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Containment and territorial transnational actors: Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas

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Containment is the term generally used to characterize American policy towards the USSR after the Second World War, when it consisted of a series of attempts to deal with the power and position won by the USSR in order to reshape postwar international order.¹ Containment, as originally articulated by its chief architect, George F. Kennan, was always contested, for example because it did not clarify whether Soviet behaviour had strictly national or ideological roots, and would result in the USSR's having the initiative about where and when to act.² Nonetheless, throughout the Cold War it remained US policy, partly because of the failure in 1953–4 of the alternative, 'liberation' and 'rollback'.³ Although containment changed and sometimes seemed to have broken down, for example in the Vietnam War, the imprint of Kennan's ideas—perhaps more than anyone else's—endured.⁴ After 1989 it seemed that containment had no place in the peaceful multilateral environment which seemed to be emerging; however, it proved adaptable to a range of post-Cold War situations, including some which appear to have little in common with the context and goals of containment's original formulation: among these are the challenges posed to US national security by the so-called rogue states.

The endurance of containment suggests that it possesses what Gaddis terms *transferability*: the capacity of a grand strategy from the past to transcend the circumstances that produced it to suggest what should be emulated and what avoided in future policy.⁵ Drawing on Gaddis's claim and the methodology of structured, focused comparison between 'deviant' heuristic case-studies, which allow the testing of theory beyond traditional boundaries,⁶ this article uses Israel's foreign policy towards Hezbollah and Hamas to demonstrate a hitherto

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¹ George L. Gaddis, *Strategies of containment: a critical appraisal of American national security policy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 4.

² See e.g. Walter Lippman, *The Cold War: a study in US foreign policy* (New York: Harper, 1947).

³ Christopher Coker, *Reflections on US foreign policy since 1945* (London: Pinter, 1989), p. 64.

⁴ Henry Kissinger, *White House years* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979), p. 135; Gaddis, *Strategies of containment*, p. 25.

⁵ Gaddis, *Strategies of containment*, p. 380.

⁶ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), pp. 67–93.

unexplored argument that containment is transferable (with some permutations) from state level to a relationship between states and territorial transnational actors (TNA). Territorial TNA, like other TNA, make ‘contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of government’.⁷ However, territorial TNA are distinctive in seeking to use some sort of territorial base; comprising well-organized politico-military organizations that pursue de facto foreign policies, they are thus formidable antagonists of individual states.⁸ The article contributes to the debate on containment by examining the under-researched⁹ topic of containing territorial TNA in relation to four issues: the circumstances producing containment; its applicability to territorial TNA; the objectives of containment; and the role of legitimacy as a component of containment.

The article is organized in three sections. The first explores the ideas instilled by Kennan’s thinking in debates on containment during and after the Cold War, and acts as a theoretical matrix for evaluating Israel’s foreign policy.¹⁰ The second and third sections focus respectively on Israel’s foreign policy towards Hezbollah (2000–11) and Hamas (2006–11). The timeframes are based on the events marking the beginning of Israel’s containment policies towards Hezbollah and Hamas, and the Arab uprisings in the Middle East, which, because they are likely to change Israel’s foreign policy environment (though not necessarily its containment stance) in ways that cannot be foreseen at the time of writing, seem a useful endpoint for the analysis.

The examination demonstrates that Israel’s actions and use of foreign policy tools reflect an internal logic that generated what I describe as *limited containment* and *comprehensive containment*. Limited containment is used to keep within confines the security threat posed by an adversary—measured in terms of frequency and lethality of attacks suffered; comprehensive containment involves keeping within confines an opponent’s military challenge *and* using this containment to generate political change in the adversary.¹¹

Containment during and after the Cold War

Scholars and policy-makers have debated what Kennan meant by containment. His notion became clearer following declassification of National Security Council and Policy Planning Staff documents from 1947–9, and other material from the Cold

⁷ Joseph S. Nye and Robert O. Keohane, eds, *Transnational relations and world politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. xi.

⁸ Christopher Hill, *The changing politics of foreign policy* (London: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 195–6.

⁹ Exceptions include Ian Shapiro, *Containment: building a strategy against global terror* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Jonathan Stevenson, *Counter-terrorism: containment and beyond*, Adelphi Paper no. 367 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Otherwise, the debate on containment focuses on state containment.

¹⁰ Foreign policy is defined here as the external actions of an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations, intended to shape and manage its foreign relations. This definition draws on Hill, *The changing politics of foreign policy*, p. 3.

¹¹ This notion builds on Robert S. Litwak, *Rogue states and US foreign policy: containment after the Cold War* (Washington DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000), p. 105.

War period.¹² Kennan refers to a strategy rooted in a predominantly pessimistic reading of international relations that is nonetheless optimistic about the possibilities of restraining rivalries, based on an understanding that the alternative foreign policy options towards the USSR—appeasement, accommodation, outright war—would be dangerous, possibly deadly. Containment was underpinned by the assumption that the USSR was ridden with internal contradictions and politically and economically was exceedingly vulnerable. Kennan believed that the USSR contained the seeds of its own decay, and argued that steady pressure exerted over several years would lead to a mellowing of Soviet power and, possibly, its eventual breakup.¹³

To achieve this, Kennan suggested, the US possessed various foreign policy tools, which he referred to as ‘measures short of war’.¹⁴ These included economic ‘carrots and sticks’, diplomacy and military force, this last being considered particularly useful for making political positions credible, deterring attacks and encouraging allies. Military intervention was an option, though only under very particular circumstances. Other measures included fostering competition in the communist world and buttressing the capitalist economies to demonstrate Soviet shortcomings. Kennan argued that the more the USSR’s deficiencies were exposed, the greater would be the disintegrating and eroding effect of containment. Meanwhile, the carrot of a happier, more successful life than under Soviet rule would remove, or at least mitigate, the conditions for and prospects of communism’s spread, especially into Western Europe.¹⁵

Pressure through the use of multiple foreign policy tools was not aimed primarily at the USSR’s military threat; after the Second World War, it was assumed that the Soviets had neither the will nor the capability to launch a military strike against the United States. Containment was aimed mainly at curtailing the USSR’s ability to gain influence via psychological and political means, particularly among its immediate neighbours.¹⁶ As the Cold War developed, this implied: restoring the balance of power in areas threatened by Soviet expansionism; reducing the scope of Soviet influence through cautious exploitation of the antagonisms between Moscow and the international communist movement; and pursuing the long-run objective of altering the Soviet concept of international relations to facilitate a negotiated settlement.¹⁷

¹² On this see John L. Gaddis, ‘Containment: a reassessment’, *Foreign Affairs* 55: 4, 1977, p. 87.

¹³ X, ‘The sources of Soviet conduct’, *Foreign Affairs* 25: 4, July 1947, pp. 566–82; George Kennan, ‘The structure of international power in the USSR’, in Giles Harlow and George Maerz, eds, *Measures short of war: the George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946–1947* (Washington DC: National Defence Press Publications, 1991), pp. 21–51; Charles Gati and Richard H. Ullman, ‘“X” plus 25 (1): interview with George F. Kennan’, *Foreign Policy*, no. 7, 1972, pp. 13–14; Charles Gati, ‘“X” plus 25 (2): what containment meant’, pp. 26–7; Gaddis, *Strategies of containment*, pp. 31, 386.

¹⁴ George Kennan, ‘Measures short of war’, in Harlow and Maerz, eds, *Measures short of war*, pp. 3–21.

¹⁵ Shapiro, *Containment*, pp. 5–6; Gaddis, ‘Containment: a reassessment’, pp. 878–9; Gaddis, *Strategies of containment*, pp. 38–49.

¹⁶ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 358; Gaddis, *Strategies of containment*, p. 34. On containment and the Soviet military threat, see Eduard Mark, ‘The question of containment: a reply to John Lewis Gaddis’, *Foreign Affairs* 56: 2, 1978, pp. 430–40.

¹⁷ On the progression of containment, see Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), pp. 446–550; Kennan, *Memoirs*, pp. 354–67; Gaddis, ‘Containment: a reassessment’, pp. 881–2.

However, Kennan was acutely aware of the need to maintain legitimacy; containment should not destroy what it sought to defend. Specifically, US strategists were concerned that the effort to contain an authoritarian adversary should not challenge democracy through the imposition of a command economy or a garrison state, or abridgement of democratic procedures.¹⁸ International legitimacy was of less concern in relation to the West since, as Buzan argues, US leadership was generally backed by a following of loyal allies and seen as preferable to Soviet domination.¹⁹

Thus, containment emerged in the context of the Cold War, and was employed by the United States towards a particular actor. Could it transcend these boundaries? The test came with the end of the Cold War. Competition among the Great Powers was over. The world seemed to be moving towards multipolarity, greater diversity of actors and less hierarchy. The greater prominence of ethnic nationalism, terrorism and discord *inside* states as determinants of conflict implied that the sources of disorder in international politics were changing.²⁰

Nonetheless, containment remained a tenet of US foreign policy, but towards a different type of actor—the so-called rogue states of Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Iraq and Libya. Despite their different histories, cultures, economies and geopolitical positions, these countries were treated by US strategists as a single group, with emphasis placed on the challenges they posed to US national security: pursuit of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy and the threat to western material interests in key regions.²¹ Containment was invoked to respond to these challenges, most systematically perhaps in the policy of dual containment towards Iran and Iraq.²² For almost a decade this policy exhibited some of Kennan's key Cold War principles. For example, dual containment emerged as a third way between what were deemed the undesirable and even unviable foreign policy options towards Iran and Iraq of accommodation or total war. Reflecting Kennan's thinking, dual containment was designed to exert pressure to exacerbate the internal contradictions and vulnerabilities in these countries' regimes, creating strains that would enforce mellowed behaviour and, eventually, might cause their collapse.²³

To this end the United States employed multiple foreign policy tools, including the maintenance of alliances with states friendly to Washington that potentially could be affected by Iran and Iraq (for example, Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council states) and diplomatic and economic measures, such as sanctions, to contain the political influence of Iran and Iraq in the Gulf and the threat it

¹⁸ Gaddis, *Strategies of containment*, p. 389.

¹⁹ Barry Buzan, 'A leader without followers? The United States in world politics after Bush', policy paper no. 2, Global Policy Institute, Nov. 2007, http://www.gpilondon.com/fileadmin/user_upload/GPI/Short_Policy_Docs/PP2.pdf, accessed 17 May 2012.

²⁰ Litwak, *Rogue states and US foreign policy*, pp. 1–3.

²¹ Anthony Lake, 'Confronting backlash states', *Foreign Affairs* 73: 2, March/April 1994, p. 46; Litwak, *Rogue states and US foreign policy*, pp. 6–7.

²² On dual containment, see Garry Sick, 'Rethinking dual containment', *Survival* 40: 1, 1998, pp. 5–32; Patrick Clawson, 'The continuing logic of dual containment', *Survival* 40: 1, 1998, pp. 33–47; Litwak, *Rogue states and US foreign policy*, pp. 123–98.

²³ Clawson, 'The continuing logic of dual containment', p. 33; Litwak, *Rogue states and US foreign policy*, p. 13.

posed to the material interests of the United States and its allies (for example, sanctions on Iraq following the 1990–91 Gulf War, and the August 1996 Iran–Libya Sanctions Act).²⁴ Echoing US policy towards the USSR, dual containment entailed the deployment of US military capabilities deemed sufficient to deter or respond to aggressive acts from Iran and Iraq and to support US allies. Thus, following the 1991 Gulf War, America, Britain and France imposed two no-fly zones over Iraq. At the same time, the United States did not rule out engagement or a form of post-Cold War detente with the rogue states.

US containment towards rogue states differed from Kennan's notion of containment in *not* being directed towards states that might exploit their ideological appeal to people in other countries to take over their states. By the 1990s, even Iran's revolutionary ambitions were significantly tempered by the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, the enduring effects of the Iran–Iraq War, and the rise of the United States as the sole superpower.²⁵ And containment after the Cold War was not articulated in the context of a strategic contest between two states at the systemic level, but was implemented to deal with the challenges rogue states posed to US national security, as noted above.²⁶

Critics point to the gap between the goals and results of dual containment. Despite the intense pressure exerted on the Iran and Iraq regimes, neither changed its policies on issues that mattered to the United States: pursuit of WMD, support for terrorist groups and the use of state terrorism. Critics argued that dual containment was driven not by US interests, but by the political agenda of the then Republican-dominated Congress, and that it provoked unnecessary frictions between the United States and its allies in Europe and Japan. It was suggested that US imposition of extraterritorial sanctions was not upheld by international law and exacted a disproportionate commercial price.²⁷ As the effects of sanctions became steadily more severe (particularly in Iraq), dual containment was increasingly criticized on humanitarian grounds.²⁸ Nevertheless, containment endured until it was replaced by war and pre-emption following the 9/11 attacks.²⁹

The record of containment during and after the Cold War shows that, at state level, it encompasses what Gaddis terms 'transferability'. Four transferable principles stem from the above account. First, containment arose as an alternative to other foreign policy options—accommodation or total war—deemed undesirable, dangerous or deadly. Second, the containing and contained entities (the latter being a revolutionary or a rogue state) had a common perception of risk which, at the most basic level, was the aspiration to survive as a political entity, and decision-

²⁴ Litwak, *Rogue states and US foreign policy*, p. 5; Lake, 'Confronting backlash states', p. 46.

²⁵ On these points, see Anoushiravan Ehteshami, 'The foreign policy of Iran', in Raymond A. Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *The foreign policies of Middle Eastern states* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 298–303.

²⁶ Lake, 'Confronting backlash states', p. 46; Litwak, *Rogue states and US foreign policy*, pp. 6–7.

²⁷ On this subject, see Kenneth Katzman, Richard Murphy, Fraser Cameron, Robert Litwak, Gary Sick and Thomas Stauffer, 'The end of the dual containment: Iran, Iraq and smart sanctions', *Middle East Policy* 8: 3, Sept. 2001, p. 76.

²⁸ The point was made by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brent Scowcroft and Richard Murphy, 'Differentiated containment', *Foreign Affairs* 73: 2, 1997, pp. 20–31.

²⁹ For the shift under Bush, see Shapiro, *Containment*; Stevenson, *Counter-terrorism*.

making frameworks for managing and responding to containment. Third, there was an assumption that internal contradictions and vulnerabilities existed in the target entity and that pressure on these states would exacerbate these tensions, prompting softened behaviour and possibly eventual collapse. Here, there is a difference between Cold War and post-Cold War containment. During the Cold War the United States used containment primarily to contain the USSR politically; after the Cold War it employed containment to deal with the challenges posed by rogue states to its national security. Fourth, containment needed to garner legitimacy. During the Cold War the main concern was that containment should be congruent with US domestic values; after the Cold War international legitimacy proved the greater concern.

As long as it abides by its transferable principles, then, containment can be applied in different international contexts, towards different types of actors: the USSR during the Cold War, rogue states after the Cold War. Using this account as a theoretical matrix, the following sections argue that Israel's foreign policy towards Hezbollah and Hamas demonstrates that, with some rearrangements, containment is transferable from state level to state/territorial TNA level.

Containing Hezbollah

On 24 May 2000 Israel withdrew its forces unilaterally from the Security Zone in south Lebanon it had occupied since 1985,³⁰ following the failure of Israeli–Syrian negotiations to yield a peace treaty,³¹ and the growing perception among politicians, civil society groups and members of the public that Israel's presence in the Security Zone was ineffective.³² Subsequently, Israel indicated that its foreign policy towards Hezbollah would be based on two pillars. The first of these was full implementation of the 1978 United Nations Security Council Resolution 425, which called 'upon Israel immediately to cease its military action against Lebanese territorial integrity and withdraw forthwith its forces from all Lebanese territory'.³³ Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, judged that full implementation would deprive Hezbollah of the legitimacy to launch attacks across the Israeli border, and create 'an invisible barrier between the IDF [Israeli Defence Forces] and Hezbollah forces'.³⁴ The second pillar was deterrence: Hezbollah and Syria were warned they would 'bear the responsibility for any act of aggression or terrorism against Israel, and that the bar of Israel's response will be high'.³⁵

³⁰ Ahron Bregman, *Israel's wars: a history since 1947* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 260–73.

³¹ On the Israeli–Syrian peace talks, see Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging peace: Israel and the Arabs 1948–2003* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

³² Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *Spider webs* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2008), pp. 15–27, 31–4; E. Barak, testimony before the Winograd Commission, *Final report* (Jerusalem: Winograd Commission, 2008), pp. 2–3.

³³ UN Security Council Resolution 425, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/368/70/IMG/NR036870.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed May 2012.

³⁴ Barak, testimony before the Winograd Commission, p. 6. The PM acknowledged that the disputed Shebaa Farms were not included in this category.

³⁵ Barak, testimony before the Winograd Commission, pp. 5, 8; Winograd Commission, *Interim report* (Jerusalem: Winograd Commission, 2007), p. 44.

Hezbollah continued to mount attacks on Israeli military and civilian targets, justifying them variously as deterring attacks on Lebanon,³⁶ as exerting pressure on Israel to release Lebanese prisoners, and as a part of the effort to 'liberate' the disputed Shebaa Farms.³⁷ Hezbollah's tactics included attempts to kidnap IDF soldiers, firing mortar shells and anti-tank missiles, and laying roadside charges.³⁸ The IDF top brass were split between those who thought the Israeli response should be fierce, in line with Barak's earlier emphasis on deterrence, and those who supported a defensive posture owing to the low level of civilian and military casualties Israel had sustained since the 2000 withdrawal:³⁹ losses had fallen from some 17 soldiers a year during 1985–2000 to a *total* of 17 between 2000 and 2006.⁴⁰ Successive Israeli governments—under Barak, Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert (until July 2006)—sided with the 'defensive' school of thought, thereby eroding the deterrence component in Israel's foreign policy towards Hezbollah.

What, then, was Israel's foreign policy towards Hezbollah from 2000 to 2006, and to what extent did it exhibit the transferable principles of containment? Both Kennan and US strategists after the Cold War deemed either accommodation or appeasement of the USSR or rogue states, respectively, unviable. Similarly, for Israel, appeasement, accommodation and political dialogue were unviable in the face of Hezbollah's staunch anti-Zionist and anti-Judaic stance,⁴¹ its long-standing conflict with Israel and its close relations with Iran.

Kennan had assumed that total war would be dangerous, even deadly, for the United States, and US strategists felt full-blown conflict with a rogue state to be extremely undesirable. Likewise, total war with Hezbollah was seen as perilous by Israel's government. With the second Palestinian intifada under way, the Barak and Sharon governments were reluctant to open a second front in northern Israel—not least because it would probably result in Hezbollah's launching wide-scale rocket attacks on Israeli military and civilian targets, against which Israel had no effective means of defence. In addition, rocket attacks would have undermined the economic and security improvements experienced in northern Israel since the withdrawal from Lebanon.⁴² Thus, in a fashion similar to US containment policy, Israel's policy towards Hezbollah was a third way between unviable accommodation and undesirable war.

Another principle of containment reflected in Israel's foreign policy towards Hezbollah was exacerbation of the opponent's internal contradictions. Hezbollah's

³⁶ D. Sobelman, 'Four years after the withdrawal from Lebanon: refining the rules of the game', *Strategic Assessment* 7: 2, 2004, p. 2, <http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=25&incat=&read=29>, accessed 17 May 2012.

³⁷ Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: a short history* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 92–3.

³⁸ For details, see Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Main events on the Israeli–Lebanese border since the IDF withdrawal', http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2003/8/Main%20Events%20on%20the%20Israel-Lebanese%20Border%20since%20th, accessed 17 May 2012.

³⁹ Dan Halutz, testimony before the Winograd Commission, p. 9; Winograd Commission, *Interim report*, p. 47.

⁴⁰ Data obtained from Bregman, *Israel's wars*, p. 261.

⁴¹ On these features, see Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: politics and religion* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), pp. 134–87.

⁴² On both points, see Barak, testimony before the Winograd Commission, p. 8; Ben-Eliezer, testimony before the Winograd Commission, p. 3; Harel and Issacharoff, *Spider webs*, p. 75.

internal tensions derived from two parallel processes in the movement. From the late 1980s, Hezbollah had tried to integrate with Lebanon's political institutions, while its identity and practice remained based on the notion of an armed resistance movement struggling against Israel and the West.⁴³ Until Israel's withdrawal in 2000, Hezbollah's political integration and insistence on militancy were reconcilable, perhaps even mutually reinforcing. The armed struggle bolstered Hezbollah's standing in Lebanon's Shi'i community and strengthened its position in Lebanese public opinion. The Lebanese government officially endorsed Hezbollah's continued resistance to Israeli occupation of south Lebanon as a national resistance effort, not just as representing Hezbollah's own aspirations and material interests.⁴⁴

Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon prompted a change in this situation. Since Hezbollah's military activity had achieved its goal of Israeli withdrawal, various groups in Lebanon called on Hezbollah to halt its attacks on Israel, and to disarm.⁴⁵ This internal pressure was compounded by external demands. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1559 of September 2004, initiated by the United States and France, called for a 'disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias'.⁴⁶ Thus, whereas during the years of the Security Zone Hezbollah's military attacks against Israel were congruent with its establishment as a political force in Lebanon, from 2000 tensions between the two strands of its purpose developed.

Israel's then defence minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, and Sharon's Chief of Staff, Dov Weisglass, along with the Winograd Commission and independent journalistic sources, confirmed that, like containment, Israel's policy was to exacerbate these tensions by depriving Hezbollah of legitimacy (which conflict escalation would have afforded) to continue its attacks on Israel.⁴⁷ Accordingly, large-scale military force was reduced and engagements with Hezbollah were more often responses to an attack. Reprisals generally were limited to artillery and air strikes on Hezbollah and Syrian targets, and reconnaissance flights over Lebanon. To minimize friction, the IDF was ordered to withdraw its units from the international border and deploy them in rearguard positions.⁴⁸

However, in some respects Israel's foreign policy towards Hezbollah diverted from the transferable principles of containment. Kennan stressed that containment

⁴³ On these two elements of Hezbollah's identity and practice, see Eyal Zisser, 'Hizballah: between armed struggle and domestic politics', in Barry Rubin, ed., *Revolutionaries and reformers: contemporary Islamic movements in the Middle East* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003); Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah*, pp. 16–34.

⁴⁴ Zisser, 'Hizballah', pp. 91–6; Krista E. Wiegand, 'Reformation of a terrorist group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese political party', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32: 8, 2009, p. 675.

⁴⁵ See e.g. Gibran Tuani, quoted in Norton, *Hezbollah*, p. 118; Walid Jumblatt, leader of the Lebanese Druze, and *Al-Mustakbal*, the newspaper of Lebanon's then prime minister, Rafiq al-Hariri, also criticized Hezbollah. See Eyal Zisser, 'Hizballah and Israel: strategic threat on the northern border', *Israel Affairs* 12: 1, 2006, p. 98.

⁴⁶ UN Security Council Resolution 1559, <http://daccess-dds ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No4/498/92/PDF/No449892.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed May 2012.

⁴⁷ D. Weisglass, testimony before the Winograd Commission, pp. 19–20; B. Ben-Eliezer, testimony before the Winograd Commission, pp. 3–4; Winograd Commission, *Interim report*, pp. 39, 45–6; Harel and Issacharoff, *Spider webs*, pp. 75–6.

⁴⁸ On the limited use of force, see Winograd Commission, *Interim report*, pp. 46–9; Harel and Issacharoff, *Spider webs*, pp. 69–77, 136–9; Daniel Sobelman, 'New rules of the game: Israel and Hezbollah after the withdrawal from Lebanon', memorandum no. 69 (Tel Aviv: Jaffe Centre for Strategic Studies, 2004).

involved pressure exerted by multiple foreign policy tools, in order to generate political change in an adversary. But the foreign policy tools Israel could employ towards Hezbollah, and the ability to generate political change in the movement, were limited. Israel's botched attempt to install Bashir Gemayel as Lebanon's president in 1982, and its desertion of the South Lebanon Army, rendered Israeli attempts at political engineering in Lebanon ineffective. Consequently, Israel was unable to exploit the differences that were emerging between Hezbollah and other political groups in Lebanon, or to employ economic carrots and sticks towards Hezbollah. Personal considerations also had a limiting effect. Barak could not afford an escalation of conflict across the northern border since this would question his judgement that unilaterally withdrawing the IDF from Lebanon would improve Israel's security. Sharon, who had been indicted by the Kahane Commission for his role in Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, also adopted a cautious approach to Hezbollah.⁴⁹

Notwithstanding the diminution, noted above, of the frequency and lethality of Hezbollah's attacks following the unilateral withdrawal, by 2006 Israeli foreign policy-makers deemed the impact of limited containment to be weakening; it lacked a deterrence component and its legitimacy base was being eroded by Hezbollah's repeated violations of UNSCR 1559.⁵⁰ The assault Hezbollah carried out on 12 July 2006—involving the deaths of three Israeli soldiers, the kidnap of two others, and the shelling of civil and military targets within Israeli sovereign territory—was seen by Israeli foreign policy-makers as epitomizing the increasingly weak impact of limited containment.⁵¹

Nonetheless, as documented by the accounts of the debates determining the response to the 12 July assault by Hezbollah, the Israeli reaction did not entail abandoning containment and replacing it with war. Rather, the government authorized the IDF to launch a fierce but limited campaign⁵²—not war—aimed at achieving two goals:⁵³ first, reinforcing the legitimacy base of limited containment by putting pressure on the international community to demand, and on Hezbollah to accept, implementation of UNSCR 1559,⁵⁴ and second, re-establishing Israeli deterrence.⁵⁵ Deterrence would be achieved via punishment—using military force offensively to 'persuade an opponent that the risk/cost of an undesirable action will exceed any possible gains'.⁵⁶ Thus Prime Minister Olmert stated in concluding the government meeting authorizing the military response:

⁴⁹ On the impact of personal factors, see Winograd Commission, *Interim report*, p. 45; Weisglass, testimony before the Winograd Commission, p. 13.

⁵⁰ Dan Haloutz, testimony before the Winograd Commission, pp. 9–12; Dan Haloutz, *Straightforward* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2010), pp. 360–61; Amir Peretz, testimony to the Winograd Commission, pp. 15–16.

⁵¹ Winograd Commission, *Interim report*, pp. 67–8.

⁵² Ehud Olmert, testimony to the Winograd Commission, pp. 35–40; Tzipi Livni, testimony to the Winograd Commission, pp. 6, 11, 32, 45; Dan Haloutz, testimony to the Winograd Commission, p. 50; Amir Peretz, testimony to the Winograd Commission, p. 36.

⁵³ Peretz, testimony to the Winograd Commission, pp. 70–104.

⁵⁴ Olmert, testimony to the Winograd Commission, p. 10.

⁵⁵ Peretz, testimony to the Winograd Commission, pp. 17–18; Winograd Commission, *Interim report*, pp. 70, 77, 87; Haloutz, testimony to the Winograd Commission, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Definition derived from Amir Lupovici, 'The emerging fourth debate of deterrence theory: toward a new research agenda', *International Studies Quarterly* 54: 3, 2010, p. 706, n. 4.

'We need to exact such a price tag [from Hezbollah] that no one will want to mess with us.'⁵⁷

However, owing to flawed implementation the campaign snowballed into full-blown conflict;⁵⁸ even so, in line with the original aims, this produced a containing effect rather than marking the end of containment and its replacement by war. Between August 2006 and the time of writing, Hezbollah has not launched a single offensive against Israel, despite restoration of its military capabilities, failure to 'liberate' the Shebaa Farms, and accusations that Israel had assassinated Hezbollah's former chief of staff, Imad Mughniyeh, that prompted avowals to avenge his death.

In terms of the principles of containment, Hezbollah's mellowed behaviour is attributed to two factors. The first is the enhanced element of deterrence in Israel's policy of containment, as reflected in comments made by Hasan Nasseralla, general secretary of Hezbollah, immediately after the 2006 conflict, to the effect that 'had he anticipated Israel's response to the 12 July attack, he would not have authorized this assault'.⁵⁹ Other factors, for example related to Lebanese domestic politics, and to Iran and Syria, may have had an impact on Hezbollah's inaction towards Israel, which is unprecedented since the organization was established in 1982. However, these factors were constant throughout the period 2000–2006, and yet did not produce the inaction by Hezbollah witnessed following the use of force in the 2006 conflict, suggesting that that use of force played a decisive role in producing the containing effect on Hezbollah's behaviour. Second, annual UN monitoring reports demonstrate that the legitimacy base of Israel's foreign policy of containment, in the form of UNSCR 1701, is far more robust than before July 2006 under UNSCR 1559,⁶⁰ reinforcing what Barak termed the invisible barrier (of legitimacy) between the IDF and Hezbollah forces.

Containing Hamas

Hamas's victory in the January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary and legislative elections resulted in a situation of dual power in the occupied territories.⁶¹ Fatah, Hamas's main rival, retained control over the Palestinian Authority (PA) presidency, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the PA security forces—the chief source of formal power within the PA. Hamas gained control over the Palestinian Council and the PA government,⁶² enabling it to extend

⁵⁷ Winograd Commission, *Interim report*, p. 80.

⁵⁸ Avi Kober, 'The Israeli Defence Forces in the second Lebanon war: why the poor performance?', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31: 1, 2008, pp. 3–40; Efraim Inbar, 'How Israel bungled the second Lebanon war', *Middle East Quarterly* 14: 3, 2007, <http://www.meforum.org/1686/how-israel-bungled-the-second-lebanon-war>, accessed 17 May 2012.

⁵⁹ *Al-Mannar*, 27 Aug. 2006.

⁶⁰ For the most recent report see 'Fifteenth report of the secretary-general on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701', 2011, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/3F3811AFDE8430C78525784E007C8BE6-Full_Report.pdf, accessed 17 May 2012.

⁶¹ On the elections, see As'ad Ghanem, *Palestinian politics after Arafat* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 122–34.

⁶² International Crisis Group (ICG), *Palestinians, Israel and the Quartet: pulling back from the brink*, Middle East Report no. 54 (Brussels: 2006), p. 1.

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its international footprint. Hamas's leaders engaged with international public opinion via Arab, Israeli and western media outlets.⁶³ In addition, in bypassing the PLO, Hamas sought to conduct official diplomacy on behalf of the Palestinians with those states that recognized its government.⁶⁴ Mahmoud al-Zahar, Hamas's foreign minister, corresponded with the UN secretary general over the Hamas-led government's relationship with Israel.⁶⁵ However, Hamas refused to accept the conditions set by the Quartet (US, UN, Russia and EU) for continued assistance to the PA government, namely: renunciation of violence against Israel, recognition of Israel's right to exist, and acceptance of the Israel–PLO peace agreements.⁶⁶

The Israeli government that took office in March 2006, led by Ehud Olmert's Kadima party, was tasked with formulating foreign policy towards the Hamas-led PA government.⁶⁷ At the time, the government's policy was informed by Israel's previous unilateral withdrawals from south Lebanon and the Gaza Strip (the latter in August 2005). The Olmert government sought to implement the 'convergence plan', which entailed another unilateral withdrawal, from the West Bank, within 18 months, should the Hamas-led government not accept the Quartet's conditions.⁶⁸

What was Israel's policy in the interim and to what extent did it exhibit the transferable principles of containment? The option of accommodation was unviable because Israel's condition for negotiation was that Hamas should accept the Quartet's conditions.⁶⁹ This Hamas could not do without backtracking politically and risking internal division.⁷⁰ The other option, of full-blown conflict with the Hamas-led government, was deemed perilous. A possible humanitarian crisis or the PA's collapse would have led to the resumption of full-scale violence, enforced Israel's assumption of responsibility for the ungoverned territories, and provoked an extremely hostile international response.⁷¹ Thus, like containment, Israel's policy towards Hamas was an alternative to accommodation and war.

Israeli policy further corresponded to Kennan's formulation in that Israel employed *measures short of war* by implementing containment. Israel coordinated a

⁶³ See e.g. Lally Weymouth, 'A conversation with Ismail Haniyeh', *Washington Post*, 26 Feb. 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/24/AR2006022402317.html>, accessed 17 May 2012; Danny Rubenstein, 'Hamas PM Haniyeh: retreat to 1967 borders will bring peace', *Haaretz*, 23 May 2006.

⁶⁴ These included Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey: ICG, *Palestinians, Israel and the Quartet*, p. 2.

⁶⁵ ICG, *Palestinians, Israel and the Quartet*, p. 4.

⁶⁶ 'Statement of the Quartet: the new Palestinian government', http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_5865_en.htm, accessed 17 May 2012.

⁶⁷ Chris McGreal, 'Kadima wins Israel's elections as Likud humiliated', *Guardian*, 29 March 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/mar/29/israel1>, accessed 17 May 2012.

⁶⁸ Ehud Olmert, address by interim Prime Minister on presenting the new government to the Knesset, 4 May 2006, <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Archive/Speeches/2006/05/speechknesso40506.htm>; Ahiya Raved, 'Official: realignment methods unlike Gaza' (interview with architect of disengagement Eival Giladi), <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3257132,00.html>, both accessed 17 May 2012.

⁶⁹ Israeli cabinet communiqué, 19 Feb. 2006, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2006/Cabinet+Communique+19-Feb-2006.htm>, accessed 17 May 2012.

⁷⁰ On this point, see Are Hovdenak, 'Hamas in transition: the failure of sanctions', *Democratization* 61: 1, 2009, p. 71.

⁷¹ ICG, *Palestinians, Israel and the Quartet*, p. 24.

diplomatic embargo with the European Union and the United States.⁷² It also used economic means: freezes on taxes, tariffs and other fees collected on behalf of the PA and transferred monthly.⁷³ Quartet envoy and former World Bank president James Wolfensohn estimated that this measure alone reduced the PA's revenue by 30 per cent.⁷⁴ Restrictions at the crossing points with Gaza were tightened, Gazan workers were banned from entering Israel, and the customs envelope allowing goods from Gaza and the West Bank to enter Israel was closed. The impact of Israel's economic measures was exacerbated by the US and EU severing economic ties with the Hamas-led PA government, resulting in significant foreign aid reductions and restrictions on the banks dealing with the PA, making transfer of the (diminishing) available funds to the PA and the Palestinians extremely difficult.⁷⁵ Economic and diplomatic pressures were compounded by the use of military force, including targeted killings and arrests of Hamas members, and intermittent incursions into, and artillery bombardments of, Gaza. The main incursions included Operation Southern Arrow (launched 4 April 2006) and Operation Summer Rains (launched 27 June 2006, following the kidnap of Corporal Gilad Shalit).⁷⁶

While the pressure from Israel was severe, it was not designed materially to destroy the Hamas-led regime: amid rocket attacks in the western Negev, and periodic suicide bombings, Israel's top brass resisted calls to topple the Hamas government and/or reoccupy Gaza.⁷⁷ Also, despite the severe economic restrictions, Israel allowed foreign agencies to provide aid that would prevent complete economic meltdown. It actively courted UN agencies aiding the Palestinians, financed a UN institution in Gaza and, together with the US and others, backed expansion of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), long a target of Israeli criticism.⁷⁸

Recalling the transferable principles of containment helps to explain the goals Israel might have hoped to achieve through this policy. Kennan believed that political and military containment was achievable through pressure exerted via multiple foreign policy tools designed to exacerbate the adversary's internal contradictions. For Hamas, the further its political identity and practice veered from the Quartet's conditions, the greater the material challenge to its ability to govern, and vice versa. In terms of the transferable principles of containment, Israel's foreign policy is conceived here as designed to exacerbate this tension in order to reduce the military challenge—defined in terms of scope, frequency and lethality of attacks—posed by Hamas. Like the stance adopted towards Hezbollah in the same period, Israel's foreign policy towards Hamas was initially one of *limited containment*.

⁷² See Israeli cabinet communiqués, 19 Feb. and 9 April 2006, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiqués/2006/Cabinet+Communique+9-Apr-2006.htm?DisplayMode=print>, accessed May 2012.

⁷³ Israeli cabinet communiqué, 19 Feb. 2006.

⁷⁴ Quoted in ICG, *Palestinians, Israel and the Quartet*, p. 22.

⁷⁵ Michelle Esposito, 'Quarterly update on conflict and diplomacy', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35: 4, 2006, pp. 101–104.

⁷⁶ Esposito, 'Quarterly update', pp. 103–11.

⁷⁷ Amos Harel, 'Halutz: IDF reoccupation of Gaza will not end Qassam rocket fire', *Haaretz*, 2 May 2006.

⁷⁸ ICG, *Palestinians, Israel and the Quartet*, p. 25.

However, the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah of July–August 2006 prompted the Israeli government to halt plans for another unilateral act and to use limited containment as an interim measure.⁷⁹ Retired military generals, politicians, and the public drew the link between the eruption of war, its outcome, and Israel's unilateral withdrawals from south Lebanon and Gaza.⁸⁰ Critics argued that, contrary to the promises made by the Barak, Sharon and Olmert governments, Israel's unilateralist measures yielded neither political nor security gains, but rather exacerbated Israel's security challenges.

Israeli declarations and actions following the abandonment of unilateralism reflect a subtle yet significant shift in Israel's foreign policy towards Hamas. In an important policy speech, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni clarified that Israeli foreign policy since August 2006 was aimed at reducing the security challenge posed by Hamas and exerting pressure to achieve a specific balance: promoting regime change in the PA through elections and/or a shift in Hamas's stance, but without, in the process, destroying the PA's institutions. Livni emphasized that changes in Hamas's behaviour would be measured by its acceptance of the Quartet's conditions.⁸¹

Israel's use of economic, military and diplomatic foreign policy tools reflects the aims and balance outlined by Livni. The economic sanctions (including banking constraints) imposed on the Hamas-led PA government by the US and EU, and the blockade on Gaza, were maintained.⁸² However, Israel also approved measures designed to avert humanitarian disaster and prevent the collapse of the PA, such as the EU's Temporary International Mechanism (TIM): a financial construct allowing money to be channelled to the Palestinians, bypassing the Hamas government and its institutions.⁸³

The balance Israel sought between generating political change and preventing collapse of the PA was also reflected in its use of military force.⁸⁴ The IDF continued to fire artillery, carry out air raids and intermittent incursions into Gaza, and assassinate and arrest Hamas members. Hamas, in turn, continued its suicide bombings (although with less frequency) and fired rockets on Israeli towns and villages. But instead of these skirmishes escalating into war, military confrontation between Israel and Hamas followed a predictable, contained pattern: fighting

⁷⁹ Yossi Verter, 'Convergence no longer on the agenda, PM tells ministers', *Haaretz*, 18 Aug. 2006.

⁸⁰ See e.g. former chief of staff Moshe Ya'alon, *The longer shorter way* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2008), pp. 155–67. Maj.-Gen. Yiftah Ron-Tal described withdrawal from Gaza as 'suicide for Israel'. See Hanan Greenberg, 'Officer's criticism of army stirs row', *Ynet*, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3310855,00.html>, accessed 17 May 2012. The chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Tzahi Hanegbi, claimed that the Gaza pullout prompted the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah war: Ilan Marciano, 'Hanegbi: pullout prompted Lebanon war', *Ynet*, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3311505,00.html>, accessed 17 May 2012.

⁸¹ Foreign Minister Livni's address to the Israeli Council of Foreign Relations, 24 June 2007, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2007/Address+by+FM+Livni+to+the+Israel+Council+of+Foreign+Relations+24-Ju-2007.htm>, accessed 17 May 2012.

⁸² Esposito, 'Quarterly update', p. 141.

⁸³ On the TIM, see Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement by the Middle East Quartet', 20 Sept. 2006, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Reference+Documents/Statement+by+the+Middle+East+Quartet+20-Sep-2006.htm>, accessed 17 May 2012.

⁸⁴ See statements by Prime Minister Olmert and Defense Minister Peretz in Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cabinet communiqué, 5 Nov. 2006, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiqués/2006/Cabinet+Communiqué+5-Nov-2006.htm>, accessed 17 May 2012.

was confined mainly to West Negev and Gaza, and was not continuous but interspersed with periods of ceasefire.⁸⁵

In relation to containment's transferable principles, the change in Israel's foreign policy demonstrates that with the abandonment of unilateralism Israeli foreign policy underwent a shift from a form of *limited containment* to *comprehensive containment*: keeping the opponent's political influence and military challenge within defined limits *and* using containment to generate political change in the opponent, while employing multiple foreign policy tools.

This shift to comprehensive containment was reflected not just in how diplomatic, economic and military pressure was used to influence Hamas. In the context of the communist movement, Kennan argued that encouraging fractures was crucial in order to highlight the USSR's internal contradictions. Similarly, Israel, backed by the US and the EU, sought to create fissures in the Palestinian national movement. The distinction between Abbas and his Fatah party, branded 'moderates', and Hamas, rendered as 'extremist', was central to this effort.⁸⁶ These classifications were not just a matter of semantics, for they translated into material support for Fatah: US\$100 million worth of tax revenues held by Israel was transferred via the PA presidential office.⁸⁷ Also, Israel and the United States agreed to bolster Abbas's security forces to counter Hamas's military capability, especially the recently formed Executive Security Force.⁸⁸

The shift in Israel's foreign policy towards Hamas from limited to comprehensive containment was temporarily put on hold following the February 2007 Mecca Accord between Fatah and Hamas, which involved the formation of a Palestinian National Unity Government (PNUG).⁸⁹ Various countries supported

⁸⁵ Three key periods can be identified: between the kidnapping of Corporal Gilad Shalit on 25 June 2006 and the 26 November 2006 ceasefire; between April 2007 and the June 2008 ceasefire. See 'Hamas militants declare end to cease fire with Israel', *New York Times*, 24 April 2007; 'Israel and Hamas ceasefire begins', BBC, 19 June 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7462554.stm, accessed 17 May 2012. The ceasefire was interrupted, but did not break down, when Israel killed six Hamas gunmen on 5 November 2008. See Rory McCarthy, 'Gaza truce broken as Israeli raids kill six Hamas gunmen', *Guardian*, 5 Nov. 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/05/israelandthepalestinians>, accessed 17 May 2012. Hamas formally ended the truce in December 2008 by resuming rocket fire on the western Negev, prompting Israel to launch Operation Cast Lead. See James Hider, 'Hamas says it will not renew cease fire', *The Times*, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article5367679.ece, accessed 20 Aug. 2010.

⁸⁶ After November–December 2006 the moderates/extremists rhetoric was conspicuous. See e.g. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Press conference by Foreign Minister Livni and Egyptian Foreign Minister Gheit', 27 Dec. 2006, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/Foreign+Minister+Livni/Speeches+interviews/Press%20Conference%20by%20FM%20Livni%20and%20Egyptian%20FM%20Gheit%2027-Dec-2006>, accessed 17 May 2012.

⁸⁷ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cabinet communiqué, 24 Dec. 2006, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2006/Cabinet%20Communique%2024-Dec-2006>, accessed 17 May 2012. The effort was coordinated with the US, which in October 2006 transferred US\$42 million to help Abbas restructure and retrain Fatah in the face of possible elections against Hamas. See Esposito, 'Quarterly update', p. 126.

⁸⁸ The US, with Israel's agreement, offered to finance enlargement of Abbas's elite presidential guard from 3,000 to 6,000, and in January 2007 Congress approved a US\$86.3 million assistance package. See US Department of State, 'Congressional notification transmittal sheet', June 2007, quoted in ICG, *After Gaza*, Middle East Report no. 68 (Brussels, Aug. 2007), p. 9.

⁸⁹ For a text of the agreement see <http://www.jmcc.org/Documentsandmaps.aspx?id=690>, accessed 17 May 2012.

the PNUG,⁹⁰ though Israel regarded it as a setback.⁹¹ However, tensions between Fatah and Hamas over who would control the Palestinian security forces persisted, culminating in Hamas's military takeover of Gaza on 14 June 2007, after which President Abbas dissolved the PNUG.⁹²

Israel's foreign policy towards Hamas after the collapse of the PNUG reflects a more pronounced shift from limited to comprehensive containment—manifested, for example, by Israel's greater use of the pre-Mecca Accord tactic of widening the cracks within the Palestinian national movement. Prime Minister Olmert stated that 'a clear distinction could be made between Hamas "extremists" and Fatah-dominated PA "moderates"',⁹³ and Foreign Minister Livni announced that the international community and Israel should bolster the moderates by providing 'money [and] arms, easing conditions, [and] opening border crossings'.⁹⁴ Reflecting the effort to deepen the divisions within the Palestinian national movement, in September 2007 Gaza was declared a 'hostile entity controlled by a terrorist organisation'.⁹⁵

Another manifestation of the same shift was the further exacerbation of the internal contradiction Hamas faced following its 2006 election victory: the increasing material challenge to its ability to govern entailed by its refusal to accept the Quartet's conditions. To achieve this, Israel increased its pressure on Hamas and the territory it sought to control in Gaza, with the aim, according to Israeli foreign policy-makers, of 'weaken[ing] Hamas to the point that it would be ousted by the Palestinians'.⁹⁶ To this end, Israel increased its use of military force towards Gaza.⁹⁷ Fighting waxed and waned, but although it was still confined mainly to Gaza and the western Negev, the overall trajectory in the Israel–Hamas military confrontation between June 2007 and December 2008 was towards intensified conflict.⁹⁸ Simultaneously, Israel maintained its economic sanctions on Hamas and enforced tighter closure of Gaza, which, according to the Palestinian

⁹⁰ For example, Norway, Qatar and Saudi Arabia jointly transferred an estimated US\$160 million to the PA. Even the US transferred funds to a PLO account managed by the then finance minister Salam Fayad. ICG, *After Gaza*, p. 3.

⁹¹ Foreign Minister Livni, address to the Israeli Council of Foreign Relations, 24 June 2007.

⁹² For details on the Mecca Agreement, see ICG, 'After Gaza', pp. 2–15.

⁹³ See e.g. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement by PM Ehud Olmert at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit', 25 June 2007, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2007/Statement+by+PM+Ehud+Olmert+at+the+Sharm+el-Sheikh+Summit+25-Jun-2007.htm>; press statement by Foreign Minister Livni at the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, 18 June 2007, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2007/Press+statement+by+FM+Livni+at+the+EU+General+Affairs+and+External+Relations+Council+18-Jun-2007.htm>, both accessed 17 May 2012.

⁹⁴ Foreign Minister Livni, address to the Israeli Council of Foreign Relations, 24 June 2007.

⁹⁵ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Security cabinet declares Gaza hostile territory', 19 Sept. 2007, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiqués/2007/Security+Cabinet+declares+Gaza+hostile+territory+19-Sep-2007.htm>, accessed 17 May 2012.

⁹⁶ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Briefing by Foreign Minister Livni to the Diplomatic Corps', 3 March 2008, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2008/Briefing+by+FM+Livni+to+the+Diplomatic+Corps+3-Mar-2008.htm?DisplayMode=print>, accessed 17 May 2012.

⁹⁷ On this trend, see 'Anti-Israeli terrorism in 2007 and its trends in 2008' (Ramat Ha-Sharon: Intelligence and Terrorism Information Centre at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Communication Centre, 2008); 'Israeli military operations against Gaza 2000–2008', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 38: 3, 2009, p. 137.

⁹⁸ After prolonged military clashes between April 2007 and June 2008 a ceasefire was signed and maintained until December 2008. See 'Israel and Hamas ceasefire begins', BBC, 19 June 2008.

trade centre and the World Bank, experienced a dramatic slowdown in economic activity.⁹⁹

A third manifestation involved Israel's attempts to create in the West Bank an alternative socio-economic and political model to that of Hamas in Gaza. Israel's policy-makers described it as creating a political horizon, and Livni commented that it made it 'possible for the moderate elements to come to the Palestinian people and say, "we are the only ones who can, in addition to immediate relief, also give you a future, a future of peace, with a state of our own, a future in which we can make progress with Israel"'.¹⁰⁰ Several measures were used to create this alternative socio-economic model, including encouraging West Bank trade with Israel and neighbouring countries; supporting infrastructure projects that could be rapidly implemented and would have long-term impact; and facilitating regular transfers of the tax and VAT revenues withheld by Israel from the PA since 2006.¹⁰¹ Donor countries complemented these actions with pledges to the PA totalling US\$7.4 billion, to be disbursed over three years.¹⁰² Actions were taken to consolidate the PA's security forces, including strengthening civil security forces; organizing, training and upgrading the Palestinian National Security Forces (PNSF) (undertaken by US envoy General Keith Dayton); and an international initiative to train four PNSF battalions in Jordan.¹⁰³

While Israel hailed these measures as huge successes, the World Bank summarized the period from June 2007 to first quarter 2009 less positively:

In [the current] policy environment and pending a political resolution to the conflict, aid should be recognised for what it is—more of a stabilising measure, slowing down socio-economic decline, than a catalyst for sustainable economic development. Large amounts of donor aid have produced insignificant growth and an increase in economic dependency, despite the consistent improvement in PA governance and security.¹⁰⁴

Even were the change in the West Bank as modest as the World Bank claimed, it was an alternative to what Gazans had been experiencing: sanctions on Hamas, closure, fierce fighting and high death tolls. As such, the policy of propping up the West Bank reflected another transferable principle of containment. Kennan attributed great importance to the creation in Europe of alternative and more

⁹⁹ 'Gaza Strip: a year through siege', Palestine Trade Centre, 14 July 2008, http://www.paltrade.org/en/publications/EN_A_Year_Through_Siege.pdf; World Bank, *Palestinian economic prospects: aid, access and reform. Economic monitoring report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee*, Sept. 2008, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/AHLCReportSept.08final.pdf>, both accessed 17 May 2012.

¹⁰⁰ Foreign Minister Livni's address to the Israeli Council of Foreign Relations, 24 June 2007, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2007/Address+by+FM+Livni+to+the+Israel+Council+of+Foreign+Relations+24-Ju-2007.htm>, accessed 23 May 2012.

¹⁰¹ See Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Report of the Government of Israel to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee: supporting Palestinian capacity building. Israel's efforts in supporting the Palestinian economy, security reforms and civil affairs' (Jerusalem: Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009), pp. 6–17.

¹⁰² Reuters, 'Donors pledge \$7.4 billion to Palestinians', 17 Dec. 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL1670303120071217>, accessed 9 July 2010.

¹⁰³ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Report of the Government of Israel to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee', pp. 18–25.

¹⁰⁴ World Bank, *Palestinian economic prospects: Gaza recovery and West Bank revival. Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee*, June 2009, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/AHLCJune09Reportfinal.pdf>, accessed 17 May 2012.

successful models than the USSR, believing this would expose the deficiencies of the USSR and erode the regime's legitimacy. Similarly, Israel sought to create in the West Bank an alternative socio-economic and political reality to that in Gaza. Of course, the context was far removed from that of ideological competition between communism and capitalism. Nevertheless, Israel's foreign policy tools were employed in the context of a competition between two political approaches to leading the Palestinian national movement and conducting its external relations: on the one hand, the combination of political Islam and 'resistance' to Israel and the West offered by Hamas; on the other hand, the mixture of state-building and engagement with Israel and the West proposed by the Fatah-led PA. In this context, Israel's policy is perceived as designed to undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the political programme offered by the contained entity, Hamas, by shoring up its rival, Fatah, and the political alternative it represented.

Hamas responded to Israel's three-pronged policy of comprehensive containment by firing more and longer-range rockets on Israeli towns and villages,¹⁰⁵ and highlighting the human toll exacted by Israel's foreign policy of comprehensive containment. On the night of 22 January 2008 Hamas militants set off a series of explosions along the border wall with Egypt, allowing a human wave to surge across the frontier into Egypt. This mass of people streaming through the broken wall to stock up on basic supplies highlighted the plight of Gaza as a result of Israeli measures.¹⁰⁶

Israel's comprehensive containment and Hamas's response are worth considering in the light of the discussion earlier in this article on the role of legitimacy as a component of containment towards the USSR and its absence in US containment of Iraq. Israel's policy of comprehensive containment was similarly undermined by Hamas's ability to reduce the legitimacy of that policy by highlighting the plight of Gazans, and by Israeli actions obstructing the longer-term Palestinian aspiration of statehood, for example the construction of settlements between 2007 and 2009,¹⁰⁷ and the paucity of confidence-building measures in the PA.¹⁰⁸

We now turn to examine in terms of containment the Israeli decision to launch operation Cast Lead (December 2008 to January 2009) and its implementation. Operation Cast Lead was planned in advance, forming part of Israel's broader strategy towards Hamas.¹⁰⁹ Comments made in March 2008, prior to the launch

¹⁰⁵ In 2007, 896 rockets were fired on Israel. Between January and May 2008, 839 rockets were fired. See 'Anti-Israeli terrorism in 2007 and its trends in 2008', p. 11. Following the ceasefire signed in June 2008 there was a sharp drop in attacks until it expired in December 2008.

¹⁰⁶ See also the Hamas response to Israeli decision to reduce fuel supplies to Gaza: Yossi Alpher, 'Gaza's agency, Israel's choice', 29 Jan. 2008, http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/conflicts/gaza_s_agency_israel_s_choice, accessed 17 May 2012.

¹⁰⁷ Hagit Ofren, 'The death of the settlement freeze: 4 months since Annapolis—March 2008', *Peace Now*, <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61&docid=3186&pos=11>; Hagit Ofren, 'Summary of construction in the West Bank 2008', *Peace Now*, <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61&docid=3508&pos=9>, both accessed 15 July 2010.

¹⁰⁸ This was evident, for instance, in Israel's extremely limited responses to PA requests to release Palestinian prisoners. For details see Michelle Esposito, 'Quarterly update on conflict and diplomacy', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 38: 2, 2009, p. 129.

¹⁰⁹ See *Report of the United Nations fact finding mission on the Gaza conflict* (Goldstone Report), 2009, pp. 324–9; Statement by Defence Minister Barak, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 Jan. 2009, <http://www.mfa.gov>.

of the operation, by Gadi Eisenkott, then Chief of the Northern Command, and other non-serving but well-placed military thinkers provide insights into the logic informing the use of military force in Operation Cast Lead.¹¹⁰ Specifically, there was a conviction that Hezbollah and Hamas could be deterred by infliction of punishment, destruction of assets and civilian infrastructures, and pressure on the civilian population through military activity. This conviction was articulated in the Dahiya doctrine—a plan *developed and approved* following the destruction wrought by the IDF on Hezbollah's headquarters in Dahiya, south Beirut, during the 2006 conflict.¹¹¹

The tactics used by the IDF during Operation Cast Lead reflected the logic encapsulated in the Dahiya doctrine. Although independent sources have confirmed that Israel did not target civilians as a matter of policy,¹¹² the military offensive exerted immense pressure on the civilian population in Gaza. Palestinian deaths (mostly civilians) amounted to more than 1,300.¹¹³ Similarly, although there is a charged debate over the *legality* of Israeli attacks on private property and civilian infrastructure, the destruction of mosques, government buildings, UNRWA installations, and food production, water and sewage facilities is undisputed.¹¹⁴ Indeed, Israeli air force data state that '99 percent of the firing that was carried out hit targets accurately', meaning that the damage inflicted during the first week of the aerial attacks was intentional not collateral.¹¹⁵ Intensive use of unarmed aerial vehicles during the ground phase of the operation suggests that high levels of accuracy in managing firepower were maintained.¹¹⁶ Crucially, although Israel deployed large ground forces in Gaza from the second week of the operation it did not, as a break from containment would require, attempt to reoccupy the area and topple the Hamas government.

Several statements made by key Israeli policy-makers during Operation Cast Lead reflect the principles of the Dahiya doctrine and the aims Israel sought to achieve by the military tactics it pursued, linking massive use of offensive military force to increasing Israeli deterrence via punishment. Most significantly among

il/MFA/Government/Communiqués/2009/Statement_DM_Ehud_Barak_3-Jan-2009.htm, accessed 18 May 2012.

¹¹⁰ Reuters, 'Israel warns Hizbullah war will invite destruction', 10 March 2008, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3604893,00.html>, accessed 18 May 2012; Giroa Eiland and Giora Eiland, 'The third Lebanon war: target Lebanon', *Strategic Assessment* 11: 2, Nov. 2008, pp. 9-17; Dr Mati Steinberg, former senior adviser to the Israeli General Security Service, quoted in Goldstone Report, p. 95.

¹¹¹ Eisenkott, quoted in Goldstone Report, p. 254.

¹¹² Richard Goldstone, 'Reconsidering the Goldstone Report on Israel and war crimes', *Washington Post*, 2 April, 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reconsidering-the-goldstone-report-on-israel-and-war-crimes/2011/04/01/AFg111JC_story.html#cb=f6f18e4917d5eb&origin=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.washingtonpost.com%2F%2F12e8e09a736&relation=parent.parent&transport=postmessage&type=resize&height=21&ackData\[id\]=1&wdth=135](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reconsidering-the-goldstone-report-on-israel-and-war-crimes/2011/04/01/AFg111JC_story.html#cb=f6f18e4917d5eb&origin=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.washingtonpost.com%2F%2F12e8e09a736&relation=parent.parent&transport=postmessage&type=resize&height=21&ackData[id]=1&wdth=135), accessed 18 May 2012.

¹¹³ Figures derived from Israeli NGO B'tselem, http://www.btselem.org/gaza_strip/20091227_a_year_to_castlead_operation; http://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20090909?DocId=917&, accessed 18 May 2012. These figures seem more accurate than the data provided by Israel and Hamas, which cite 1,100 Palestinian deaths and ascribe a larger proportion of the deaths to combatants.

¹¹⁴ For the debate, see Goldstone Report, pp. 17, 19, 105-15; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Gaza operations investigations: second update', <http://www.mfa.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/1483B296-7439-4217-933C-653CD19CE859/o/GazaUpdateJuly2010.pdf>, accessed 16 January 2012.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Goldstone Report, p. 327.

¹¹⁶ Goldstone Report, p. 328.

several declarations made during the operation,¹¹⁷ in a cabinet communiqué justifying the end of the operation the government reiterated the aim of ‘creating deterrence against further terrorist attacks’ as a central objective of the operation. Furthermore, it stated that ‘the strikes have . . . created significant Israeli deterrence, the impact of which will become apparent after the Hamas leadership has surfaced and seen the extent of the damage done to its assets’.¹¹⁸ The significance of this communiqué lies in that, reflecting the Dahiya doctrine, it makes a causal link between the damage inflicted on Hamas assets by the IDF and increasing Israeli deterrence towards the organization.

Following Operation Cast Lead the number of showcase terrorist attacks and the amount of mortar shell fire and rocket fire launched from the Gaza Strip decreased to an unprecedented low that lasted from 2006 to the time of writing.¹¹⁹ It is interesting to explore this outcome in view of the discussion above about the transferability of containment, which would attribute Hamas’s mellowed behaviour to the increased deterrence component in Israel’s comprehensive containment policy after Cast Lead. Other factors, for example relations between Hamas and Egypt and internal Palestinian politics, may have also had an impact. However, these factors were constant throughout the 2006–2009 period, but did not produce the same drop in attacks by Hamas as that witnessed following the use of force in Operation Cast Lead,¹²⁰ suggesting that the latter played a decisive role in producing the containing effect on Hamas’s behaviour. However, unlike Israel’s policy towards Hezbollah after 2006, Israel’s foreign policy towards Hamas following Cast Lead lacked international legitimacy. In fact, the huge human toll it exacted prompted fierce criticism from allies,¹²¹ international agencies¹²² and media outlets, thereby exacerbating the legitimacy deficit attaching to comprehensive containment since 2006. Consistent with Kennan’s formulation, this difference helps to explain why limited containment (towards Hezbollah), exhibiting an enhanced component of deterrence *and* a more robust legitimacy base, proved to be more effective after 2006 than comprehensive containment (towards Hamas), exhibiting a greater deterrence component but suffering from a legitimacy deficit.

¹¹⁷ See also Livni’s comments, quoted in Amos Harel, ‘Olmert: we won’t just defend against Gaza terror, we’ll attack’, *Haaretz*, 9 Dec 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/olmert-we-won-t-just-defend-against-gaza-terror-we-ll-attack-1.259125>; and in Kim Sengupta and Donald Macintyre, ‘Israeli cabinet divided over fresh Gaza surge’, *Independent*, 13 Jan. 2009, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israeli-cabinet-divided-over-fresh-gaza-surge-1332024.html>; see also comments made by Mike Herzog, chief of staff of Defence Minister Barak in the midst of the operation, quoted in Amir Oren, ‘Top aide to Barak: IDF aiming to stop Gaza rocket fire, not crush Hamas’, *Haaretz*, 1 Jan. 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/top-aide-to-barak-idf-aiming-to-stop-gaza-rocket-fire-not-crush-hamas-1.267229>, accessed 18 May 2012.

¹¹⁸ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Behind the headlines: Israel holds its fire’, 18 Jan. 2009, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/Behind+the+Headlines/Israel_holds_fire_18-Jan-2009, accessed 18 May 2012.

¹¹⁹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Terrorism from the Gaza Strip since Operation Cast Lead: data, type, and trends’, 17 March 2011, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism+Obstacle+to+Peace/Hamas+war+against+Israel/Hamas_terror_organization_since_2009-March_2011.htm, accessed 18 May 2012.

¹²⁰ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Terrorism from the Gaza Strip since Operation Cast Lead’.

¹²¹ e.g. Turkey: see Katerin Benhold, ‘Leaders of Turkey and Israel clash at Davos panel’, *New York Times*, 29 Jan. 2009.

¹²² Though tempered by the retraction of Judge Goldstone in the *Washington Post* op-ed, the Goldstone Report still epitomizes the trend.

Conclusion

In some respects, transfer of the principles of containment from state level to state/territorial TNA level is straightforward. Containment emerges as a third way between peace and total war. The rationale for containment is that the containing and contained entities have a common perception of risk; common aspirations to survive as political entities; and decision-making frameworks for managing and responding to containment. Under these conditions, containment can be directed towards different types of actors: a revolutionary state, one or more rogue states, or a territorial TNA such as Hezbollah or Hamas.

Precisely because Hamas and Hezbollah were perceived as rational actors capable of making decisions, Israeli policy sought to exacerbate their internal contradictions. In this respect, too, containment emerges as transferable from state level to the state/territorial TNA relationship. However, what enabled Israel to treat Hezbollah and Hamas as rational actors was not merely their status as territorial TNA, but crucially their wish to integrate into the political institutions of their respective societies. This would suggest that containment cannot be applied to all territorial TNA; Al-Qaeda, for example, was based in Afghanistan prior to the 9/11 attacks, but did not aspire to establish a role for itself in government. It is rather the combination of being a territorial TNA *and* seeking to participate in political institutions that creates the conditions whereby a territorial TNA may be contained by exacerbating its international contradictions.

Likewise, the use of a massive military offensive to bolster containment by enhancing its deterrence component through punishment was dependent on Hamas and Hezbollah being territorial TNAs and integrated in the political processes in their respective societies. Unlike the US replacement of containment with pre-emption and war, Israel's massive military offensives in 2006 and 2008 were designed to enhance deterrence and produce a containing effect. The behaviour of Hezbollah and Hamas following these conflicts suggests that in this respect too Kennan's formulation, in which the use of military force is integral to containment in enhancing deterrence and making political positions more credible, is transferable from the state level to the state/territorial TNA relationship.

In some respects, however, Israel's containment of Hezbollah and Hamas differs from Kennan's formulation. Territorial TNA, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, do not pose the same ideological challenge as was posed by the USSR to the US during the Cold War. We might ask: what was Israel seeking to contain? Following the Cold War, political containment of the revolutionary rival state, the USSR, was replaced by the rationale of containment to meet the challenges posed by rogue states to US national security. Israel's foreign policy of limited and comprehensive containment, which was aimed at keeping within confines the security threats posed by Hezbollah and Hamas, suggests that this trend of using containment to deal with challenges to national security persisted when containment was employed towards territorial TNAs.

Another difference concerns the place of legitimacy as a component of containment. Kennan was preoccupied with the issue of legitimacy. However, given that

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Soviet leadership was considered a worse alternative to US leadership, Kennan was concerned less with 'international legitimacy' than with consistent containment based on US domestic values. The US and Israeli experiences of containment towards, respectively, Iraq, and Hezbollah and Hamas, represent a refinement to Kennan's thinking. By the late 1990s, the US policy of dual containment was coming under international scrutiny, especially on humanitarian grounds. The legitimacy of Israel's comprehensive containment was tainted by failure to offer the Palestinians what Livni termed a 'political horizon', and by the toll it took on Palestinians in Gaza, which attracted international criticism on humanitarian grounds.

The lack of legitimacy of Israel's policy towards Hamas contrasted sharply with the emphasis on legitimacy in Israel's limited containment of Hezbollah. Prime Minister Barak envisaged unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon, in accordance with UN Resolution 425, as creating an 'invisible barrier' between Hezbollah and the IDF. This barrier may not have been impermeable, but surely was a major influence on Hezbollah's behaviour. Thus, although Israel did not take significant measures to increase its deterrence, during 2000–2006 Hezbollah attacks on Israeli targets decreased substantially. Since the end of the 2006 conflict and the passing of UNSCR 1701, Hezbollah has not carried out any attacks against Israel. These findings suggest that since the end of the Cold War, international legitimacy has a crucial bearing on the success of containment. In particular, when civilians suffer the impact of sanctions and military operations, international criticism on humanitarian grounds will undermine the ability to contain the political influence and military challenges posed by an opponent. Lack of legitimacy further reduces the capacity of containment to engineer the opponent's downfall.