Concept

The Resistance Network

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Definition

The concept "Resistance Network" relates to a system of state and non-state actors that promote an extremist political agenda in the Middle East through strategic, cross-boundary collaboration. The Resistance Network uses terror and limited warfare, among other tools, and may attempt to take over the governing institutions in the territories in which it operates.[1]

In the case of Israel, the Resistance Network poses a new model of security and political threat, which succeeds in preventing Israel from military or political achievements leading towards its secure existence.[2]

Background

In the past, state and non-state actors in the Middle East have often formed alliances and used proxy elements that threatened to undermine governments or to cause civil unrest in rival regimes.[3]

Since the Iranian Revolution (4/79) and especially in recent years, Iran has increasingly promoted radical Islamist ideology and has initiated and supported subversive action in the Middle East, thus becoming the most prominent **Initiator** of the Resistance Network.[4]

Characteristics

The structure of the Resistance Network is flexible and dynamic, reflecting the motivations, interests and capacities of its actors at a given point in time. It has several generic characteristics and common modes of operation, as follows:

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[1] The Resistance Network is a different phenomenon from the global jihad. Actors from either can cooperate when their interests coincide, yet while the latter acts against the West in general, the Resistance Network functions in order to achieve a common political objective focused largely within the Middle East. Nonetheless, both find common ground in their struggle against Israel and the United States. See, for example, the article on the Somali guerilla fighters, who came to Lebanon in order to fight along the Hizbullah in the war against Israel (Worth Robert, New York Times, 11/14/06) or the global activity of Hizbullah (Karmon Ely, "Hezbollah America Latina: Strange group or real threat?", ICT, 11/14/06).
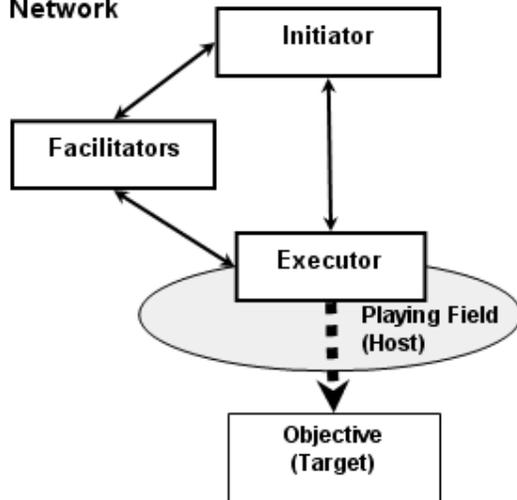
[2] See Terror is an Existential Threat.

[3] Two examples are Egyptian President Nasser's support of Palestinians against the monarchy in Jordan during the 1950's; and his backing of loyal Lebanese Sunnis during the 1958 civil crisis (respectively, Cleveland William, **A History of the Modern Middle East** (3rd ed., Westview, 2004, p. 331) and Abukhalil As'ad, **Historical Dictionary of Lebanon**, (Scarecrow, 1998. p.16). See, for further examples, Korany Bahgat, "The Arab World and the New Balance of Power in the New Middle East", in Hudson Michael (ed.), **Middle East Dilemma** (Tauris, 1999); and "The Cold War in the Middle East", Chapter 2 in Fawcett Louise **International Relations of the Middle East** (Oxford, 2005).

[4] The rise of Iranian-backed extremist Islamism in the Middle East region, combined with other elements, has been the main impetus behind the development of the Resistance Network in its present manifestation. It is important to note that the network poses a threat not only to Israel but also to other Middle Eastern states such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt, in the context of the ongoing regional battle for supremacy. See ReViews #7, Battle for Control of the Resistance Network.

- **The Resistance Network is a systemic phenomenon** composed of various geographically-dispersed state and non-state actors[5] that act together towards the realization of a certain objective or Target.[6]

The Resistance Network

- The **Initiator** provides the impetus, which may include an ideological basis, for the activities of the Resistance Network.

- A **Facilitator** provides various types of political and logistic support to an Executor, enabling its operation.

- An **Executor** carries out operations to serve the interests of the Resistance Network.

- The **Host** provides a territorial base from which an Executor may operate.

- A **Target** is the Resistance Network's political objective.[7]

- **Fluidity of roles** – the participants in the Resistance Network may initiate, facilitate, host or even execute the operation, depending on circumstances.[8]

- **Targeting weak governments** – The Resistance Network prospers in countries where the central government is relatively weak and lacks a monopoly on force. It may also aim to undermine or to take control of government authorities and institutions.[9]

- **Limited warfare** – The Resistance Network exploits the asymmetry that it encounters vis-à-vis conventional armies. It aims not to achieve decisive military victories, but rather to use terror and limited warfare to exhaust its enemy over time.[10]

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[5] See the typology of non-state armed groups in Shultz Richard and Dew Andrea, **Insurgents, Terrorists and Militias**, (Columbia University Press, 2006); and also the analysis of state-sponsored terrorism in Byman Daniel, **Deadly Connections**, (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[6] One example of the Resistance Network dynamic is the Syrian sponsorship of Palestinian militant groups acting as Executors against the Target of the regional peace process that was begun in Madrid in 1991. "To disrupt [the Madrid initiative] and keep the Palestinian movement weak, Syria supported an array of anti-Israel movements that rejected the peace process .... In 1991, after the Madrid peace conference that brought Israel, Palestinian leaders, and various Arab states together, HAMAS and other militant Palestinians established the Ten Front in Syria to oppose negotiations. The PFLP, the DFLP, PIJ, HAMAS and Hizbullah all conducted attacks…Some of these groups used terrorism, while others, particularly Hizbullah, concentrated primarily on guerilla war." See Byman Daniel, **Deadly Connections**, (Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 129-130).

[7] The political objective of the Resistance Network may be, among other things, the spreading of an ideology, the undermining of a political process, or the takeover of a political entity.

[8] See, for instance, the CFR interview with Julia Choucair (7/31/06) on the reversal of roles between Syria and the Hizbullah; the NY Times report (11/28/06) on the Hizbullah training the Mahdi Army in Iraq; and the UN report on Hizbullah training of Islamic militants from Somalia with Iran and Syria providing weaponry (NY Times, 11/15/06). See also Reviews #7, Battle for Control of the Resistance Network.

[9] See the concept Address and ReViews #7, Battle for Control of the Resistance Network.

[10] In the case of Israel, the Resistance Network recognizes its military inferiority in relation to the IDF, and therefore does not aim to subdue Israel through conventional military means, but rather exhausting it with ongoing limited warfare tactics. These include suicide bombings, rocket attacks, kidnappings, weapons-smuggling through tunnels, and the use of human shields.

- **Promoting a radical agenda** – The Resistance Network promotes a radical political agenda that threatens moderate Arab states such as Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.[11]

- **Exploits technological innovation** – The Resistance Network takes advantage of information and other technologies created by globalization, which result in rapid transfer of information, goods and people; and in small, non-state groups gaining disproportionate influence.

The Resistance Network Against Israel

In recent years, the salient expression of Resistance Network against Israel is found in acts of terror emanating from Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. The Resistance Network has succeeded in preventing Israel from military or political achievements leading towards its secure existence. In this way, the Resistance Network furthers its goal of establishing a single Islamist state in place of the state of Israel.

The **Executors** of the Resistance Network against Israel are organizations such as Hizbullah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Palestinian Resistance Committee and other terror organizations, which use Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority as **Hosts.** [12]

Iran has been increasingly involved in instigating the Resistance Network against Israel, thus becoming the most prominent **Initiator** within the network. As such, it has become the primary source of inspiration for the Resistance Network's ideology and has been funding and assisting the Palestinian terror organizations, as well as Hizbullah, in their actions against Israel.

Syria acts as **Facilitator** to the Resistance Network against Israel by hosting the headquarters of some of the Palestinian terror organizations, supporting Hizbullah and aiding the passage of weapons and people from Iran into Lebanon.

Furthermore, the Resistance Network against Israel is characterized by these additional elements:

- **Permanent Resistance** – The Resistance Network is composed of actors who fundamentally reject Israel's right to exist and act politically, legally, diplomatically and militarily to undermine Israel's existence and to promote a single Islamist state or entity in Israel's place.[13]

- **No End of Occupation -** The Resistance Network works to prevent Israel from ending its control over the Palestinians, since an End of Occupation may anchor the principle of the two-state solution, to which the Resistance Network is fundamentally opposed.[14]

End.

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[11]   See the concept Moderate Axis.

[12]   See Ben Horin, **Ynet,** 11/05/06, in Hebrew.

[13]   The Permanent Resistance to Israel takes part in the Basic De-Legitimization of Israel, in which states, organizations and other actors that are prima facie not inherently connected to the Arab-Israeli conflict attack the right of the state of Israel to exist (as in the anti-Israel activity at the 2001 Durban Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance; or the initiation of the International Court of Justice case concerning the separation barrier; or the Holocaust denial conference in Iran of 12/06).

[14]   This is also true regarding the scenario of End of Conflict and Finality of Claims between Israel and the Palestinians or Israel and Lebanon. See, for example, the concept of The Shebaa Farms.