

The 17th Annual HERZLIYA CONFERENCE

Israel's Strategic Balance Ahead of the 70th Year of Independence:
Opportunities and Risks

JUNE 20-22, 2017

IDC HERZLIYA CAMPUS, ISRAEL

SIMULATION SCENARIO: Israel Faces a Multi-Front Confrontation

Stage I

The Palestinian Arena

The president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Mahmoud Abbas (Abu-Mazen) was admitted to the hospital in Ramallah and the spokesman of the PNA announced that due to the president's condition he is unable to fulfill his duties for an unknown period of time. Following this announcement, the leadership of the PNA and the Palestinian National Liberation movement have decided to appoint an interim leadership Council headed by the deputy head of the Palestinian National Liberation movement - Mahmoud Al-Aloul, Secretary-General of the Palestinian National Liberation movement - Jibril Rajoub, the director of the Palestinian general intelligence service - Majid Faraj and Nabil Shaath.

Mohammad Dahlan declared that he "doesn't acknowledge the interim leadership Council and will return to the West Bank to lead the Palestinian people in one of the hardest times in their history. Hamas's leadership announced that the organization does not acknowledge the authority of the interim leadership Council as well. In different hotspots within the West Bank violent riots and clashes erupted between Dahlan's supporters and the Palestinian security forces.

A young Israeli man, resident of one of the settlements, was kidnapped and no organization took responsibility for the kidnapping. Israel demanded that the PNA take the necessary steps to return the kidnapped civilian. The interim leadership Council announced that it decided to stop the security cooperation with Israel and thereafter demanded the immediate release of Marwan Barghouti from prison and a halt to IDF's activities within the West Bank.

As a result of the IDF's operational activities violent riots erupted in different hotspots within the West Bank. Both the IDF and the Palestinians suffered casualties. Moreover, large-scale riots erupted in the West Bank

and East Jerusalem. The Palestinian media outlets define these events as "the Liberation Intifada", which occur on the eve of the 70th year to the Nakba.

The wave of terrorism by lone attackers (stabblings, running over and into crowds with a vehicle and shootings) intensifies and Hamas committed a suicide attack in a bus within Jerusalem which caused an immense number of civilian deaths and injuries.

Hamas announces that it will not restrain itself in light of the acts of aggression made by Israel against the Palestinian people. Rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip towards the Gaza envelope but caused no damage or injuries. The IDF responded to the rockets fired by attacking Hamas's strongholds in the Gaza Strip.

The Northern Front

Syria

Forces loyal to Assad, forces of Hezbollah and elements of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard have taken control over the Syrian Golan Heights - from Mount Hermon's lower parts to the area of Quneitra. These forces started building fortifications and transferring weapons to the area (rocket launchers and anti-tank missiles).

In a speech carried by Hassan Nasrallah he announced that the liberation of Quneitra is an important step towards the liberation of the Golan Heights and threatened that Hezbollah will not stand by when Israel "slaughters the Palestinians".

Lebanon

Hezbollah reinforced its forces in southern Lebanon using units of the organization that returned from Syria to Lebanon.

The war against Islamic State

The battle for a-Raqqa

In Syria, forces of the coalition led by the US conquered its North Eastern areas (near its border with Turkey). An all-out battle is being fought in order to conquer the city of a-Raqqa, the capital of the Islamic state. In the ground offensive took part Kurdish, Turkish, Saudi Arabian and special American & French forces. The ground forces are supported by massive aerial support of the US, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

In the course of battle at a-Raqqa and Northeastern Syria over 2,000 ISIS fighters have been killed and hundreds of its members have been captured, but its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi hasn't been captured and it is estimated that he managed to escape. There is unverified information about his whereabouts in Libya.

The forces of the coalition refrained from attacking forces loyal to Assad which are now besieged in enclaves within the coalition controlled zone.

The battle for Mosul

The Iraqi army, pro-Iranian Shiite militias, Kurdish Peshmerga forces and American ground forces with massive aerial support of the US have managed to take the city of Mosul out of the Islamic State's hands. Islamic State's casualties in Mosul and its surroundings are estimated at 3,000 fighters.

The Iraqi government demands that the Kurds leave the areas they captured in the city and the Turkish take their forces out of Iraq's territory.

Thousands of the Islamic State's members went underground and some are trying to flee Iraq and Syria. Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia intensified inspections along their borders to prevent penetration of Islamic State's members into their Territory.

In response to the defeats it suffered in Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State carried out a series of attacks around the world.

The war in Yemen

The war in Yemen between the Houthi rebels aided by Iran and the loyal forces of the Yemeni government headed by President Hadi together with the coalition headed by Saudi Arabia continues. The Houthi rebels struck two oil tankers and one merchant ship using shore-based anti-ship missiles and naval mines. As a result of the damage made to the sea trade route at the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb the cost of oil has risen globally and so do the costs of maritime insurance. The United States announced that it will organize an international naval force which will enable the freedom of sailing in the Red Sea.

Humanitarian crisis in the Middle East

As a result of the fighting against the Islamic State in a-Raqqa and Mosul, the refugee problem in Syria and Iraq has worsened. Aid organizations and the UN report that there was a sharp rise in the number of refugees and a severe shortage of food, drinking water and medicine.

The Secretary-General of the UN calls for an immediate convening of an international convention for the resolution of the refugee crisis and to bring order and security to the region.

The great world powers

President Trump announced in a special address to the nation that the US achieved an important victory in the war against terror in Iraq and that soon the Islamic State will be eliminated in Syria as well. He expressed hope that after the elimination of the Islamic state, peace and stability will return to the region.

Talks are being conducted between the White House and the Kremlin in order to arrange a formal summit meeting between President Trump and President Putin.

United States, the European Union and Russia are in close contact regarding an international convention sponsored by the UN to reach political agreements in Syria and Iraq.

Stage II - Israel in a double-front confrontation at the Palestinian arena

The Palestinian arena

Israel faces a violent confrontation against the Palestinians in the West Bank - the third Intifada ("The Liberation Intifada", according to the Palestinians).

An escalation occurs in the confrontation with the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as well. Hundreds of rockets and mortar bombs were fired from the Gaza Strip to Israel's territory: the Gaza envelope, Beersheba, Ashkelon, Gedera, Ashdod and Rishon LeZion.

The Northern front

A rocket barrage was fired from the Hezbollah controlled Quneitra area towards the Nafah area in the Israeli side of the Golan Heights and a few IDF soldiers were injured. The Israeli Air Force attacked targets from which the rockets were fired. Forces of Hezbollah in Lebanon were put in a state of alertness.

Nasrallah threatened again that Hezbollah will retaliate against Israel if the latter will not cease its acts of aggression against the Palestinian people.

Stage III - Israel in a multi-front confrontation: Two Palestinian fronts and two northern fronts

- Israel faces a violent confrontation against the Palestinians in the West Bank - the third Intifada ("The Liberation Intifada", according to the Palestinians).
- Israel is at war with the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Massive barrages of rockets are being fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip. The IDF attacks the rockets infrastructure and other Hamas targets using its Air Force, artillery and tank firepower. An Israeli reserve draft is being issued in order to reinforce the IDF in the West Bank and to prepare for a ground offensive in the Gaza Strip.
- Hezbollah fires hundreds of rockets from Lebanon and Syria into Israel's territory. Hassan Nasrallah declares that Hezbollah joined the battle against Israel alongside the Palestinians. He then called upon the entire Arab and Muslim world to fulfill the duty of jihad and join the battle against Israel.