demands,[42] and thwarted Hamas's desire for conflict mediation through Turkey and Qatar, because Israel had secured Egypt as the sole mediator.

Hamas achieved several objectives in this conflict as well. It gained international legitimacy, garnered power in the Palestinian political arena, shut down Israel's international airport for 48 hours, caused the suspension of Israel's southern train line, threatened 70 percent of the Israeli population until the last day of the conflict, and managed to utilize its counter-doctrine in a manner that resulted in international criticism against Israel.

It appears that the question of which side was more successful during the conflict remains open. The fragile deadlock between Israel and Hamas remains, with both sides already preparing for the next round.

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41 "PM Netanyahu's Statement and Press Conference at the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv," Israel Prime Minister's Office, August 2, 2014.

42 (1) [Withdrawal of Israeli tanks from the Gaza border]; (2) Freeing all the prisoners that were arrested after the killing of the three youths; (3) Lifting the siege and opening the border crossings to commerce and people; (4) Establishing an international seaport and airport which would be under U.N. supervision; (5) Increasing the permitted fishing zone to 10 kilometers; (6) Internationalizing the Rafah Crossing and placing it under the supervision of the U.N. and some Arab nations; (7) International forces on the borders; (8) [Easing conditions for permits to pray at the Al Aqsa Mosque]; (9) Prohibition on Israeli interference in the reconciliation agreement; (10) Reestablishing an industrial zone and improvements in further economic development in the Gaza Strip.