PALESTINIAN POLITICS AFTER ARAFAT

A Failed National Movement

AS'AD GHANEM

PALESTINIAN POLITICS AFTER ARAFAT

INDIANA SERIES IN MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

Mark Tessler, general editor

PALESTINIAN POLITICS AFTER ARAFAT

A Failed National Movement

AS'AD GHANEM

Indiana University Press
Bloomington and Indianapolis

This book is a publication of

Indiana University Press
601 North Morton Street
Bloomington, IN 47404-3797 USA

www.iupress.indiana.edu

Telephone orders 800-842-6796
Fax orders 812-855-7931
Orders by e-mail iuporder@indiana.edu

∞ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ganim, As'ad.
Palestinian politics after Arafat : a failed national movement / As'ad Ghanem.
p. cm. — (Indiana series in middle east studies)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-253-35427-3 (cloth : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-253-22160-5 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Palestinian Arabs—Politics and government—21st century. 2. Nationalism—Palestine. 3. Arab-Israeli conflict. 4. Arafat, Yasir, 1929-2004. I. Title.
DS119.7.G355 2009
956.95'3044—dc22
2009024538

1 2 3 4 5 15 14 13 12 11 10

To my daughters: Lobna, Hala, and Lina

Contents

Preface

This book represents an attempt to understand the situation of the Palestinians and their national movement at the start of the twenty-first century. This has been a period of reversals and change; it is different in essence from earlier periods of Palestinian history since the Palestinian Nakba. I shall focus on the period which began following the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), with special attention to the period following the second intifada against Israeli occupation (October 2000).

It was after Oslo that the seeds of the present period, which has brought the Palestinian national movement to the verge of failure, were planted. This period is characterized by the transition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from support of a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian problem to pursuit of partial solutions, and by the failure of the Palestinian national movement to achieve even one of its national aspirations. Equally, Yasser Arafat's tightened control over the Palestinian national movement and the spread of corruption under his leadership led to the figurative bankruptcy of the PNA and the PLO. Finally, the PLO's gradual decline in the domestic and international arenas and the rise of Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) as an alternative to it provided the foundation for Hamas's ascent to power in 2006.

Israel strongly condemned the sweeping victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections that were held on January 25, 2006, and declared that it would not negotiate with any Hamas-led government. The Hamas victory gave the Israeli government another excuse not to negotiate directly with the legitimately elected Palestinian government and to continue with its unilateral efforts to destroy the Palestinian movement for independence and to prevent the establishment of a sovereign state alongside Israel. At the same time, the immediate reaction by the supporters of the Palestinian liberation movement (Fateh), made it clear that Palestinian politics had reached a moment of crisis.

I will argue that the crisis among the Palestinians is so severe that the street fighting and confrontations covered by the media scarcely scratch its surface. The problem runs so deep that the Palestinians have actually lost the ability to function efficiently, internally or externally, as a single national group. The existential crisis that currently afflicts the Palestinians and their national movement is no accident. It is, in fact, a direct result of historical processes that intensified after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994, and erupted into the public sphere in the post-Arafat era.

Following an introduction that provides historical and theoretical background, chapters 2 and 3 explain the Israeli post-Oslo policies toward the Palestinians and their relevance to the Palestinian national movement's failure in the post-Arafat era. Chapters 4 and 5 analyze two aspects of an Arafat regime in the PNA that contributed to the failure of the Palestinian national movement: the Arafat-controlled system and the spread of corruption under Arafat rule. Chapter 6 explains and analyzes the lack of authoritative leadership following Arafat's death in 2004 as a source of failure, and chapters 7 and 8 analyze and explain the rise of Hamas as an alternative to the PLO and the open conflict between its supporters and supporters of the PLO.

The crisis in the Palestinian national movement is linked to its choice of Arafat and the PLO to guide Palestinian affairs. Freeing themselves from the crisis will require new thinking by the Palestinians about all of the options available to them in their internal affairs and in their relations with Israel, the West, and the Arab world. As things currently stand, it is hard to envision the various factions and currents in the Palestinian national movement taking a consensual and logical step in this direction, and therefore it is improbable that it can extricate itself from the crisis.

Over the last two years research assistants helped me gather my data and classify it. I would like to thank all of them, especially Aziz Kayed, Mohanad Mostafa, Alex Bailsky, and Rola Sirhan, and to thank the many people who gave of their precious time and allowed me to interview them. I also thank Katie Hesketh and Dina Fattom, who edited my draft and gave me very useful recommendations for the improvement of the text.

PALESTINIAN POLITICS AFTER ARAFAT

Introduction

Theoretical Framework and Historical Background

The post-Oslo era in Israeli-Palestinian politics has been a period of reversals and change for the Palestinian national movement. This period is different in essence from earlier periods of Palestinian history for two primary reasons. First, the changes observed during this period are taking place within the context of a geographical shift in the center of gravity from the Palestinian diasporas to the "Palestinian center": the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian center emerged as a focal point over the years, especially during the first intifada, which began in the late 1980s. Second, all the events which have taken place during the post-Oslo period were shaped by the complex interaction with Israel, both the heightened attempt to reach an agreement and the intensification of violence. We shall focus on the period which began with the start of the second intifada (October 2000), although the origins of the period can be traced back much earlier, to the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994 or to the election of Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister of Israel in 1996. Indeed, the steps taken by Netanyahu's government to dismantle the Oslo process and halt the implementation of United Nations resolutions 242 and 338, which formed the basis of the mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), were accompanied by an outline plan for the Palestinian state. In the view of the Israeli right, this plan accepted the existence

of the Palestinians without allowing them full self-determination, while at the same time pushing for their autonomy and management of their own affairs in some kind of quasi-state.

What happened during the following decade to the Palestinians in general, and to their national movement in particular, led to the internal and external failure of the latter. Internally, this failure was manifested in the disintegration of the regional and international status of the Palestinian national movement. Concomitantly, the efforts to establish a Palestinian state and resolve the conflict reached a dead end because of the deep internal schism that developed, which is incompatible with national unity.

This situation has diverse causes. One is that the agreements with Israel did not lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state, and another can be traced to the irresolution of the demands advanced by the Palestinian national movement since its reorganization in the 1960s. Internally, governmental malpractice and the spread of corruption under Yasser Arafat, together with the lack of consensus over the leadership after his death—which was followed by the outbreak of a harsh struggle among the Palestinians—led to an internal breakdown, which was reflected in the decline of the PLO's reputation in the international arena, particularly in Europe and the Arab world.

Thus, the situation in which the Palestinian national movement found itself at the dawn of the new millennium is significant for all those interested in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and for the Palestinians themselves. It raises a theoretical issue which can be linked to the decline of national movements in general. Much has been written in the literature on ethnicity and nationalism about the paths followed by groups of people from the pre-national to the national condition; much research and thought has been devoted to the factors that shape or encourage this trajectory. This book, however, is concerned with the inverse process: the decline or collapse of national movements. In this chapter I want to identify the symptoms of the disintegration of national movements and the diverse factors that create such situations. The collapse of the Arab national movement constructed by Jamal Abdel Nasser, the schism and internal rifts within the Kurdish national movement, the civil war in Lebanon in the 1970s, the civil war in Iraq that followed the American occupation in 2003, and the disintegration of several national movements in the Balkans in the 1990s are all cases that can destabilize the argument that national conditions are deterministic and follow a linear development. They provide examples of national movements that have disintegrated and failed, as a result of both external and internal causes.

Failed National Movements

For the purposes of the following discussion, a basic distinction will be drawn between a nation (national group) and nationality on the one hand, and a national movement on the other. It is true that the two concepts can be treated in parallel, and in fact most scholars do so; however, in order to clarify the theoretical context, I prefer to distinguish between them.

A national group or nation is a group of individuals who assert, actively or by tacit consent, that they share a comprehensive system of national values and beliefs. More specifically, a national group is an ethnic group which aspires to self-determination;[1] that is, a group that has a shared consciousness based on the past or on unifying elements, real or imagined. Whereas many students of nationalism assert that national and ethnic affiliations are based on objective conditions or elements, such as history, language, origins, and culture, my definition rests more on the existence of a shared consciousness, which is the only essential element for the existence of ethnicity. The other elements of ethnic and/or national group affiliation may exist, in reality or merely in imagination. Authentic and objective components may exist in the group's past or present, but this is not an essential condition. These components may exist only in imagination, as elements of the group consciousness.

Nationalism is the assertion of uniqueness, or the demand for self-determination, by a distinctive group demarcated by a shared unique consciousness which differentiates its members from those of other groups—that is, by a system of real or imagined beliefs, values, and aspirations that provide the content for the assertion of this distinctiveness. This value system is generally rigid and basic, allowing members of the group to be divided according to factional, social, geographical, linguistic, or cultural values, or along other fault lines. Beyond these divisions, however, the members of the group believe in the superiority of the national values which unify the group.[2]

The widespread assertion that nationalism is an expression of the process of modernization[3] or an expression of a primordial ethnic identity[4] does not provide an adequate explanation of the phenomenon of nationalism per se. These may be secondary components that work alongside the main forces that "invented" the nationalism, which is a "creation" of the elites, in particular the intellectuals and political leadership, who foster the demand for self-determination. It is clear, for example, that societies which have experienced rapid modernization, such as those of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf emirates, and some areas

in Central Africa, have not developed a genuine and distinctive nationalism; rather, the modernization process strengthened the status of the ruling family and accelerated the processes of a familial and primordial solidarity that offsets the national idea. At the same time, more traditional societies that have not attained a comparable level of modernization, such as the Kurds, or even Egypt in the second half of the twentieth century, outpaced the Saudis and the other societies mentioned above in the consolidation of their nationality. They were swept up in the national process both as societies and as individuals, and acquired a highly developed national consciousness as a result of a genuine or imagined system of values manufactured by leaders or intellectuals. The same applies to the assertion of a primordial ethnicity. Some important national groups in the contemporary world were never part of a single ethnic group—notably in some former colonies (such as the United States, Canada, and Australia); and, even if they were (something that cannot be reliably verified), what consolidated them as national groups was not shared ethnicity, but rather the "common glue" created by the leaders and intellectuals.

A national movement is the sum total of individual, organizational, and political expressions the goal of which is the realization of national aspirations, generally manifested in the aspiration to self-determination. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly state that a national movement is a struggle between activists who hold a national ideology, and a state or other group, which opposes their demand or takes a different stand on it.[5] This position fails to provide an adequate minimum definition of a national movement.

A national movement has two fundamental elements: (1) the organizational manifestation which unites, formally or informally, individuals, institutions, or groups who have set for themselves the objective of achieving self-determination; and (2) political engagement or political strategies which serve the individuals, institutions, or groups in their pursuit of these goals. National movements commonly face a struggle against the forces opposed to their national goals, but such a struggle is not essential. In many cases, internal, rather than external, conflicts are its catalyst or goals.

The topic of nationalism, nation, and national movement has been dealt with in many studies, particularly in the fields of the social sciences and history. Conspicuous in the literature is the deterministic assumption of a linear rise of nationalism and the realization of its goals. Even those who predict the demise of the national era assume that it comes to an end because the goals of nationalism have been achieved, making it necessary to advance to a post-national age in which the focus shifts to promoting the welfare of the individual, even if this is contrary to the national group logic. Too little attention has been paid to

the failure of national movements or their disintegration before their national aspirations are achieved, as has occurred in the case of the Palestinian national movement.

There is, however, considerable discussion of the failure or success of social-change movements,[6] and this work may illuminate the discussion of national movements and the conditions for their success or failure. Like national movements, social movements aim for social and political change; thus they bear at least some similarities to national movements. Moreover, social movements generally use non-establishment forms of struggle and political participation, just like national movements, especially in the period preceding independence or self-determination—the point at which they take control of the national or state institutions.

The achievement of the objectives of a social- or political-change movement may be influenced by its profile (internal strength and solidarity), the nature of its objectives or goals, the group or groups that oppose it, and the third parties interested in the conflict between the movement and its opponents. Of special importance is the strength or weakness of the movement itself.[7] These characteristics can also be applied to national movements.

The extent to which a social-change movement achieves its objectives depends on the degree of influence it can exert on its target group and any third parties.[8] This factor is particularly valid for national movements engaged in a struggle for national liberation. In gauging success and failure, social-change movements (like national liberation movements, and any political actor seeking to generate change) may be deemed successful to the extent that their achievements measure up against their declared objectives. William Gamson proposes a slightly different definition:[9] that success and failure are measured by a movement's ability to persuade its opponents that it does represent its group's interests, in addition to its ability to achieve these interests. Paul Schumaker proposes five indices for gauging success or failure:[10]

1. Accessibility: the extent to which the target group or institution is willing to listen to the movement's demands.
2. Response: the adoption by the countervailing group (the opponents) of the movement's objectives as part of its own objectives.
3. A policy change that corresponds to the movement's objectives.
4. The fruits of the implementation of its policy, in the wake of change that took place in light of its objectives.
5. Influence: the depth or breadth of its influence in light of changes in policies and the fruits of this change.

This approach to social-change movements can help us examine the success or failure of national movements. Successful national movements have absorbed the bulk of the scanty theoretical and empirical discussion in the literature, leaving the failures unanalyzed. Success is measured on three levels: (1) a national movement's ability to organize and recruit members of the national group to support it and its national goals; (2) its ability to persuade the opposing side(s) or third parties of the justice of its course and to compel it or them to accept its goals; and (3) most importantly, the extent to which a national movement achieves its objectives or goals, judged by their scale and quality.

The success or failure of a national movement depends, thus, on the strength or weakness of three factors associated with the national movement and its ability to achieve its objectives. The first factor concerns the internal strength of the national movement and relates to its internal organization, including whether it has developed a suitable organizational structure with central and provincial political institutions; the quality and strength of the leadership; territorial factors, such as unity or concentration as opposed to dispersion; demographic elements such as size, the existence of urban centers, and age distribution; economic factors, such as the wealth or poverty of the members of the national group; and social factors associated with inner cohesion or fission.

The second element concerns the solidarity and strength of opposing parties or groups. It relates to the intensity of the resistance, both among the leadership and rank-and-file members of the group contesting the aspiring national group and its objectives; its ability to withstand that group, economically and politically; and the strength of the opposing group—its numbers, economic capacity, social solidarity, etc.

The third element has to do with the international and regional interests of external parties in promoting or opposing the movement's goals. Such third parties may be foreign states, international organizations, or pro- or anti- groups in other countries (in recent years these have been mainly in the United States and Europe). These may provide passive or active support, including material assistance, to the national group; opposition; or aid to groups that resist it.

Taken together, all of these factors, in addition to environmental conditions, may explain the success or failure of a national movement. In principle, the achievements of such a movement may be more relative than absolute and, as such, cannot be measured in zero-sum terms. The success of a national movement depends on the existence of a nation and nationalism, but a national movement can fail even where these exist.

Such a failure may be manifested in three main ways: first, in a total failure to achieve the national goals that the movement set for itself; second, in internal disintegration due to a substantive disagreement between two subgroups that

are equal or closely balanced in strength and influence; and third, when these two conditions coexist. The causes may be external, such as pressure exerted by foreign states or groups, or internal, manifested in internal struggles that make it impossible for the national movement to make progress toward its goals. The basis of these struggles may be ideological, political, economic, ethnic, or territorial. Some or all of these factors may be present, or one dominant factor may cause the internal disintegration of the national movement.

If a national movement exists along a time axis on which nationalism is produced by a conscious decision or a series of such decisions, involving rational choice by the key players, is it plausible that nationalism includes the definition of who is "inside" and who is "outside" the borders of the nation? What are the contents of nationalism? What is the source of the historical and contemporary elements and what is their impact? Of course, one may argue that nationalism and nation developed over time and advanced in distinct stages, starting from the diffusion of nationalism, developing its core content and its main shapers.

McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly present four stages in the development of nationalism (and subsequently of a nation), exemplified in two cases: the successful consolidation of a unifying Italian nationalism in the nineteenth century; and, at the other extreme end, the disintegration of the Soviet Union at the end of the twentieth century. Their four stages which may cause the rise or fall of a nationalism and nation are as follows:

(1) A chain of opportunities: This refers to the successful or failed cases in a region or within a subgroup, which are propagated for emulation in other regions or by other subgroups. McAdam et al. offer the Sicilian revolt in 1860 and the ensuing success of Garibaldi as the first in a series of steps accomplished by the Italian leader that ultimately led to the unification of the Italian nation.[11] Conversely, they see the ability of the secessionist movements that developed in the mid-1980s in parts of the Soviet Union, such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, as the first link in a chain of demands for independence that ultimately led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. These secessionist movements turned into popular movements that won over a significant share of the population to support their demands.[12]

(2) Identity shift: This refers to a process whereby identity and its components change significantly within a limited period of time. Fundamental alterations in the nature of Sicilian identity before and during the 1860 uprising led to a deep shift in the basic identity of the Sicilian peasants, and engendered a progression from the demand for Sicilian

autonomy to support for a unified Italian identity and the consolidation of the Italian nation.[13] Similarly, these shifts in basic identity in the second half of the 1980s fundamentally altered the values of the inhabitants of the Soviet republics, so that they demanded autonomy or total disconnection from their former identity, which was based on universal values of Communism, to advance particularistic values based on their unique and distinctive identities, incorporating elements from the pre-Communist past, including historic struggles against Russia.[14]

(3) Contention: This refers to the internal rivalry between opposing forces within a single national movement, which may strengthen the movement or destroy it depending on the nature of the competition. In the case of Sicily in the nineteenth century, the rivalry pitted the "moderates" against the "democratic camp," which vied over the extent of their contribution to the achievement of the national goals.[15] We can also discern an inverse type of competition between rival organizations aspiring to different goals. This competition may find various expressions: competition to rally external support in order to triumph over the rival; or an inner competition to gain control over resources, state organizations, or institutions in order to gain and keep the upper hand. A balance between rivals may lead to paralysis or even an internal schism that divides the nation.[16]

(4) Brokerage: This refers to the roles that interested parties among local elites in specific regions or among distinct subgroups play in the process of national unification or disintegration. In the case of Sicily, the personal or collective benefit that the local elites stood to gain made possible their recruitment to the national project.[17] By contrast, it was the individuals and groups that were active during the 1980s in the peripheral regions of the Soviet Union, and who were exposed to Soviet information and the Soviet power structure, that oversaw the secession of their regions and the breakaway from Russia in the 1990s. The material or national interests of these individuals and groups ultimately led to secession and the establishment of new states.[18]

The combination of these four conditions produced divergent results in the Italian and Russian cases. Internal conditions within the groups themselves and/or external conditions can contribute to the conditions enumerated above and, taken together, can influence the direction in which a national movement develops.

Continuing this discussion concerning the failure of national movements, we may point to various forms of disintegration of national movements. These can provide evidence of the scope of a crisis experienced by a national movement.

Disintegration on the margins: In this situation, a national movement accepts the existence of a segment of the nation whose development differs from that of the majority. The problem is exacerbated when the group on the margin develops its own unique identity, distinct from that of the national majority. Such cases may emerge in three situations: (1) when part of the national group develops in a geographically isolated region located on the periphery; (2) where a foreign power or state controls part of the nation, like the Palestinians in Israel or the Syrians in Alexandretta under Turkish control; or (3) when a significant percentage of the members of a national group emigrate to new regions or countries and adopt a separate identity from that of the original nationality, as in the cases of traditional colonies or countries of immigration in recent times—among the many examples of this are the whites in South Africa, the Europeans in North America and Australia, and the Russians in Israel.

Disintegration into equal fragments: This form of disintegration may be voluntary or it may be caused by the intervention of a foreign power that divides the nation into distinct political units. Examples include the Arab nation, which is divided among more than twenty states characterized by different and distinct conditions of the Arab identity, and the partition of Kurdistan and the Kurds among four countries (Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria), thereby allowing for different forms of Kurdish existence.

Disintegration at the center: This situation is indicative of a profound crisis in a national movement. It results from a balance of deterrence and is manifested as an internal struggle, which may take the form of civil war or national paralysis, either of which makes it impossible to advance the national goals. Such cases have occurred and are occurring in some African countries, such as Rwanda, Sudan, and Algeria, as well as in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s and Iraq following the American invasion in 2003.

It is difficult to determine the ultimate success or failure of social movements, and with regard to political processes in particular, for two reasons. The first difficulty is the diagnosis and definition of success or failure: what some consider to be a failure may be interpreted as a success by others. Success and

failure are relative concepts and a matter of subjective judgment. The second is that it is impossible to give a final verdict on the success or failure of an ongoing historical process, since unexpected intervention or calculated steps taken by the leadership may alter the national movement's situation and switch some indicators from success to failure, and vice versa.

Nevertheless, if we accept the argument that success means achievement of the goals that the national movement has set itself, it is clear that failure is a situation in which the national movement does not achieve these objectives, especially after a reasonable period of time has elapsed. A national movement can also be said to have failed when environmental conditions indicate that it is in persistent decline and the scope of its achievements is shrinking rather than increasing. In addition, when a national movement disintegrates, especially at the center, when it is clear that the national group has split into more than one national movement, and when this process takes place without the establishment of a state or the consolidation of national institutions (which serve as an alternative catalyst for group affiliation), the national movement should be classified as failed.

The Palestinian National Movement in Historical Context: From Success to Failure

This book focuses primarily on the years during which the Palestinian national movement became a failed movement, a process that culminated only after the death of Yasser Arafat, although it is clear that the causes of this failure are deeply rooted in the modern history of the Palestinian national movement, beginning with the consequences of the Palestinian Nakba of 1948. Since that time, the movement has passed through a number of distinct periods.

The first period, between 1948 and the 1967 war, with the Nakba and the Palestinians' expulsion from their homeland, and its devastating impact on the Palestinians in general and their national movement in particular, preceded the revival of the latter. The next period began immediately after the 1967 war, when the Fateh movement and Arafat in particular took control of the Palestinian national movement. This period ended in the early 1980s, specifically 1982 and following the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, when Israel launched an assault on the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, an attack that was bolstered by the attempts of the Ba'ath regime in Syria to remove Arafat as the leader of the PLO.

The third and key period began with Arafat's search for a compromise with Israel, which included the renewal of relations with Egypt, closer ties with Jordan, and attempts to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. These

attempts bore their first fruit in 1988, after the proclamation that year of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, Arafat's public denunciation of terrorism, and his approval of UN Resolution 242 indirectly recognizing Israel.

In December 1987, the popular struggle against the Israeli occupation—the intifada—began. This uprising confronted the Palestinian national leadership, the PLO, with the immediate need to deal with a new form of struggle and with options for resolving it. The intifada forced the Palestinian leadership to focus on the demand for a Palestinian state, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, alongside Israel. This entailed major changes in emphasis and new directions for the Palestinian national movement and its leadership, which resulted in the taking of concrete steps. The most significant expression of the PLO's change in attitude toward Israel and regional peace was made at the nineteenth session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), held in Algiers in November 1988. This session, proclaimed the "Intifada Session," unanimously approved the Palestinian Declaration of Independence; which even won the support of the representatives of the hard-line organizations: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).

The Declaration of Independence included an article which stated that "UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947), which partitioned Palestine into two states, one Arab, one Jewish . . . provides those conditions of international legitimacy that ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty and national independence."[19] This wording explicitly recognized the partition resolution and, indirectly but clearly, Israel's right to exist. This orientation was clarified in the political manifesto issued by the PNC, according to which the PLO agreed "to participate in an international conference that would seek to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace and would be convened on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, supplemented by the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination." The manifesto demanded that "Israel withdraw from all Palestinian and Arab lands occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem."[20] This wording, adopted at the urging of the Arafat-led mainstream, represented a significant step toward clarifying the nature of Palestinian expectations from Israel and for peace. Along with Arafat's renunciation of terrorism, this led to a significant modification in the attitude of the United States toward the PLO and the Palestinians, and paved the way for the convening of the international conference in Madrid on October 18, 1991. At the conference, the Palestinians formed a joint delegation with Jordan, which left, however, the Palestinian delegates with sole responsibility for the negotiations over specifically Palestinian matters.

The head of the Palestinian delegation, selected by the PLO leadership in Tunis, was Haidar Abd el-Shafi, one of the founders of the PLO and a well-

known personality in Gaza and among the Palestinians in general. In his opening address to the conference, he presented the Palestinian position, reiterating the Palestinians' desire for peace with Israel on the basis of the Security Council resolutions and the Palestinian right to self-determination, to be manifested in a state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which would be confederated with Jordan.[21]

After the Madrid conference, and on the basis of the discussions and agreements which preceded and followed it, the talks were continued in several multilateral meetings considering regional issues and in bilateral sessions, during which Israel and each of the Arab delegations attempted to push for progress on specific contentious matters. The bilateral talks between Israel and the Palestinians were held in Washington and continued intermittently from the Madrid conference until the Oslo Accords. Six rounds of talks were held during this period without producing any significant progress. Even during the sixth round, held after the electoral victory of Yitzhak Rabin as prime minister and the change of government in Israel, no change was evident in the Israeli position or in Israel's willingness to compromise with the Palestinians.[22]

This third period of the Palestinian national movement continued with the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians in Washington (which went on until August 1993), followed by negotiations between Israel and the PLO in Oslo and the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993, and the subsequent establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

It was after Oslo that the seeds of the present period, which has brought the Palestinian national movement to the verge of failure, were planted. It is characterized by the PLO's transition from support of a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian problem to pursuit of partial solutions, and the failure of the Palestinian national movement to achieve even one of its national aspirations. Equally, Arafat's tightened control over the Palestinian national movement and the spread of corruption under his leadership led to the political bankruptcy of the institutions of the PNA and PLO. Finally, the PLO's gradual decline in the domestic and international arenas and the rise of Hamas as an alternative to it provided the basis for Hamas's ascent to power in 2006.

The PLO and the Palestinians: From "Resolving the Conflict" to "Partial Arrangements"

The stalemate in the Washington talks, produced by the inflexibility of the two teams—the Israelis led by Elyakim Rubinstein and the Palestinians by Dr. Abd el-Shafi—prompted both sides to seek other channels, secret or public, through

which to reach concrete agreements. This option became more urgent after Rabin took office, as his electoral campaign had promised to conclude an agreement with the Palestinians within six to nine months.

On August 19, 1993, in Oslo, official Israeli and PLO representatives reached an agreement, the crux of which was the proclamation of basic principles for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The agreement became a formal international commitment after an exchange of letters of mutual recognition on September 9 and the signing of the Declaration of Principles on September 13 on the White House lawn, with guarantees given by the United States and Russia. The ceremony in Washington marked the end of a six-month period of negotiations that had begun as informal talks between Israeli academics and PLO representatives, aimed at investigating options for a peace agreement in light of the deadlocked negotiations in Washington. On the Israeli side, the two chief negotiators were Dr. Ron Pundak of Tel Aviv University and Dr. Yair Hirschfeld of the University of Haifa, both of whom were close to the then deputy foreign minister, Yossi Beilin, and were working in partial coordination with him.[23] Beilin kept Foreign Minister Shimon Peres briefed on the contacts and on the flexibility displayed by the PLO representatives with regard to a future peace agreement with Israel, in contrast to the rigid positions presented by the Palestinian delegation in Washington. This flexibility gave a signal to Peres, and later to Prime Minister Rabin, of Arafat's interest in opening a secret, direct channel for talks. They sent the director general of the Foreign Ministry, Uri Savir, to meet with PLO representatives Ahmad Qurei (Abu Alaa), Hassan Asfour, and Maher al-Kurd. The Israeli side later added Yoel Singer, the legal adviser to the Foreign Ministry, to the team. These talks led to Israel's recognition of the PLO, in addition to the endorsement of the agreement.[24]

The mutual recognition and Declaration of Principles opened the way for negotiations between Israel and the PLO. This in turn produced a provisional agreement, signed in Cairo in May 1994, establishing the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in the Gaza Strip and Jericho. This was seen as a first step toward a comprehensive peace agreement based on UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 383. The PNA took shape in May–June 1994, and took concrete form with the arrival in Gaza of Arafat and his entourage from Tunis on July 1, 1994.

From the Israeli perspective, the agreement with the PLO, including the recognition of it as the representative of the Palestinian people, was a significant breakthrough, and it provoked protests from the right-wing and religious opposition. For the government, the agreement was a practical manifestation of Rabin's campaign promise to make peace with the Palestinians, against the backdrop of the intifada in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the appearance

of the first signs of fatigue with the conflict among broad sectors of the Israeli public. The Israelis and their government had also taken note of the increased international insistence on the need for a solution in the Middle East, especially from the United States, as a result of the new global balance of power emerging in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. One manifestation of this change was the massive support offered by governments in Europe, North America, and elsewhere for a speedy resolution of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

For the PLO, the agreement came at a difficult juncture. The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were beginning to weary of the intifada. The negotiations in Washington were not bringing about any significant achievements on the ground, and to some extent they had excluded the PLO leadership from the focus of the decision-making process. Compounding the PLO's difficulties was the collapse of the Communist bloc, which had consistently supported the Palestinian position against Israel, and the turmoil in the Arab world as a result of the Gulf War. Furthermore, the support of PLO, Arafat, and the Palestinians for Iraq caused the Gulf states to cut back on their financial and political support. This produced a severe financial crisis, which forced the PLO to close many of its missions around the world. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip a strong local leadership began to emerge and to assert its independence from the PLO leadership in the Palestinian diaspora. On top of these factors, the continuation of Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the collective punishment of the Palestinian civilian population increased the pressure for the negotiations. The agreement was, in fact, necessary to rescue the PLO leadership from the abrupt termination of its historic role, and thus an expression of its distress and desire to pay almost any price to survive.

The political breakthrough was clearly the result of both external and internal conditions related to the conflict. While Israel still had other options, such as concluding an agreement with local Palestinian leaders, with Syria on the Golan Heights, or with Jordan on the West Bank, the PLO was facing financial and organizational collapse, and had no real choice but to proceed with the negotiations. This disparity was evident from the way in which the negotiations were conducted. All the evidence available from memoirs and other books written to date about the Oslo negotiations indicate that the talks were directed by the Israelis, who prepared the draft agreements, stipulated conditions, and decided on the core elements of the Declaration of Principles, including the relegation of crucial questions such as the future of Jerusalem, the future of the settlements, the future of the refugees, borders, security arrangements, free passage, and many other central issues, to a later stage. In practice Israel obtained a cease-fire

on the part of the Palestinians without itself having to make any commitment on the substance of the future agreement, while the Palestinians agreed to almost all of the Israeli conditions.[25]

The Palestinians who returned with Arafat from exile had made no preparations for the move to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The process of setting up the PNA, described in general terms in the Interim Agreement between Israel and the PLO, was implemented in a disorganized fashion chiefly through ad hoc decisions made by Arafat, who did not consult the professional echelons. The administrative arrangements which evolved within the PLO in the period before the establishment of the PNA were reproduced partially and hastily in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Mechanisms set up by the Israelis before and after the establishment of the PNA were automatically inherited. Others were instituted in the spur of the moment, without sufficient consideration. The result was duplication, chaos, and an utter lack of clarity regarding spheres of responsibility and administration. Thus a gap was created between the formal agreements and those actually implemented with regard to the type of regime practiced in the PNA, which led to many deviations from the principles of good governance. This situation is one of the main focuses of this study.

Approximately two years after the establishment of the PNA, the leader of the Israeli right, Benjamin Netanyahu, won the elections against Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin's successor as head of the Labor Party. This was the most important turning point since the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO. Netanyahu coined the phrase, "If they give, they will get; if they don't give, they won't get." He deliberately put the brakes on the peace process. Even though Netanyahu reaffirmed his commitment to the agreements before and after the elections, it is clear that his declaration was merely a political ploy, designed both to win the votes of the Israeli centrists, who were supportive of the agreement with the Palestinians but dissatisfied with its implementation under the Labor government, and to respond to domestic and foreign pressures on his new leadership. Although Netanyahu legally committed to withdraw from Hebron and other regions and partially implemented these obligations, his fundamental attitude was hostile to an agreement based on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on territories that he defined as *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel). The steps he and his government took, in effect, halted the peace process and destroyed any mutual trust which had developed between the leaders of the two sides. Ultimately, it created a situation in which the Palestinians had to plead with Israel for every centimeter of withdrawal, and simultaneously to relocate their leadership from one place to another, preventing them from operating effectively. Instead of working to resolve the Palestinian problem and establish a state, the negotiations focused on daily issues of free passage, work in Israel,

the transfer of tax money collected for the PNA by Israel, and even the right of mobility for rank-and-file Palestinians and their leaders to move freely from one place to another, including travel abroad and the maintenance of contact with the Arab world and the international community.

Netanyahu lost to Ehud Barak in the 1999 elections in part because of the latter's promise, as Rabin's heir, to make an arrangement with the Palestinians. Barak tried to work out a comprehensive agreement with the Palestinians. He pressed for a summit at Camp David with Arafat and the Palestinian leadership, under American auspices. The results of the negotiations at the Camp David summit were interpreted very differently by each side.[26] In the end, the conference produced no political agreement or clear movement towards a solution to the conflict.

As a result of this failure, Barak's government collapsed and new elections were initiated in Israel. Parallel to this collapse was a rapid and significant increase in violent confrontations between the Palestinians and Israel. The government of Israel consequently launched massive attacks on the Palestinian territories, without distinguishing between armed forces and civilians, the organized forces of the PNA and the Palestinian factions. Civilian public installations were bombed and the Israeli army besieged Arafat's offices in Ramallah. At the same time Palestinians launched attacks on the Israeli military, settlers, and civilians. The entire arrangement that had prevailed in the occupied territories since the establishment of the PNA was shattered.

Ariel Sharon, who became the interim leader of the Likud Party after Netanyahu's withdrawal from politics following his defeat by Barak in 1999, ran against Barak as the candidate of the Likud and the Israeli right, and won by an unprecedented landslide (55 percent of the vote) in 2001.

As prime minister, Sharon continued the assault on the PNA and brought about its final paralysis. Arafat remained confined in his compound, along with some of his aides and members of the Presidential Guard, until his death in November 2004. Concomitantly, Sharon instigated a fundamental change in Israel's attitude toward the Palestinian problem in general and toward the occupation in particular. Israel switched from a position of seeking to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians to one of seeking to control the conflict unilaterally. In this sense, Sharon's new post-Oslo program was based on heightened apprehensions over the high birth rate and the demographic increase of the Palestinians that was known as the "demographic threat," which was exploited as a means to tackle the problem and future of the occupation. The plan included several basic elements, such as a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and several sites in "northern Samaria," the erection of a separation wall between Israel and the West Bank, the unofficial annexation of the Jordan Valley, the continuation

and extension of settlement activity in the West Bank, the sanctioning of Palestinian self-management in civilian areas, and the improvement of relations with Egypt and Jordan, using them as mediators between Israel and the Palestinians and the Arab world.[27]

Thus the new Israeli policy and attitude, which began to take shape under Barak and intensified in a new form under Sharon, is critical for understanding Hamas's rise to power and the profound crisis within the Palestinian national movement. The disillusionment about all prospects for an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel has played a fundamental role in shaping the current Palestinian situation and the internal balance of power. On one hand, Fateh and its supporters did not fulfill their promises, and there was a very low probability that they would do so in the future, and on the other hand, Hamas's political positions are in opposition to those of Fateh. These are the elements which have created the current crisis plaguing the Palestinian national movement.

Thus, Palestinian history passed through a number of stages before arriving at its present juncture of profound and critical disagreement over the future of the Palestinian national movement.[28] The process of Palestinian mobilization gained momentum in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s within the framework of a successful attempt to build up the Palestinian national movement. These efforts resulted in the emergence of strong internal solidarity, which allowed the movement to make progress toward its goal of establishing a Palestinian state. This was made possible by the assistance of Arab countries, significant support from the international community, and material aid from the Communist bloc during the Cold War.

After the Lebanese civil war of 1982 and the subsequent dismantling of the PLO's infrastructure in Lebanon, the focus of Palestinian efforts shifted to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where, with significant contributions from Arab countries, the institutions of the future Palestinian state—political parties, educational, health-care and social welfare institutions, voluntary organizations, and the like—were built. This effort ultimately produced, or at least catalyzed, the outbreak of the first intifada and the appearance of the Palestinian problem in international headlines. It also subjected Israel to greater pressure and paved the way for Yitzhak Rabin's election in 1992 as Israeli prime minister, and later for negotiations with the PLO, resulting in the signing of the Oslo agreement.

However, since Netanyahu's victory in the 1996 Israeli elections, we have witnessed a progressive deterioration in the negotiations and increasing despair and doubt among both the Israelis and the Palestinians over the benefit of pursuing peace negotiations. Profound transformations on the Israeli side ultimately led to Sharon's election as prime minister and his declaration of a unilateral Israeli policy toward the Palestinian problem, known as the transition to

the post-Oslo phase. On the Palestinian side, the political situation, reinforced by domestic processes, brought about the rise of Hamas and its victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council—the legislative branch of the PNA—elections in 2006. This reflects the current state of relations between the two sides. The crux of the crisis involves a deep and paralyzing schism within the Palestinian national movement. The national objectives determined by the PLO at the start of the Oslo process have yet to be achieved and are as far as ever from realization. It is thus possible that the Palestinian national movement has "missed the boat" as far as these objectives are concerned. In order to shed further light on this situation, the discussion will now move on to an attempt to evaluate the trajectory of the Palestinian movement.

The main argument of this book is that the Palestinian national movement reached a dead end and came close to disintegration at the beginning of the present century. In the post-Arafat period, in particular in 2006, internal and external processes ripened in the Palestinian national movement, which provided clear evidence of its failure and made it a "failed national movement." Its failure is reflected in a number of basic indicators, which will be presented in greater detail in the final chapter of this book. They include the following:

1. Internally, the Palestinian national movement has reached a stage of internecine struggle and internal collapse. The rise of Hamas as an alternative to the PLO during the 1990s and the former's espousal of a plan based on social and political norms and aspirations which differ dramatically from those of the PLO have exacerbated the conflict between supporters of the PLO and its Fateh mainstream, and supporters of Hamas. This in turn has paralyzed the Palestinian political system and created an internal polarization which is dissolving the national movement from inside.
2. In its relationship with Israel and Zionism, the Palestinian national movement has not achieved one of the significant goals that it set for itself over the years; namely, the liberation of the homeland and the rejection of Zionism as a colonial movement, the return of the refugees, the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, and the achievement of a stable peace.
3. Externally, the stature of the Palestinian national movement, in the Arab world and the international arena in general, has plummeted.

The source of the failure at the beginning of the twenty-first century lies in the nature of the regime established by Arafat as the PNA. It is evidenced

by Israeli policy, which is opposed to an equitable solution to the Palestinian problem, and by the rise of Hamas as an alternative to the PLO, and the consequent emergence of a struggle within the Palestinian leadership in the post-Arafat era. These elements together caused the failure of the Palestinian national movement.

1

The Israeli Post-Oslo Strategy

The Demographic Threat and the Shift from Conflict Resolution to Conflict Management

Despite the fact that many analysts address the Oslo Accords as the cornerstone of any peace process or historical agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, it is clear that in recent years the political situation that prevailed during the time at which these agreements were signed has undergone a fundamental transformation. Responding to internal politics and impeded hopes for establishing an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, the Palestinians elected a new government and legislative council led by Hamas. The Palestinians have in effect closed the Oslo chapter and declared the beginning of a new stage. In so doing, they are following in the footsteps of Israel, which effectively ended Oslo and its bilateral agreements with Ehud Barak's deliberate thwarting of an interim agreement with Yasser Arafat at the Camp David summit of 2000. Barak was succeeded as prime minister by Ariel Sharon, who boasted of his bloody record in dealing with the Palestinians and of the fact that he "did not shake hands with Arafat," even as a minister in the Netanyahu government and a member of the Israeli negotiating team between 1996 and 1999. Sharon launched the new Israeli project, which will be discussed in detail later, and at the same time avoided any official negotiations with the Palestinians, even after the death of Arafat and the peaceful transfer of power to Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen). In tackling the future of the Palestinian

territories occupied in 1967, Sharon succeeded in establishing a new political "game" based on a shift from a policy of seeking a solution to the conflict to one of "conflict management."

The discourse on the future of Israel is entirely based, according to the majority of Israel's leadership, its elite, and its general public, on what is known within Israel as the "demographic threat" posed by the Palestinians. Closely related is the fear that Israel, within its extended borders that encompass the West Bank and Gaza, or within the limits of the 1967 borders, would, sooner or later, transform into a "bi-national" state.

The Politics of Fear: The "Demographic Threat" versus the "Bi-National" Reality

The demographic factor constitutes a basic component in the executive planning in modern communities. This is especially true of divided communities which came into being following a period of intense immigration. Demography constituted an important component in the Zionist movement's dealings with the Palestinians both before and after the establishment of Israel. Theodor Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, wished to "spirit the penniless [indigenous Palestinian] population across the border" to create the Jewish state.[1]

Once it was established, Israel continued to consider the demographic factor paramount in dealing with the Palestinians, whether they were citizens of Israel or not. Since the 1950s, Israeli policy and Jewish housing plans have focused on "improving" the demographic ratio in favor of the Jews in general as well as in specific locales by settling Jews in areas with significant Arab populations. The "Judaization" of Galilee represented a first step toward this end; it aimed at establishing state control over the land by founding and expanding Jewish settlements and communities over large areas of land to create a Jewish majority in Galilee.[2] As part of this project, lands were confiscated from Arab towns and villages and dozens of new Jewish settlements were built close to their outer borders.

The Judaization of Galilee was followed by another Judaization project targeting the Negev desert, the goal of which is to concentrate all of the Arab residents of the Negev into seven restricted, government-planned communities. This policy has been met by the strong opposition of the native Arab Bedouin population, whose traditionally distinct clans and nomadic lifestyle had previously been unrestricted. Under a similar policy, the Bedouin have been subjected to restrictions on herding of livestock, which requires the use of large tracts of land, while dozens of cooperative villages and communities continue to be es-

tablished for the Jews in the Negev area, where the government plans to absorb thousands of future Jewish residents. These general policies of Judaization have been coupled with deliberate attempts to reduce the status of Arab communities throughout the country, including the establishment of the town of Nazerat Illit on land previously under the control of the major Arab town of Nazareth, in order to demographically check its Arab population, and the development of Beer Sheva into the main city in the Negev area.

Demography has become an essential part of the conflict, and in recent years various conferences have been held and articles written on the subject of its effect on the character of the Jewish state and on a possible future solution with the Palestinians. It has been the catalyst for the discussion of an Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967. The demographic debate has also been broadened to include a link between withdrawal from parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the possibility of relinquishing predominantly Arab areas along the Green Line[3] to a future Palestinian state in exchange, as well as the solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. The goal of this demographic discussion is, of course, to find ways to protect and ensure the steady growth of the Jewish majority.

Israeli sociologists have used statistics to encourage withdrawal from or annexation of the land occupied in 1967.[4] A demographic study conducted in 2002 by Jewish demographer Sergio de la Pergula predicted a decline in the percentage of Jews in Israel's population from 78 percent to between 65 percent and 69 percent by 2050. Pergula further estimated that Jews accounted for 53 percent of the population in historic Palestine and that this would dwindle to between 26 percent and 35 percent by 2050.[5] This prompted him to call for a speedy disengagement between the two peoples.

The demographic reality is also causing concern among Jewish politicians and academics interested in the character and identity of the state, prompting many of them to seek new ways of guaranteeing a Jewish majority. This search has intensified in light of a decline in the Jewish immigration that has helped to maintain a Jewish majority over the past five decades. Different suggestions have been proposed in the political discussion, including the surrendering of a number of Arab areas inside the Green Line in the context of the final settlement with the Palestinians.

One of the most prominent figures in this discussion has been Professor Arnon Soffer. Professor Soffer presented a paper to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon detailing his vision for the resolution of the "demographic crisis." This paper was discussed by the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and at the Herzliya Conference on the Balance of Israel's Security. In his paper, Soffer proposed ceding the Triangle (*Muthallath*) area and East Jerusalem to the Pal-

estinian National Authority (PNA), in order to reduce the Arab population of Israel by 400,000, (210,000 in East Jerusalem and 190,000 in the Triangle). These 400,000 Arabs are expected to increase to approximately 800,000 by 2020. With this reduction, in 2020, the predicted Arab population in Israel would be just 1,350,000, compared to 6,000,000 Jews.[6]

Soffer's demographic concerns and justifications for disengagement, including from East Jerusalem, were explicit in his paper. Thus, he wrote to Sharon: "The absence of disengagement means the establishment of an Arab majority, and consequently the end of the Jewish state of Israel." He added, "It is important to remember that when the Israeli army attempts and succeeds to assassinate a militant here or there, at the same time 400 children are born in the western land of Israel. Some of them will become new militants. Every day, 400 children! Do you understand that?"[7] After reading the paper, the director of planning at the U.S. State Department, Richard Harris, asked Soffer to what extent was his project based on security and to what extent on demography. Soffer responded it was 100 percent based on demography.[8]

The discussion over annexation, disengagement, and demography is not the monopoly of a specific few. Work groups have been established to draft border demarcations on the basis of the demographic factor rather than security. In 2006, a number of researchers from the fields of demography and geography held a series of meetings with settlers at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. The group sketched out several potential border demarcations to ensure an 80 percent Jewish majority among Israeli citizens, and an Arab minority of 20 percent. According to the group, every dunum earmarked for annexation to Israel must have a population ratio of 8:2 in order to guarantee a Jewish majority.

The Van Leer Institute is not the only establishment in Israel to hold discussions on demography and annexation. These issues have also been discussed at universities and research institutes, the Israeli National Security Council, and even by the U.S. State Department and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).[9] The Herzliya Center, one of Israel's elite security and academic research establishments, has held several high-profile meetings to discuss the issue of demography in Israel.

Shimon Peres, who has been one of the most ardent believers in the importance of demography in the post-Oslo era, based his vision for peace and withdrawal on making the demographic factor convincing enough to garner support for his plans both during and after the Oslo agreements. This was particularly the case during the right-wing surge in Israel during the 1990s, which triggered his concerns regarding the annexation and settlement of Palestinian land. In a break from his past, Sharon followed in Peres's footsteps upon assuming the

office of prime minister; both men found common ground in the Kadima party that was established by Sharon in 2004, and advocated for withdrawal as a necessity for maintaining a "demographic balance."

Sharon is considered the Israeli leader who is most forthright in expressing his ideas, political views, and the policies he believes Israel should follow to achieve its goals. On becoming prime minister, Sharon faced a basic, chronic dilemma that Israel has failed to solve since its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. It results from the contradiction between the expansionary nature of Zionism and the need to preserve the Jewish character of Israel. In practical terms, the annexation of the occupied Palestinian land diminishes the Jewish character of Israel and makes it a bi-national state with a growing Palestinian majority. Withdrawal, however, contradicts Sharon's basic belief about the "Greater Land of Israel." Due to this demographic dilemma, Sharon sought to unilaterally establish a system of separation, while at the same time refusing to withdraw to the June 4, 1967, borders. Sharon's vision was one of withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and 42 percent of the occupied Palestinian West Bank, in return for the annexation of Palestinian areas on which Jewish settlements have been established and other areas in the West Bank containing coveted resources, primarily water and land.

After winning a sizable victory in the March 2006 Knesset elections, the Kadima party continued to emphasize the need for unilateral withdrawal from parts of the West Bank. In a television interview aired on February 7, 2006, Ehud Olmert, the designated leader of Kadima, stated: "We shall keep the Jordan Valley, we cannot abandon control over Israel's eastern borders . . . Our intention is clear: we are heading for disengagement with the Palestinians [in the West Bank] and for the establishment of final borders for the State of Israel . . . We shall disengage from most of the Palestinian residents in the Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]." He added: "This would force us to abandon territories presently held by Israel." The Kadima party platform includes preserving "the State of Israel as the safe national homeland of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel," and introducing "a national component to the character of the State of Israel, as well as providing full equality in rights for the minorities living in Israel so as to ensure. . . . a balanced Jewish democratic state." In this context, Kadima envisions using the negotiating process with the Palestinians as a means of demarcating and developing the permanent borders of Israel. The Kadima leadership hopes that this strategy will result in calm and in the realization of Israel's national and security interests. Therefore, "the interest in maintaining Israel as a Jewish national state requires accepting the principle of two national states, on a demographic basis, that live side by side in peace and security."[10]

Israel's "Post-Oslo" Strategy

Sharon was depending on a high level of public support in order to pursue a gradual, long-term interim solution. He believed that the time had not yet arrived for the achievement of a comprehensive peace with the Palestinians and that "quick solutions" usually fail, in the light of the Camp David summit of 2000. He realized that retaining Israel's control over the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip would impose a significant economic burden on Israel. He also saw that it would render Israel passive in regard to the various international and Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives, such as the Geneva initiative jointly proposed by Yossi Beilin and Yasser Abed Rabbo, and the Nusseibeh-Ayalon initiative, both of which received broad support from the Israeli public.[11]

Despite attempts to revive them, the Oslo Accords, which involved the mutual recognition of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and formed the foundation for the establishment of the PNA, have ceased to be the basis of the negotiating process since Sharon's assumption of office.

The new Israeli vision for dealing with the occupation reflected a shift from pursuing a solution to the conflict with the Palestinians, to an approach based on "conflict management." This "management" is intended to ensure Jewish demographic ascendancy within Israel's borders, while responding positively to the Israeli public demand for a period of calm. Such a period would, however, be fragile, as Sharon's vision does not allow the price required by the international resolutions to be paid; nor, moreover, do a majority of Israelis, who support establishing a Palestinian state with limited sovereignty and independence. Regrettably, this majority considers itself to be part of the peace camp, even though its position falls far short of the minimal Palestinian aspirations and requirements for international resolutions.

Sharon gave his vision a political context by advancing the unilateral withdrawal project as the only possible means for Israel to deal with the Palestinian issue in the short term. The terminology used fails to conceal the fact that this project is essentially based on Sharon's old vision of annexing large swaths of the West Bank along the Green Line and in the Jordan Valley, while concentrating the Palestinians in segregated enclaves, at best connected by narrow strips of land (roads, tunnels, and bridges). Gaza was the first such enclave to be established. The substantive modification in Sharon's stance was not in accepting the need for the division of the "Land of Israel," but rather in the attempt to term the Palestinian enclaves a "state."

In October 2004, Dov Weisglass, the architect of the disengagement plan and cultivator of Israeli-U.S. understandings over disengagement, revealed, in a lengthy interview given to *Haaretz,* the motives and goals behind the disengagement plan. He openly stated that the plan's objectives were to neutralize and freeze the proposed alternative political plans (in particular the Road Map peace plan as proposed by U.S. president George W. Bush, which stipulates the complete cessation of settlement expansion in return for a Palestinian cessation of all forms of violence and military operations against Israeli targets), and to portray "terrorism" as the main obstacle to peace. He also revealed the marketing interest behind attempts to strengthen the Israeli allegation that "there is no Palestinian partner," in order to preclude any Israeli "concessions" and make the Road Map plan irrelevant.[12]

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon made his ideas and new policy public at the Herzliya Conference in December 2003. The main points in Sharon's speech were as follows:

1. Israel continues to commit itself to the Road Map peace plan.
2. Israel conditions the implementation of every part of the Road Map on the cessation of terrorism, the eradication of "terrorist" organizations, and PNA reform.
3. Israel warns the Palestinians that if they do not eradicate the "terrorism infrastructure" and adopt comprehensive reforms within a few months, Israel will adopt unilateral measures for disengagement, which Sharon described as based on purely apolitical security measures.
4. The Israeli disengagement would include a redeployment of the Israeli army along a "security line" within the Palestinian territories, and would entail the evacuation of some settlements. The settlements to be relocated are those which will not remain within Israel "in any possible future solution." At the same time, Israel would strengthen its hold over certain parts of the occupied Palestinian territories that would become indivisible parts of the State of Israel in any possible future solution.
5. Israel would accelerate the construction of the separation wall at a rapid pace.
6. Israel would coordinate its unilateral measures with the United States of America.
7. Israel would remove the "illegal" settlement outposts and commit itself to freezing settlement construction according to understandings reached with the United States.
8. The plan aims to provide the highest level of security to the Israelis and to create the lowest degree of friction with the Palestinians.

After assuming office following Sharon's illness, Ehud Olmert adopted the same vision; that is, the unilateral dismantling of a number of West Bank settlements and implementation of similar withdrawals in the West Bank over the coming years. Olmert stressed that the paramount mission for Israel was to "demarcate permanent Israeli borders so as to ensure a Jewish majority in the state." Olmert quoted Ze'ev Jabotinsky on the significance of maintaining a Jewish majority, stating:

> The term "Jewish nation" is absolutely clear: it means a Jewish majority. With this, Zionism began, and it is the basis of its existence, it will continue to work towards its fulfillment or it will be lost . . . The existence of a Jewish majority in the State of Israel cannot be maintained with the continued control over the Palestinian population in Judea, Samaria [the West Bank] and the Gaza Strip. We firmly stand by the historic right of the people of Israel to the entire Land of Israel. Every hill in Samaria and every valley in Judea is part of our historic homeland. We do not forget this, not even for one moment. However, the choice between the desire to allow every Jew to live anywhere in the Land of Israel and the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish country—obligates relinquishing parts of the Land of Israel. This is not a relinquishing of the Zionist idea, rather the essential realization of the Zionist goal—ensuring the existence of a Jewish and democratic state in the Land of Israel. In order to ensure the existence of a Jewish national homeland, we will not be able to continue ruling over the territories in which the majority of the Palestinian population lives. We must create a clear boundary as soon as possible, one which will reflect the demographic reality on the ground. Israel will maintain control over the security zones, the Jewish settlement blocs, and those places which have supreme national importance to the Jewish people, first and foremost a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty. There can be no Jewish state without the capital of Jerusalem at its center.[13]

Basic Components of Israel's "Post-Oslo" Policy

The basic goal of Israeli post-Oslo policy derives from the following considerations: the unilateral demarcation of the permanent borders of Israel (i.e., not through bilateral agreements); the safeguarding of a numerical Jewish majority within the borders of this state; and the establishment of an accommodating authority on the Palestinian side to provide security and deliver basic economic services and functions. This would enable Israel to annex all of the land along the Green Line and in the Jordan Valley, in addition to other large areas to establish territorial contiguity between the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea.

Furthermore, Israel would fatten the settlements not slated for evacuation by accelerating construction and encouraging Jewish settlement in them. This vision implies ceding control of densely populated Palestinian areas to the PNA and the removal of Israeli settlements from those areas. Consequently, between eight and nine segregated Palestinian enclaves would be established. Each enclave would be surrounded by Israeli settlements and military structures. Hence, Israel would not object to these enclaves being called a "Palestinian state." In practical terms, this post-Oslo policy necessitates the following measures:

Unilateral Withdrawal

The unilateral withdrawal plan was formulated in light of Ehud Barak's experience at Camp David. Sharon drafted and submitted it as a new vision for dealing with the conflict in general and the occupation in particular. Sharon presented his plan at the Herzliya Conference:[14] referring to it as the "unilateral disengagement plan," he rejected withdrawal to the June 4, 1967, borders and concurrently pronounced the "demographic threat" to Zionism. Sharon sought to establish a system of segregation in historical Palestine by agreeing to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and 42 percent of the occupied Palestinian West Bank, in return for Israel's annexation of the Palestinian areas on which Jewish settlements have been established and other strategically important Palestinian West Bank areas.[15]

A number of factors contributed to Sharon's success in freezing the Road Map peace plan and making his plan "the only game in town." These include Israel's strong and special relationship with the United States, the world's only superpower in a unipolar world; a weak Arab world stricken by regional conflicts and competition to win American support; the lack of Israeli opposition beyond the extreme political right and the Likud party; and the unequivocal support of the Israeli political left for Sharon's plan.

The "disengagement document" surfaced in the form of a letter sent by Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon to U.S. president George Bush on April 14, 2004. In the preface, Sharon insisted that "Israel is committed to the peace process and aspires to a negotiated settlement, on the basis of two states for two peoples: The State of Israel for the Jewish people and a Palestinian State for the Palestinian people." Sharon justified the unilateral disengagement on the ground that "Israel has arrived at the conclusion that today there is no Palestinian partner with whom to proceed within a reciprocal peace process." Sharon stressed that the unilateral disengagement plan was not contingent upon Pales-

tinian cooperation, and that it would lead Israel toward a "better security situation." Sharon further elaborated that Israel would withdraw from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank, and that "in any future settlement there would be no Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip. It is clear that there would be areas in Judea and Samaria, considered part of the State of Israel, including civil settlements and security zones, in addition to other areas where Israel has interests." The Israeli prime minister added that the disengagement plan "would counter allegations concerning Israel's responsibility for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip." He ended his letter by alleging that "the disengagement plan" would not violate the signed agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, and that "when there are indications on the Palestinian side of their readiness and ability, in addition to practical action, to combat terrorism and conduct reforms according to the Road Map, then Israel can return to the path of dialogue and negotiation." Sharon explained that under his plan Israel would withdraw from the Gaza Strip, including the existing settlements, except for the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. He added that after executing the Gaza Strip withdrawal, "there would be no basis for allegations that the Gaza Strip was an occupied area." As for redeployment in the occupied Palestinian West Bank, Sharon stated that "Israel would evacuate an area in the northern West Bank (the settlements of Ganim, Kadim, Homesh, and Sanur), in addition to all permanent military structures in that area."

In mid-September 2005, Sharon addressed the annual meeting of the United Nations General Assembly to explain the unilateral withdrawal that had been taken by the Israeli government. In his address he stated, "This week, the last Israeli soldier left Gaza Strip, and military law there was ended. The State of Israel proved that it is ready to make painful concessions in order to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians." He added, "Now it is the Palestinians' turn to prove their desire for peace. The end of Israeli control over and responsibility for the Gaza Strip allows the Palestinians, if they so wish, to develop their economy and build a peace-seeking society."[16]

During the preparations for the seventeenth Knesset elections, held on March 28, 2006, Kadima's candidate for prime minister, Ehud Olmert, declared his party's intention to go ahead with the unilateral disengagement and unilateral demarcation of Israel's permanent borders. The party leadership declared its intention to implement unilateral plans without seriously considering negotiations with the Palestinian partner.[17] This declaration supports my argument that Israel has moved to a new stage of "managing" the conflict with the Palestinians, through first proposing and then implementing the Gaza disengagement plan. This step is part of a wider project for dealing with the issue of occupation in light of what is viewed in Israel as the "demographic threat," without any real

willingness to pay the price demanded by the Palestinians or the relevant international resolutions.

Allowing the Palestinians to Exercise Partial Self-determination

One of the most important components of the post-Oslo Israeli posture is its evasion of responsibility for the daily needs of the Palestinians living under occupation, and its seeking of a PNA prepared to shoulder this burden.

Since the outset of Oslo negotiations, where Israel was facilitating the establishment of the PNA, Israel dictated its concept of the form and content of this authority, and the tools it would use, including the introduction of legislative and institutional changes in order for it to meet Israeli interests and to allow the delegation of Israeli responsibilities to it.[18]

During the second (Al-Aqsa) intifada, Israel took several measures to restrain the PNA. In 2002, Israel waged a full-scale military offensive on PNA-ruled territory. The Israeli army systematically destroyed Palestinian infrastructure, crushed the Palestinian security forces, terminated communications between the presidency in Ramallah and the remainder of the territories under PNA rule, obstructed the delivery of social services, and greatly constricted Palestinian diplomatic relations, particularly with Europe and North America.

However, in spite of all these heavily restrictive measures, Israel stopped short of destroying the PNA. Its existence was intentionally preserved to allow the claim that a Palestinian body exists which is responsible for providing basic services to the Palestinians, and to spare Israel from these responsibilities under international law. It also provided Israel with a convenient scapegoat in the conflict, and a tangible enemy to be held accountable for actions taken against Israel and for Palestinian domestic problems.

Israel continued to pursue the same policy following the death of Arafat. It closed the channels of negotiation and obstructed President Abu Mazen's efforts to reopen negotiations, but refrained from taking steps that could have led to the demise of the PNA. Once President Abu Mazen used his constitutional powers to call for legislative elections in January 2006, Sharon announced that he would prevent the holding of elections in Jerusalem, he said that he would not allow Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to participate in these elections on the basis of arrangements made for the 1996 Palestinian elections. He added that Jerusalem is "the capital of Israel, and there is no place there for the Palestinian Authority and its organizations," and that Palestinians who want to vote should do so outside of Jerusalem and in Ramallah. Sharon advised Abu Mazen to focus more on eradicating terrorism, and to work to collect the weapons of Hamas and the other militant groups before thinking about legislative elections.

On the eve of the Palestinian elections, Sharon's government backed down, ostensibly in response to a request by the U.S. president. The Israelis and Palestinians held meetings to discuss arrangements for the elections, from campaigning to ensuring calm and order on election day (January 25, 2006). Israel promised to refrain from military incursions, arrests, and assassinations, and to ease restrictions on travel by road on the day itself. Late in 2005, Israel's leaders publicly declared their intention to boycott any Hamas-led government. However, it was clear that Israeli threats would not extend to the dismantling of the PNA, although it would be allowed to exist only so far as this was convenient for Israel, even if this meant having to acknowledge the Palestinian entity as a state.

Continued Settlement

Sharon's government followed in the footsteps of previous Israeli governments in its handling of the peace process with the Palestinians. It declared its adoption of a policy of halting the construction of any new settlements in the occupied territories. This policy was part of the basic platform adopted by Sharon's government and was mentioned in several official statements.[19] However, statements by Israeli governments on the settlements have always included the caveat that they would take into consideration the "natural growth" of the settlements. The phrase "natural growth" has always been used as a pretext for annexing more land, enlarging the settlements and constructing settlement roads. The amount of land and number of housing units added to the settlements far outstrips any "natural growth" of the settler population; in some settlements hundreds of housing units were built, and dozens of them lay vacant.

Significantly, Israel, in particular Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, has made repeated announcements of its commitment to the Road Map peace plan as proposed by President Bush.

Moreover, although all forms of settlement in the occupied territories are considered prohibited under international law, Israel considers only settlement "outposts" illegal. These "outposts" are new colonies located at a sufficient distance from existing settlements so as not to be associated with them. Ironically, Sharon was one of the major supporters of the establishment of the settlement outposts from the 1980s, and especially in the 1990s, first on the opposition benches and later in control of ministerial portfolios for the Likud government. In the mid-1990s, Sharon encouraged settlers to occupy the West Bank hills in order to establish facts on the ground prior to reaching any agreement with the Palestinian leadership.

Recently, an official state report, the Sasson report, supported the conclusion that all Israeli governmental departments and ministries have engaged in the funding of "illegal settlement" or outposts. The report's three hundred pages reveal a steady official channeling of services and maintenance funds to these outposts, even in the absence of government building permission. The report further divulged that many Israeli institutions are complicit in the establishment of these outposts, including the Ministry of Defense, the Israeli army, the Civil Administration, and the ministries of Infrastructure, Education, Industry, Labor and Trade, and Finance. In addition, the report shows how all officials within these ministries and departments, from ministers and to low-ranking officials, have been party to the identified violations, by overlooking the illegal colonization by settlers of land owned by Palestinians or land considered "state-owned land" by the occupation authority. By the end of 2005, the settlers had established 120 "illegal" outposts with the aim of making them into new independent settlements or new neighborhoods within adjacent settlements.

Construction of the Separation Wall

In mid-March 2006, two weeks before the Israeli general election, the Kadima candidate Ehud Olmert declared his intention to make the separation wall a permanent Israeli border. The idea of erecting the separation wall was not conceived of by the present or former Israeli government, but was the suggestion of leaders of the Labor Party—mainly Yitzhak Rabin and Haim Ramon, in the aftermath of the Beit Leed operation of 1995). Their proposed solution was for total separation between the two peoples, to include sealed borders demarcated close to the Green Line (with some amendments based on Israeli security considerations). The Likud government substantially developed Ramon's idea for "security amendments." These developments have made the idea of establishing a Palestinian state with geographical contiguity a near impossibility. The proposed path of the separation wall, both the implemented and planned sections, annexes large areas of the remaining Palestinian land in the West Bank, and by incorporating the settlement blocs and infrastructure into the Israeli side, segregates and hems in the territories on which the Palestinian state is to be established under the Road Map.

When the Palestinians approached the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, the Israeli media launched a campaign to foil this endeavor, or at least mobilize international support for Israel's position, so as to minimize the impact of any ruling by the court in the Palestinians' favor. After the court issued an advisory opinion supporting the Palestinians on July 9, 2004, the

Israeli media systematically attempted to refute the ruling and justify the pretexts advanced by the Israeli government.[20] The ICJ's opinion required Israel to immediately halt the construction of the wall, dismantle the sections that had already been built, and compensate the Palestinians. The advisory opinion included the following statement: "The Court considers that the construction of the wall and its associated régime create a 'fait accompli' on the ground that could well become permanent, in which case, and notwithstanding the formal characterization of the wall by Israel, it would be tantamount to *de facto* annexation." The ICJ concluded that Israel's construction of the separation wall was not justified by security reasons. It considered that "construction of the wall and its associated régime cannot be justified by military exigencies or by the requirements of national security or public order . . . , this is a breach by Israel of various of its obligations under the applicable provisions of international humanitarian law and human rights instruments."[21]

It is important to point out here that the construction of the separation wall at a slower pace than was desired by those most influential in shaping Israeli public opinion is not due to budget constraints or to pressure exerted by the international community, and is certainly not a result of the ICJ's advisory opinion. The slow construction pace of the wall is rather due to the pressure exerted by some groups of the far right and Likud extremists who are opposed to establishing the separation wall as a final border; for them, such a border would prevent the actual Israeli control over what they consider the entire "Land of Israel," which is historical Palestine.

Practical Annexation of the Jordan Valley

Israel has adopted a policy of tight restrictions on the movement of the Palestinians in the eastern part of the West Bank. As concluded by B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, this policy has resulted in the practical annexation of this area to Israel. In general, the Israeli army prohibits the entry of the Palestinians into the Jordan Valley, and limits access to those officially registered as residents of the area. B'Tselem warned that isolating the Jordan Valley from the rest of the West Bank constitutes a dangerous violation of the human rights of many Palestinian residents. Furthermore, this isolation is being effected without any formal governmental decision and without the notification of the Israeli public.[22]

Since the occupation of the West Bank, all Israeli governments have considered the Jordan Valley as Israel's eastern border and have worked toward annexing it to Israel. In order to consolidate the Israeli presence in the area, Israel has established twenty-six settlements in the valley, in which approximately 7,500

settlers have lived since the early 1970s. Since then, Israel has gradually claimed most of the land in the valley as state-owned land, which was then annexed to the areas under the jurisdiction of the Arvot Hayarden and Megillot regional councils. The Oslo agreements classified most of this area, except an enclave that includes Jericho and its environs, as Area C, or an area under full Israeli control. Acting Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert stated on many occasions during the 2006 election campaign that the Jordan Valley would remain under Israeli control in any future settlement.

Following the establishment of the PNA in 1994, Israel erected seven permanent roadblocks between the western Jordan Valley and the northern part of the Dead Sea. Four of these roadblocks encircle the Jericho enclave, and have been used by the Israeli army to impose significant restrictions on the movement of the Palestinians since 2002. A spokesperson for the Israeli army responded to B'Tselem's report of January 2006,[23] stating that passage through these roadblocks was restricted to the residents of the villages of the Jordan Valley, as verified by the address on their identity cards. Other West Bank residents were required to obtain a special permit from the Civil Administration; otherwise, only "humanitarian cases" would be allowed to pass through. These restrictions do not apply to West Bank residents entering Jericho, but to those traveling from Jericho northwards toward the other parts of the Jordan Valley, including residents of Jericho without special permits. "Palestinians caught in the Jordan Valley without permits will be handed over to the police," confirmed the army spokesperson.

Actual Israeli practices in the Jordan Valley and statements issued by high-ranking officers indicate that what lies behind Israel's policy is not a security-military motive, but rather a political one. What is taking place is the annexation of this area to Israel. This is also happening with other large areas of Palestinian land that fall on the western side of the separation wall, in a flagrant violation of the Palestinian right to self-determination. Control over the Jordan Valley is also important for Israel's control of the movement of Palestinians and goods between Jordan and the West Bank.

Improving Relations with Neighboring Arab Countries

Changes in Israeli policy toward the PNA in late 2004 and early 2005, especially following the death of Yasser Arafat and the election of Abu Mazen as president, have affected Israeli-Arab relations, particularly Israel's bilateral relations with Egypt and Jordan. After President Abu Mazen took office and Ariel Sharon resumed the implementation of the Road Map, relations improved and prompted an upsurge in joint political and security activity. As the implementation of the

"disengagement" plan neared, communications intensified between Israel and Egypt, while the U.S. administration encouraged communication between the three parties, Israel, Egypt, and the PNA. U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice succeeded in mobilizing Egypt in support of the evacuation of the Israeli settlers and army from the Gaza Strip.

Egypt contributed to the reaching of an understanding over the settlers' houses, according to which Israel committed itself to demolish these houses and transfer the rubble to the Egyptian desert. Economic relations between Israel and Egypt continued, with the two sides exchanging goods and cooperating over tourism.

In 2005, Jordan and Israel resumed normal relations, especially after the Jordanian ambassador returned to Tel Aviv. Israeli-Jordanian ties were maintained in the areas of trade, economy, and tourism, and were even strengthened as Jordan served as a conduit for Israeli goods to the east, the Gulf states, and Iraq (entailing the shipping of military supplies to the American military forces). Security cooperation between the two sides was maintained on the basis of agreements signed and a shared interest in combating "extremism and terrorism." The two sides continued to cooperate in security matters on "international terrorism," especially after hotels in Amman were targeted by suicide bombers loyal to al-Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

In 1993, prior to the political coup that followed the Knesset elections of 1992, Israel recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and signed the Oslo agreement as a first step in a process aimed at achieving peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The Israel that signed that agreement was not, however, ready to meet its requirements or to implement the relevant international resolutions.

Three years after signing the Oslo Accords, Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish extremist who was bent on bringing the peace process to a standstill. Right-wing candidate Benjamin Netanyahu subsequently became prime minister in the 1996 elections, and declared the beginning of a new era in Israel's relations with the Palestinians.

Under the leadership of Sharon, Israel's policy shifted from seeking to solve the conflict with the Palestinians to adopting a new strategy for "conflict management" in accordance with Israel's narrow interests. The separation wall and the unilateral disengagement present the two sides of the Israeli "system of separation" without reaching a historic settlement. As a result, an entity might be established which represents "more than autonomy and less than a state."

It is clear that the Israeli government initiated the separation solution because Israeli policy makers, like the majority of the Israelis, are not ready to

implement the international resolutions regarding the solution of the Palestinian problem. In choosing not to accept any agreement that promises a full withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, or that finds any appropriate solution for the Palestinian refugees' problem, Israeli policy makers are demonstrating their dependence on a sweeping consensus among the Israeli public.

The majority of the Israelis are unwilling to pay the full price of a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that meets the basic demands of the Palestinians, including the return to 1967 borders, the evacuation of all Jewish settlements, the division of Jerusalem, and the return of refugees.

2

Israeli Public Attitudes toward Peace with the Palestinians

Which Peace?

Israeli policy changes in the second half of the 1990s rested in part on an understanding of the Israeli public mood and a desire to move closer to it, for political and electoral reasons. Ariel Sharon and the Israeli leadership understood that the Israeli public was not ready for an agreement that would meet the Palestinians' demands or expectations about the implementation of international resolutions related to the conflict's fundamental issues. Jerusalem, borders, settlements, the refugees, and the extent of Israeli control of developments are issues on which the Israeli public has firm opinions. Instead of trying to modify public attitudes, as Yitzhak Rabin did in 1993, decision makers since Rabin have preferred to revise their policies to correspond to the public's expectations. Israeli policy in the post-Oslo period has been a mixture of right-wing leadership and public positions, with a significant proximity to the Israeli center, which supports a partial compromise with the Palestinians but is not willing to pay the appropriate price for a stable peace as required by the UN resolutions in the Palestinian case.

The Israeli public's support for a peace agreement with the Palestinians, including the key elements of such an accord, is reflected in a series of public opinion polls conducted among Jewish Israelis.[1] Analyzing this data will make

it possible to sketch out the general lines of an agreement that would be acceptable to most Israelis.

The Peace Process

Survey questions about the Israeli public's attitudes toward the peace process can be divided into three categories. The first category concerns how Israelis perceive the peace process; it includes questions designed to measure the respondents' satisfaction with the process. The second considers which of the two sides, Palestinian and Israeli, is responsible for the lack of progress in the peace process. The third group of questions looks at the future of the peace process.

The first question of the first group was "How would you define the condition of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians at the present time?"[2] The respondents were asked to choose from the following answers: "making progress," "frozen," and "over." An analysis of the responses shows that at neither juncture did the respondents believe that the peace process was making progress: in April 1997 only 4% thought so, with this figure increasing substantially to 22.4% in January 1998. In both surveys there was a strong majority which believed that the process was going nowhere—it was either "frozen" or "over." This position was held by 92.8% of the respondents in April 1997 and by 75% of respondents in January 1998.

Another question asked in this cluster was "Are you satisfied with or worried by the state of the peace process today?"[3] Here one can detect a continuation of the pattern revealed in the responses to the first question; that is, respondents evinced low satisfaction with the peace process and high levels of concern over its progress. In 1997, a majority of the respondents of (79.6%) were concerned with the state of the peace process, whereas an average of only 16.5% expressed satisfaction with it. The same trend of concern continued in 1998, where 83.1% of respondents expressed concern and only 13.9% said that they were satisfied. This is parallel to the trend in the responses to the first question. It is clear that in 1997 and 1998, which were relatively quiet years in terms of the security situation and years during which the peace process was being actively pursued, the Israeli public was nevertheless concerned with its health.

The last question in this cluster was "Are you disappointed with or encouraged by the peace process?"[4] This was intended to encapsulate the Israelis' evaluations of the peace process at its start. Here, too, we see the same pattern. Even in the early years of the process, Israelis were dissatisfied with it. In 1994, 23.3% of respondents were encouraged by the peace process, but almost half (49.8%)

expressed disappointment with it. In 1995 the situation was unchanged: on average, 24.7% of respondents were encouraged by the peace process, while 48.5% were disappointed.

The second cluster of questions examined public attitudes toward what could be done to enhance the peace process, as well as Jewish Israelis' attitudes toward the peace process after the Camp David summit and before the start of the al-Aqsa intifada. The first question sought to clarify public attitudes toward the peace process after the failure of the Camp David peace talks: "Since the Camp David Summit last summer, have you been more optimistic or more pessimistic about the prospects for achieving a peace agreement with the Palestinians?"[5] In August 2000, 34.2% of the respondents stated that they were optimistic about the prospects of reaching an agreement with the Palestinians, while 50.4% responded they were pessimistic.

This was the second question: "Some assert that Israel should take action to eliminate the Palestinian Authority because Arafat and his men are not interested in peace with Israel, made the negotiations fail, and are unable or unwilling to fight terrorism. On the other hand, some assert that destroying the PA would lead to utter chaos in the territories or the rise of a radical Islamic leadership, or to an international reaction against Israel. With which position do you identify more: that the PA should be destroyed or that it should not be destroyed?"[6] In 2001, 24.9% of the respondents answered that the PA should be destroyed, while 64.8% opposed such a move.

The third cluster of questions examined whether or not respondents believed that the peace process would ultimately lead to a peace agreement and a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and, if not, who would bear the main blame for the failure. The first question was "Do you or do you not believe that there will be peace between Israel and the Palestinians in the next two years?"[7] In March 1995, 36.1% of respondents replied that they were confident that there would be peace between Israel and the Palestinians in the near future, while 43.6% said that there would not be.

The second question was "Do you believe that the conflict between Israel and the Arabs and Palestinians can end in the visible future by the signing of peace agreements? Or perhaps achieving peace is a protracted process in the life of the region whose end cannot be foreseen today; even should peace agreements be signed?"[8] This question, too, was meant to examine the possibility that Israel and the Palestinians could achieve peace as a result of the peace process. In June 2000, just 29.4% of the respondents replied that the signing of a peace treaty could bring an end to the conflict; an absolute majority of 64.2%, however, asserted that achieving peace is a protracted process, the end of which cannot be foreseen.

The third question in this cluster was "Some say that a permanent settlement with the Palestinians can be reached today, others say that it is impossible to do so today. What do you think?"[9] In reply to this question, in 2003, 26% of respondents stated that a permanent solution was attainable, 36% that it was currently unattainable, and another 36% that no permanent solution could ever be found.

The final question in this cluster was related to responsibility for the lack of progress of the peace process: "Who do you think is responsible for the stagnation of the peace process, the Israeli side or the Palestinian side?"[10] To this question, 16.8% of the respondents answered in February 2000 that the Israelis were to blame, 45.3% that the Palestinians were to blame, and 27.6% that the two sides were equally at fault. It is clear that the Israelis assign most of the blame to the Palestinians. However, blaming the other side is a familiar tactic in a conflict situation.

The responses to this third cluster of questions reveal that the Israeli public was extremely skeptical about the chances that the peace process would lead to a peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, especially in the early years after Oslo.

Overall, from the very onset of the peace process Israelis were skeptical about its potential for success and soon became disappointed with it. In recent years the margin between those who are disappointed and those who are encouraged has decreased, but the Israeli public still does not hold a strong belief that the peace process can lead to a resolution of the conflict, and thinks that the Palestinians are mainly responsible for this situation. Nevertheless, the al-Aqsa intifada seems to have softened Israeli attitudes and increased support for the idea that it may be possible to reach at least a partial accord, if not a full resolution.

The Oslo Accords

Israeli public attitudes toward the Oslo Accords, as distinct from the wider peace process, were also examined. Three clusters of two questions each considered various aspects of the accords.

The first cluster of questions investigated public attitudes toward the Oslo Accords and whether or not they differed from attitudes at the time the accords were signed in 1993. The first question was "What is your position on the agreement signed in Oslo between Israel and the PLO?"[11] The results reflected the Israeli public attitude: strong support in the earlier years, more moderate support later on, a plummeting in support in the wake of the al-Aqsa intifada, and

then some rebound when the intifada weakened. This question also examined the assumption that one result of the failure of the Camp David talks would be a decline in support for the Oslo Accords.

The results reveal that in their first few years, the Oslo Accords enjoyed broad support in Israel. In 1994 they were supported by 43.4% of respondents and opposed by 31.8%. In the first five years of implementation, 1994–1998, the average level of support ranged from 33.3% to 44.8%, with an average of 39.58%; the average level of opposition was 29.22%, ranging from 18.6% to 40.1%. By contrast, in the subsequent approximately five years, 2000–2004, those of the al-Aqsa intifada, support for the agreement dropped significantly. The average number of respondents who supported the Oslo Accords in 2001–2005 was 28.04%, with a range of 26% to 33.3%. Opposition increased significantly during those years to an average level of 40.22%, with a range of between 30.1% and 46.4%.

This question also tested the hypothesis that the failure of the Camp David talks constituted a watershed in the Israeli public's attitude toward the peace process. There was indeed a drop in support for Oslo immediately after Camp David, from 38.5% in January 2000 to 36.3% in July 2000 and 36.4% in August 2000. In the next month, however, support rose to 39.5%, the level before Camp David.

Analysis of the support for the Oslo Accords before and after the al-Aqsa intifada indicates that the latter also had a decisive impact on attitudes. In 1994–2000, support for the Oslo Accords averaged 39.76% and opposition 28.93%—a difference of 10.83 percentage points in favor of support. During the five years of the intifada, 2000–2005, taking October 2000 as the baseline, average support declined to 28.63% and opposition increased to 40.5%, a difference of 11.87 percentage points in favor of opposition to the agreement.

The second question asked here was "Today, in comparison to when the accords were signed in September 1993, are you opposed to or supportive of the agreement?"[12] In 1994, 17.6% of the respondents said that they supported the agreement and 29.5% that they opposed it. When the question was asked in 1998, 20.5% expressed their support for the agreement and 22.1% their opposition to it. There is no significant difference here, though it is clear that in 1998, in particular, the Oslo Accords did not enjoy very strong support among Jewish Israelis.

The second cluster of questions dealt with the Israeli view of the two sides' compliance with the terms of the Oslo Accords. The first question, designed to investigate how Israelis perceived the Palestinians' compliance with the agreement, was "To what extent do you believe that the Palestinians have, so far, been doing their part, according to the Oslo Accords?"[13] This question was asked as part of the "Steinmetz peace index" in the first five years after Oslo (1994–1998).

Table 2.1. Israelis' Beliefs concerning the Likelihood of Future Peace with the Palestinians

Attitude/ Year	1996 (%)	1997 (%)	1998 (%)	1999 (%)	2000 (%)	June 2000 (%)	July 2000 (%)	Aug. 2000 (%)
Believe	37.8	33.5	38.2	39.9	43.9	46.1	37.2	35.6
Do not believe	32.9	29.9	38.5	34.5	40.3	51	47	44.9

Attitude Year	26 Sep. 2000 (%)	Oct. 2000 (%)	2001 (%)	2002 (%)	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)
Believe	38.7	22.1	24.7	11.3	16.1	16.7	23.8
Do not believe	40	56.7	54.3	70.6	60.5	66.3	48.4

The responses given during the first three years indicate that Israelis perceived the Palestinians as not complying with the agreement they had signed: 19.6% of Israelis thought that the Palestinians were complying and 50.66% that they were not. Especially in the three years between 1994 and 1996, an average of those who thought that the Palestinians were complying with the agreement was as low as 14.15%; an average of 51% of respondents thought that the Palestinians were not complying. Here there was a change over time: in 1997–1998 the percentage of those who believed that the Palestinians were fulfilling their part of the agreement rose to 27.75%, an increase of 13.5 percentage points, while the percentage of those who thought that the Palestinians were not complying with the agreement declined by less than 1 percentage point to 50.15%. One may conclude from these figures that over time more Israelis began to view the Palestinians as doing their part under the agreement, but the idea that the Palestinians were not doing so had become solidly entrenched and did not alter over the years.

The second cluster of questions concerns the future of the Oslo Accords and investigates the possibility of their leading to a permanent agreement and the end of the conflict. The first question asked here was, "Do you or do you not believe that the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO will in the near future lead to peace between Israel and the Palestinians?"[14] This question also tested the presumption that the failure of the Camp David summit was a watershed in the relations between Israel and the Palestinians, and was followed by a decline in support for dovish positions, which argue that the Oslo Accords will lead to a permanent agreement between the two sides.

Table 2.1 shows that the period that followed the signing of the Oslo Accords can be divided into two, the first running until the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada (1996–September 2000), and the second continuing thereafter (September 2000–2005). Looking exclusively at the average public confidence, over the entire decade, that the Oslo Accords would lead to a permanent settlement (31.4%), and the corresponding lack of belief that they could do so (47.72%), would be misleading, and suggest that the Israeli public never strongly believed that the Oslo Accords could lead to a permanent agreement.

During the first period, the belief that the Oslo Accords might lead to a permanent agreement was more widespread, ranging from 33.5% (in 1997) to 46.1% (in June 2000), with an average, over the period, of 38.99%. The belief that the Oslo Accords could not lead to a permanent agreement ranged between 29.9% (in 1997) and 51% (in June 2000), with an average over the period of 39.89%. The average percentages of respondents who believed and did not believe are almost identical, with a difference of less than 1 percentage point; hence it can be said with a high degree of confidence that, even in a phase of calm and progress in the peace process, the Israeli public was both skeptical and confident, to equal degrees, that the Oslo Accords could lead to a permanent agreement.

The second period, which began with the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada in September 2000 and lasted until 2005, saw a sharp drop in Israeli public confidence that the Oslo Accords could lead to a permanent agreement between the two sides. During these years, belief that they could do so ranged between 11.3% (in 2002) and 24.7% (in 2001), with an average of 19.12%. Skepticism grew during this period, ranging from 48.4% (in 2005) to 70.6% (in 2002), with an average of 59.47%. During the years of the al-Aqsa intifada, belief in the potential of the accords to produce a peaceful resolution plummeted, and the gap between belief and disbelief increased from the first period to 40.35 percentage points.

Overall, we see that splitting the respondents' replies into two periods, before and during the al-Aqsa intifada, yields a number of major conclusions, of which the most important is that, even during the period of peace, belief in the potential of the accords did not exceed skepticism, but it dropped sharply with the eruption of the al-Aqsa intifada. The difference in belief in the potential of the accords between the two periods is 19.85 percentage points; for skepticism, the difference is 19.6 percentage points. The lack of confidence in the accords declined by the same amount between the two periods, which highlights the intensity of the change among the Israeli public, in reaction to the events of the intifada.

The second question was "On the assumption that a permanent agreement is signed based on the principle of 'two states for two peoples,' do you believe that for the Palestinians such an agreement would mean the end of their historic

conflict with Israel?"[15] In November 1999, 23.5% replied in the affirmative, while 73.4% stated that such an agreement would not mark the end of the conflict. In June 2000, 35.9% of the respondents replied in the affirmative, and 55.9% in the negative. The average percentage of respondents who believed that an agreement would put an end to the conflict was 29.7%, while an average of 64.5% gave the opposite response. The gap between the two positions, 34.8 percentage points, is significant. The clear conclusion is that Israelis believed that even if a Palestinian state was established, the Palestinians would not view this as the end of the conflict.

In the early years after the Oslo Accords, then, Israelis were not certain about the accords and displayed weak support for them. Later, however, support rose, particularly in 1999–2000. Then, as a result of the al-Aqsa intifada, support again declined, to a level even lower than the levels recorded during the first years after the signing of the accords. Although the failure of the Camp David summit caused a decline in Israeli support for a peace agreement, the main cause for the decline was the al-Aqsa intifada.

Negotiations with the Palestinians

The first question asked on the issue of negotiations with the Palestinians was "Do you support or oppose the Israeli government's taking a more rigid line in negotiations with the Palestinians?"[16] This question was asked in 1996, 1997, and 1998.

These figures reflect a change in the Israeli public's attitude during these years. In 1996, in the wake of murderous attacks by Hamas in February and March, a feeling developed that Prime Minister Shimon Peres should adopt a tougher stance in negotiations with the Palestinians. In subsequent years, when terrorism declined and the negotiating policy, under the Netanyahu government, was more unbending, support for greater inflexibility declined and the public evinced a more conciliatory attitude toward the negotiations. Notable here is the significant shift from 70.7% of support for "rigid line negotiations with the Palestinians" in 1996 to 56.4% in 1997, and 52.3% support in 1998. The change reflects the extent to which the combination of these two factors—the decline in terrorism and the change in government policy—shaped public opinion.

The second question considered in this part was "What is your attitude toward the Israeli-Palestinian negotiating process? Are you very much in favor, in favor, opposed, or very much opposed to the process?"[17] This question was asked twice, before the negotiations at Camp David and after, with the outbreak

of the al-Aqsa intifada. In June 2000, 61.2% of the Israeli public favored negotiations, while 34.9% opposed them. In December 2000, the figures were 62% in favor and 35.6% against negotiations. At first glance, these figures run against the general trend, since by December 2000 the al-Aqsa intifada had erupted, and we might therefore expect greater opposition to negotiations; instead, there was only a negligible rise of seven-tenths of a percentage point in the opposition to negotiations. A number of factors can explain these figures. First of all, in the first months of the second intifada there were few Israeli casualties and the Palestinians absorbed most of the losses. We need only recall the mass demonstrations in the Gaza Strip and the points of friction in the West Bank, where Israeli soldiers sometimes used excessive force. At this stage, however, the Israeli public was only moderately exposed to the violence.

A second factor involves the political developments which occurred during those months, including the meeting held in Paris between Barak and Arafat, under French auspices, in October, and the Clinton plan, published in December 2000. It seems likely that these events influenced the position of Israelis, who still believed that negotiations with the Palestinians could lead to an end of the violence.

The third question asked was "What do you think about the following statement: The decision by the Palestinian National Council concerning the abrogation of the clauses in the Palestinian Covenant referring to the destruction of Israel proves that the Palestinians are genuinely interested in continuing the peace process?"[18] To this question, 52.1% of the Israeli public responded in the affirmative, while 45.2% stated that the decision did not demonstrate any such Palestinian interest. The poll was conducted in April 1996, following the March wave of Hamas terrorist attacks in Israel, in response to the assassination of "the engineer," Yahya Ayyash, when, as part of the efforts to placate the Israeli public, Fateh declared that these clauses were null and void. Although it is clear that this step had a positive effect as a confidence-building measure, a substantial portion of the Israeli public did not give it any credence.

The fourth question sought to determine whom the Israeli public blamed for the failure of the Camp David summit: "Whom do you believe is more responsible for the failure to achieve an agreement at Camp David—the Israelis or the Palestinians?"[19] In July 2000, 12.7% answered that Israel was to blame for the failure; 67%, the Palestinians; and 12.4%, both parties. These results are in keeping with others demonstrating that the Israeli public overwhelmingly blamed the Palestinians for the failure of the negotiations; with just a quarter of the Israeli public stating that either Israel or both parties were to blame.

In summary, Israeli attitudes toward negotiations with the Palestinians stemmed primarily from their perception of the security situation and the pros-

Table 2.2. Israelis' Views concerning Arafat as Terrorist or Statesman

Attitude/ Year	1994 (%)	1996 (%)	1997 (%)	1998 (%)	30 Oct. 2000 (%)	2001 (%)	2002 (%)	2003 (%)	2004 (%)
Terrorist	43.7	34.5	44	41.5	70.6	71.5	85.6	89.8	78.7
Statesman	23.3	30.6	23.8	15.9	6.8	3.8	2.4	3	4.9

pects for achieving calm on that front. The security situation is the most accurate predictor of public attitudes in Israel: in periods of relative calm, support for the negotiations increases, and during periods of violence, it declines. An exception to this trend was December 2000; however, as noted above, support for negotiations was reinforced because there had been few Israeli victims at that stage and there was a degree of optimism in the wake of various international initiatives to bring an end to the confrontation.

Yasser Arafat

Israeli attitudes toward Palestinian leaders, first Arafat and later Abu Mazen, after he became Palestinian prime minister and later president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), were also investigated.

The first question asked of the respondents was "To what extent do you believe that Yasser Arafat today is a terrorist or a statesman?"[20]

A number of main conclusions about the Israeli public's view of Yasser Arafat as leader of the Palestinians can be drawn from these results (table 2.2):

1. A fundamental distrust of Arafat has always existed. Even during relatively quiet periods he was not accepted as a statesman; he was always thought of as a terrorist, even after he had abandoned the path of violence.
2. The only juncture at which he even approached the status of statesman in the opinion of the Jewish Israeli public was 1996, the year after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and a time when he took serious action against Hamas and imprisoned many of its members. Even then, however, 34.5% of Israelis considered him to be a terrorist, while only 30.6% saw him as a statesman.
3. In relatively quiet years in terms of security, such as 1997 and 1998, when interim accords such as the Wye Plantation agreement were reached, a greater number of Israelis still considered him to be a ter-

rorist: the average gap between those who saw Arafat the terrorist as opposed to Arafat the statesman stood at 24.8 percentage points, a reflection of Israelis' total distrust of the man.

4. The al-Aqsa intifada merely proved to Israelis that they had been right all along. In 2003, after the outbreak of violence, Arafat's status declined to its nadir.

A second question put to the respondents was "Do you think that Yasser Arafat is making sincere efforts to do his part as required by the Oslo accords?"[21] This question was asked in 1994, when Arafat first arrived in the country. At the time, 54.2% said that he was doing so to a slight extent, 23.8% to a moderate extent, and 15.8% to a great extent. This distribution indicates a strong distrust of Arafat from the start of the peace process and reinforces the conclusions derived from the responses to the previous question.

A third question compared Arafat to an alternative Palestinian leadership: "Some assert that Arafat is the only reason the Oslo process did not lead to peace, but that if the Palestinians had different leadership it might be possible to reach an agreement in the future. Others assert that it does not matter who is the leader of the Palestinians; it is impossible to achieve a peace agreement with them. With which of these two opinions do you agree with more?"[22] In 2002, 53.9% replied that the Oslo process had failed because of Arafat, while 40.9% held that it would not make any difference who the Palestinian leader was. In 2004 the answers were more evenly distributed: 49.3% expressed the belief that the process had failed because of Arafat, whereas 43.4% did not think an alternative leadership would have made any difference. The responses to this question make it clear that the Israeli public had internalized the idea that Arafat was spearheading the effort to undermine peace between the two sides.

Abu Mazen

The next cluster of questions examined attitudes toward Abu Mazen, Arafat's successor as the leader of the PNA. The first question asked was "To what extent do you believe that Abu Mazen today is a terrorist or a statesman?"[23] In 2002, an average of 26.7% of the Israeli public defined him as a terrorist, while 35.9% stated that he was a statesman. This distribution was the inverse of that received for Arafat. The Israeli public perceived Abu Mazen, in contrast to Arafat, as someone pursuing peace rather than violence.

The second question posed was "In your estimation, is the new Palestinian Prime Minister, Abu Mazen, making or not making sincere efforts to end terrorism on the Palestinian side?"[24]

The results indicate that the Israeli public views Abu Mazen as a man who, unlike Arafat, is endeavoring to achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The results in the poll in 2003, according to which a majority among the Israeli public (55.5%) believed that Abu Mazen was not making sincere efforts to end Palestinian terrorism, can be explained by the fact that it was conducted before the cease-fire declared by the Palestinians came into effect. After it did, the Israeli public's view of Abu Mazen changed. The responses given in 2005 indicate that the "honeymoon period" which followed the cease-fire was drawing to a close. Even though the Israeli public still viewed Abu Mazen as making efforts to bring about peace between the two sides, its support for him was eroding (55.5% in 2004 and 45.4% in 2005).

The last question put to the respondents was "In your opinion, are the efforts by the Palestinian president to disarm the terrorist infrastructure succeeding?"[25] When this question was asked in 2005, just 1.5% of those questioned thought that Abu Mazen had been fully successful, 47% that he had been partly successful, and 45.9% that he had been totally unsuccessful. This reinforced the trend suggested by the responses given to the previous question: that the Israeli public became disappointed in 2004–2005 with Abu Mazen, who they believed had not made sufficient efforts to put an end to terrorism. Consequently, support for him dwindled.

Thus, in the case of Yasser Arafat, the Israeli public displayed distrust in the very institution of the PNA, a distrust which plunged to its lowest point during the al-Aqsa intifada. As for Abu Mazen, the Israeli public expected him to take steps to quash terrorism, and his early attempts to establish a *hudna* or cease-fire won him the approval of the Israeli public. However, support for him declined as Israelis saw that he had been unsuccessful in disarming the Palestinian organizations that were attacking Israel.

Relations with the Palestinian State

This cluster of questions investigated Israeli attitudes toward relations with a future Palestinian state. The first question asked was "In a situation of peace, what type of relations would you like to see develop between Israelis and Palestinians; Distant or close?"[26]

Analysis of the results shows (table 2.3) that in the early years of the peace process, the Israeli public supported close relations with the PNA; however, the significant fraction who opted for "correct relations" shows that the inclination toward cooperation was strongly tempered by a desire among many for no more than basic relations. A comparison of the figures for 1995 and 1998 shows that,

Table 2.3. Israelis' Views concerning Their Future Relations with the Palestinians

Attitude/Year	1995 (%)	1998 (%)	2003 (%)
Close and cooperative	43.5	44.6	4.9
Correct (neutral)	33.7	50.9	34.3
Nonbelligerent only	21.4	3.4	52.2

even though the peace process continued, the proportion of respondents who wanted close relations rose by only about 1 percentage point. At the same time, there was a significant increase in the number of those who sought merely correct relations, indicating acquiescence to the establishment of the PNA and the desire for minimal relations with it that would be beneficial to Israel, but not require excessive intimacy. By 2003, the third year of the al-Aqsa intifada, the distribution was inverted: only 4.9% were still interested in close relations with the PNA, while those interested in a state of nonbelligerence only had increased significantly to an absolute majority. This, too, indicates the strong correlation between Israeli attitudes and the security situation.

The Establishment of a Palestinian State

The next cluster of questions investigated Israeli attitudes toward an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Once again, three sets of questions were posed, each focusing on a different aspect of the issue. The first set investigated the general acceptance by Jewish Israeli citizens of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. The first question was "In the context of a peace agreement with the Palestinians, do you believe that Israel can accept the establishment of an independent Palestinian State?"[27]

An analysis of the responses reveals that support for the establishment of a Palestinian state among the Israeli public remained stable at around 46%. It declined in 1995, evidently because of the lack of progress in the peace process and the deterioration in the security situation. From then onward, the general trend continued until 1999, which witnessed increased public acceptance of a Palestinian state. This year was marked by a quiet security situation and a renewal of the peace process, as a result of Ehud Barak's election as prime minister. In that year, the percentage supporting a Palestinian state rose to 55.6%, eight percentage points higher than in the previous year, demonstrating the magnitude of Israeli expectations at that time.

The survey conducted on October 30, 2000, soon after the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada, revealed a dramatic fall in support for the idea of the establishment of a Palestinian state, clearly a consequence of the intifada. There was still a plurality in favor of the idea, however, with 49.8% of respondents in favor and 45.1% opposed. We should also note that alongside the consistent support over the years for an independent Palestinian state, a very large percentage of the Israeli public—roughly 40% or slightly higher—was always opposed the idea. We may conclude that although the Israeli public did indeed support the idea of an independent Palestinian state, there was a stable core of opposition to it, which gained strength after the al-Aqsa intifada broke out.

Another question asked in this group was, "Should Israel oppose the establishment of a Palestinian State as a condition for a political settlement?"[28] In 2003, 40% of the respondents said yes; in 2004 the percentage was 39%, and in 2005 36.5%. These findings indicate that as the al-Aqsa intifada dragged on, the Israeli public understood the need for a solution incorporating the establishment of a Palestinian state. The shift from 2003 to 2004 in the percentage of those who responded in the affirmative to this question was negligible; in 2005, the number declined, perhaps because the improved security situation caused people to reconsider the option of allowing the Palestinians to have an independent state. But the difference is relatively small—a mere 3.5 percentage points—allowing for the conclusion that although the al-Aqsa intifada did reduce Israeli backing for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, the idea still enjoyed significant support in the country.

The second set of questions dealt with public attitudes about the boundaries of a future Palestinian state and public willingness to allow it to rule the territories occupied by Israel during the Six-Day War of 1967.

The first question was, "Do you agree or disagree that, as part of a comprehensive solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a Palestinian State should be established based on the 1967 borders, including East Jerusalem?"[29] When this question was posed in 1999, 11.3% of the public stated that they agreed, 12% that they were undecided or of two minds over the subject, and 72.7% that they rejected the idea.

The second question was as follows: "Most Palestinians aspire to establish a Palestinian State on the lands occupied by Israel in 1967. What do you think about that?"[30] When the question was asked in 2003, 34% of the respondents answered that they supported the idea, while 64% expressed opposition. Thus, it may be inferred that the al-Aqsa intifada exerted an influence on the Israeli public, making it more pragmatic and willing to make territorial concessions to the Palestinians, an idea that had previously met greater resistance. Support

for this idea rose by around 23 percentage points, while opposition declined by approximately 9 percentage points.

The third set of questions investigated attitudes among the Israeli public toward the ideas of one state for two peoples versus two states for two peoples. The first question was "Do you or do you not believe that it is possible to reach a permanent agreement on the basis of the formula of two states for two peoples—that is, the establishment of a Palestinian State alongside Israel?"[31] In 1999, 56.9% of respondents stated that they believed it was possible, and 41.6% that it was not. The second question in this section was "Some maintain that the formula of two states for two peoples is the best solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Others assert that the historical Land of Israel ('Palestine') cannot be divided into two states, so the best solution is a bi-national state in which the Palestinians and Israelis enjoy equal representation in the institutions of government, whatever the relative sizes of their population. Which of the two solutions do you prefer?"[32] Clearly, the idea of a bi-national state was unpopular among the Israeli public; the gap between support for the bi-national (15% in 1999 and 22% in June 2000) and for the two-state solutions (58% in 1999 and 64% in June 2000) remained stable and actually increased over time, boosted by the al-Aqsa intifada.

It can be stated, therefore, that from the very start of the peace process the Israeli public was not interested in the partition and establishment of a Palestinian state; subsequently, however, a majority came to support the idea. This change in attitude in favor of a Palestinian state took place in 1999–2000, a period of intensified negotiations, increased hope, and a quiet security situation. The al-Aqsa intifada had a negative impact on support for the establishment of a Palestinian state, but it also influenced Israeli willingness to achieve a territorial compromise with the Palestinians and created an awareness of the need for this—mainly, a return to the 1967 borders. A large and stable majority was found to oppose the idea of a bi-national state.

Jerusalem

This set of questions investigated Israeli attitudes toward the division of Jerusalem between Israel and a future Palestinian state. The first question put to the respondents was "In the context of the peace negotiations with the Palestinians, how important is it that Israel retains the present status of Jerusalem as a united city and the capital of Israel only?"[33] In 1999, 90.3% replied that the issue was important to them, and only 7.5% that it was not. This is indicative the great importance that Jewish Israelis attach to Jerusalem.

The second question was as follows: "If the conclusion of a peace agreement with the Palestinians depended exclusively on the question of Jerusalem, should Israel agree to transfer to the Palestinians sovereignty over the eastern part of the city, including the Temple Mount and Old City, with the Jewish Quarter remaining in Israeli hands?"[34] In May 2001, 63.8% replied that they were opposed to this idea, while 29% accepted it. To the follow-up question, "What if concluding an agreement depended on transferring only the Arab neighborhoods to the Palestinians, without the Old City and Temple Mount?,"[35] 40.4% of the Israeli public accepted the idea, while 54.9% did not.

A more recent survey of the Israeli public confirmed the general attitude of the Israelis on the future of Jerusalem. According to two surveys that were conducted by the Truman Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 41% of the Israelis polled in 2003 stated that they were willing to accept Jerusalem as a joint capital of Israel and a Palestinian state. Further, 39% in 2005, 37% in 2006, and 36% in 2007 were willing to accept this solution.[36]

Thus, there is greater public willingness to cede the Arab neighborhoods of eastern Jerusalem, which contain many thousands of Arab residents who do not consider themselves to be Israeli citizens, and whom the Israeli public is willing to give up. However, there is strong opposition to the surrender of religious symbols such as the Temple Mount.

The third question asked in this section was "Would you agree to the establishment of a Palestinian State with its capital in eastern Jerusalem, if this would remove the last obstacle to genuine peace between Israel and the Palestinians?"[37]

Analysis of the findings reveals a clear, solid, and steady position that Jerusalem constitutes one of the key issues in the dispute between the two sides. The Israeli public is not willing to concede Jerusalem, even if it were the last obstacle to a peace agreement with the Palestinians (62.7% in 1997, 67.4% in 1999, and 64.6% in 2000). Also significant is that this position is unwavering and, except for relatively minor fluctuations, remained unchanged from 1997 to August 2000, a period when it seemed that two sides were moving toward a peace agreement and the security situation was calm. The difference between 1999 and August 2000 is less than 3 percentage points, indicating that the peace initiatives between the Barak and Arafat governments exerted only a slight influence. Most of the Israeli public continued to consider Jerusalem as the cornerstone of the Jewish people, a place which could not be surrendered even as part of a peace agreement.

The last question in this cluster was "What should be the status of Jerusalem when there is a stable peace between Israel and the Arab countries and the Palestinians?"[38] This question was put to respondents in 1995 and 1999. In 1995,

70.8% stated that Jerusalem should be the united capital of Israel; 20.9% said that the holy places of Islam should be transferred to the Palestinians; and 7% maintained that all of the eastern part of the city should be ceded to the Palestinians. In 1999, 56.3% stated that Jerusalem should remain the united capital of Israel; 27.9% that the Muslim holy places should be transferred to the Palestinians; 5% that the eastern part of the city should be ceded to a Palestinian state to serve as its capital; 3.1% that it should be the joint capital of Israel and Palestine; and 5.2% said that Jerusalem should be turned into an international city.

The picture produced by these figures is that over the years more Israelis have come to believe that parts of Jerusalem should be ceded to the Palestinians; nevertheless, support for preserving its undivided status under Israeli control remains strong. On two different occasions, the number of respondents who stated that the city should remain united under Israeli control was more than twice the number who stated that it should not—a reflection of the magnitude of this issue for the Israeli public, which was not willing to compromise over it, even when negotiations seemed to be progressing. This reluctance is highlighted by the low percentage of respondents who agreed to cede the eastern part of the city to the Palestinians, which changed by only 2 percentage points over a period of four relatively quiet years.

An analysis of Jewish Israeli attitudes toward Jerusalem thus indicates that the city is one of the key issues in the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians. The Israeli public is strongly opposed to compromising over Jerusalem, even if the status of the city is the sole issue preventing a peace agreement from being reached. In the course of the four years from 1995 to 1999, Israeli willingness to transfer East Jerusalem to Palestinian control increased by only 2 percentage points.

Borders and the Future of Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Territories

This set of questions addressed the borders to which the Israeli public is willing to withdraw upon the creation of a Palestinian state. The questions were divided into three groups discussing withdrawal from the occupied territories, various proposed plans, and ceding the occupied territories as part of a permanent peace agreement.

The first question in the first group was "Would you agree to return to the 1967 borders as part of a permanent agreement?"[39] In July 2002, 47.5% replied that they supported the idea, while 43.5% were opposed. Significantly, this plurality

in favor of withdrawing to the 1967 borders had not previously existed. The second question was "Do you agree with the statement that not a single settlement should be dismantled, even in the context of peace agreements?"[40] In 2003, 32.5% answered that they agreed with the statement and 66.5% that they did not. In 2004, 34% agreed with it; in 2005, 39%. Thus the minority believing that settlements should not be dismantled increased, but remained a minority. This finding supports a conclusion that can be drawn from the responses to the previous question: that the majority of the Israeli public is willing to dismantle settlements. It is noteworthy that these years were the peak of the al-Aqsa intifada, which seems to have had a moderating effect on the public's positions. As the violence died down, however, the Israeli public seems to have hardened its stance.

The third question asked in this group was "Should the negotiations with the Palestinians ever be resumed, and if achieving a peace agreement depended only on the issue of the settlements, should Israel agree to evacuate all of them?"[41] In 2001, 40.2% of respondents stated that Israel should agree, and 51.4% that it should not. In 2004, 52% said that Israel should agree, and only 39.8% that it should refuse. Evidently, three years of violent confrontation with the Palestinians had also influenced the public's attitudes toward the issue of the settlements, making it more willing to compromise in order to conclude a peace agreement with the Palestinians. Thus the mood had changed; the majority that had previously opposed the idea was now willing to accept it, evidently influenced and perhaps worn out by the long years of confrontation.

The fourth question was as follows: "Were it to become clear that, in order to achieve a comprehensive peace agreement with the Palestinians, most of the Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria would have to be evacuated, would you be for or against the Israeli government's signing the agreement?"[42] In 1995, before the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, 30.3% said that they would favor signing such an agreement, while 51.9% were opposed. After Rabin's assassination, support for signing increased to 40.5%, with 37.9% opposed. These results indicate that the Israeli public's unwillingness to evacuate most of the settlements in "Judea and Samaria" and Gaza, even in return for a comprehensive peace agreement, was altered by the years of the al-Aqsa intifada, which made Israelis willing to compromise over borders.

The fifth and final question in this group was "In your opinion, what should be Israel's stance in negotiations with the Palestinians about the future of the Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria as part of the final accord?"[43]

The data in table 2.4 reveals that there was no significant change in the attitudes of the Israeli public during the first five years of the peace process. The only movement evident from these figures is found within the category of evacuating most of the settlements, which gained support, although the increase was

Table 2.4. Israelis' View concerning the Future of Settlements in the West Bank and Gaza

Attitude/Year	1995 (%)	1998 (%)	July 2000 (%)
Evacuate all the settlements	8.5	8.0	7.6
Evacuate most of the settlements	11.0	12.2	15.2
Evacuate only settlements near Palestinian localities	39.4	43.4	32.4
Evacuate no settlements	37.0	28.9	36.3

moderate and not really significant. At the same time, the majority supported the opinion that not a single settlement, or only the "problematic" ones located near Palestinian population centers, should be evacuated, which again indicates that during the first five years after Oslo—a time when no effort whatsoever was required to deal in depth with the problem of the borders of a future Palestinian state—the Israeli public did not adopt a flexible position and remained against territorial concessions.

A more recent survey showed a slight change in Israelis' attitude toward the question of the future of the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. A survey conducted by the Truman Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem showed that in 2007, 14% of the Israelis were ready to evacuate all the settlements and 45% were ready to evacuate all the small settlements, compared to the 16% who were ready to evacuate all the settlements and the 46% who were ready to evacuate the small settlements in 2006.[44] It seems that the unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip had its effect on the Israeli attitude toward the future of the small Israeli settlements in the West Bank also.

The second set of questions in this part dealt with various plans put forward by Israeli leaders during the course of negotiations with the Palestinians. The first question asked was as follows: "Here are three plans that have been drawn up recently by various groups concerning the future relations between Israel and the Palestinians. What is your attitude toward each of them? (1) Maintaining the status quo, including continued Israeli control of the territories it now holds and leaving all the Jewish settlements in place, even if this means that there is no agreement with the Palestinians. (2) Signing a peace agreement based on annexation to Israel of most of the Jewish settlements in the territories, the evacuation of isolated settlements in the heart of Arab populated areas, such as the Jewish settlers in Hebron, and setting up an independent Palestinian State with no offensive military force in most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. (3) A full Israeli withdrawal from the territories (except for minor border rectifications based on Israeli security needs), the evacuation of the Jewish settlements there,

and recognition of the Palestinians' right to an independent state, along with the signing of a final peace agreement with the Palestinians."[45] In 1996, 26.1% of the respondents supported plan 1, 16.9% plan 2, and 39.4% plan 3.

These figures revealed an additional support by the Israelis for withdrawal from most of the territories, the dismantling of the settlements there, and the establishment of a Palestinian state. We should recall, however, that in 1996, after the severe wave of Palestinian military attacks in February and March, the security situation improved as the security apparatus of the PNA took strong action against Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. At the time there was an increase in Israeli dovishness, especially after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. All of this breathed new life into more conciliatory attitudes on the Israeli side. Consequently, one should view these figures with caution. Nevertheless, they do indicate an Israeli willingness to seek a compromise over the borders of a Palestinian state.

In May 1997, the survey included the following question: "This morning the media published Netanyahu's proposal for a permanent agreement, under which the Palestinians would receive 40% of the area of the West Bank and most of the settlements would remain in Israeli hands. What do you think of this?"[46] According to 30.7% of the respondents, Israel would be conceding too much to the Palestinians; 19% said that they would be conceding too little; and 38.1% that Israel would be conceding them just the right amount. The attitude of the Israeli public was harsher and more disinclined to territorial compromise than it had been during previous years (1994–1996). This plan—the negative image of that presented in the previous question—shows how far Israeli attitudes are from the Palestinians' minimum requirements. In 1996–1997 the Israeli public believed that peace could be achieved at a meager price, and was unwilling to withdraw from most of the occupied territories.

The third set of questions investigated Israeli attitudes toward the occupied territories in the context of a permanent agreement between the two sides. The first question posed was "To what extent do you support or oppose signing a permanent agreement with the Palestinians that would include evacuation of the territories and recognition of a Palestinian State?"[47] In 1998, 54.7% of respondents replied that they supported such a permanent agreement, and 38.6% were opposed. Here one can see that, generally speaking, the Israeli public supported a peace agreement and was willing to withdraw from the occupied territories in order to achieve one.

The second question was "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Territories should not be handed over to the Palestinians even as part of a peace agreement?"[48] In 2001, 43% of the Israelis supported this statement, 35% in 2003, and 37.5% in 2004 and 2005.

Evident from these findings is a clear and consistent position that the issue of removing settlements can be discussed, as can partition, in the context of a permanent agreement. This position was influenced particularly by the al-Aqsa intifada. In 2001, at its peak, there was greater opposition to the idea of evacuating settlements than in the following years. This shows that the Israeli public was prepared for far-reaching compromise; we can even speak of a certain Palestinian success in modifying Israeli opinions in the direction of greater acceptance of far-reaching territorial compromise than in the past. In subsequent years we see a consistent decline in Israeli opposition, which evidently stems to some extent from the more relaxed security situation that followed the signing of the *hudna* by the Palestinian factions.

Thus, the Israeli public has demonstrated willingness for territorial compromise with the Palestinians, though the parameters of the questions asked were general and unfocused. It evinced its greatest willingness during the al-Aqsa intifada, when public positions were more conciliatory. If the context is an end to the conflict, the public's willingness to dismantle the settlements and withdraw from the territories increases. Nevertheless, in the period before the al-Aqsa intifada the Israeli public was not willing to make significant concessions, even when the surrounding conditions, chiefly the security situation, were favorable.

Refugees

The refugee problem is the fourth and final of the main issues related to the peace process over which Jewish Israelis and Palestinians disagree. The refugee question lies at the heart of the conflict between the two peoples, perceived by both as an existential problem. Attitudes among the Israeli public toward this issue were investigated over a decade. The questions on the refugee problem were divided into several clusters, each dealing with one of its aspects.

The first question in the first cluster was as follows: "There are different opinions about who bears major responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem in 1948—Israel or the Arab side. Who do you think is mainly to blame?"[49] In 1999, 9.3% of the respondents said that the Israeli side bore the brunt of the blame, 24.5% that the Israeli and Palestinian sides were equally to blame, and 47.5% that the blame lay with the Palestinian side; the rest (18.7%) didn't answer this question. At first glance, the answers fall within the normal pattern, with a majority of Israelis blaming the other side. Here, though, we should pay close attention to the relatively large group of Jewish Israelis who think that Israel bears some responsibility for the refugee problem, with 9.3% stating that Israel

is totally to blame and 24.5% that both sides are to blame. If we add these two figures together, we find that 33.8% of the Israeli public thinks that Israel bears some responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem.

The second question was "Do you agree or disagree with the idea that the principle that a person who leaves his home during the course of a war has the right to return to it applies to the Palestinian refugees as well?"[50] In 1999 the margin between the Israelis who agreed with this statement, 18.2%, and those who disagreed, 25.3%, was relatively small: 7.1 percentage points. The majority stood somewhere in the middle, saying that the answer depended on the circumstances. In 2003, after three years of the al-Aqsa intifada, there had been a significant hardening of the Israeli attitude. In 2003, an overwhelming majority of 76.3% disagreed with the statement, while only 17.6% agreed with it. In this case the security situation caused a rightward shift in Israeli public opinion.

The cornerstone for a peaceful solution for the Palestinian refugee problem is referred to in the two UN resolutions, 194 and 242. Despite a slight positive change in this regard, most Israelis still reject the implementation of these two resolutions. According to the Truman Institute public opinion survey in 2003, only 35% of the Israelis polled agreed to the implementation of these two resolutions while 65% rejected them; in 2004, 56% rejected them, and in 2007, 56% still rejected the implementation of these resolutions and 44% were willing to accept their implementation, with the condition that the refugees be allowed to return only to the Palestinian state to be created alongside Israel, and not to their homeland inside Israel.[51]

The Hamas Government

The attitudes of the Israeli public toward Hamas, the main Palestinian Islamic movement, and its policies were investigated after the victory of Hamas in the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council held in January 2006. The focus was on three key questions: transferring money to the Palestinian Authority, Hamas's involvement in terrorist attacks, and setting a border unilaterally.

The first question asked was, "Today, after the Hamas electoral victory, do you believe that Israel should or should not transfer tax money it collects for the Palestinian Authority, as it has been doing until now?"[52]

In January 2006, 7.3% of the respondents replied that Israel should certainly transfer to Hamas the tax money it collects on its behalf, and 14.5% said that perhaps Israel should do so. On the other side, 18.8% stated that perhaps Israel should not transfer the funds, and 49.8% that Israel absolutely should

not do so. A month later, in February 2006, the situation had changed only slightly: 12.6% replied that they were certain that Israel should transfer the tax funds it collects for the PA to the Hamas government, and 16.2% that it should perhaps do so; 20.1% said that Israel should perhaps not transfer funds to the Hamas government, and 43.4% that they were certain that this money should not be transferred. Hence, the Israeli public is strongly opposed to the transfer of money to Hamas. At both points in time, in the first months after Hamas's electoral victory, a clear majority opposed transferring the money to the Hamas government. In January 2006, opposition was expressed by 69.4% of the public, while 21.8% supported the idea. In February, 63.5% were opposed and 28.8% in favor. Despite the increase in public support for the idea in February, from 21.8% to 28.8%, as a whole the Israeli public remained unwilling to transfer money to the Hamas government.

The next question dealt with Hamas's involvement in terrorist attacks after its electoral victory: "Do you think that Hamas, after its clear victory in the elections to the Palestinian parliament, will or will not moderate its involvement in terrorist attacks against Israel?"[53]

In January 2006, 11% of respondents replied that Hamas would certainly moderate its involvement in terrorist attacks, and 35.1% that it might do so. At the same time, 20.8% stated that Hamas might not moderate its involvement in terrorist attacks, and 24.6% expressed certainty that it would not do so. In the following month, the breakdown changed slightly: 9.7% were certain that Hamas would moderate its involvement in terrorist attacks and 29% thought it might do so. At that point, 23.5% said that Hamas might not do so and 30.4% that it would certainly not. In January, the Israeli public was equally split over Hamas's future involvement in terrorist attacks, with 46.1% holding that it would reduce its involvement and 45.1% that it would not. By the following month, the public had clearly adopted the position that Hamas would not cut back its involvement in terrorist attacks, with 38.7% stating that it would and 53.9% that it would not.

The third Hamas-related question dealt with unilateral demarcation of Israel's borders. The following question was asked: "Do you believe that, in the wake of the Hamas victory in the elections, borders should be drawn without negotiations with the Palestinian government?"[54] In January 2006, 75.5% answered that Israel should set borders without negotiations with Hamas, while 17.9% disagreed. In February 2006, 47.3% responded that the borders should be set without negotiations with Hamas, whereas 35.2% thought that the Hamas-led Palestinian government should participate in negotiations over borders. Thus a shift occurred in February and the Israeli public evinced a greater willingness for Hamas to participate in negotiations over borders.

Analysis of the responses to the three questions reveals that the Israeli public greeted Hamas with suspicion and was not interested in any contact with it. Regarding the other issues—determining the country's borders and Hamas's involvement in terrorism—the Israeli public was pessimistic, believing that Hamas would continue to take part in terrorist attacks. The prevailing approach of Ehud Olmert's government, which followed the line of the Sharon government in setting the country's borders without negotiations with the PNA, was popular with the Israeli public.

It should be recalled that in January and February of 2006, Israel was in the middle of an election campaign, in which one of the key issues was Israel's stance toward the Hamas-led government. The Likud's campaign warned the public of the dangers posed by Hamas, which arguably influenced public attitudes toward the movement. It is also significant that during this period a number of senior Hamas personalities, notably the head of its political office, Khaled Mashal, delivered speeches declaring that the movement would not abandon the armed struggle against Israel; this, too, had a major impact on Israeli public attitudes.

Unilateral Disengagement

In this part the attitudes of the Jewish Israeli public about the various plans for unilateral disengagement from the Palestinians were explored. The idea of unilateral disengagement comprises several layers with different meanings, and thus is difficult to evaluate. Therefore a narrow definition of the notion, involving only one level of the process—withdrawal and the evacuation of settlements from most of "Judea and Samaria"—was employed. The attitudes of the Israeli public were examined through responses to sets of questions, each pertaining to a different aspect of public attitudes toward unilateral disengagement.

The first question dealt with the actual concept of unilateral disengagement, separate from negotiations with Palestinian actors, whether the PNA or another group: "In light of the difficulties in renewing the negotiations with the Palestinians, which of these two options do you prefer: (1) trying to achieve an agreement with the Palestinians, even if the process takes a very long time; or (2) unilateral and immediate Israeli disengagement?"[55]

The responses demonstrated that in December 2003 a majority of the population (58.6%) preferred the unilateral option, as opposed to only 28.9% who preferred negotiations between the parties. In March 2004 this trend continued, although support for unilateral action had declined somewhat to 50.9%, while 35.6% now favored negotiating with the Palestinians.

The second question was "The Prime Minister has declared that if the Palestinians do not cooperate in political negotiations based on the Road Map, Israel will adopt a policy of unilateral disengagement, that is, a series of unilateral steps to draw a line of demarcation, which includes a withdrawal from the Palestinian cities and evacuation of some of the settlements. In the present situation, do you support or oppose such a unilateral disengagement?"[56] In response to this question, 33.9% of the Israeli public replied that they strongly supported the disengagement plan, 28% that they supported it, 11% that they opposed it, and 17.1% that they strongly opposed it.

Another group of questions dealt with the Israeli public's willingness to evacuate settlements in "Judea and Samaria" in the context of a unilateral disengagement. The first question was "Should a decision be taken in favor of unilateral disengagement and if it proves necessary to evacuate settlements in order to create an effective barrier between Israel and the Palestinians, would you agree to evacuate settlements?"[57]

The results revealed that in February 2002, a total of 45.2% of the Israeli public supported the creation of a security barrier, and 51.4% were opposed to it. In May of the same year some shifts had occurred in the public position on such a barrier, which now enjoyed overall support from Israelis (65.2%), with 26.7% opposed to the idea. Thus, over a period of two months, support increased by 19.5 percentage points, an indication that the tide had turned and the public had adopted the idea of a security barrier. It is likely that this shift stemmed chiefly from the deterioration of the security situation, and the fact that in March 2002 terrorism claimed a record number of victims. The large toll evidently engendered a change in public attitudes on this issue.

The second question posed was, "What is your attitude with regard to a broad evacuation of settlements in the West Bank?"[58] The results demonstrate a lack of popular support for a broad evacuation of settlements in the West Bank. In August 2005, 34.3% of respondents supported the evacuation of settlements as part of an agreement with the Palestinians, and 13.5% in the context of unilateral disengagement; however, 41.8% of the respondents expressed their absolute opposition to a major evacuation of West Bank settlements. By the next month, September 2005, some change had taken place, with 38% of respondents stating their support for the evacuation of settlements as part of an agreement with the Palestinians, and 18.6% in the context of unilateral disengagement. In September, only 34.9% expressed strong opposition to the evacuation of settlements in any circumstances. There was thus a slight increase, 8.8 percentage points, in the number who would agree to the evacuation of the settlements. A further indication of this trend was a rise of 5.1 percentage points in support for unilateral disengagement. One may assume that this support derived from the

success of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan, implemented in August 2005, which showed that unilateral action, with minimal or no Palestinian involvement, could succeed.

Another significant question asked in August 2004 was, "What do you think about the possibility that in the context of a unilateral disengagement Israel might evacuate all the settlements in the West Bank, including the major settlement blocs?"[59] Here 29.4% responded that they supported the idea, while 60.2% were opposed.

A third question asked about the involvement of other countries: "According to the plans drafted by the Israeli government and defense establishment, at some stage the implementation of a unilateral disengagement plan might require the involvement of outside parties, so-called third parties. Do you accept or not accept the involvement of each of the following in the implementation of a unilateral disengagement plan?"[60]

The figures indicate that the only third party whose involvement in disengagement would be acceptable to the majority of the Israeli public is the United States: 46.7% accepted the possibility of U.S. involvement in June 2004, and 67.9% in April 2005. As for the other parties mentioned, the United Nations was accepted by 27.5% in June 2004 and 43.6% in April 2005, the European Union (EU) by 20.1% in June 2004 and 34.7% in 2005, and the Quartet (the UN, the EU, the U.S., and Russia)[61] by 25.7% in June 2004 and 37.7% in April 2005. Averaging the two figures, we find that the United States scored 46.7%, the United Nations 35.6%, the Quartet 31.7%, and the European Union 27.4%. These findings are compatible with the Israeli view that the United States is Israel's strongest ally, and with broad distrust among Israelis of the European Union. In the context of unilateral disengagement, too, the Israeli public was more willing to accept the involvement of the United States than international groups like the European Union or the Quartet.

The Israeli population thus supports the idea of unilateral action in the West Bank. The highest level of support, recorded in May 2002, suggests that one of the main factors promoting the idea is the security situation. Nonetheless, the preference of the Israeli public is that the major step of evacuating most settlements in "Judea and Samaria" be implemented in coordination with the Palestinians. Concerning the scope of the evacuation, a majority of the Israeli population is inclined to oppose a process that entails the evacuation of most of the settlements. Regarding the involvement of third parties, there is most confidence in the United States and least in the European Union, which is perceived as being biased in favor of the Palestinians (a perception which is also reflected in attitudes toward the European Union on other issues).

Table 2.5. Israelis' Views concerning the Effectiveness of Physical Barriers in Reducing Terrorist Attacks

Attitude/Year	May 2002 (%)	June 2003 (%)	Oct. 2003 (%)	Feb. 2004 (%)
Believe it can prevent terrorist attacks	13.7	16.3	19	16.5
Believe it can significantly reduce terrorist attacks	59.7	59.6	63.1	70
Do not believe it can help	23.8	22.8	16.5	12.2

The Separation Wall

The questions asked on this subject were designed to assess the Jewish public's position on the separation wall, which is meant to separate Israel and the territories under the control of the PNA. Construction of the fence began in 2002, in the wake of the strong public pressure on the Sharon government produced by the tidal wave of terrorist attacks in the first half of that year, prior to Operation Defensive Shield. Consequently the surveys presented here ran from 2002 to early 2004, by which time large sections of the structure had been completed and it had become a fixture on the public scene.

The first question was "Do you or do you not believe that the unilateral construction by Israel of a fence, wall, and other physical means of separation can prevent or at least significantly reduce terrorist attacks?"[62]

The results (see table 2.5) revealed that the Israeli public consistently believed that the wall could significantly reduce terrorist attacks, including as early as May 2002, just a month after Operation Defensive Shield was launched. In that month, 13.7% of those surveyed stated that they believed that a separation wall could prevent terrorist attacks, and 69.7% that it could reduce them significantly; only 23.8% replied that they did not believe that a fence could prevent or reduce terrorist attacks. In subsequent years the Israeli public increasingly adopted the idea of the wall, as evidenced by a slow but steady rise in the percentage of those stating that it could reduce or prevent terrorist attacks.

In June 2003, 16.3% of the Israeli public replied that a wall could prevent terrorist attacks and 59.6% that it could reduce them; a minority of 22.8% said that they did not believe that it could help the situation. In October of the same year, support for the wall had risen further: 19% stated that it could prevent terrorist attacks, 63.1% that it could reduce them, and only 16.5% that it could

Table 2.6. Israelis' Support for or Opposition to the Separation Fence

Attitude/Year	July 2003 (%)	Oct. 2003 (%)	Feb. 2004 (%)	June 2004 (%)
Strongly support	48.2	47.2	53.4	50
Support	31.2	36.2	30.1	28.1
Oppose	8.4	6.5	5.9	5
Strongly oppose	6.9	5.1	7.3	11.5

not help—a drop of 7.3 percentage points from May 2002. The trend continued in February 2004, when 16.5% responded that the wall could prevent terrorist attacks, 70% that it could significantly reduce them, and only 12.2% that it could do neither. We can explain the steady increase in support for the wall by the fact that the scope of violence declined from 2003 onwards, thanks to the wall, on the one hand, but also to an expansion of interdiction activities by the Israeli military and General Security Services, as well as the cease-fire (*hudna*) that came into force when Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) was appointed Palestinian prime minister. Thus support for the wall, which was consistently high throughout the period, increased as the length of the structure grew and the violence declined.

The second question asked was, "As a matter of principle, do you support or oppose the construction of the separation fence?"[63]

Support for the idea of the wall was consistently high in 2003 and 2004. As discussed above, those years saw a decline in the number of Israeli victims of terrorism, a development that was perceived as due in part to the wall's construction. During the same period, security personnel praised the wall for helping to prevent terrorists from infiltrating into Israel. The figures presented in table 2.6 provide clear evidence of this: in July 2003, 31.2% of respondents supported the idea and 48.2% supported it very strongly—a total of 79.4% in favor. Only 15.3% expressed opposition to the wall, of whom 6.9% were strongly opposed and 8.4% opposed. In October of that year the distribution was largely the same: 83.4% of the public was in favor of the idea (47.2% expressed their strong support and 36.2% their support). Of the remaining respondents, 11.6% were against it (5.1% strongly opposed and 6.5% opposed).

In February 2004, 30.1% stated that they supported the wall and 53.4% that they supported it strongly—a total of 83.5%. Only 13.2% stated that they were against it (5.9% opposed and 7.3% strongly opposed). In June 2004, 78.1% of the respondents supported the idea of the wall, with 50% expressing strong support. Only 16.5% were against the structure (5% were opposed and 11.5% strongly opposed). Clearly, the wall enjoyed almost unreserved support on the Israeli side

throughout 2003 and 2004; even when support declined slightly in June 2004 it remained close to 80%, which indicates that a consensus has emerged over the wall within Israeli society.

The third question asked in this group was, "Work is now getting under way to build a separation fence between Israel and the Palestinians. Even though the precise route of the fence has not yet been determined, it is clear that at least some Jewish settlements in the territories will remain outside it. Do you support or oppose construction of the fence in such conditions?"[64]

In June 2002, 57.4% of those surveyed responded that they favored construction of the fence in such conditions, including 30.8% who supported it and 26% who supported it strongly. Those against the idea totaled 34% of the respondents; 17.4% were strongly opposed and 16.6% opposed. A similar breakdown is evident in the following year. In June 2003, 59.7% were in favor of the fence under these conditions, with 29.5% supporting it strongly and 30.2% supporting it. In the same month 17.1% of the respondents opposed the idea and 16.7% opposed it strongly, for a total of 33.8%. A month later, in July 2003, 55.5% of the Jewish Israeli public was in favor of the idea, combining the 30.3% who supported it and the 25% who supported it strongly; 36.6% were against it, with 18.3% opposed and 18.3% strongly opposed.

Thus in 2002 and 2003 the idea of the wall was very attractive and Israelis favored its construction, even if it meant leaving some Jewish settlements on the Palestinian side. This sentiment was reflected in surveys that revealed that over 60% of the respondents consistently supported construction of the wall even if some Jewish settlements were to remain outside its perimeter.

The fourth question asked about the wall was "As is known, there is a debate about the route of the separation fence, pitting those who believe it should follow the Green Line and those who think that the Green Line should not be the only factor in determining its route, but that security and other considerations of the Israeli government should also be taken into account. To which view do you tend?"[65]

From the responses received it can be inferred that the idea of building the separation wall along the Green Line did not enjoy broad support from Israelis; rather, a majority favored the use of governmental discretion in determining the route. In October 2003, 62.6% replied that the route should be based on what the government deemed most appropriate, 19.1% that it should be built along the Green Line, and only 4.2% that they were opposed to construction of the wall. This distribution continued in February 2004, when 66.1% stated that the route of the fence should be determined by the government, 20.2% that it should run along the Green Line, and 6.5% expressed opposition in principle to the wall. Thus we see that Israelis did not consider the Green Line to be a major factor

and that the wall was viewed as essential, given the tiny percentage of those who voiced opposition to its construction.

The last question in this section was "From time to time the argument is made that, due to political considerations, construction of the separation fence is not proceeding as rapidly as it should be. According to this argument, the government does not really want to build the fence because it is afraid that its route will determine the border between Israel and the future Palestinian State. Do you agree or disagree with this contention?"[66]

In June 2003, 60.6% of those surveyed replied that they agreed with this statement, including 37.5% who agreed with it and 22.6% who agreed with it strongly. Only 23.2% rejected the statement: 13.5% disagreed and 9.7% disagreed strongly. In February 2004, 51% expressed agreement with the statement; 30.6% agreed and 20.4% agreed strongly. In the same month, 31% rejected the statement; 16.5% disagreed with it and 14.5% disagreed strongly. We see that overall the Israeli public believed that political considerations were influencing the pace at which the wall was being constructed. However, the period between June 2003 and February 2004 witnessed a decline of about 10 percentage points in those who believed this argument.

It can be inferred that the Israeli public strongly believed that the wall could prevent or sharply reduce terrorist attacks, as expressed in the strong support for its construction, which was very high in 2003. Support for the wall was also significant even if some West Bank settlements would remain outside it, which underlines the importance attributed to it by Israelis. In addition, the wall was perceived as a political issue, with many stating that the pace at which it was being built was dependent on the government's political considerations.

Conclusion: In Favor of Peace, but Which Peace?

What kind of accord is acceptable to the Jewish Israeli population? This question is decisive for any future peace between the Palestinians and Israelis. The basic assumption is that the opinion of the Israeli public at large, and its support or opposition, is a decisive consideration in actions taken by the leadership and government in Israel. Such support is essential for making headway in negotiations and for reaching agreements with the Palestinian side. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that Israeli public opinion is also being influenced by any potential agreements that are reached by any Israeli government. Finally, this support is vital for tranquility and stability following the conclusion of a peace agreement.

The figures presented in this chapter reflect Israeli public support for the fundamental principles underlying such an agreement. The Israeli public agrees that there is a need for peace. It supports the establishment of a Palestinian state and accepts the need to withdraw from some of the occupied territories. This analysis is based, in addition to public support for peace, on the broad support for an agreement among of the Israeli leadership, as reinforced by the many published studies and reports, as well as media coverage of the issue in recent years.

Nevertheless, the seeds of continued conflict and confrontation are latent in the kind of agreement that is acceptable to the Israeli majority. Such an agreement would include the establishment of a Palestinian state in only parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (according to several proposals advanced by Netanyahu and Sharon, only around 40% of the area of those territories) and an almost total refusal to return to the 1967 borders. It would also need to take account of strong Israeli support for an undivided Jerusalem as the united capital of Israel, and thus a refusal to partition it between Israel and Palestine, as well as opposition to uprooting all settlements in "Judea and Samaria"—the West Bank; a lack of readiness to recognize Israeli responsibility for the refugee problem and a sweeping refusal to permit all or most of the refugees to return to their homeland (that is, an across-the-board refusal to implement UN Resolution 194 concerning the Palestinian refugees); viewing the Palestinian leadership, which has expressed clear support for the division of Jerusalem, the dismantling of settlements, and the return of the refugees, as a terrorist leadership whose word is not to be trusted (this view applied in particular to the late President Arafat); and support for an agreement based on unilateral withdrawal, on the assumption that any agreement based on negotiations would have to deal with the questions of a permanent solution. However, there is an Israeli consensus against a solution based on UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and supported by a majority of the international community, and, of course, by a broad Palestinian consensus.

What are the contours of the peace that the Israeli public is willing to accept and uphold? Analysis of the figures presented here indicates that Israelis support only a partial agreement and prefer to leave crucial elements of a future agreement unresolved, and as a source of tension once a peace agreement has been reached. This conclusion takes into account international resolutions on the solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as well as the broad consensus among the Palestinians, and particularly the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This analysis is essential for determining what kind of agreement Israel is willing to consider. It makes it quite plain that an agreement acceptable to the Palestinians is far from one acceptable to the Israelis, even those among

them who support peace and an agreement based on the concept of two states. Hence, any aspiration to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will run aground on fundamental and severe problems associated with the preferences of the Israeli public. The official Palestinian political line, which is based on seeking an agreement anchored in the implementation of international resolutions, must be informed by the fundamental challenge posed by Israeli public opinion.

Israeli public attitudes, which are measured almost weekly, are what paved the way for a fundamental change in Israeli policy, diverting it from the path of "achieving peace" to a focus on "conflict management," and maneuvering in order to meet the expectations of the Israeli public. The Israeli refusal to meet the requirements of what is considered peace by the international community and the majority of the Palestinians is certainly not the only factor behind the internal crisis and the failure of the Palestinian national movement to create an independent state. Palestinian internal political developments since Oslo are another important set of factors.

3

Arafat's Heritage of Political Control

The roots of the current Palestinian situation go back to the nature of the regime that was created by Arafat after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), and to his regime within the structure of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The way in which Arafat led the Palestinians can provide a partial explanation for both Palestinian achievements since the 1950s and also for the Palestinians' failure to attain their national goals. In any event, Arafat's style of rule constitutes one explanation for the Palestinian situation today, including the rise of Hamas in opposition to Arafat's control and the hegemony of Fateh.

Arafat's Control over PLO Institutions, 1968–1993

From the 1960s through 2004, Yasser Arafat dominated the leadership of both the Fateh movement and the PLO and its various institutions. This control encompassed political, financial, and public relations, and organizational domains. In the last forty years of his life, Arafat was the only figure with the power to unite, make decisions on behalf of, and lead the Palestinians—to the degree that the evolution of the Palestinian problem can be said to have been an expression of Arafat's mode of decision making,[1] and his life a direct continuation of the decisions he took in the name of his people. Arafat's Achilles' heel was simultaneously the principal source of his strength: his belief that he alone possessed the capacity to bring the aspirations of the Palestinian people to fruition.[2]

Over the decades Arafat employed many means of influencing various aspects of the Palestinian problem. In addition to his own leadership qualities, he appointed individuals loyal to himself, to positions of power, thereby ensuring that PLO institutions would make the decisions he favored.

Control of the Armed Forces

Yasser Arafat was elected chairman of the PLO's Executive Committee at the fifth session of the Palestine National Council, which was held in Cairo February 1–4, 1969. A major change introduced during the session, one considered a personal victory for Arafat,[3] was that for the first time the chairman of the Executive Committee was also named supreme commander of the "forces of the revolution"; in other words, Arafat himself was placed at the head of the military wing of the PLO. It was also decided that the PLO's armed struggle would be overseen by representatives of the various Palestinian armed factions. From that time onwards, Arafat served both as chairman of the PLO's Executive Committee and as supreme commander of the "forces of the revolution."

The Quota System

Arafat exploited the quota system of representation in PLO institutions to guarantee passage of the decisions he supported and the selection of his confidants to important posts. The Fateh movement always had the largest quota, supplemented by so-called independents, who have generally either been supporters of Fateh or been supported by it, as well as representatives from women's organizations, student unions, trade unions, professional associations, and other constituencies. In this way Arafat assured himself a majority that allowed him to run the PLO's institutions, while remaining within the formal regulations of the organization.

One of the fundamental principles of the political activity of the PLO was that "independents" were associated with every faction; most of them, however, were identified with Fateh.[4] The quota system, according to which positions and funds were distributed, constituted the foundation of the PLO's organizational structure, and, as such, generated frequent disagreements and quarrels.[5]

The quota system was instituted in order to guarantee the continued hegemony of the armed struggle organizations within the PLO, as it existed in 1969, and therefore the true center of power lay elsewhere. The system guaranteed these organizations most of the seats in the Palestinian National Council (PNC) and the Central Committee, as well as representation on the Executive Committee. Accordingly, decision making fell under the control of the political groups,

and decisions were always made outside the legislative and executive organs of the PLO. Because these organs had no real power, a vacuum was created at the top of the power structure—a vacuum that was filled by one man, a single individual who had replaced the institution.[6]

Since the 1960s the Fateh movement has been able, at various levels, to restrict the struggle for "democratic reform" to a contest for the distribution of quotas; it describes this as action on behalf of "national unity" and as a reflection of the need to adopt policies that command a consensus. There is no doubt that, viewed objectively, the quota system paved the way for a gradual transfer of decision-making power away from the national institutions (the PNC, the Central Committee, the Executive Committee, and its various commissions and affiliated organizations), because membership in these institutions became subject to the quota system; that is, to a particular form of arbitrary appointment. The quota system perpetuated the guardianship asserted by the various factions, and their leaders, over the Palestinian people and their right to elect their representatives and hold them accountable. This system also encouraged the tendency to prefer the narrow interests of these organizations over the broad national good.[7]

Control of the Palestinian National Council

Arafat gained control of the PNC by continually appointing new members to it: whereas in 1968 it had one hundred members, during the last decade of Arafat's life the number of PNC members exceeded five hundred Palestinians from all over the world. This gradual expansion[8] occurred under the guise of guaranteeing participation for various sectors, such as trade unions and professional associations, students, women, authors, journalists, exiles, and residents of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. New members have been added at every session of the PNC. The eighth session of the PNC, held in Cairo from February 28 to March 5, 1971, authorized the Executive Committee and chairman of the PNC to select the new delegates.[9] A similar resolution was passed by the fifteenth session (held in Damascus, April 11–19, 1981), which decided to add thirty to forty new members to the PNC, to be selected at a joint session of its presidium and the PLO's Executive Committee.[10] Because Arafat controlled both of these bodies, in practice he determined the identities of the new members.

A number of leading figures objected to these arbitrary appointments. Bahjat Abu Ghariba resigned from the Executive Committee at the ninth session of the PNC (Cairo, July 7–13, 1971) in protest against them. At the eleventh session (Cairo, January 6–12, 1973), it was decided that 50 percent of the new members of

the PNC would be drawn from the popular organizations.[11] These organizations were funded by Arafat himself and controlled by his close supporters.[12]

This system allowed the PLO's leadership to ensure that "the PNC would be an empty forum in which strange and mysterious events would take place, but not a forum that would allow the various social agents to put forward their demands and views, as an opposition to the executive branch. In practice, the role of the PNC was to provide formal legitimacy without participating in any fashion whatsoever in the determination of Palestinian policy or in the monitoring of the activity of the executive branch. The members of the PNC served to rubber-stamp policies determined by others."[13]

Arafat's seizure of control of the PNC was made easier because the council was never elected and was in practice merely the constituent assembly of a future Palestinian entity. The leaderships of the various factions and the Executive Committee performed many of the functions originally intended for the PNC. Furthermore, the PNC was never meant to serve as a legislature or to draft laws; its purpose was to set up a Palestinian national entity, a task it has failed to accomplish.[14]

Control of the PLO's Central Committee

Arafat reaped the benefits of the policy of establishing new leadership organs and splitting off new institutions from existing ones. Examples include the establishment of the PLO's Central Committee in 1970 and the Central Council in 1973. At the seventh session of the PNC (Cairo, May 30–June 4, 1970), the PLO's Central Committee was established to assist the Executive Committee. Not only was the chairman of the Executive Committee—namely, Yasser Arafat—made the head of the Central Committee, all of its other appointed members were his confidants. According to the resolution, they were the members of the Executive Committee, the speaker of the PNC, the commander of the Palestine Liberation Army, and three independent representatives.[15]

Following the establishment of the Central Committee, the Executive Committee was stripped of some of its powers; in practice it was left with the task of implementing the decisions of the Central Committee. Due to protests against this constriction of the Executive Committee's authority and against Arafat's control over the management of affairs, the PNC decided at its ninth session (Cairo, July 7–13, 1971) to abolish the Central Committee and restore the powers of the Executive Committee.[16]

This policy, which continues to the present, was reaffirmed in 1973, when the PNC, at its eleventh session (Cairo, January 6–12, 1973), decided to set up the Central Council of the PLO as a liaison body between the Executive Committee

and the PNC.[17] By means of the "independent" representatives, representatives of popular organizations, the quota system, and the continual expansion in the size of the Central Council—from thirty-two members in 1973 to more than a hundred today—Arafat also gained control of the latter.[18] Thus, for example, the dates and agendas of meetings of the Central Council were set by the Executive Committee;[19] that is, by Arafat.

Arafat guaranteed that the various departments of the PLO did his bidding by appointing Fateh members and leaders, or "independents" close to him, to head them. This practice affected the following departments: the secretariat, the political department, the military department (of which Arafat appointed himself head after his selection as head of the Executive Committee in 1968), the Palestinian National Fund, the Department for Occupied Homeland Affairs, the Department for Arab-National Relations, the Department for Refugee Affairs, the Department for Education and Higher Education, the Information and Culture Department, the Popular Organizations Department, the Department for Social Affairs, and the Department for Administration.[20]

Control of Financial Agencies (the National Fund)

Arafat also controlled the treasuries of both the PLO and Fateh. According to the rules of the Palestinian National Fund, Arafat, by virtue of his position as chairman of the Executive Committee, had to approve the transfer of large sums to various parties, which permitted him to allocate funds and control supported groups. Arafat authorized the monthly allocations to organizations and factions, the families of martyrs, the wounded and orphans, the political bureaus and propaganda offices, schools, hospitals, clinics, and cultural organizations.[21]

Arafat exploited the vast sums contributed to the PLO in ways that his opponents considered illegitimate and unfair. For example, he fostered splits in rival organizations by supporting opposing elements in them, and took control of newspapers and various institutions, as well as other miscellaneous forums. During the months that preceded the Oslo Accords in 1993, it was perceived by Israel, the West, and some of the Palestinians that the Palestinian leadership was concerned chiefly with money, and that excessive use was being made of it to influence internal Palestinian political activity.[22]

According to the bylaws of the PLO, the Palestinian National Fund was responsible for all financial affairs and operations pursuant to the instructions of the Executive Committee. The activities of the fund were overseen by a board of directors appointed by the Executive Committee; thus Arafat controlled the activities of the fund via the Executive Committee.[23]

In 1969, Arafat decided to found the Samid institution for economic production. Over the years it became a colossus, overseeing dozens of productive enterprises and thousands of Palestinian workers in Arab countries. Its budget grew to enormous proportions, and Arafat was the source of its authority.[24] Even if Arafat himself led an austere lifestyle, he did not deny the lavish habits of his aides. During the years after Arafat came to power, he silently disregarded incidents of financial corruption involving his aides, and even gave them more money to fund their prodigality.[25]

Control via the Media

Arafat controlled the Palestinian electronic and print media. He also managed through financial means to extend his influence to many employees of Arab and foreign media outlets. On many occasions Arafat placed journalists loyal to him with Arab periodicals in the Gulf States, Jordan, Egypt, and elsewhere. Radio Monte Carlo, which broadcasts from France, which was very close to Arafat and in favor of his policies, was subsidized by him, and he even paid the salaries of some of its correspondents.[26] To this should be added the Voice of Palestine radio station in Baghdad. The media in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip generally displayed allegiance to Arafat, and some received direct financial support from him. With the exception of *Al-Nahar,* which was pro-Jordanian before financial difficulties forced its closure, all of the following newspapers were financially and politically (through his selection of the editors) dependent directly on Arafat: *Al-Oudeh, Al-Biyader as-Siyasi, Al-Biyader al-Adabi, Al-Fajr, Al-Fajr* in English, *Ash-Sha'ab,* and *Al-Kateb.* The allegiance of the London-based *Al-Quds* newspaper varied in accordance with the inclinations of its private owners until Arafat managed to gain influence over it and its coverage, and it became the paper most supportive of Arafat and his policies.[27]

In 1972, three years after his election as chairman of the PLO, Arafat acted to take control of the media affiliated with all of the Palestinian organizations by setting up the general union of Palestinian writers and journalists within the PLO. Arafat then appointed Ahmad Abd el-Rahman, who was very close to him, to replace Hana Meqbel as editor in chief of the official newspaper, *Falastin al-Thawra,* with the result that representatives of the other factions resigned from the periodical's editorial committee. This turned it, to some extent, into the private domain of Fateh.[28]

The PLO's Research Center was generally considered a success story, but following numerous squabbles between Arafat and the center's director and several of its fellows during the 1970s, when Arafat's center of power was in Lebanon, the center's cultural, intellectual, and information roles were curtailed. Dr. Anis

Sayegh, who served as the director of the center in the seventies, relates that Arafat used to meddle in its activities, interfering in the appointment or dismissal of fellows in its journal, *Palestine Studies,* and even controlling the wording of its correspondence. Sayegh believes that Arafat wanted the center to be subordinate to his opinions and views and to him personally.[29]

Sayegh also writes about attempts by Arafat to gain control of the Palestinian encyclopedia published by ALECSO, the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization. He relates in great detail how Arafat intervened in various entries written for the encyclopedia, citing, for example, his opposition to an entry written about Iz el-Din al-Qasam, on the grounds that he was Syrian and not Palestinian.[30]

Exclusivity in Decision Making (the Executive Committee)

By the force of his personality, determination, and strength, Arafat was able to make decisions and run the affairs of the PLO alone, to the point that he was accused of lacking respect for the opinions of the Palestinian public, the PLO, and even his closest colleagues, and of failing to include them, if only for appearances' sake, in decision making. This lack of respect was evident, for example, in his reference to the members of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid conference as "political neophytes,"[31] as well as in his dismissal of the complaints of Faisal Husseini, Hanan Ashrawi, and Haidar Abd el-Shafi, the delegates to the Washington talks, about his treatment of them.[32]

Confirmation of Arafat's attitude can be found in the remarks of the head of the Palestinian delegation to the negotiations, Haidar Abd el-Shafi, who, referring to the problems the delegation faced in Madrid, noted Arafat's stubborn insistence on making all of the decisions himself.[33] He added that Arafat selected the members of the Palestinian negotiating team at the Madrid conference without consulting him.[34]

The secret talks in Oslo were conducted without the knowledge of the PLO leadership, the Executive Committee, or the negotiating team in Washington. After the accord was announced, Arafat did not convene the PNC or the Central Council to ratify it. He called a session of the Executive Committee only in the wake of repeated demands and pressure, ten days after a meeting held with the Fateh leadership, as if the accord directly concerned only Fateh and not the PLO.[35] Even those closest to Arafat, like Sakher Habash, a member of the Central Committee of Fateh, spoke of the dangers of Arafat's way of control. To prove his point, Habash noted that the Oslo Accords and its appendices were published in the Israeli media, and that the members of the PLO's Executive Committee and the Fateh Central Committee were the last to know about them.[36]

In 1994, Khaled al-Hassan, a member of Fateh's Central Committee and a confidant of Arafat for decades, wrote a book, *Lest the Leadership Become a Dictatorship,* which remains unpublished. In this volume, on the basis of his personal experience, al-Hassan described the problems within the leadership of the PLO, which tended toward dictatorship and the absence of consultation in decision making. In so doing, al-Hassan, who died in 1994, sought to make a final plea for a collective leadership rather than dictatorship in the Palestinian arena.[37]

Those in the know cite, as an example of Arafat's exclusive control of decision making, his refusal to appoint a deputy in any of the organizations he headed: as chairman of the Executive Committee, supreme commander of the forces of the revolution, president of the State of Palestine, head of the PNA, and chairman of the Central Committee of Fateh, Arafat worked without a deputy. He refused to name a deputy even after the need was made obvious in 1992, when the plane he was traveling in crashed in the Libyan Desert and he was missing for a number of hours.[38]

Some Palestinian political commentators believe that the hints that Arafat dropped on a number of occasions about Abu Alaa or Abu Mazen as potential successors were merely an attempt to create rivalry between the two, and leave both in a weakened position and unable to challenge him.[39] In 1983, when Abu Musa and Abu Saleh led a faction that seceded from Fateh, one of their declared justifications was protest against Arafat's one-man rule. A statement published by the faction stated that "Arafat has eliminated the role of the Central Committee and Revolutionary Council of the Fateh movement, while instituting one-man rule, in which, along with a handful of aides, he takes perilous and fateful decisions that harm the security of our cause and threaten the struggle of our people." One of the demands made by this group was that Fateh become the commanding organization rather than the organization of the commander. Another example is Arafat's renunciation of terrorism on November 7, 1985. This statement was made at his own initiative and was not discussed by the Executive Committee until some two weeks after it was made, even though by this date Arafat had become the decisive voice in the PLO and probably would not have faced any significant opposition within the committee.[40]

Creating Divisions in Institutions and Factions

In pursuit of his ambition to consolidate his position within the PLO, Arafat benefited from the fissures, divisions, and schisms that frequently emerged within the Palestinian factions. Arafat also used this method to control the armed forces, for example by dispersing the thousands of fighters among differ-

ent Arab countries in order to prevent them from taking any part in opposition to him.[41] Indeed, Arafat admitted this openly: "I never put all my eggs in one basket," he is reported to have said.[42]

The schisms also contributed to the continued weakness of the Palestinian factions. New groups asked Arafat for financial assistance, which helped ensure their loyalty to him. Some leaders believe that Arafat himself took a hand in fomenting these splits and encouraged senior members of some factions—such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front, the Arab Liberation Front, the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front, the Islamic Jihad, and the Communist Party—to secede from their parent organizations, and even gave them the necessary funding. A similar practice has emerged also within Hamas in the Gaza Strip.[43]

The Establishment of Alternative Institutions

Political leaders who worked alongside Arafat have noted a number of methods that he employed in order to control of Palestinian institutions, such as setting up alternative institutions to the existing "unloyal" ones. Arafat's intervention in their activities—the appointing his associates to positions of power; continually increasing the number of their members; failing to convene to discuss crucial issues; lavishly distributing funds to close associates; and dispersing the armed forces in various Arab countries, and such activities—were part of Arafat's way of maintaining control.

Here I shall focus on three key institutions, one military, one financial, and one intellectual: the Palestine Liberation Army, the Palestinian National Fund, and the PLO's Research Center. With regard to the first of these, Arafat, in addition to scattering PLO fighters among camps in various Arab countries, also maintained regular and irregular forces that competed within the PLO. These forces made strenuous efforts to obtain Arafat's support,[44] and were one reason for the split that took place in Fateh in 1983; the statement published by the dissidents referred to the establishment of these groups as "a military and organizational coup," adding that their objective was to exclude all those capable of taking part in the struggle against the Americans from the military arm of Fateh.[45]

As for the money that should have been transferred to the Palestinian National Fund from the Arab world, a large percentage was transferred to Arafat's private accounts and other channels. Arafat sought to create confusion between the funds of the PLO and the funds of Fateh, the treasury of which he bore direct responsibility for. To this end he gained control through an alternative fund, as became clear in 1993 when, amid rumors of PLO bankruptcy, Fateh's treasury was still able to fund activities on a broad scale.[46]

In addition to meddling in the activities of the Research Center, Arafat also deliberately weakened it by establishing an alternative institution, the Planning Center, affiliated with the PLO. The competition between the two and the struggle over spheres of cultural and intellectual responsibility eventually weakened both centers.[47]

Arafat as a Statesman: The Centralization of Power and Political Conduct in the PNA

The nonformal structure of the Palestinian National Authority as a government and source of power and decisions voided the formal structure and systems of all but symbolic meaning. At most, they were overshadowed by an undemocratic apparatus similar to the systems in dictatorial states, of the sort that developed after independence in many countries in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

In parallel to the formal structure of the PNA, which is supposed to reflect democratic political behavior, the presidency, which is also part of the formal structure, has endeavored—ever since the establishment of the authority after the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and Jericho, and following the subsequent enlargement of the territory under its control—to concentrate power in ways that relegate the formal structure to a secondary role. This regime amasses power and controls the Palestinian institutions and general population by means of various techniques that fall into three categories: centralization of power, surveillance (intimidation), and largesse that purchases quiet and supporters (bribery).

Centralization of Power

Under Arafat the Palestinian political system operated by centralizing power in the presidency and its head. All decisions, both external and internal, were made exclusively by Arafat, who, according to the testimony of those close to him, invested many hours in the "how" of consolidating all decision making, even in negligible matters. Political, economic, and security issues were fully subject to Arafat's direct authority and supervision, and these constitute the main manifestations of the centralization of political power in his hands.

Political Power

The process of the concentration of political power in the Palestinian liberation movement—Fateh and the PLO—began long before the signing of the peace

agreement with Israel and the establishment of the PNA. Arafat maintained the powers and positions he had held before Oslo in the post-Oslo period and after founding of the authority, and added a long list of new titles and positions to further consolidate his power. The *raʿisis* (president) was the source of all political power and the only person authorized to make political decisions on both external and internal issues. This applied even to what should logically have fallen within the authority of a minister or lower-ranking official, such as the director general of a ministry, the director of a public office, or the director of a specific department within a ministry. Dozens of persons were employed in the office of the *raʿis* as assistants or advisers on various topics, including the director general of the President's Office, and advisers on the media, Israeli affairs, police affairs, economic affairs, and educational affairs. These advisers were supplemented by a large number of functionaries bearing the title of "director general in the President's Office." The large number of personnel should not be compared to the offices of chiefs of state of democratic governments. These assistants and advisers only advised the *raʿis;* they were not allowed to take any decisions or practical steps. These remained the exclusive privilege of the *raʿis,* after consulting or ignoring his advisers. Decisions were made by Arafat, and Arafat alone.

Cabinet meetings, with the participation of the ministers and the *raʿis,* were merely a forum for Arafat's ministers to report on the activities of their ministries, or at most for consultation. No truly significant decisions were taken during these meetings. Ministers frequently reported of learning about political moves by the PNA, such as talks with Israel or arrests of opposition figures, from the media.

In addition to political decisions, appointments to the public service also tended to be the exclusive privilege of the *raʿisis.* It was he who proposed or at least confirmed appointments in the various governmental ministries and agencies, such as the Broadcasting Authority and Central Bureau of Statistics, in addition to bodies and posts that should be less dependent on political agencies, such as universities and research institutes, judges, and state attorneys.

Palestinian institutions include those that operate as alternatives to institutions established under the Israeli occupation, as well as voluntary and nonprofit associations focusing on various issues. These emerged during and after the first intifada. Following the signing of the Oslo Accords and after the establishment of the PNA, they became subject to direct and indirect monitoring and supervision by Arafat, especially through the Office of National Institutions, which was affiliated with and directly subordinate to Arafat, who was also its honorary president. According to its acting director general, Dr. Samir Shehada, this office was originally set up, in 1995, by the Fateh movement, and was later confirmed

by Arafat as an organ of the PNA.[48] However, the change in status did not bring the necessary personnel modifications to support democratic procedures. The result was that the Office of National Institutions turned into an organization that oversaw all institutional activity in the PNA.[49]

Economic Power

The second method employed by the *ra'isis* and his aides to concentrate power directly in Arafat's hands was the exploitation of the economic resources available to the PNA. Arafat was able to assert personal control of expenditures and the supervision of revenues, which were routed through three main channels, the PNA's Finance Ministry, the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), and special funds at Arafat's disposal. In addition, he controlled two other channels, one that belonged to the PLO (the Palestinian National Fund) and the other to the Fateh movement (its own finance branch). Arafat controlled both before the establishment of the PNA by virtue of his position as chairman of the PLO and head of Fateh.

The PNA Ministry of Finance fell almost totally under Arafat's control, especially as regards expenditures and the allocation of funds. The ministry was run by Arafat's right-hand man, Muhammad Zuhdi al-Nashashibi. Al-Nashashibi was Arafat's financial assistant before the establishment of the PNA. His transfer to the position of finance minister constituted a continuation of his previous mission: to help Arafat control the authority's funds, and to use them to assert Arafat's political control of Fateh field operatives and PNA employees through their appointment or the allocation of funds for various objectives.

A short note scribbled on a scrap of paper by Arafat—and him alone—sufficed for the transfer of funds to various persons or agencies, including some that had no logical connection to the regular operations of the PNA.

The Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) was created in accordance with a PLO decision made in November 1993, around two months after the signing of the Oslo Accords, "to organize, administer and disburse international aid in an effective and efficient way."[50] The PNA later retroactively ratified the establishment of PECDAR. From the time of its establishment, PECDAR was the only Palestinian institution empowered to oversee international financial assistance to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Officially, PECDAR was managed by a fourteen-member board, all of whom were members of the PLO's Executive Committee, and three of whom were also members of the PNA's Council of Ministers. In other words, all were subordinate to Arafat in the PLO and/or the PNA. PECDAR itself was an extremely important instrument in Arafat's hands. He was its president and used it to control the implementation of the authority's economic policy. On paper, PECDAR reported

to the PLO's Executive Committee and the PNA. In practice, it was subordinate to the *ra'isis* and his office. It reported to him through its director general, and followed Arafat's dictates over to how to implement policy and handle the international assistance transferred to the PNA by various countries, the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the Arab Fund for Economic Development, and other sources.[51]

Special Funds Controlled by Arafat

The unlimited powers vested in Arafat gave him control—direct or indirect, through those loyal to him—over other sources of revenue, which he could use to serve whatever objectives he saw fit. This was carried out through two main channels: personal bank accounts in Arafat's own name and corporate funds.[52]

The Security Forces

A third tool used by Arafat and his close associates to concentrate power in their hands was the security apparatus established under the PNA, chiefly before Arafat's arrival in Gaza in 1994. The security forces continued to expand from that time. An appendix to the May 1994 Cairo (Gaza-Jericho) Agreement provided for the establishment of a Palestinian police force to handle security in areas controlled by the PNA. The 1995 interim agreement on the transfer of the Palestinian cities to the direct control of the PNA stipulated that "the [Palestinian] Council shall establish a strong police force," into which "the Palestinian police force established under the Gaza-Jericho Agreement will be fully integrated." It further specified that the police force and the Israeli security forces would be the only security agencies present.[53] The accord between Israel and the Palestinians included an agreement on the establishment of the following six security agencies to serve the PNA: civilian police, general security, preventive security, intelligence, presidential police, and civil defense. The fourth article of Annex 1 to the interim agreement enumerates the spheres of authority, composition, deployment, recruitment methods, and weaponry of the various forces.

These six forces, established under an agreement between Israel and the PNA, soon mushroomed. Within less than two years they had turned into eleven separate security forces with distinct spheres of authority, each with its own commander reporting directly to and receiving instructions from Arafat. These security forces derived their legitimacy from the *ra'isis* and implemented his wishes in the areas of domestic and external security.[54]

All the security forces were directly controlled by Arafat as the supreme commander of the Palestinian armed forces, a position to which he was appointed before the PNA was established. They can be divided into three categories: the Palestinian security forces/army, including the army, military

intelligence, and Force 17; the police, including the civilian police and civil defense; and the special security forces, including preventive security and general intelligence.

Surveillance (Intimidation)

The security forces played a central role as the implementers of security activity, both internally and externally. They employed various techniques and methods to impose a regime of surveillance and intimidation of opposition elements, activists in voluntary human rights organizations, and critics of the PNA—a regime that has also perpetrated violence against citizens uninvolved in political activity.

The frequency and variety of the assaults on citizens by the security forces have left the average Palestinian citizen with a sense of insecurity in daily life. These violent excesses range from random gunfire at citizens, illegal detentions, detention for prolonged periods, mistreatment of attorneys so as to prevent them from carrying out their job, the use of fortune-tellers to identify criminals, and failure to implement Palestinian Supreme Court decisions, to the abduction and "disappearing" of persons and the undermining of the powers of the attorney general.[55]

There are many instances of gunfire directed by members of the Palestinian security forces at Palestinian demonstrators or random passersby, including shooting at demonstrations or crowds of adults, teenagers, and even children. Other excesses include the premeditated killing of citizens who protested against the policies of the PNA; shooting indiscriminately or without warning at the general public during the pursuit of criminal suspects; shooting at Palestinian vehicles by the security forces and gunfire from inside fortified positions held by the Palestinian security forces; and even the accidental wounding of citizens as a result of members of the Palestinian security forces playing with their weapons.

Repression of Political Opposition by the PNA

The PNA under Arafat did not view political opposition and its activities in a favorable light or as the normal elements of a democratic state. In many cases it treated the opposition and opposition organizations as an enemy to be overwhelmed by force. Its attitude toward political opposition is reflected in the campaigns of repression it carried out after every military action against Israeli targets.

The authority was also sensitive to the pressure exerted upon it by the United States administrations, Israel, and many other European states, to re-

strain political opposition. On a number of occasions, repression gave way to rapprochement, especially when it was sensed that public opinion would not tolerate further repressive measures. At such times the PNA tried to improve its relations with the opposition by calling for a comprehensive national dialogue, releasing opposition prisoners, and improving their conditions of confinement inside prisons.

Infringement of the Fundamental Rights of Assembly, Freedom of Expression, and Freedom of Information

The steps taken by the Palestinian security forces to intimidate the Palestinian population included severe infringements of the fundamental rights of assembly, freedom of expression, and freedom of information. Demonstrations, spontaneous or planned, alarmed the security apparatus, causing it to react impulsively and with inadequate planning and forethought. Such reactions resulted from the inexperience of high-ranking officers with public gatherings or meetings organized by political or voluntary organizations or ordinary citizens.

The Arafat-led PNA also infringed on freedom of the press and freedom of expression. It set down "red lines" that periodicals, journalists, and citizens must not cross. These red lines were unwritten but were tacitly inferred from assaults on those who dared to criticize the authority and its actions. Freedom of reporting in newspapers was severely limited. Generally, journalists were not permitted to write about corruption and favoritism by PNA officials.[56] Similarly, the authority worked to prevent and repress any media coverage of the activities of the political opposition. The steps taken by the PNA against newspapers and the media included the confiscation of journalists' press passes or identity cards, searches of cultural institutions and newspaper offices, and the confiscation of documents. Journalists and editors who reported on opposition activities, corruption, or anything not to the liking of PNA officials were arrested. Newspapers were closed, their printing banned or distribution prohibited. In addition, the infringement on freedom of information and expression extended to the confiscation of certain books and the imposition of bans on their distribution.

Thus, the domestic activities of the security forces under Arafat's command involved gross violations of human and civil rights under the terms of international conventions and even the laws of the PNA, enacted since its establishment in April 1994. This conclusion has been reached by various organizations active in defending human and civil rights in areas governed by the PNA, including the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, the al-Qanun [law] Association, the Palestinian Commission for Human Rights, and B'Tselem (the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), as well as

international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and the Agency for International Human Rights Cooperation in Washington.

Buying Quiet (Bribery)

The PNA and its chairman, Yasser Arafat, employed a variety of ways to persuade people to support the authority. They generally targeted particular people, families, or interests, "bribing" or neutralizing them. Direct financial support and jobs were the most important ways of achieving this objective. The methods used by the authority under Arafat to buy quiet and maintain the allegiance of various persons are detailed below.

Jobs

The authority and Arafat personally employed various methods and actions to curry the favor with individuals and groups. Arafat's intervention in the distribution of jobs demonstrates that the goal of this practice was not to strengthen the PNA and its activities, but to buy support. Close scrutiny of all the decisions taken by the chairman of the PNA and published in its official gazette, *Al-Waqa'a al-Falistiniya,* reveals a large number of hirings and appointments. It also reveals the creation of new posts, so that a particular person whose support the chairman desired could be appointed a position, even if this meant the duplication of jobs and positions.

Appointments of Members of the Opposition

In order to win over some members of the Palestinian opposition, the PNA chairman made them enticing offers to join the authority's ranks. This method successfully neutralized some left-wing and Islamic opposition leaders. It secured the end to their hostility to the Oslo Accords and even made Arafat supporters of them, as well as employees in the PNA's various institutions and ministries. Four individuals are particularly notable here. Two are from the left, namely Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, who served as minister of higher education under Arafat, and Abd el-Jawad Salah, who was appointed to the position of minister of agriculture. These two were among the most prominent opponents of the Oslo Accords and particularly critical of Arafat—especially Ashrawi, who, together with a group of Palestinian academics and jurists, founded the Independent Palestinian Authority for Civil Rights, which monitors the institutions of the PNA and reports on its violations of Palestinian human rights. The other two, formerly central figures in Hamas, were Imad al-Faluji, who served as minister of communications, and Talal Sidr, minister of sports and youth. The former was the editor of the Hamas newspaper *Al-Watan;* the latter was one of the Marj

al-Zahour deportees. Under the banner of reform from within, however, the two joined the Palestinian government and became Arafat supporters; in response, Hamas purged them from its ranks.

In addition to control over governmental ministries and appointments to high-ranking positions, political support was also secured by material means, perhaps in the form of money or a car, a house, a scholarship, or an airplane ticket. In principle it is difficult to prove that such gifts had political strings attached, as no documentation can be provided, but the phenomenon is widely known. It was also confirmed by a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Hussam Khader of Nablus, in an interview.[57]

Family Bribery

This method was used to attract large or affluent families to the PNA, through the appointment of *mukhtar*s. Despite the ill repute into which the position of *mukhtar* has fallen, due to its holders' connections with the Israeli authorities, the PNA under Arafat, through the Ministry of Local Government, appointed a number of them, especially in regions with a tribal social structure, notably Gaza and Hebron.

Before the advent of the PNA there were approximately 120 *mukhtar*s in the Gaza Strip alone. After its establishment, the Ministry of Local Affairs approved positions for 500 *mukhtars,* according to Muhammad al-Fara, then director of the Office for Municipal Officials.[58] This number is undeniably impressive; it means that 500 families or villages had a direct link with the PNA through a *mukhtar.* In other words, the family of the *mukhtar* was declaring its loyalty to the chairman.

Economic Bribery

Arafat bought off businessmen and the wealthy by granting them monopolies (concessions or franchises) and commercial agencies, or by turning a blind eye to their control of various sectors of the Palestinian economy. A report issued by the Economic Affairs Committee of the Palestinian Legislative Council at a meeting on May 14, 1997, discloses many of the relevant facts. Monopolies, concessions, and rigged tenders were enjoyed by ministers, Arafat's advisers, and employees of the Office of the President. Examples include the monopolies established in essential commodities such as cement, petroleum, flour, and cigarettes; special import permits and customs exemptions issued without the knowledge of the Finance Ministry; distribution monopolies granted to commercial agencies; discrimination among registered companies; the establishment of dummy companies; the diversion of economic agreements to serve interested parties; and even the involvement of the security agencies in such matters.

In addition to the granting of concessions for the distribution of commodities and monopolies, this category included the allocation of governmental land to favored investors for the construction of projects without restrictions and/or fair competition. By 1997 year, 988 dunums, or 9 percent of all government land, had been awarded to a handful of persons for the establishment of 99 investment projects.

The above-mentioned examples can be classified as part of the financial, administrative, and organizational corruption in the PNA, its institutions, and government. Because those who headed these bodies were close to Arafat and these practices took place with his knowledge and with the objective of winning the support of investors, businessmen, and capitalists, they also fall under the heading of economic bribery.

Social Bribery

The chairman of the PNA used social bribery in awarding contracts and privileges to some families. On the surface, these privileges constitute assistance by the chairman to these families, but they were in fact a misuse of public assets, and privileges were given without restrictions or regulations. The decision was made by the chairman personally and can be seen as a form of bribery. Examples include a decision by Arafat to refer persons for medical treatment abroad, in Israel, Jordan, or elsewhere, at the expense of the PNA, without the knowledge of the Ministry of Health or a decision by the finance minister. A letter from Arafat was all that was needed to implement such decisions; not even a medical examination was required.[59]

The concentration of power in Arafat's hands and intimidation and bribery were the main instruments used by Arafat and his closest supporters to rule the Palestinians in the PNA-controlled West Bank and Gaza Strip. These practices created the basis for the "partially democratic" regime founded in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the establishment of the PNA. This undemocratic conduct created a centralized political system that dominated the lives of the Palestinians. This system greatly contributed to the difficulties faced by Palestinians under the PNA and contributed to the growing distrust among Palestinians toward Arafat and Fateh, and to the growing support for Hamas.

For the Palestinians, the quiet revolution that took place in the Middle East in 1993 (the details of which were woven in Oslo) had two faces. Almost all Palestinians, Israelis, and persons in other countries were, however, aware of only one of them: the document of mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestinians, which recognized Israel's right to exist and the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The signing of the agreement of mutual recogni-

tion is one facet of the revolution. It was significant for the Palestinians, Israelis, and other peoples of the region, and received wide attention and support from various members of the international community.

The other aspect of the revolution, of which most observers were unaware, took place within the Palestinian national movement. During the years of Israeli occupation, the first forms of a political entity had begun to emerge in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[60] This entity was democratic in its basic characteristics: it featured rival parties and factions, voluntary organizations and institutions, representative leadership, community organization, and constant civil confrontation with the strictures of the Israeli occupation and related developments. This process was aimed at the construction of a future democratic political system.

In parallel to developments in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, under the Israeli occupation and centralization in the PLO increased over the years. It was furthered by processes that affected the PLO as a result of the struggle with Israel, the experience in Lebanon, its forced departure from that country, and the years of the first intifada. It involved political and legal measures that led to the takeover by the PLO, under Arafat, of the system that had begun to emerge in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It likewise entailed the neutralization of the local leaders who, after the Madrid conference, participated in the talks with Israel that were held in Washington and that aimed at reaching a peace agreement based on a resolution to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and of the appurtenances of the Palestinian problem created during and after the 1948 war. This revolution entailed the gradual transfer of land—agreed upon by Israel and the PLO leadership—to the people of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the establishment of a Palestinian political entity that aspired to control this territory.

A number of factors enabled this change. First among them was the weakness of the PLO after the Gulf War, the exhaustion of its financial resources, the decline of its organizational vigor, and the desire of its activists to revive it using whatever measures were available to them. Second were the signs of fatigue in the Palestinian national movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after years of struggle against the occupation. Third was the disconnection, after its departure from Lebanon, between the PLO and its followers. The Palestinians living in refugee camps in the Arab world, for example, could not prevent the organization's leadership from signing peace agreements that made inadequate reference to their problems. Fourth was Israeli assistance to the PLO leadership, and especially Arafat, which made it possible for them to implement the change and set up an alternative mechanism to "direct" Israeli control of the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The last factor was crucial, or at least the only one without which the revolution could not have taken place. The Israeli leadership, headed by Yitzhak Rabin, wanted a peace agreement that was comfortable, cheap, and easy to market to the Israeli public. The Israeli side was also interested in the establishment of a "partner" within Palestinian society that the Palestinians would recognize and consider legitimate, and that could impose order where Israel had failed to do so. In the eyes of the then (and the current) Israeli leadership, the regime that would exert control on the ground was supposed to maintain calm, prevent anti-Israel protests by Palestinians, repress leftist and Islamic elements hostile to Israel, and prevent them from engaging in violence against Israel and Israelis. This agent was, of course, the PLO led by Arafat, which, during the course of the Oslo talks and thereafter in all public contacts between the Israeli and Palestinian leadership, demonstrated its willingness to "do the dirty work" and satisfy Israeli expectations. This arrangement involved a basic, unwritten promise: the maintenance of quiet on the ground at any price, even the denial of basic rights to the Palestinians controlled by the Palestinian entity.

The steps taken by the Palestinian leadership since the establishment of the PNA produced a "partial democracy" marked by contradictions. On the first hand, processes were instigated that attested to greater democracy in the Palestinian national movement and the PNA. On the other hand, however, processes of de-democratization and restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of expression, movement, and organization were introduced, as well as an attempt to subject the Palestinians to Arafat's exclusive control. One facet of this attempt was Arafat's intention to impede the emergence of an alternative leadership in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Arafat's measures and his system of control provide one explanation for the current situation of the Palestinian national movement, both within Fateh and out of it. In particular, this system is the main factor responsible for the corruption that took place within the Palestinian National Authority during the last few years of Arafat's regime.

4

The Politics of Reform in the Palestinian National Authority

The corruption versus reform debate among the Palestinians and in the international arena constituted a major factor in the historical transformation that followed the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. This becomes particularly apparent when we consider the nature of the transformation in the division and control of authorities before 1994, i.e., within the Palestine Liberation Organization itself, and especially around the time that Yasser Arafat assumed the post of president of the PLO's Executive Committee in 1969. Hence, this event is of special interest when examining the development of the Palestinian national movement. The debate over the issues of corruption and reform involved an internal Palestinian discussion, a Palestinian-Israeli discussion, and a Palestinian-international discussion on reform, its features and its relationship to other developments in the Palestinian arena. It is clear that this debate hastened the decline in Fateh's hegemony over Palestinian politics from the 1960s, and led to the empowerment of its opponents, particularly Hamas. Reform is an old Palestinian demand, one which developed in tandem with the exacerbation of internal Palestinian disagreements between the supporters and the opponents of Arafat, on the one hand, and the Palestinian-Israeli impasse on the other. Thus, the Palestinian demand for reform also came as an expression of an internal Palestinian need.

Reform Agenda within the Palestinian National Movement before the Establishment of the PNA

Since its foundation, the PLO has undergone a slow process of de-democratization, epitomized by the transfer of decision-making authority from various power centers to Chairman Arafat and the administrative apparatus that he fostered and consolidated. For many years, particularly once Fateh had gained control of the PLO and Arafat was named leader of the entire organization, Arafat cultivated the habit of consulting close associates in the Fateh leadership and the leaders of other factions in the PLO, such as the heads of the Democratic and Popular Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine, and even prominent individuals within Palestinian civil society.[1] This situation eroded gradually, beginning with the seventh Palestine National Congress meeting in June 1970 and the establishment of the Central Committee, which fell under the full control of Arafat. The Executive Committee was thereby neutralized. Later, with the construction of a Palestinian state-within-a-state in Lebanon during the PLO's heyday there, exclusive control by Arafat of decisions and their implementation was established.

A number of factors made this possible, of which the most significant were the continuing state of war and climate of revolution, and the recurrent need to make rapid and secret decisions within Lebanese territory; the absence of any law requiring the chairman to seek consultation or obtain the consent of a defined majority; the absence of any mechanism to supervise finances; and the chairman's practical control over the organization's revenues and expenditures. These and other factors allowed Arafat to avoid consulting others. The process was a gradual one, and it continued through the crises that beset the Palestinian national movement, such as the clashes with Christians in Lebanon, with the Syrians, and with Israel. First Arafat suspended his dialogue with leaders of the opposition within the PLO, and after that with independents. Eventually, he even turned a deaf ear to other Fateh leaders. He employed various means and pretexts to neutralize even his close associates, including those who had founded Fateh in Kuwait in the 1950s. Further, while alleviating himself of the need to consult with others, Arafat also gathered around him a set of accommodating advisers and assistants; over the years he appointed them to senior positions as advisers or department heads, and even to senior positions within the PLO, including membership on the Palestinian National Council (PNC).

At the same time that Arafat was tightening his control of the PLO and concentrating power in his own hands, he continued to champion traditional

methods of decision making in the organization and its institutions (such as the PNC, the Central Committee, and the Executive Committee). This entailed in particular a reliance on consensus and the avoidance of formal votes, which are the norm in a modern democratic system; the absence of a commitment to respect opposing opinions; and the absence of an apparatus to oversee the implementation of decisions. In practice, motions were submitted for debate, the results of which were known in advance: the result was whatever the chairman wanted. Organizations or individuals who were unhappy with the decisions or motions boycotted meetings or walked out, aware that their opinions would have no impact on decisions or their implementation.

Arafat's control of the decision-making apparatus and the implementation of decisions intensified over the years. This process accelerated after the PLO's exodus from Lebanon, and in particular as a result of the consolidation of the new bureaucracy in Tunisia. Its further rapid advancement followed the murders of Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad) and Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), who had been leading figures since the founding of the organization, and who had been extremely close to Arafat. After their elimination Arafat cultivated a new generation of aides and assistants subject to his authority. They helped him to take over the organization and its decision-making processes, and to marginalize other figures such as Farouk Kaddoumi, another of the organization's founders. In practice, these processes reflected the concentration of power in the hands of the chairman many years before his return to Palestinian territory in Gaza and Jericho, and his coronation as the all-powerful and sole ruler within the PLO, and arguably the entire Palestinian national movement.

The history of the PLO indicates that the recurring and increasing calls for comprehensive reform within the institutions of the PLO, and the PNA from 1994, were not the first of their kind. The most important and intense calls for reform and change were manifested in two events; one involved the Fateh movement, and the other emanated from within its midst and was directed against its leadership. The first event was the coup staged against Ahmad Shukeiri and the transfer of the PLO's leadership to Fateh in 1968. The second was the split which emerged in the Fateh movement in 1983. Thus, Fateh was the focus of the calls for reform, which principally originated from within the movement and included those efforts that were directed against internal components of Fateh.

The 1968 Transfer of Leadership of the PLO to Fateh

From its formation in 1964 as the first Palestinian entity, under the leadership of Ahmad Shukeiri, the working methods of the PLO leadership faced criticism.

The censure focused on Shukeiri's own performance, but there were also calls for change and reform within the PLO's structure. The first of these calls was made by the Higher Arab Commission, which presented a memorandum on September 6, 1966, that called for a meeting of the Council of the Arab League. The memorandum emphasized the necessity of taking effective and proper measures for reform within the PLO, and accused Shukeiri of self-seeking, domination, and improvisation. It further described the three years of his leadership of the PLO as "full of wantonness, problems, blunders, political bluffs and subordination, and of downgrading the Palestinian question to the level of wangling and secondary disputes, and of forcing it into Arab conflicts and quarrels."[2]

The commission also declared that Shukeiri had overstepped all boundaries of the mission allocated to him, and that the Palestinian conference that had given birth to the PLO had been convened on the basis of personal appointments, and included known opponents of the Palestinian national movement and collaborators with the colonialists and Zionists. It stated that the Palestinian masses, including the workers, peasants, and those living in the refugee camps, were not properly represented, and above all, it complained that Shukeiri was not opposed to appointing several persons from the same family merely on the basis of their allegiance to his policies and plans. The commission further stated that the conference had been lacked any semblance of democracy or freedom of opinion, and that it had placed the fate of the Palestinian question and people at the mercy of an autocratic dictatorship.[3]

The division within the PLO grew deeper in 1965 as its members focused on Shukeiri's methods of administering the organization. A dispute between Shukeiri and the *fedayeen* organizations broke out after the 1967 war, and the latter began to call for reform of the PLO's leadership.[4]

At this point, the PLO's Executive Committee split into two factions. The first faction backed Ahmad Shukeiri, and argued that the PLO should continue its political role and leave the role of alleviating the effects of the war to the Arab states. The second faction believed that the Palestinians should mobilize and direct their efforts toward guerrilla warfare. Conflict within the committee intensified and harsh accusations were exchanged. One such accusation was that "Shukeiri had not worked towards the development of the PLO's revolutionary role," and "that his political practices were autocratic, as he considered himself a head of state rather than the head of an organization striving for liberation."[5]

The differences within the PLO reached a serious level in mid-December 1967, when seven members of the Executive Committee presented Shukeiri with a memorandum requesting his resignation, due to the "methods he employed in running the PLO." The Fateh movement issued a statement on December 10, 1967, requesting that Shukeiri resign on the basis of his "misleading and delu-

sive" declarations. The statement also maintained that as a result of his autocratic rule, "internal struggle had overwhelmed the will to achieve any practical goals in the service of the Palestinian cause." Its authors charged that the lack of a political, military, or media plan within the services and offices of the PLO had rendered them unable to function effectively or to succeed in achieving national unity.[6]

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) followed suit, issuing its own statement, as did popular Palestinian unions. These developments obliged Shukeiri to submit his resignation to the Palestinian people and to the secretary general of the Arab League on December 21, 1967. The Executive Committee then decided to appoint Yahya Hamoudeh as acting president of the committee, and it broadcast a communiqué indicating that it "would work in cooperation with all factions to achieve national unity and develop the organization's bodies by establishing a council in which the people's will is represented and from which a responsible group leadership will emanate." Hamoudeh's appointment constituted the first step of the transfer of the organization's leadership into the hands of the *fedayeen* organizations, the most influential of which was Fateh.[7] Thus one stage of the organization's long journey was completed, and a new phase begun, during which the Palestinian representative body (the PLO) was unified, and the *fedayeen* organizations took the leading role in the organization and became a part of it at the same time.[8]

At the fifth session of the PNC, which was held in Cairo from February 1 to 4, 1969, Yasser Arafat was elected president of the Executive Committee, and a new national council was formed in order to distribute certain seats to the various Palestinian factions; most of them went to Fateh members. Significantly, the PFLP and the Palestinian Liberation Army boycotted the council's meetings, contending that "the suggested formations would lead to the hegemony of one faction over the Palestinian struggle." Thus total control over the PLO by the freedom-fighting factions was established, which led to a radical transformation in the makeup of the organization and its leadership.[9]

Some analysts have suggested that the anti-Shukeiri forces were able to oust Shukeiri for two reasons. The first was an inclination among the Arabs to hold him partially responsible for the defections in 1967, and the second was Fateh's exploitation of his self-seeking and autocratic hold on the organization in order to get rid of him, which enabled Fateh to take control of the PLO's institutions and funds on the pretext of carrying out reforms.[10]

The demands for reform during this stage might be summarized as follows: reform of the structure and methods of struggle of the PLO, including the National Council, the Palestinian National Fund, and the Palestinian Liberation Army; the introduction of group leadership and a move away from monocracy;

and the adoption of freedom fighting and the handing over of the leadership of the PLO to the *fedayeen* organizations.

The demands for political reform reached a peak in 1968, when the National Council sanctioned the renaming of the Palestinian Covenant as the Palestinian National Covenant in a way that consolidated the ideas of the Fateh movement. The main shift was from a pan-Arab perspective of the Palestinian problem to a national one. This approach was adopted by Fateh, now in control of the PLO. It constituted a victory for the nationalist stream, headed by Fateh, over the pan-Arab stream, led by Shukeiri.

The Division of Fateh in 1983 and the Demand for Reform

Differences of opinion within Fateh emerged in 1974 as the leadership adopted the "interim program," a policy of interim solutions. These differences surfaced and became public in 1975, when a group of Fateh leaders under the name of the National Democratic Current raised a demand for an official policy of expanding democracy within Fateh. Initially, the position of this group, which was headed by Nimer Saleh Abu Saleh, Abu Mousa, and Naji Alloush, became more clear once Arafat was openly clear about his interest in reaching a settlement with Israel. However, their attempt was speedily contained, prompting Naji Alloush to split away from Fateh and form an independent faction.

The signs of division within Fateh continued and deepened after the PLO left Beirut in 1983, whereupon Abu Saleh, a member of the movement's Central Committee and a former member of the PLO's delegation to the Fez summit, issued a statement in which he objected to the PLO's acceptance of the Arab Peace Initiative, publicly known as the Fahd plan, and demanded certain reforms within Fateh and the PLO. In addition, at a meeting of the Revolutionary Council of Fateh, he gave a long speech containing an explicit criticism of the positions taken by the movement's leadership, and demanded its reform. These demands were also distributed en masse to the members of Fateh. The Fateh leadership prevented a member of the Central Council—Abu Saleh—from participating in the sixteenth meeting of the Palestinian National Council. After that the discord was aggravated anew by Yasser Arafat's declaration that new military regulations had been devised according to which a group of officers who rejected political solutions was transferred out of Lebanon, and an officer accused of cowardice in the 1982 war—Abu Hajem—was appointed to head Fateh's forces in Lebanon. This further enflamed the situation and resulted in the declaration by some Fateh leaders, including Nimer Saleh, Abu Mousa, Samih Abu

Kweik (a member of the Central Committee), and Abu Khaled al-Amleh, of their intention to split from the movement. The new movement was named Fateh al-Intifada, and its leaders refused to acknowledge the aforementioned decisions on the premise that they should have been issued by the Military Council and the Revolutionary Council of Fateh, and not by Yasser Arafat or his aides.[11]

The group declared its reformist demands in their first communiqué, which stated: "Our movement aims at reinstating the Central Committee and the Revolutionary Council, which have failed to carry out their roles as leading bodies, as their authorities were infringed upon and dangerous stands were imposed on them, which represents a violation of our by-laws and political program, as a result of the autocracy of an individual who takes major and crucial decisions after consulting with only a few other individuals"—a reference to Arafat's leadership practices.

Its calls for reform and rejection concentrated on the two pivotal issues of internal reform and the political positions of their leadership. Concerning the demand for reform, Abu Mousa stated that the split was both a protest against Arafat's individualism and monopolization of organizational, political, and financial decisions, and against the lack of democratic group leadership, the disregarding of the movement's bylaws, and the hindering of its institutions, bodies, and decision-making apparatuses by a dominating leadership.[12]

In seeking a method of resolving the crisis, the renegade factions, calling themselves the National Alliance, concluded that the unity of the PLO could not be regained while Arafat remained at its helm. Samih Abu Kweik, one of the leaders of this group, called for a boycott of any Palestinian institution headed by Arafat. Abu Khaled al-Amleh emphasized that solving the PLO's crisis would require depriving Arafat of legitimacy as he considered the leadership of Arafat as a big risk for the Palestinian people, their achievements and revolution. He similarly emphasized the importance of eliminating the political influence of Yasser Arafat's leadership on Palestinian political thought. Within this context, the National Alliance called for the formation of a temporary unified body for national salvation to be led by the head of the PNC, with the participation of the Executive Committee members who had taken positions against Arafat.[13]

At the culmination of the crisis, the various Palestinian factions took positions ranging from support for the demands for democratic reform to rejection of the internal split as a result of the disagreements between the factions. George Habash, secretary general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, stated in a press release issued on June 24, 1983, that with an autocratic leadership the revolution would without doubt face enormous problems, since he considered internal factors the primary cause of a crisis within any faction. He further

claimed that any democratic reform that took the form of a split would lead to the opposite results. Thus he found it essential that the reform process within Fateh should be undertaken on the basis of the unity of the movement.[14]

After attempts at mediation failed and the internal conflict increased and developed into an armed struggle, the PFLP and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) devised at the beginning of October 1983 a comprehensive program for "Unity and Democratic Reform within the PLO." This program included a number of principles for the preservation of PLO unity and the realization of democratic reform in its ranks. Among the main articles focusing on reform[15] were those dealing with a commitment to the organizational program ratified by the National Council; the achievement of a unified leadership in every apparatus and body of the PLO and an end to factional hegemony; the unification of the collection of funds within the framework of the Palestinian National Fund, and the placing of all the PLO's finances under the responsibility of the Trust Fund; and combating all forms of extravagance, corruption, or lax financial arrangements within the institutions of the PLO.

Demands for Reform from the Establishment of the PNA to 2000

Reform as an Israeli, American, and International Demand

The discussion of the need for political, security, financial, and administrative reforms within the Palestinian National Authority coincided with deliberations over the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, which had been at a complete standstill for over two years since the failure of the Camp David and Taba talks. This debate and the actual demand for reform have generally been seen by the Israelis, Americans, and Europeans as a basic condition for resuming negotiations. It is as if reform is considered a gateway to the resolution of the Palestinian question, through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state next to Israel. Those who have promoted this interpretation use it as proof that reform and the surrounding debate are the result of an external, not an internal, Palestinian effort.

The Israeli demand for the resumption of negotiations with the Palestinians and their stipulation of reform as a step prior to negotiations are related to former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon's visit to the United States in May 2002. During this visit Sharon's top priority was U.S. acceptance of reform as a condition for negotiations. The reality is that after Sharon came to power in Israel following the elections in early 2001; it became evident that he did not want

to carry out any negotiations with Palestinian president Yasser Arafat. He even stated on a number of occasions that the negotiations would not be resumed as long as Arafat remained at the top of the PNA's political hierarchy. One of the most influential Israeli analysts, Aluf Ben, interpreted Sharon's aversion as fear of futile negotiations and of what Arafat might "beguile" him into accepting (which was what had happened to his predecessor, Barak.

By placing the demand for reform on the table, Sharon indicated that he had changed his mind; up to that juncture his demand had been for "seven days of quiet," or the termination of Palestinian attacks. This period had been his security prerequisite for the commencement of any negotiations, and came as a response to the American position, as articulated by William Burns, then the U.S. Commissioner for Negotiation Affairs, who said that the negotiations should be accompanied by Palestinian-Israeli security arrangements. Thus, for Sharon, the administrative and military reforms within the PNA were a precondition for negotiations.

The position of the United States, and in particular that of President Bush, developed from its support of a solution built on two states, as articulated by Bush in a speech delivered in November 2001, and repeated at a speech given in April 2002 in the Rose Garden. However, Bush did not mention reform until June 26, 2002, during a speech in which he presented his peace plan and spoke of the need for serious reform within the PNA to accompany the talk of resuming negotiations. This followed Sharon's visit to Washington in May 2002. Prior to Bush's aforementioned speech, clear indications had been made, however, by the U.S. secretary of state, Colin Powell, and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice regarding serious reform within the PNA as a condition for progress in the negotiations. In an interview for ABC TV on May 5, 2002, Powell said, "When the Palestinians start rebuilding internally once again, they should do so in a democratic way that's neither corrupt nor supportive of terrorism."

Through their concentration on reform, the Americans aspired to a transformation on the security level on the issue of "combating terrorism," and on the economic level in the form of serious controls on the financial behavior of the PNA in general, and Arafat in particular. They requested some kind of financial monitoring, which resulted in their backing of Salam Fayyad, a Palestinian with American citizenship, as minister of finance. This was the U.S. position until Bush's speech of June 26, 2002, and his presentation of the peace plan bearing his name. In this speech, Arafat was considered illegitimate and as an obstacle to peace, and Bush argued that he should therefore be replaced by another Palestinian figure, insisting upon "a true democracy founded upon freedom and a constitution that guarantees separation of authorities, democratic elections, etc."

After Bush's declaration of his plan, the Quartet, which is composed of representatives of the United States, Russia, the United Nations, and the European Union, met in Madrid in July 2002 in order to consolidate the steps to be taken in order to achieve Bush's two-state vision. After extended discussions, the Quartet unveiled a plan known as the Road Map. This plan received international and Arab support, and even Palestinian and Israeli backing, with some slight reservations. It is essentially the only plan currently proposed in the international sphere for reaching a solution to the Palestinian question and the problem of the occupation. It consists of three stages, the first of which requires that the Palestinians begin a process of reform to begin with the appointment of a Palestinian prime minister, which was actually done in April 2003. In accordance with the Road Map, these Palestinian reforms were to be accompanied by the complete termination of Israeli settlement activities by the end of May 2003. The second stage, originally intended to span the period of June 2003 to the end of the year, entails the complete termination of Palestinian and Israeli military operations, an Israeli withdrawal from the areas reoccupied since the beginning of the al-Aqsa intifada, and the establishment of a Palestinian state with temporary borders. The third stage, slated to commence at the end of 2005, includes the complete resolution of the struggle and the establishment of a Palestinian state with permanent borders and peaceful relations with Israel.

Many commentators, analysts, and researchers considered the Israeli and U.S. positions proof that the source of the demand for reform was Israeli, American, and international. In many cases this conclusion was reached in order to depict the Palestinians as unconcerned with reform. This representation is the opposite of the truth, as will be demonstrated below.

Reforms as an Internal Palestinian Demand

Some of the calls for reform were made in the Palestinian arena shortly after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994. The calls for comprehensive reform intensified following the publication of a report in 1996 by the head of Public Monitoring Body, which was established in 1994 following an order by Arafat, as an agency that monitors the PNA institutions. This report was followed by a second report, by the investigatory committee formed by the Palestinian Legislative Council to carry out a fact-finding mission on the Public Monitoring Body's report. Other calls for reform at the time were the so-called "Statement of the Twenty," Dr. Haidar Abd el-Shafi's protest resignation from the PLC, and reports published by the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights.

Report of the Head of the Public Monitoring Body

This report, which bears similarities to a report issued previously by the state comptroller, was issued at the end of May 1997 and was 250 pages long. It covered the period from the founding of the PNA to December 13, 1996. This was the first and last report of its kind to be released since the PNA's establishment. It included statistics and accounts on financial and administrative malpractices by public servants, including all ministers and the heads of government institutions and local authorities, but focused on financial matters. The report detailed financial and sometimes administrative transgressions, and it explicitly described the problem of misuse of public funds. It also made a number of recommendations for reform within the PNA, the majority of which were financial.[16]

The most important of these recommended reforms were the creation of a formal financial system for the PNA; holding the executive authority responsible for presenting a timely budget and remaining committed to its articles; holding ministers and officials accused of misusing public funds to account, as well as individuals who exploited their offices for personal gain; and regulating the appointment of employees and restricting new appointments to those made according to ministries' and institutions' needs.

The report also recommended the issuance of a number of regulations and pieces of legislation in order to provide a legal framework for monitoring and accountability and to avoid financial chaos. These included a system for donations and grants presented to ministries, systems for procurement and customs, and licensing regulations. It also recommended that the security forces should be prevented from making financial collections from institutions, companies, and merchants, and from interfering in issues related to customs, taxes, etc. In addition, the report recommended that the payment scales be unified within the Ministry of Finance and the General Employees Bureau. Dozens of recommendations specific to each individual ministry and institution were also made.

Report of the Committee Formed by the Palestinian Legislative Council

This report was issued on July 28, 1997, by a committee composed of members of the Budget Committee and the Financial Affairs and Public Comptroller's Committee. Its task was to investigate the report of the public comptroller (the Public Monitoring Body). This sixty-page report set out the committee's observations following its meetings with all those accused in the former report of corruption and of the extravagant expenditure of public funds. The investigatory committee also presented a general recommendation consisting of three articles, and other recommendations. The general recommendation was for the

president or the head of the PNA to dissolve the cabinet and form a new one that would include technocrats and professionals, but exclude all the ministers the accusations against whom were confirmed, or who had failed to meet their responsibilities. It also included a recommendation for comprehensive administrative and organizational reform and the separation of cabinet meetings from those of the Palestinian leadership, in order to enable the cabinet to shoulder the responsibilities and tasks associated with building state institutions and establishing the rule of law and civil society. The third recommendation was for the trial and punishment of ministers the accusations against whom were confirmed, in order to rebuild the bridges of trust between the leadership and the people, and to strengthen the internal front.

Haidar Abd el-Shafi's Resignation from the Legislative Council

The resignation of Dr. Haidar Abd el-Shafi, a PLC member from Gaza, on October 7, 1997, was a protest against the internal Palestinian situation and a direct demand for reform. The main trigger for his resignation was the executive authority's marginalization of the PLC and disregard for its decisions, in addition to its contempt for the law and constitutional principles. He believed that the executive authority was holding the future of the Palestinians hostage to the will of a small group. The most important specific issue was the executive authority's postponement of ratification of the Basic Law, which was mainly meant to determine the basic legal structure of the PNA, leaving the relationship between the authority's bodies and their main functions without a legal context.

In his letter of resignation, Dr. Abd el-Shafi also protested the PNA's closure of a number of institutions and charitable, health, and cultural societies on the pretext that they belonged to Hamas, which had carried out a number of operations against Israeli civilians.

The Statement of the Twenty

This statement, which was issued on November 27, 1999, was an explicit protest against the spread of corruption within the PNA and a demand for comprehensive reform, starting with the president and continuing down to the lowest-ranking employees. Twenty prominent national personalities, including nine PLC members, a former minister, and several mayors signed the statement.[17]

The tone of the statement was severe, as was its critique of the president himself. Its authors demanded an end to corruption and the holding to account of those described as "the corrupt and corruptive." They also discussed the Palestinian prisons and security forces, and what the statement referred to as a "terrifying series of lies and delusions," and dealt with the deterioration of economic conditions under the PNA, as well as the destruction of health, educational,

and judicial institutions. The statement's closing remarks included a call to the people to take a unified stand against hegemony and corruption. It should be noted here that the Palestinian security forces imprisoned some of those who signed the statement for a period of three weeks.

Reports by the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights (PICCR)

This commission issued twelve annual reports on the status of the rights of Palestinian citizens between 1995 and the end of 2006.[18] Each report included a number of recommendations related to financial, judicial, administrative, and security matters, and calls for reform in various fields, including the ratification of the Basic Law and other laws concerning the reform of the constitutional and legal arrangements; the establishment of a unified legal system in all areas under the PNA and an independent judiciary; the revitalization of the role of the cabinet and clarification of its mandate; a reduction in the number of ministries and restructuring of all ministries; the definition of the mandate of the security forces by law; the respecting of public freedoms and human rights; the monitoring of arrest procedures and prisons; an end to political detentions; the consolidation of the role of the public comptroller; the holding to account of all accused officials; reform of the judiciary, to include the appointment of a public attorney; reform of the courts and the enactment of a law governing the judiciary; the increase of the number of courts and employees within the judicial system, and the cancellation of the state's security court; the holding of timely general and presidential elections; and the prevention of conflicts of interest by preventing PLC members or ministers from owning private business.

Main Features of Demands for Reform after 2000

A number of documents dealing with various spheres of reform—political, legal, financial, and administrative—have been issued since 2000 by various parties, such as the PLC, the Palestinian government, and civil society organizations. In addition, a number of officials, academics, and individuals have issued statements of their positions on this subject. The most important of these documents and statements are listed below.

The PLC's Vision of Reform

On May, 16 2002, the PLC issued a declaration entitled "Declaration on the Development of Reform of the PNA's Institutions," which was known as the

"Reform Program." The declaration followed President Yasser Arafat's speech at a session of the PLC on May 15, 2002, which included an explicit call for a process of administrative and financial reform.

The PLC's Reform Program made suggestions for constitutional, financial, administrative, and judicial reform. Its authors believed that the requirements for change and reform were within the constitutional realm, the executive authority, and the judicial authority. On the constitutional level, the PLC called for the rebuilding and revitalization of the PNA's institutions, and for the reforming of their flaws. It demanded that the president of the PNA ratify the Basic Law and oblige all the bodies and institutions within Palestinian society to respect and implement it, as the main reference for the PNA's work. It should be noted that the president responded to these recurring calls and ratified the Basic Law on May 29, 2002, five years after it was submitted to him by the PLC. The PLC then ratified the Basic Law after its third reading on October 2, 1997, and sent it back to the president for approval on October 4, 1997.

The PLC's vision for financial reform emphasized the central role of the Finance Ministry and emphasized the ministry's role as the only authority for acting in financial matters. It also emphasized the importance of organizing and monitoring tax collection, resources, and investments within the framework of the Finance Ministry. In this context, the PLC called for a "commitment to the Annual Budget Law and to unifying the financial accounts of the PNA within the Public Treasury, which thus would hold all government income from taxes, fees, loans and grants and all interests concerning the PNA in one account and emphasizing the inappropriateness of specifying any part of the Public Treasury's money for any reason or spending any amount except according to what is prescribed by law."

Regarding reform of the security forces, the PLC found that the task of the General Security Forces and the National Forces is to "protect the security of the country, its citizens and their private and public property and to keep public order and implement the rule of law." Thus the PLC presented a number of suggestions, the most important of which was "issuing a law to regulate the security forces' actions and lay down the conditions for joining them for new recruits, and to delineate its authorities and mandate in a way that would prevent duplication between the various security forces and in compliance with the Basic Law."

Concerning administrative reform and reform of public institutions, the PLC suggested "placing the head of the Public Monitoring Commission, the head of the Employment Bureau, the head of the Financial Authority and the heads of the independent public bodies that are not part of the ministries under the auspices of the PLC." It should be noted in this respect that the Basic Law

stipulates that the appointment of the heads of those institutions requires the approval of the PLC. However, in reality the president appointed them without referring to the council. The PLC also recommended a review of the Public Monitoring Commission Law in order to delineate the commission's role, responsibilities, and relations to the various governmental and non-governmental organizations, and in order to give instructions for the delivery of the commission's annual and quarterly reports to the PLC. Significantly, this law was issued by the president of the PNA in 1995 before the election of the PLC.

The Palestinian Government's Vision of Reform

The Palestinian government made a number of commitments to carry out reform in various spheres. However, only a few of these were implemented. These suggested reforms were contained in the following documents: the One Hundred Day Plan, the Ministerial Declaration, and the Cabinet's Action Plan. It should be mentioned here that President Yasser Arafat, in response to a number of calls for reforms, declared the formation of a new cabinet on June 6, 2002.[19] This cabinet tendered its resignation on September 11, 2002, in order to avoid the PLC's withdrawal of support from it as a result of discussions held within the PLC on the same day. The president declared the formation of a new cabinet on October 29, 2002, which received the approval of the PLC on the same day.

Also noteworthy is the issuance by President Yasser Arafat on June 6, 2002 of a decision for the formation of a "Ministerial Committee for Reform," with the task of drafting projected plans for economic, security, financial, judicial, and administrative development. President Arafat read this declaration aloud before the PLC at the session in which the newly formed cabinet gained the PLC approval on October 29, 2002. The Ministerial Declaration dealt with the president and the cabinet's vision of reform in a section of the declaration entitled "Implementing a Reform Program and Developing and Consolidating National Unity and Democracy." The declaration focuses on three spheres: security, the justice system, and the administration of public funds.

On the security level, the cabinet promised to complete the fusion of the police, preventive security, and civil defense forces with those under the control of the Interior Ministry. It also committed to rebuild the security forces and institutions, to retrain its cadres according to their expertise, and to prevent the security forces from intervening in political, media, and financial issues, unless otherwise stipulated by law. The cabinet promised to work toward unifying the Palestinian judicial system and allocating funds to support the judicial authority by building courts and by appointing, training, and protecting judges. In the financial sphere, the plan called for "placing all the revenues of the PNA from

taxes, fees, interest, grants, loans and external aid in a unified account within the Treasury, and to implement the principle of a unified treasury in the administration of public funds."

The Cabinet's Action Plan

The cabinet announced this plan on October 29, 2002, i.e., on the day it gained the approval of the PLC. It is an extremely detailed plan composed of two main sections: the first, entitled "The Tasks of the New Government," deals with the various programs of the government, including each ministry's action plan. The second section, entitled "The Reform Program," deals with reforms that had been already achieved, and those that the government was striving to achieve.

The cabinet's plan included the various reforms that the government was attempting to undertake in the financial, judicial, and public spheres. The reforms in the public sphere can be summarized as the completion of the separation of authorities after issuing the Basic Law and the Judicial Authority Law, and of administrative reform by continuing preparations for the legislative and presidential elections. In the judicial sphere the plan stated that work was being carried out on drafting the laws of the constitutional court and the court of appeals and on the administration of government issues. Work was also being done to clarify the relationship between the Ministry of Justice and the Higher Judiciary Council, with the aim of separating the two. According to the plan, other work was being undertaken to issue the finance minister's decision concerning the transfer of all revenues to the account of the Treasury, and the unification of salary administration in the Finance Ministry for all employees in the West Bank and Gaza. Further, an examination of the situation of employment in the public sector was continuing, as were arrangements for a retirement system.

The Palestinian national movement contains various political hues and currents, and its leadership has always faced elements of internal discord emanating from demands to end autocracy and self-seeking in decision making. This situation has existed within the Palestinian national movement since the first years after its establishment in the 1920s. Hence the case of Haj Amin Husseini's leadership of the national movement, the opposition to which was headed by the Nashashibi family and their leader, Ragheb Nashashibi. However, opposition was not confined to this family, and a long debate ensued between the institution and the opposition within the national movement, which continuously made a claim for the need for administrative and financial reform. The national movement undoubtedly benefited from this debate on many occasions, and lost

a great deal on others; some analysts even blame this internal struggle for the 1948 defeat and the Nakba (catastrophe).

Following this defeat and the renewed attempts to organize the national movement in the 1950s, the Fateh movement appeared as a leader of the internal reform process and as a challenge to attempts by the Arab states to gain control over the Palestinians. Fateh continued to play this role even after the establishment of the PLO in 1964 by the Arab League. It coerced Jamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian president, and other Arab leaders to relinquish their support of Ahmad Shukeiri's leadership, and to support the internal reforms within the PLO that brought Fateh and Yassar Arafat to power. Within the PLO there has been a broad debate since the outset over the leadership's responsibilities and the extent to which it has been able to exercise control over Palestinian decision-making. This debate led to several divisions and to an inflamed internal struggle within the PLO and in other areas with Palestinian communities. In the summer of 1983, a violent military confrontation erupted between Fateh under the leadership of Arafat and renegade factions supported by the Syrian regime.

The reforms being recommended during the years since the establishment of the PNA are truly and originally Palestinian, and the Palestinians, including the various factions, have been the first to call for reform, in accordance with their national agenda. The calls by Israel and the United States for reform were not intended for the benefit of the Palestinians. Thus, we could say that these reforms are a Palestinian project, and should be treated as such in order to clarify the future course, whether it be toward a military coup supported by the United States and Israel, under the leadership of Palestinian military leaders and in the name of the future state, or in the direction of a radical, democratic change that would serve the interests of the Palestinians in building their internal strength, in order to meet future challenges and achieve a Palestinian state that responds to the Palestinian people's aspirations, as articulated for nearly a century.

5

Palestinians in Search of Authoritative Leadership after Arafat

Following the death of Yasser Arafat in November 2004, the Palestinian political system and leadership faced a difficult choice over the renewal of the leadership, as Arafat had been the spine of that regime over the previous decades. He had been the leader of both the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) for a very long time, so his death left a void in the leadership. The difficult choice, however, was not limited to replacing Arafat as chair of the PLO's Executive Committee, the PNA, or Fateh; the real challenge was to address new developments that might lead to the participation of non-PLO factions, specifically Hamas, in the political scene. This latter group did indeed become more prominent as it enjoyed strong support in the recent Palestinian legislative elections, and thus became part of the Palestinian leadership at different levels, including in the local councils, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), and the government.

Because the system set in place by Yasser Arafat was more a function of his personality and leadership charisma than of institutional and collective decision making, the political structure of the PNA had to be altered. However, following Arafat's death, the Palestinian leadership had difficulty making a fast transition in leadership, and electing a new chairman to the PLO and nominating a Fateh candidate for the PNA presidency.

In the post-Arafat era, many politicians, academics, and factions tackled the issue of restructuring the Palestinian political system or reforming it on

new foundations better suited to the current context. This reform, they believed, should take into account the PLO and the PNA. Many proposed that the new foundations of the political system should not be based on the quota system, which had long characterized the Palestinian political scene and internal relations, but rather on the ballot box. The new balances of power would result in the formation of new coalitions within the bodies of the PLO, such as the Executive Committee and the Palestinian National Council, as well as within the bodies of the PNA, such as the government and the PLC.

The results of the presidential elections, held on January 9, 2005 (in addition to the first, second, and third stages of local elections and the legislative elections held in January 2006), indicated an urgent need for change in the Palestinian leadership, and suggested that the Palestinian arena was witnessing the beginning of significant change and political development.

Presidential Elections

Seven candidates competed in the Palestinian presidential elections held on January 9, 2005. The most prominent of these candidates were the Fateh candidate, Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas), and the Palestinian National Initiative candidate, Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, who was backed by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Other leftist independent candidates also competed. No candidates stood from the Islamic Jihad or Hamas, which boycotted the elections. Despite the election of Fateh candidate Abu Mazen, the result of the presidential elections, together with those of the local elections which had taken place two weeks earlier, indicated a decline in Fateh's popularity and attested to a weakening of the movement's status as a leading movement of the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian public and many analysts believe that a simple arithmetic calculation based on a comparison of the percentage of votes with the number of eligible voters demonstrates this decline: Abu Mazen received 62.5% of the votes (501,448 votes). However, he received the support of just 28% of the eligible voters, as only 66% of those eligible to vote according to the electoral register actually participated in the elections. Thus, Abu Mazen received 62.5% of the votes in the absence of a Hamas competitor, which is not a high percentage relative to the total number of eligible voters.[1]

The Palestinian National Initiative candidate, Mustafa Barghouti, who was backed by the PFLP, received around 20% of the collected votes (156,227 votes). This result raised the possibility of forming an alliance with opposition organizations, which would be capable of creating a balance in the Palestinian arena as

a third alternative to Fateh and Hamas. Some liberal leftist leaders who were not strongly affiliated with certain parties were encouraged to give serious consideration to forming a political bloc for the Palestinian left. Hence, Saleh Raafat, secretary general of the Palestinian Democratic Union (FIDA), announced a joint statement of principles, backed by five leftist factions, which would participate on the basis of a single political platform. In addition to the presidential elections, the legislative election helped the scattered leftist factions to win 53 seats in the second stage of local elections held in the West Bank, in addition to one seat in the Gaza Strip.

Even though the Palestinian left failed to establish a joint alliance, there remained a leftist pole in the political arena, represented by the National Initiative, headed by Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, Haidar Abd el-Shafi, and a number of leaders of the People's Party (formerly the Communist Party), in addition to some independent figures. The National Initiative has become an acknowledged faction within the Palestinian arena that seeks to join the PLO and to attend national meetings along with the other Palestinian factions. The speedy rise of the National Initiative party highlighted the fact that national figures, opposition legislators, and critics of bad governance (corruption, and the absence of the rule of law and democracy), such as Hanan Ashrawi, Abdel Jawad Saleh, Rawya Shawa, and Hassan Khreisheh, were unable to form an organized political bloc in the outgoing PLC. They also failed to propose an alternative social and political plan that could attract other PLC members or public forces. Thus, they failed to crystallize a front within the PLC that could bring about the realization of any political or other demand.

The election results indicate the weak state of the Palestinian left, which was defeated in the PLC elections of January 2006. The presidential elections also indicated disarray within the Palestinian left, given that three leftist candidates ran and none of them gained significant support among the Palestinian voters. These candidates were Dr. Mustafa Barghouti of the Palestinian National Initiative, Tayseer Khaled of the DFLP, and the People's Party (communist) candidate, Bassam Salhi.

It was anticipated that Abu Mazen, as Fateh's candidate, would win the presidential elections because Fateh is historically the largest Palestinian faction. In addition, Abu Mazen's qualities made him a strong candidate in the absence of a Hamas candidate. This assured Fateh's victory even though the nomination of Fateh member Marwan Barghouti caused some concern for Fateh in general and Abu Mazen in particular, before he withdrew his nomination.

As a former prime minister, a prominent Fateh member, and perhaps the second in command under Yasser Arafat, Abu Mazen appeared to be the main character in the Palestinian political arena. His reputation had grown through

his leadership on the Palestinian negotiating team in Oslo. However, it should be stressed that this adversely affected him with opponents of the peace process. Abu Mazen also enjoyed more media publicity than any other candidate, which led to a perception that he was the automatic replacement for Arafat. Indeed, after his appointment as chairman of the PLO's Executive Committee and his assumption of the role of president of the "State of Palestine," Abu Mazen was seen as the strong man of Palestinian politics, in particular abroad. His numerous trips and international meetings, the most important of which was a meeting with President George W. Bush, were intensively covered by the media during the election campaign, which led to protests by some of the other candidates.

Despite his strong performance in the campaign, Mustafa Barghouti faced attacks from the other candidates because he had formerly been a leading member of the People's Party. This attack damaged Barghouti's prospects, as did a further attack launched by other candidates on the funding of his campaign.

The electoral campaign platforms had no significant impact on the results of the election. There are several reasons for this, the most important of which is the relative similarity between the political platforms of the strongest candidates, Abu Mazen and Mustafa Barghouti. Both spoke constantly of national themes, including the future of Jerusalem, the refugees, and the Palestinian prisoners, as well as reform and the building of a state of law and institutions. In addition, these two candidates made statements of support for the path of peace, a halt to Israeli aggression, the promotion of national unity, and other issues considered by the Palestinian citizenry to be mere slogans. It should also be borne in mind that the average Palestinian is less concerned with campaign promises than with the candidates themselves and their political affiliations.

Nonetheless, it can be argued that the election slogans of Abu Mazen were well timed and well tailored to the Palestinian situation. For instance, the slogan "On the path of Yasser Arafat" earned him popular sympathy because of the Arafat's abrupt death. The slogan "Security and safety for citizens" was well received due to the growing lawlessness in Palestinian society. Finally, the slogan "Stop the militarization of the intifada" was popular because of intensive Israeli attacks on Palestinian targets. It became clear to many Palestinians that the Israeli military's aggressive reaction to the use of armed struggle by the Palestinians was a high and painful price to pay. Moreover, during the campaign it was widely believed that Abu Mazen was the most acceptable candidate to the United States, Israel, and the West, and thus might be capable of alleviating the Palestinian people of their daily suffering; this also earned him many votes.

Nevertheless, it is worth listing the main points of Abu Mazen's program: ending the conflict by reaching a cease-fire, and adopting internal dialogue as a mechanism for reaching a national understanding in this regard; stopping the

Israeli attacks and improving people's living conditions in preparation for the launch of the political negotiation process; reforming the Palestinian political system and imposing the rule of law; building the PLO and the PNA on the principle of partnership for all; and restoring international confidence in the Palestinian cause by reactivating contacts with the international community, demonstrating commitment to the Road Map, and respecting related Palestinian commitments for a peaceful solution, based on establishing a Palestinian state beside Israel.

Forming the Post-Arafat Palestinian Government

The deliberations for the establishment of the first post-Arafat Palestinian government revealed the depth of the crisis within Fateh. After being entrusted by Abu Mazen to form the government in early February 2005, Prime Minister Abu Alaa announced its structure without having won the PLC's vote of confidence, due to internal disagreements within Fateh. Several times the names of candidate ministers were announced and then withdrawn, and the PLC's vote on the government was postponed more than once.

Finally, on February 24, 2005, a government composed of technocrats, who were selected mainly on the basis of their profession and not on their political affiliation, was formed with ministers who, with the exception of Minister of Information Nabil Shaath, were not PLC members. This revealed the lack of willingness among many Fateh members to allow PLC members to hold ministerial portfolios. Once the PLC members were excluded, the government was able to win the confidence of the PLC. The government that was formed was characterized by the presence of academics and experts, rather than individuals from the political departments of the various factions.[2]

Additionally, the crisis revealed that the PNA president, Abu Mazen, had not interfered directly in the formation of the government, as Yasser Arafat had done in his time, when the conflict surrounding the formation of successive Palestinian governments was between the President Arafat and the prime ministerial candidate. In the new political context, conflict over the formation of the government became more a dispute between the various leaders and even the various wings of Fateh, for there was no longer a single leader to dominate the decision-making process within the movement.

Some Palestinian politicians located the reason for the crisis in the one-party system of government, coupled with the absence of any significant political participation by the other parties. Others attributed it to governmental political paralysis characterized by an absence of programs, or to a government that had made minimal achievements and wasted time waiting for the PLC elections. In

other words, they thought that the government charged with conducting state affairs lacked the ability to make decisions or devise and implement plans. As a result, decisions and power would pass into the hands of deputy ministers. Many observers believed that the upcoming PLC elections would result in the end of Fateh's hegemony over the government.

Some of the major factions objected to the formation of such a controversial government. The DFLP issued a statement claiming that a technocratic government would be unable to solve the crisis or break the deadlock. The Democratic Front believed that establishing an interim coalition government would serve as a means of escaping the crisis, while embarking on a path of democratic reform, to include the amendment of the Electoral Law to create a mixed electoral system combining proportional representation and the constituencies system.[3]

In July 2005, Hamas refused to participate in a national unity government proposed by Prime Minister Abu Alaa. Instead, Hamas called for the formation of a supreme national body for the Palestinian people at home and abroad, to be responsible for the entire Palestine issue. Hamas deemed Abu Alaa's government incapable of facing the challenges facing the Palestinians. It pushed instead for adherence to the Cairo Agreement of March 2005, which called for accelerating the reconstruction of the PLO on new political and organizational democratic foundations to allow for the participation of additional factions, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Furthermore, Hamas stated that it was better for the PNA to hold the legislative elections scheduled for July 17, 2005, rather than deferring them and calling for the formation of a new government.

Local Elections

On May 10, 2004, the Palestinian cabinet decided to hold municipal elections, to be held in four stages starting in late August 2004 and concluded within a year. The ministers did not specify the criteria for selecting which local councils would hold these elections in the first stage.

The minister of local government justified the sequencing of municipal elections by citing the lack of Palestinian experience in this area; he emphasized that holding elections for all local councils simultaneously would result in failure.[4] Significantly, the Local Councils Law (No. 5) of 1996 authorized the minister of local government to delay the holding of elections for a local council for a period not exceeding two weeks, if required for the public interest or for the proper holding of elections.

The first stage of elections was held for 26 local councils in the West Bank on December 23, 2004, and for 10 others in the Gaza Strip on January 27, 2005. The

second stage was held on May 5, 2005, for 84 local councils—76 in the West Bank and 8 in the Gaza Strip. The third stage elections was held on September 29, 2005, for 104 local councils in the West Bank. Elections scheduled for the Jenin district and the Gaza Strip were postponed due to the Israeli evacuation of settlements in these areas at that time. The fourth and final stage was held on December 15, 2005 and included 44 local councils, including those in the metropolitan municipalities of Hebron, Nablus, Ramallah, Al-Bireh, and Jenin.[5]

The Local Councils Law

This law was ratified on December 16, 1996, but was not enacted until 2004, when local elections were held. Thereafter, three substantial amendments were introduced to the law within an eight-month time span. These proved to be a source of confusion for those involved in the local elections.

On December 1, 2004, the first amendment was adopted to address significant issues, such as allocating a quota for women (a minimum of two seats in every council) and electing mayors from among elected council members rather than through direct election. It is worthy of note here that abolishing the direct election of mayors had political motives, as Hamas would have stood to benefit from it, while indirect election served Fateh's interests.

A second amendment was ratified on August 15, 2005, after the second stage of elections, entailing the adoption of the proportional electoral system for local elections. As a result, nominations were limited to candidate lists, which usually reflected political and familial affiliations, and representation for all factions in the local councils would be enabled without the domination of the two major factions—Fateh and Hamas—as had occurred in the first and second stages. On August 29 of the same year, another law, the third, was ratified which included new amendments that mainly concerned a new mechanism for the election of women to local councils. Generally, these amendments to the Local Councils Law promote women's participation in local leadership, the participation of smaller factions in local leadership, and the improvement of Fateh's ability to establish alliances in order to counter Hamas power, in terms of selecting mayors.

Indicators for the Results of the Local Elections

Many Palestinian political analysts consider the holding of the second stage of local elections for 84 local councils, including a number of densely populated municipalities, to be a strong indication of the Palestinian people's advance from one political stage to another. Fateh had been the leading faction during the first

stage of local elections, but the results of the second stage of elections indicated that Hamas had taken Fateh's position in the political arena. This had several implications for the nature of the regime, the approach of the administration, and the provision of services to the Palestinian public at the local level.[6]

A number of things can be noted based on the results of the second stage of local elections. The Hamas movement made significant gains, allowing it to assume a higher leadership position, mainly through taking over councils previously dominated by Fateh. This applies to the West Bank and Gaza Strip although it was expected that Hamas would be stronger than Fateh in the Gaza Strip. The criterion for success at this stage was not the number of seats won but rather the number of votes recorded for each faction. If one considers the total number of votes received, Hamas's success is clear. According to the method of calculation used, the number of seats attained in each constituency was weighed against the number of votes needed to win these seats. In other words, we cannot simply add the number of seats (15) won in Rafah—where there is a higher population density—to the (11) seats attained in smaller Abasan—where there is a lower population density—and state that 15 + 11 = 26. In order to win its seats in Rafah, Hamas needed to win more than 70,000 votes, while Fateh took its seats in Abasan with no more than 2,000. Therefore the Rafah seats carried forty times the weight of the Abasan seats.

The shift in public support from Fateh to Hamas is attributable to the long period under Fateh's rule during which the political, economic, and social situation deteriorated. The Palestinian people have also been raising criticisms against Fateh's administration and rule since the establishment of the PNA. In addition to public frustration against the form and the content of the PNA, Hamas was a pioneer in proposing alternatives to Fateh, which ultimately translated criticism into support for Hamas.

The election results constituted a challenge for both Fateh and Hamas. Having been constantly in opposition since its establishment, Hamas had to face the challenge of converting political positions into governmental seats. This switch necessitated a psychological change for Hamas in terms of its vision of issues of government. Its ability to face this difficult test successfully needs to be monitored.

Fateh, having become accustomed to rule over many years, had to do the reverse: to become the opposition. This challenge came as a shock for many Fateh members, which was manifested in the form of collective resignations. For Fateh, the election results meant the loss of influence and hegemony over Palestinian politics. For Hamas, they meant the challenge of balancing armed resistance on the one hand and political responsibility for the Palestinian people on the other.

The outcome of the second stage of local government elections is significant because it constituted a prelude to, and an indicator of, the outcome of the subsequent legislative elections: Hamas became a strong potential victor, and Fateh had to prepare to lose its majority and to coordinate with the leftist factions.

Finally, the election results indicated that the Palestinians were on the verge of a new political experience, with all that implies about political plurality and the political future and governance. The elections, which further consolidated Hamas's leading position, marked the end of one-party—Fateh—rule. Indeed, the results reflected the demand for political plurality at all levels, from the local to the legislative. They also paved the way for a new focus on promoting the interests of the Palestinian people.

Fateh and Hamas: Indications of Ascent and Decline in the Local Elections

An internal Fateh study revealed that the election results were as surprising to Hamas as they were to Fateh. With an 85% turnout in the first stage, the results, according to the study, revealed a decisive victory for the Change and Reform lists of the Hamas movement. In these elections, Hamas won seven of the ten municipalities in the Gaza Strip, gaining 77 seats out of 118, and 65.2% of the votes recorded. Fateh won only two municipalities, 26 seats, and only 22% of the recorded votes. Based on these results, the study recognized the undeniable strength of Hamas as an evolution that justified the movement's demand for inclusion in Palestinian political decision making.

The study considered the reasons for Hamas's entry into the Palestinian political arena not only from the perspective of power and political gain, but also as a way to promote the movement; taking part in the political scene would enable it to gain public legitimacy and access to legal instruments, and allow it to reach a broader public audience. The study identified the following reasons for Hamas's rise to power:[7]

1. Hamas adopted the approach of armed resistance, while Fateh pursued the peace option, while continuing to unofficially support the armed resistance through the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. Indeed, this support was politically controversial both in the media and within Fateh, as some members supported and others rejected armed resistance. Hamas, by contrast, earned a certain amount of legitimacy from its clear approach to the issue.

2. Hamas adopted a political agenda with religious underpinnings. This further consolidated public support for Hamas in a society lacking a national religious faction.
3. Over the years, Hamas has established an extensive network of charities and health clinics, as well as affiliated *zakat* committees, koranic schools, kindergartens, sports clubs, schools, and media outlets. Hamas has also established efficient organizational bodies and a dynamic media apparatus, which contrasts with the inactive media outlets of many other Palestinian political factions.
4. The leftist movements had declined; the leftists had become a political elite, and their presence was confined to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) rather than political parties, thereby limiting the competition to Fateh and Hamas.
5. Israeli strikes against Hamas leaders had the effect of evoking sympathy for the movement among the Palestinian masses.
6. Hamas's engagement in the political process was an astute investment in the movement's struggle as well as a subjective outcome of the movement's armed struggles and organizational efforts.

The same study suggested the following reasons for Fateh's decline:

1. The organization's role in the community was waning. This factor is related to organizational problems within Fateh, and to the confusion that developed between the concept of organizational work and membership in the movement.
2. Fateh was subsumed within the PNA. The members of Fateh had interests both in the PNA and Fateh to the degree that the latter had to shoulder the bulk of the burden of authority and the related corruption.
3. With the exception of President Arafat, most of Fateh's leaders have failed to reach the status of symbolic leader among the Palestinian people, and indeed many have been linked to financial or administrative corruption within the PNA.
4. Many within Fateh have relied on virtual popularity associated with the movement's historical role, and have not come to grips with new developments in the Palestinian arena since the first intifada.
5. Fateh demonstrated ineffectiveness in the electoral process and management. For instance, it did not encourage the public to register to vote, it made numerous changes in the candidate lists in certain locations, questions were raised over the credibility of the move-

ment's candidate lists in some locations, and more than one Fateh candidate list appeared in some electoral districts.

The Issue of Leadership within the Fateh Movement

From Fateh's founding in 1956 until the battle of Al-Karamah in 1968, the actions of the movement were characterized by secrecy as well as a certain degree of joint leadership, as most of the decision making was in the hands of the movement's prominent founding leaders, many of whom had a common background, such as Yasser Arafat, Abu Jihad, Abu Iyad, and Farouk Kaddoumi, all of whom studied at Egyptian universities before working in Arab Gulf countries. The second phase, from 1968 to 1971, saw the decline of collective leadership after the nomination of Yasser Arafat as spokesman for the movement; he subsequently became commander of Fateh's armed forces, commander for the Palestinian Revolutionary Forces, and chairman of the PLO's Executive Committee.

A related issue is the Palestinian Legislative Council election in 2006, because the Central Committee of Fateh was the authority for the selection of the movement's candidates for the elections. Two different approaches were evident in this regard: the first, supported by the young leadership, called for the prompt convening of the old Central Committee and the election of a new Central Committee before the PLC elections. The new leadership would thereby be able to play an important role in the selection of candidates, and thus bring about substantial change at the level of the Central Committee and the Legislative Council, including the replacement of Fateh's leadership in general. The second approach, supported by the so-called "old guard" of the Central Committee, called for the postponement of the election of a new Central Committee. Several justifications have been offered for this approach, including the security situation and the difficulty in gathering members of the leadership of the Fateh movement from Palestine and abroad. The result was that the Central Committee retained its authority to select Fateh's candidates for the PLC elections.

Following a heated debate, the two sides arrived at a compromise by which two committees were formed. The first was to prepare for the convening of the General Congress, and the second was to supervise the holding of elections within Fateh to produce a primary list of candidates for the PLC according to geographical region. Clearly, this solution constitutes a victory for the approach of the Central Committee's old guard, which called for the postponement of the PLC elections from July 17, 2005, to January 25, 2006, and the postponement of the General Congress from August 4, 2005, to the end of March 2006.

Although the old guard retained control of the Central Committee and the Revolutionary Council, the conflict with the new generation was more acute at the third level of the movement's leadership: the field and organizational leadership, i.e., the movement's Supreme Committee and the Office of Mobilization and Organization, which is composed of young leaders from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, led by Marwan Barghouti.

In early March 2005, many of Fateh's members resigned from the Office of Mobilization and Organization in the West Bank to protest what they called "the administrative slack and unilateral decisions in the office." They voiced harsh criticisms against the commissioner of the office, Central Committee member Hani al-Hassan. This protest was reinforced on March 9, 2005, when another 250 members from the movement in Gaza collectively resigned on the same grounds. They attributed their resignation to what they called "slack in the ranks of the movement and the conditions that lead to it, in addition to certain negative phenomena." They also expressed their rejection of the role of being mere puppets in the movement. Thereafter, another 244 Fateh members from the Rafah area in the Gaza Strip collectively resigned for the same reasons on October 15, 2005.

The young leadership demanded that the members of the Office of Mobilization and Organization be selected by elections. However, the Central Committee rejected this demand on the basis of the movement's rules of procedure, which provide for the appointment of the members of the office by the Central Committee itself. In response, the young leadership threatened to form a new office under the leadership of Marwan Barghouti, who was then in prison. As a result, a compromise was reached between the two sides according to which the young leadership retracted the collective resignations and dropped their attempt to oust Hani al-Hassan, thereby preserving the status quo. This approach, as adopted by PNA president Abu Mazen, resulted in the acceptance of the young leaders' demands and, at the same time, a refusal to oust members of the Central Committee. This would subsequently be perceived as the beginning of the takeover of the movement by the new generation.

Another indicator that emerged from this conflict of how things might evolve within the Fateh movement was the nomination of Marwan Barghouti as a candidate in the PNA presidential elections, despite the declaration of Abu Mazen as the only official Fateh candidate. Barghouti's nomination both challenged the Central Committee and caused embarrassment to Fateh before the public. However, the candidacy of Barghouti was clearly more a protest by members of the Supreme Committee, who frequently visited Barghouti in prison, against the mechanism adopted by the Central Committee for the selection of Abu Mazen as the sole candidate of Fateh's Revolutionary Council. The Supreme Committee eventually withdrew Barghouti's candidacy and agreed

to the nomination of Abu Mazen. Thus, the Supreme Committee had called for the participation of other levels of the organization in the decision-making process.

Hamas and the Issue of Political Partnership

Hamas had boycotted the presidential and legislative elections held on January 20, 1996, and the presidential elections of January 9, 2005. However, it did participate in the various stages of the local elections of 2005, and announced that it would participate in the legislative elections that took place on January 25, 2006. This move accompanied a declaration of its readiness to join the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and its various institutions in a national dialogue aimed at "putting the Palestinian house in order." These developments indicated that Hamas had withdrawn its initial opposition and would become part of the post-Arafat Palestinian leadership through participation in the PLC and the Palestinian government.

The literature produced by Hamas explained that it had boycotted the 1996 elections because it considered them to be closely associated with the Oslo Accords, which the movement categorically rejected.[8] In 2000, however, Hamas believed that the intifada had destroyed the peace process, relegating the Oslo Accords and other political agreements to the past, though this was never stated explicitly by any of the parties to the peace process. Therefore, in this context, its participation in the PLC elections in 2006 did not involve the aforementioned political risks, nor did it mean a renunciation of Hamas principles.

Hamas went even further by announcing that it was necessary to hold the elections in order to put an end to the autocracy that had previously characterized the decision-making process. This meant the end of Fateh's monopoly on the leadership of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, after the Al-Aqsa intifada and the ensuing shift in the internal balance of power, in addition to the increasing popularity of Hamas at the expense of Fateh, Hamas decided that it was time for the movement to participate in the leadership of the Palestinian people. Hence on March 12, 2005, the movement announced that it would participate in legislative elections, whenever they were held, and adopted the slogan "Partners in blood are partners in decision."

Hamas also sought to "put the Palestinian house in order," to activate political life in the diaspora, reform the PLO, and end the PLO's monopoly over the affairs of Palestinians in the diaspora. Although the Cairo Agreement of March 2005 had provided for the acceleration of procedures to allow Hamas join the PLO, the steps thus far had been insufficient, with the result that Hamas had grown skeptical about the seriousness of Fateh and Abu Mazen's intentions in this regard.

Hamas has always declared that municipalities and local councils perform services for the citizens and that these services do not involve any specific political agenda; therefore, its participation in all stages of local government elections was justified and Hamas could thus run in the elections without any reservations. On the other hand, it justified its non-participation in the presidential elections that followed Arafat's death on the grounds that the circumstances were not conducive to such participation, and that the Israeli occupation would undermine the benefits of the election for PNA president and that the presidential elections wouldn't lead to "the achievement" of the Palestinians' aspirations. This justification is inconsistent with the decision to participate in the legislative elections; the refusal to participate earlier may have stemmed from the movement's lack of preparedness in the immediate aftermath of Arafat's death and its lack of a suitable candidate following the loss of Hamas leaders to Israeli targeted assassinations.

Regardless of Hamas's interpretation of its own position, its participation in the local and legislative elections, along with that of other factions, clearly signaled the end of Fateh's decade-long monopoly of the PLO and the PNA, and the start of the establishment of political pluralism at all leadership levels within the PLO and the local councils.

Hamas also sought to consolidate its legitimacy in the Palestinian arena in the face of potential obstacles posed by the international community, the Israeli occupation, and the PNA's security apparatus. The movement endeavored to use legitimate means to communicate with the broadest sections of the public in addition to reaping the moral and material benefits of participating in political decision making, without harming the movement or incurring a political price. These efforts stemmed from the direct targeting of Hamas by the Israeli occupation forces, as well as pressure exerted by the PNA and its security apparatus. The potential participation of Hamas attracted criticism from Israel, which announced that it might hamper the Palestinian elections if Hamas participated, because, according to Israel and the United States, political activity is incompatible with armed struggle. Indeed, Silvan Shalom, then the Israeli foreign minister, went so far as to describe the participation of Hamas in the elections as a form of insanity.

The Palestinian Legislative Elections, January 25, 2006

Undoubtedly, the ratification of the new electoral law enjoyed a national consensus, as a part of the Cairo Agreement signed by the Palestinian factions and

the PNA in March 2005.[9] Several Palestinian political parties and organizations contributed to a large-scale campaign for the amendment of the previous electoral law on the basis of which the 1996 elections had been held. The previous law was criticized for being too traditional and upholding clan leadership and for facilitating the monopoly on power held by the larger parties. As public demands for the amendment of the law mounted, the National Campaign for Amending the Electoral Law was established and carried out several activities that related to the demand to introduce changes to the election law.

The new law aimed to encourage all factions and parties to participate in Palestinian political life and leadership, especially in the PLC and the formation of governments. It established a mixed electoral system, combining the proportional and the constituencies systems in equal measure. The proportional system allows for the participation of all parties that reach the minimum ballot tally, with the whole country considered as a single constituency, while the constituencies system encourages independent candidates to run in one of the sixteen constituencies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In order to implement this system efficiently and encourage greater participation, the number of PLC seats was increased to 132 from 88. The new law provided that 66 seats should be filled by the proportional system and 66 by the constituencies system.

The new law also encouraged wider civic participation. The minimum age of nomination was reduced from thirty to twenty-eight years to facilitate the participation of younger leaders. In order to encourage the participation of smaller parties, the minimum percentage of votes required for a candidate list to be eligible to participate was set at 2%. A quota was introduced for the representation of women in the PLC, according to which every list should include a woman candidate within the first three names, as well as an additional seat for a woman among the next four names, and another among every successive five names on the list.

It is noteworthy that consultations between Fateh and Hamas took place during 2005 regarding the introduction of a further amendment to the electoral law. The aim of this amendment was to adopt a full proportional system for the parties and lists participating in the elections, and to abolish the constituencies system, with the whole country considered as a single electoral area. Both movements were motivated to hold these consultations by their problems in forming electoral lists.

Fateh faced serious problems in carrying out primary elections within its ranks, because so many of the movement's members wished to run for office. The results were further affected by the possibility of nominating more than one electoral list. Additionally, the internal conflict within Fateh was expressed as public criticism in the media by a number of its well-known leaders and cadres.

The Hamas movement faced difficulties from as early as October 2005, when many of its leaders who had been expected to run in the elections in the West Bank were arrested. As a consequence, proportional representation would have reduced the personal influence of individual candidates and encouraged election on the basis of political affiliation.

Nevertheless, together with the Basic Law, the electoral law contributed to the creation of the political system sought by the Palestinians. Indeed, the presence of multiple political factions in the Palestine Legislative Council as a result of the new law of proportional representation contributed to the goal of creating a parliamentary system. However, the law itself works indirectly through the direct election of the president of the PNA by the citizens, and hence preserves the features of a presidential system. Therefore, duplication between the presidential and parliamentary systems continues to prevail. Furthermore, the problem of duplication continues to exist within the executive authority, through its two heads, the president and the prime minister.

The number of registered voters for the elections was 1,340,673, 811,198 in the West Bank and 529,475 in the Gaza Strip. A total of 414 candidates competed in the elections in 16 constituencies, and 314 candidates representing 11 candidate lists competed at the national level. The constituencies for the elections were as follows: Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah and Al-Bireh, Jericho, Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Salfit, Tubas, Gaza, Northern Gaza, Khan Younis, Rafah, and Deir el-Balah. The lists that participated in the elections were the Alternative Bloc (an alliance of the DFLP, the People's Party, and FIDA); Independent Palestine, led by Mustafa Barghouti; Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa (the Popular Front); Change and Reform (Hamas); and Fateh and the Third Way, led by Salam Fayyad and Hanan Ashrawi. In addition, the following five lists of smaller blocs failed to reach the minimum vote: Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa, Palestinian Justice, the National Coalition for Justice and Democracy, Freedom and Social Justice, and the Freedom and Independence list.

The elections were conducted under the supervision of around 17,000 individuals under the direction of some 500 international observers, headed by former U.S. president Jimmy Carter, as well around 12,000 local observers, representing the candidates and lists, and various institutions and NGOs. Approximately 13,000 policemen were deployed throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip to protect over 1,000 polling stations.

The first phase of the Palestinian legislative elections was held on Saturday, January 21, 2006, in what was known as the advance vote of security forces, in which security forces in all constituencies cast their votes at polling stations three days before the main elections. In a statement by the Palestinian Central Elections Committee, the number of security officers registered to vote

amounted to 58,708, and 53,227 of them cast their votes, which equates to 90.7% of the total. The number of members of security forces registered to vote in the Gaza Strip was 36,091, and the remainder were registered in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, 32,853 voted, which equals 91% of the total, and 20,374 voted in the West Bank, or 90.1% of the total. The security personnel voted in 17 centers, 6 in the Gaza Strip and 11 in the West Bank. The Central Elections Committee indicated that the aim of holding special election for the security forces prior to the main elections was to allow the police to ensure the smooth running of the elections for civilians on election day.

The Central Election Committee, all observers, both local and international, and all official and private bodies stressed that elections were conducted in an atmosphere of democracy, integrity, and transparency, and that no violations were recorded. In this context, observers and political analysts agreed that the holding of elections in such a manner constituted an impressive achievement on the part of the Palestinian people at all levels, including the PNA and the various other factions. This was especially true given the skepticism expressed by many over the Palestinian people's ability to hold successful, democratic elections, and their ability to manage their own affairs.

Election Results

On January 29, 2006, the Central Elections Committee announced the final results of the elections and statistics on the election process, showing that total voter turnout was 77.69%. The number of voters in the West Bank was 585,003, which equals 74.18% of the eligible electorate. The number for the Gaza Strip was 396,079, or 81.65% of the total, bringing the total number of voters to 981,082 of the 1,340,673 eligible voters in all electoral constituencies, which equates to 77.69% of the total. The highest voter turnout was recorded in the Rafah constituency, where the turnout reached 89%. The total turnout in Jerusalem was 22,661 of the 47,742 registered voters, or 47.5%.

The Hamas Change and Reform list won 74 seats, 56% of the total number of council seats (see table 5.1). This figure includes 45 seats in the constituencies and 29 for the candidate lists. Hamas supported four successful independent candidates, who ran in the elections through the Change and Reform list. This brought the number of Hamas-loyal PLC seats to 78, which equals 59% of the total seats in the PLC. The Fateh movement won 45 seats, or 34% of the total, including 17 seats in the constituencies and 28 seats for candidate lists.

The results for the other lists are as follows: the list of the Popular Front won three seats, and the Alternative, Independent Palestine, and Third Way lists

Table 5.1. Distribution of PLC Seats

Percentage	Seats Obtained	List
56	74	Change and Reform (Hamas)
34	45	Fateh
3.0	4	Independent (Backed by Hamas)
2.5	3	Abu Ali Mustafa (Popular Front)
1.5	2	Alternative (Democratic Front, People's Party and FIDA)
1.5	2	Independent Palestine (Mustafa Barghouti and independents)
1.5	2	Third Way (Salam Fayyad and Hanan Ashrawi)
100	132	Total

Table 5.2. Distribution of Seats Won by the Electoral Lists and Their Percentage of the Total of 66 Seats

List	Seats Obtained	Percentage
Change and Reform (Hamas)	29	44
Fateh	28	42.5
Abu Ali Mustafa (Popular Front)	3	4.5
Alternative (Democratic Front, People's Party, and FIDA)	2	3
Independent Palestine (Mustafa Barghouti and independents)	2	3
Third Way (Salam Fayyad and Hanan Ashrawi)	2	3
Total	66	100

Table 5.3. Number of Seats Won by the Electoral Lists in the Constituencies System (Districts) and Their Percentage of the Total of 66 Seats

List	Seats Obtained	Percentage
Change and Reform	45	68
Fateh	17	26
Independents	4	6
Total	66	100

each won two seats. However, these lists failed to win any seats at the level of the constituencies.

The results (tables 5.2 and 5.3) clearly indicate that the Hamas Change and Reform list beat the Fateh list at the district level by a landslide: 45 seats to 17 seats, a 28-seat margin. However, the difference between the two movements at the lists level is only one seat, as Hamas won 29 seats and Fateh 28 seats. Thus, Hamas and Fateh shared the constituencies between them. Other than the four independents supported by the Hamas movement, no other list won any seat at the district level. This result can be explained by the fact that at the district level the behavior of Palestinian voters was based more on individual than on party-based considerations. Hamas-nominated candidates, for instance, were mostly clergymen and university professors, who are relatively close to the citizenry. Furthermore, Hamas's candidates were not suspected of involvement in financial or political corruption, whereas the Fateh candidates, especially former members of the PLC, had been subjected to harsh criticism regarding financial and administrative malpractice and failure to achieve tangible gains during their terms on the outgoing council.

The results recorded for the Hamas and Fateh candidate lists were close (44% and 42.5% respectively), which indicates that the difference in the number of seats between Hamas and Fateh was principally at the constituencies level. This fact has led some analysts to conclude that the amendment of the previous constituencies-based electoral law served only Fateh and not the Hamas movement, and that had the elections been held on a constituencies-only basis, centered on individual candidates instead of party affiliation, the difference of seats would have been more favorable to Hamas.

Votes and voting: The total number of votes obtained by electoral lists varies slightly compared to the number of seats obtained by each list. For example, while each of the Alternative, Independent Palestine, and the Third Way lists won two seats, the number of votes recorded for each list differs by thousands of votes. Likewise, Hamas won over 30,000 votes more than Fateh; however, Hamas won only one more seat than Fateh (see table 5.4).

The nomination policy: Table 5.5 indicates that Fateh followed a nomination policy according to which the number of candidates was equal to the number of seats allocated to each constituency, while the Hamas Change and Reform list nominated fewer candidates than the number of seats allocated to certain constituencies. Hamas adopted this policy, it announced, in order to encourage coordination with the other lists and independents, and perhaps because in some constituencies a few

Table 5.4. Number of Votes Obtained by Electoral Lists and Percentage of the Total Number of Voters

List	Votes	Percentage
Third Way	23,513	2.5
Independent Palestine	26,554	2.8
Alternative	28,779	3.0
Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa	41,671	4.3
Fateh	403,458	42.1
Change and Reform	434,917	45.4
Total	958,892	100.0

Table 5.5. Comparison between the Number of Nominated and Elected Candidates for Hamas and Fateh at the Constituency Level

Constituency	Allocated Seats	Change and Reform List Hamas		Fatah	
		Nominated Candidates	Elected Candidates	Nominated Candidates	Elected Candidates
Jerusalem	6	4	4	6	2
Jenin	4	4	2	4	2
Tulkarm	3	2	2	3	0
Tubas	1	1	1	1	0
Nablus	6	5	5	6	1
Qalqilya	2	2	0	2	2
Salfit	1	1	1	1	0
Ramallah and Al-Bireh	5	4	4	5	1
Jericho	1	1	0	1	1
Bethlehem	4	2	2	4	2
Hebron	9	9	9	9	0
Northern Gaza	5	5	5	5	0
Gaza	8	5	5	8	0
Deir al-Balah	3	3	2	3	1
Khan Younis	5	5	4	5	1
Rafah	3	3	0	3	3
Total	66	56	45	66	17

Table 5.6. Comparison between the Number of Nominated and Elected Candidates for Fateh and Hamas at the Level of the Party Lists

Number of Seats Allocated for Proportional Representation	Change and Reform List		Fatah	
	Nominated Candidates	Elected Candidates	Nominated Candidates	Elected Candidates
66	59	29	45	28

quota seats were reserved for Christians. Fateh nominated candidates for 100% of the allocated seats, but won only 24.2% of them, while Hamas nominated candidates for only 85% of the allocated seats, and won as many as 82% of them.

At the level of the party lists, Hamas nominated a list of 59 candidates, of whom 29 were elected, and, Fateh nominated a list of 45 candidates, of whom 28 were elected, as illustrated by table 5.6.

Factors affecting the election results: Most analyses of the outcomes of the Palestinian legislative elections attribute the decline of Fateh and the victory of Hamas to three categories of reasons: the first pertaining to the Fateh movement, the second to Hamas, and the third to the surrounding circumstances at the Palestinian, Arab, and international levels.

Analyses of factors related to Fateh discuss its loose organization and the lack of homogeneity in the absence of a charismatic personality capable of attracting the public after the death of Yasser Arafat. In addition, open conflicts between the different wings within the movement; the absence of democracy and the non-renewal of the leadership; the existence of a gap between the leadership and the cadres; the endemic corruption within Fateh and the PNA, the senior positions in which are dominated by Fateh; and the failure of the Fateh-led peace process all led to the decline in Fateh's popularity

The factors related to Hamas include its resistance to Israel; the extensive social and educational services provided by the movement to Palestinian society, especially the working and middle classes; the clear discipline among the Hamas ranks; and its adaptation to the transformations taking place within the movement and the involvement of its cadres in these developments in an appropriate manner all garnered wide support for the movement. In addition, it was able to establish balanced relations with the various Palestinian and Arab parties, thereby avoiding an Arab-Palestinian conflict, despite its designation by Israel, the U.S., and some European countries as a terrorist organization.

The surrounding circumstances that affected the results include the integrity of the elections, which reflected the choice of the people; the Palestinian people's wish to defy the Americans, some Europeans, and the Israelis, who wanted to prevent Hamas from participating in the elections and who threatened to cut off financial aid to the Palestinian people.

Hamas's unity versus discord within Fateh: The Palestinian elections revealed sharp differences within Fateh's ranks. Two separate Fateh can-

didate lists were nominated, one headed by Marwan Barghouti and the other by Abu Alaa. The two lists reflected the depth of the conflict between the younger generation, represented by the Fateh Supreme Committee and headed by Barghouti, and the old guard generation, represented by Fateh's Central Committee.

Deep differences within the movement emerged in the primary elections, which were marred by violence and fraud, including attacks on Fateh election centers, the burning of ballot boxes, bombings, and shootings. Ultimately the results were rejected by most Fateh members, which resulted in a decision to cancel these elections and to form a committee to survey the opinions of Fateh members in the different districts, regarding the formation of a single list headed by Marwan Barghouti, an idea that was not fulfilled.

Many of the movement's members filed their nominations as independent candidates at the level of the constituencies, which affected the outcome of the elections and reduced the chances of the movement's official candidates, against whom the independent candidates competed.

By contrast, Hamas gave a strong impression of internal unity by forming a single list and avoiding conflicts. Furthermore, candidates were nominated at the constituencies level without creating competition among the movement's members, which had a positive effect on the opinion of the Palestinian public.

A successful versus a disorganized electoral campaign: Hamas's electoral campaign was modern and well-organized, and received extensive media coverage. The campaign had many strengths, including its use of the internet, media and legal advisers, unified campaigning for the candidates, scheduled field visits, and various team activities. Additionally, Hamas members participated en masse in well-organized campaign activities with a religious element, an advantage which Fateh lacked.

By contrast, Fateh's electoral campaign lacked unified activities in which the candidates could participate; indeed, Fateh's candidates often had separate campaign offices. Similarly, Fateh's candidates presented individual electoral programs and had their own aides and supporters, with the result that sometimes competition developed between them, mainly due to personal differences. Fateh, unlike Hamas, did not exploit modern means of communication, such as the internet, in its electoral campaign.

Protest votes: Corruption in various forms—including political, financial, and administrative corruption, bribery, nepotism, the squandering of public money, and financial misappropriations—which had

been a prominent feature in Fateh's management of the PNA, doubtlessly played a role in shifting the support of the Palestinian electorate in the direction of Hamas. This shift was to some extent a protest against the performance of Fateh over the previous decade. However, the supporters of Hamas downplayed the significance of this factor, arguing that a protest vote against Fateh did not necessarily result in a vote for Hamas, given that there were nine other electoral lists besides those of Hamas and Fateh.

Votes of defiance: Some believe that foreign interference in the Palestinian elections had a negative impact on the outcome of the elections for Fateh. Indeed, reports that the United States was providing funds to some of its candidates dealt a blow to the movement, especially in light of American acknowledgments of such funding and Fateh's inability to refute them unequivocally. In addition, Israel's incitement against Hamas and its calls for the movement to be banned from participating in the elections, together with threats from the United States and European Union to cut off aid to the Palestinian people in case of a victory for Hamas, all served to bolster support for the movement in defiance of foreign intervention in the elections.

Hamas's sacrifices versus Fateh's political line: The election results arguably reflected the reality of the Palestinian situation, which had undergone a profound change, due in large part to the Al-Aqsa intifada. Indeed, the great sacrifices made by Hamas, which played an active and strong role in the intifada, may have transformed it into a viable alternative to the PNA and the PLO.

Fateh's policy during the intifada, however, was unclear. Some in Fateh supported negotiations and accepted political initiatives, the latest of which was the Road Map peace plan, while others called for a return to armed resistance, represented by the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade. This divergence further highlighted the continuing disunity within Fateh, which stood in contrast to the unified positions adopted by Hamas on all political issues.

The martyrdom of Hamas leaders versus the mysterious death of Yasser Arafat: There is no doubt that the death of most of Hamas's leaders, including Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantisi, resulted in a magnification of the movement's popularity. In contrast, Fateh's inability to provide an explanation for the death of President Yasser Arafat and the mystery that shrouded it adversely affected the movement, in spite of the popular sympathy for President Arafat at the time of his death.

The local elections (municipal and village councils): The success of Hamas in the local elections, which took place shortly before the legislative elections, influenced its subsequent success in the legislative elections. Hamas's victory in the metropolitan municipalities a month before the legislative elections, compared to Fateh's poor showing at these elections and its failure to form consolidated candidate lists, contributed to Hamas's victory by lifting the morale of its supporters and strengthening their resolve to record a further victory in the elections for the Legislative Council. In contrast, Fateh's supporters lost confidence during the municipal elections, and this communicated itself to Palestinian voters, who assessed the changing fortunes of the two parties.

The election results were significant in a number of ways. Beside an inevitable change in the political map of a future Palestine, one of the most significant results of the elections was the proof they provided of the ability of the Palestinian people to conduct sound, well-organized, democratic elections, despite prior concerns that the election process might be disrupted or sabotaged. Fateh's retreat to opposition, and Hamas's victory, by winning a majority of seats in the PLC and taking office in both the PLC and the Council of Ministers, will have a profound impact on the political agenda not only of the PNA, but also of the PLO. This is because the participants in the Cairo Agreement of March 2005 have tended to advance in the restructuring of the PLO based on the results of the elections, which would place Hamas at the forefront of the political scene and the PLO.

The broad participation of the political parties in the elections were a sign of change in the Palestinian political movements; none of the Palestinian factions boycotted the elections, with the exception of Islamic Jihad. As many as eleven candidate lists representing different Palestinian political factions participated in the elections, as well as hundreds of independent candidates at the district level. Moreover, the relatively high level of popular participation and voter turnout (77.69%) indicated a high degree of political awareness among Palestinians and their ability to make choices independently. These positive developments should be considered against the background of the failure of foreign interventions, principally on the part of Israel, the European Union, and the United States. Their various interventions included a request to postpone elections for fear of a Hamas victory; the threat to withhold aid if Hamas did win; the financing of the electoral campaigns of some candidates, as announced in the media, with the aim of prevent the victory of Hamas; and Israel's campaign to arrest Hamas operatives that started on September 25, 2005; these did

not, however, have the desired effect on the outcome. In fact, these interventions probably had the reverse effect on some voters by encouraging them to vote for Hamas.

On the domestic front, the election results indicate the failure of the Palestinian leftists to form an electoral alliance, despite the common principles held by its parties and factions; this failure weakened it politically. The leftist factions even traded accusations of blame over the failure to form such a coalition. The only leftist alliance to be formed was the Alternative Alliance bloc, which included the DFLP, the People's Party, and FIDA but left out the PFLP, Independent Palestine, and the other five small leftist lists. In addition, efforts were made by many popular national and independent figures, together with numerous factions and parties, to form a united national list as a third competitor to challenge Hamas and Fateh.. However, the differences between the parties, and in particular disagreements over the senior position on the candidate list, precluded the formation of such a list.

Five of the smaller lists which participated in the elections failed to achieve the required threshold of 2% of the votes, even if their votes are combined, as they together received as little as 1.8% of the votes. Thus these factions have almost no support among the Palestinian public, despite the fact that they are members of the PLO, are represented within its bodies, and have been the recipients of PLO subsidies for a long time. The election results therefore require that these factions reconsider their political and organizational choices.

The opinion polls by and large failed to predict the results of the elections, which indicates a low level of credibility for opinion polling centers among Palestinian citizens. These centers predicted that Fateh would win close to 60 seats, Hamas around 50 seats, and the Independent Palestine list (Mustafa Barghouti and the independents) 8 seats. The actual results gave 74 seats to Hamas, 45 seats to Fateh, and only 2 seats to Independent Palestine. The opinion polling centers attribute the large discrepancy between the predicted and the actual results to reluctance among voters to reveal their opinions for security reasons. In other words, Hamas supporters were averse to disclosing their voting preferences out of fear of repercussions, whether on the part of the occupation authorities or the Palestinian security services.

The Central Elections Committee, however, performed strongly and transparently, and displayed resilience to any attempt to blackmail or pressure voters, sticking strictly to the election law and associated regulations. These qualities had been clearly in evidence in the period prior the elections, when the committee insisted that voter registration forms be received in advance, and that voting be conducted at sites specified by the committee, rather than at the security services' headquarters.

The Israeli Response to Hamas's Success in the Elections

The State of Israel dealt with Hamas's victory by drawing parallels with the Nazi period. By portraying Hamas through the use of historical terms that evoked the Israelis' sense of Jewishness and through the intimidation of international public opinion, Israel attempted to force acceptance of its rejection of the results of the Palestinian elections, and of their "serious repercussions for the collective security of the Jewish people." Benjamin Netanyahu, head of the Likud Party, stated that the victory of Hamas was akin to that of the "Nazis when they assumed power in Germany," in an attempt to connect the tragedy of the Jewish people in Europe to the possible consequences of the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian legislative elections. Avi Dichter, a central leader of Israel's Kadima party, likened the charter of Hamas to Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Effi Eitam, member of the Knesset from the rightist Ichud Leumi party, called "for Hamas's leaders to be assassinated, as Hitler should have been."[10] Articles and caricatures appeared in the Israeli press reinforcing these stereotypical views of Hamas.

Israel had not anticipated that Hamas would win by such a margin. This failure to predict the election results has been compared to the failure of the Israeli intelligence in the 1973 October war.[11] The ensuing post-election confusion was so great that the Israeli Military Intelligence Service (Aman) admitted that the Hamas victory had created a new, transitional stage, and that it did not have a clear idea of when that stage would end.[12] The absence of an Israeli strategy to deal with the new Palestinian situation was reflected in Israel's assessment of the new stage. The current and former chiefs of the Shabak intelligence service (Shin Bet), Yuval Diskin and Avi Dichter, considered the victory of Hamas as a strategic threat to Israel, an assessment that was strongly disputed by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni stated that Palestinian president Abu Mazen had become "irrelevant," a claim that was also rejected by Olmert. Thus, the Israeli government was in disarray over its evaluation of the new Palestinian political reality. Just as Israel severed its economic ties with the Palestinians, it continued, however, to coordinate security issues with the PNA, and Israeli officers maintained normal, constant contact with the Palestinian security services. Security coordination between the two sides continues, despite a claim made by Olmert during a meeting of the Israeli cabinet on February 19, 2005, that "the Palestinian Authority turned in theory and in practice into a terrorist authority," and that "Israel will not maintain any relations with Hamas, whether Hamas is a small or large part of that regime."

Some Israeli commentators concur that the victory of Hamas poses a strategic threat to Israel. However, Israeli observers consider the victory of Hamas,

in the long run, and from a broader perspective, to herald the beginning of the "era of the masses. The Arab masses have become an important element in the Israeli political and strategic considerations after the victory of Hamas. . . . Hamas' victory will lead to the dismantling of traditional Arab political frameworks and the emergence of new ones, which will require Israel to create a new strategy for dealing with them, rather than merely deterring existing dictatorial regimes."[13]

In the aftermath of Hamas's victory, the Israeli government formed two teams to examine the relationship between Israel and the PNA, and to tackle the state of political disorientation over the future of this relationship. Dov Weisglass, then director general of the Prime Minister's Office, headed the first team. This team included the army's chief of staff, the chairman of the Shabak, and the head of the Military Intelligence Service. The second team was formed within the National Security Council, and was chaired by its president, Giora Eland. The government adopted the recommendations made by the National Security Council.[14] The first team proposed a full disengagement from the Palestinians, involving closures, the prevention of the entry of Palestinian workers into Israel, siege, and a total embargo.[15] This approach is consistent with the position of the security services, which consider the PNA after the election of Hamas to be part of an "arc of evil" formed by Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas. One journalist called this plan "the iron wall" plan."[16] Clearly, the Israeli security services adopted an extremist policy in dealing with the victory of Hamas and had a pessimistic view of the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. The second team, however, suggested a more pragmatic policy for dealing with the new situation, aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of its dynamics and components.

Israeli positions on Hamas can be divided into two camps. The first claims that the victory of Hamas and the formation of the Palestinian government will lead to a radicalization of the existing political regime, the PNA, and transform it into a terrorist political entity. This view was shared by the majority of the Israeli political elite. At the Herzliya conference held in December 2005, the then chief of staff, Dan Halutz, confirmed the extreme view adopted by the Israeli security apparatus, stating that "if Hamas becomes a central force with an instrumental role in power, a future showdown will be inevitable."[17] This view is based on an Israeli assumption that Hamas cannot be a moderate movement, and consequently that there can be no political settlement with it. Professor Dore Gold, a former adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, wrote that it was wrong to compare the PLO in the 1970s with Hamas today, adding that the latter had already linked itself with "global Islamic terrorism and become part of it."[18]

The second camp argues that Hamas's victory and ascent to power will lead the movement to adopt a more pragmatic approach toward Israel by entering into negotiations with it and recognizing its legitimacy. Taking advantage of its control over the daily issues affecting the lives of the Palestinian people, Israel is attempting to prevent the passage of funds to the PNA; this is a form of political blackmail aimed at pressuring Hamas into making concessions and eventually turning it into a pragmatic and realistic movement. In a lecture delivered at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, Udi Dekel, the head of the Israel Defense Forces' Strategic Planning Division, stated: "Through turning Hamas into a political body, it may become more moderate and restricted by political considerations, and then it wouldn't practice direct terrorism against us; perhaps it would only practice terrorism indirectly."[19] Ami Ayalon, a leader of the Labor Party and former head of the Shabak, concurred with this position, stating in an interview: "We have to rationalize Hamas. This is possible. And when Hamas meets reality, it will become more moderate . . . When an Islamic faction faces a clear Israeli policy and resolve, it will turn into a pragmatic faction."[20] Thus, there is a tendency among some members of the Israeli elite to consider "the positive side" of Hamas's victory. Indeed, some of them believe that it could lead to the end of the armed chaos by transforming Hamas into a stakeholder in stability and calm. They also argue that it could improve control over security matters, by making Hamas the only weapons holder in the PNA; thus it could be blamed for any armed resistance.[21]

Some observers have criticized those who believe that Israel should not negotiate with Hamas, stating, for example, that "they are adamant on turning Hamas into a monster that wants to annihilate Israel because monsters must be annihilated, and they insist on making the Palestinians understand that in order to receive food they must return to the Fateh movement, which suddenly turned (in the Israeli discourse) into one of Zion's fans. The policy now is not to talk to Hamas, just as we once swore that we would not talk at all to the PLO."[22] In this context, Ofer Dekel, former vice president of the Shabak, suggested that "Israel imposes a dynamic of moderation on Hamas, as an elected government, by pressuring it to act to prevent attacks against Israel and to prevent the smuggling of arms."[23] This position stems from the fact that the Palestinian territories remain under Israeli control, and for this reason the election of Hamas should be no cause for concern. As discussed above, this stance contradicts the position of the current Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin, who described the Hamas victory as a strategic threat to Israel.

One researcher[24] who studied the Hamas movement said that its election would form a bridge between Islam and Europe, and that he would not be surprised to see Hamas leaders visiting in the White House.[25] Another researcher[26]

stated that "the bridge would harm the State of Israel as it would provide a platform for the Palestinian narrative, which would lead to the acceptance of the idea of a bi-national state and lend legitimacy to the demand that the Israeli government define the final borders of the State of Israel as a Jewish state.[27] A third researcher[28] argued that Hamas will not perform the role of a bridge between the East and West, but rather will consolidate its position because it will not end its resistance. He added that the threat will cease to be a military one and will become political, due to Hamas's consolidation of its victory and the consequent strengthening of the Islamic factions in the Arab world.

The Position of the Israeli Public on the Election of Hamas

Israeli public opinion on the election of Hamas differed little from that of the government. Indeed, Israeli public opinion plays an important role in influencing the positions adopted by the Israeli government and the attitudes of politicians from various political parties. This was particularly the case with the Hamas victory, which came against the backdrop of the Israeli elections. Benjamin Netanyahu, for instance, adopted the election slogan of "Strong against Hamas," which is clearly populist and not based on pragmatic or rational convictions, and reflective of the attempts of the Israeli right wing to respond to Israeli public sentiment.

Israeli society is divided on how to deal with the Hamas-led Palestinian government, but in general supports dialogue with it. A survey conducted shortly before the Palestinian elections in 2006 found that 43% of the Israeli public believed that Israel should sever all contacts with the PNA if Hamas formed a Palestinian government, while 48% expressed support for talks with a Hamas-led government.[29] A higher percentage of Israelis approved of talking with the PNA if Hamas participated in the government as opposed to taking full control of it: 67% expressed willingness to talk to the PNA if Hamas participated in the government, compared to 28% who supported the boycott of such a Palestinian government.[30]

Another poll revealed a popular sentiment that Israel should be more intelligent in its dealings with Hamas rather than use greater force, which contradicts the Likud Party's slogan of "Strong against Hamas." Only 21% supported the immediate severing of contacts with the PNA; 23% supported the continuation of contacts with the PNA, while a majority, 56%, responded that Israel should pause to evaluate the behavior of Hamas before making any decisions over whether to continue or sever contacts.[31] In another poll, 40% stated they would support

negotiations with a Hamas-led government if it abandoned the aim of annihilating the State of Israel, while 27% expressed support for the continuation of the current Israeli approach and the renewal of negotiations; and 27% supported the severing of all contacts and relations with the Palestinian National Authority.[32] The Israeli public adopted the same position on the question of transferring funds to the PNA: just 28% stated that Israel should freeze the transfer of funds to the Palestinians, compared to 27% who were in favor of this transfer and 43% who supported a temporary freeze of funds until the policy adopted by the Hamas government became apparent.[33]

In giving these responses, the Israeli public differentiated between its pragmatic vision of the Hamas movement and the movement's ideology. While Israelis stated the belief that Israel should talk with the Hamas-led PNA, they also expressed the conviction that the movement would not change its ideological character following its electoral victory: 61% stated that they did not believe that Hamas would cease "terrorism" and recognize the State of Israel; 37% stated the opposite view.[34] The Israeli public disagreed with the position of Ehud Olmert, the leader of the Kadima party, who stated that Hamas's victory did not pose a strategic and existential threat to Israel: 55% of Israeli Jews believed that Hamas's victory constituted an existential threat to Israel, as compared to 38% who did not. Views vary according to the Israeli political map (table 5.7). Overall, however, 46% of Israeli Jews stated that Hamas would reduce its military operations, and 40% considered the movement a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.[35]

The same poll indicated that Israeli support for the establishment of a Palestinian state declined following the election of Hamas, from 67% before the election to 55% after the Hamas victory.[36]

The Israeli public concurs with the line adopted by the Kadima party in terms of how to contend with the new Palestinian reality. In a poll conducted in February 2006, 75.5% of respondents stated that Israel should determine its destiny unilaterally through the erection of the separation wall, and only 18% opposed that view.[37]

Opinion polls confirm that the position of the Israeli public is in harmony with the official position over the perceived need to make negotiations with Hamas conditional on Hamas's abandonment of its political and ideological program. The Israeli public demonstrated greater flexibility on this issue than the political leadership, which was perhaps due to the fact that the political debate between the candidates over Israel's relationship with the PNA was influenced by the context of the Israeli elections.

The political mood of the Israeli public is strongly affected by surrounding internal and external political events. In a poll conducted in February 2006, a

Table 5.7. Israeli Voters' Responses to the Question "Does Hamas's Victory Pose an Existential Threat to Israel?" (in percentages)

	Jewish Population	Voters for the Labor Party	Voters for Kadima	Voters for the Likud
Yes	55	39	48	83
No	38	49	48	17
Don't know	7	12	4	0

plurality (42%) of the Israeli public believed that the government had been very lenient in dealing with the victory of Hamas, while 38% believed that the government's policy had been appropriate for the political circumstances, and a further 12% thought that it had been too rigid.[38] In another poll from the same month, 34% of respondents stated the government had been very lenient, while 43% answered that its actions had been appropriate and prudent. The same proportion (12%) said it had been very rigid.[39] The Israeli public does not support the linking of the withdrawal from Gaza with the victory of Hamas, a view put forward by the Israeli right wing. Nor does it consider Israel's spurning of Palestinian president Abu Mazen to be a reason for the Hamas victory, as the Israeli left wing argued. In February 2006, 52% of the Jewish Israeli public expressed the belief that the Israeli government was not concerned with Hamas's victory, and 42% that the government was concerned with the Palestinian election results.[40] The Israeli public considered Olmert and Netanyahu to be the leaders capable of confronting Hamas (35% and 34% respectively), while Labor Party leader Amir Peretz enjoyed the confidence of only 10% of the Israeli public.[41]

Hamas after the Elections—Fundamental Challenges

Since sweeping to power, Hamas has faced several challenges stemming from its election victory. These challenges can be grouped under the following headings: its relationship with the PLO; its relationship with Israel; its relationship with the Palestinian presidency; its relationship with the West and the Arab world; and its relationship with the Palestinian public, including its aspirations and needs.

The formation of the Palestinian government by Hamas after the elections in 2006 posed a major challenge not only in the Palestinian arena, but also at various regional and international levels. The major question revolves around the way in which Hamas deals with internal and external developments, while it faces critical questioning about its ability to hold on to power.

The movement's relationship with the Palestinian presidency poses a further challenge. Although the Basic Law has defined the powers of the PNA president and the prime minister, the relationship between them is a source of tension for the Hamas-controlled Council of Ministers, in particular concerning the obligations of the president, a member of Fateh, toward the peace process and the international community. The transfer by presidential decree of certain institutions, such as radio and television stations and the Palestinian News Agency, from the jurisdiction of the Council of Ministers to the president, despite the stipulation in the Basic Law that they fall within the authority of the Prime Minister's Office, has exacerbated these tensions.

The question of the Palestinian security forces is a unique one that cannot be easily tackled by Hamas. These forces include tens of thousands of armed men who are both affiliated with Fateh and loyal to their direct commanders. Their weapons have contributed on more than one occasion to the general security chaos in the Palestinian territories. Adding to the difficulty is the tense relationship that existed between Hamas and these security apparatuses in the 1990s, which at times deteriorated into open confrontations—and the confusion generated by the fact that these forces have more than reference. A further complication is that in accordance with a law enacted in 2005 to regulate military service, the intelligence services fall under the jurisdiction of the president and the remainder of the security services under the jurisdiction of the Council of Ministers. This law was passed at a time when Hamas's election was not foreseen. However, it is likely that Hamas's success will end Fateh's monopoly over the security services and establish a certain balance by encouraging Hamas loyalists to join the security services and to establish its own security powers in Gaza.

The relationship with Israel is a further challenge for Hamas. Israel alleged following Hamas's victory in the 2006 elections that Hamas is not a Palestinian peace partner and that Hamas's control of the government will affect any future negotiations. The situation currently resembles a deadlock, with Israel declaring its refusal to negotiate with Hamas, and Hamas announcing its willingness to continue its resistance and its refusal to enter into negotiations with Israel.

Dealing with the international community is a difficult task for Hamas and its government, and one which it is tackling for the first time. While it may be able to manage the local domain, drawing on its cadres and experience, a far greater challenge lies in managing the PNA's international relations. These relations are determined by the new stance taken by the international community, and Hamas has made a number of breakthroughs in this regard, including in its relations with some Arab countries and Russia, in spite of the continued American political and financial threats against dealings with the Hamas-led government.

Conclusion: The Leadership Question after the Ra'is

The crux of the Palestinian leadership problem is that in the three decades that followed Arafat's assumption of the chairmanship of the PLO's Executive Committee, the Palestinians, despite heated clashes during their history, were subject to a centralized leadership that blocked the emergence of any serious rivals. Arafat adopted several complex means and mechanisms of gathering power exclusively in his hands, excluding even his comrades in leadership.[42] This centralization of power was clearly evidenced by the exclusion of Abu Mazen from any decision-making power in the months preceding Arafat's death. After Arafat died, the leadership issue rose to the top of the Palestinian agenda.

Formal leadership has been settled through regulations and laws within the PLO and the PNA. However, it was not seriously addressed in practice during Arafat's lifetime, and the election of a new leadership after Arafat would clearly be entirely different from all previous Palestinian elections. An analysis of the results of all elections held since Arafat's death indicates that the Palestinians have succeeded in overcoming the principal challenge of holding democratic elections.

The presidential elections brought Abu Mazen to power, a man who is known for his advocacy of a conciliatory stance in the Palestinians' relationship with Israel and the West in general. He is also known for his highly flexible approach and for being appreciably more interested than Arafat in seeking a peaceful solution with Israel. The legislative elections, however, brought Hamas to office, and Hamas is an organization that calls for armed struggle, even within Israel's pre-1967 borders, and opposes any recognition of Israel. An examination of the dialogues and discussions that have taken place between the Palestinian presidency and government, and between Fateh and Hamas, reveals serious disagreements over the whole range of issues currently facing the Palestinians.

6

The Empowerment of Hamas and the Outbreak of Palestinian Infighting

In late 2006 the intra-Palestinian conflict took a more tangible form in the infighting between Fateh, represented by President Abu Mazen, and Hamas, represented by Prime Minister Ismail Haniya. This infighting became violent in December 2006, after Hamas accused Fateh supporters of attempting to assassinate Haniya on his return from a tour of Arab and Islamic states. The goal of the tour was to raise financial aid as a way of breaking the embargo imposed on the Palestinian National Authority by the United States, Israel and European and some Arab countries after Hamas's victory in the January 2006 elections. The accusation led to open confrontations between the two movements in the streets, in which many casualties were incurred among citizens and activists.

The dispute deepened and was exacerbated by President Abu Mazen's criticism of Hamas for failing to form a national unity government. Abu Mazen also revealed his intention to hold early legislative and presidential elections and his decision to establish an alternative government, led by Salam Fayyad. By these efforts, Abu Mazen attempted to end Hamas's domination of Palestinian politics, which Fateh believed would bring about the alleviation of the siege imposed on the Palestinians by Israel, the U.S., and the EU states.[1]

Some analysts view the conflict between Fateh and Hamas as a tactical one that originated from their different views over the management of the conflict and ending the Israeli occupation. However, the conflict is substantial in every

respect, not merely tactical, and related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the future of the peace process. It also relates to deep and fundamental political, social, and cultural differences in approach between the two movements. Thus, the conflict cannot be resolved purely through procedural dealings with Israel. Great effort will be required to settle internal differences within the national factions through the embracing of democratic principles, as will be elaborated upon in the conclusion of the book.

The Emergence of Hamas as a National Alternative

Hamas was a religious and social movement without any political platform before the beginning of the first intifada (1987–1993), when it issued its first Intifada statement in December 1987. Hamas, like the PLO, strove to become a driving force in the intifada. However, over time a conflict gradually emerged between the two over their respective influence on the intifada and their competing claims of responsibility for gains made.

As the intifada escalated, so did competition between the various Palestinian factions over their participation in the resistance. The rivalry was qualitative as well as quantitative. One of the fears of the PLO, the majority of whose leadership was abroad, mainly in Tunisia, was that Hamas would become a leading force in the intifada, and consequently a central power among Palestinians in the occupied territories, by virtue of its armed resistance.[2]

Hamas's view of the PLO was primarily shaped by ideological and programmatic factors. Specifically, the dispute between Hamas and the PLO is rooted in the ideological sphere, where Hamas's worldview is incompatible with the secular approach of the PLO, and in the programmatic sphere, primarily due to differences in political programs and the methods adopted to achieve their respective goals. In addition, Hamas considered itself an alternative to the PLO, and a more legitimate representative of the Palestinians inside Palestine. In this regard, Professor Yazeed Sayegh from Oxford University stated, "Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, stressed that Hamas will not replace the PLO as a negotiator, but at the same time it is clear that [the PLO] only represents the Palestinians in the Diaspora, not the Palestinians in Palestine." He also criticized the PLO for adopting a non-Islamic approach. However, he added, "The changes within Hamas made young activists in the movement increasingly challenge Fateh."[3]

In January 1990, the unofficial spokesman for Hamas in Gaza, Mahmoud Zahar, employed more conciliatory discourse, stressing that the PLO represents "all of us." This state of affairs ended after Fateh announced its intention to hold a session of the National Council and Hamas demanded 40–50 percent of the

council seats and the abolition of the PLO's political platform, which had been adopted in November 1988.

Altercations between Fateh and Hamas activists eventually drove Arafat to authorize the publication of a lengthy and harsh article against the Islamists in the *Palestinian Revolution* magazine in July 1990. The article refuted the political accusations leveled against Fateh by Hamas, contending that "the real reason for [Hamas's] anger was the attempt by Hamas to stay outside the framework of the PLO, so as to project Hamas as an alternative to the PLO in representing a large part of the Palestinians."[4] Nevertheless, negotiations between the two continued over the issue of Hamas joining the PLO. These negotiations often ended in deadlock or violent clashes, which would be followed by calmer periods. This state of affairs continued even after the signing of a "cooperation agreement" between the two organizations on September 21, 1990.

Tension prevailed once again in 1991 when Hamas, together with other factions, called for a total strike in protest against the Madrid Middle East peace conference. The strike resulted in renewed confrontations and the killing of one citizen and injury of three others.[5]

After the failure of the Madrid peace conference, several secret negotiation channels were opened in Europe, one of them in Oslo. After signing the Oslo agreement in Washington on September 13, 1993, Hamas adopted a hard-line position against the agreement. Ahmad Yassin, the founder of Hamas, sent a letter from prison to his followers stating that the accord disregarded basic issues such as Jerusalem, the settlements, and the demarcation of borders and thus did not meet the ultimate goals of the Palestinian people. In the letter, Ahmad Yassin called on his followers to reject the agreement and resist it with "the civilized means at their disposal."[6]

Hamas's stance was further clarified in a statement made by the movement's spokesman, Ibrahim Ghousheh, on September 4, 1993, in which he stated: "The Gaza-Jericho agreement does not represent the Palestinian people at all, nor does it represent the Palestinian national and Islamic factions; it doesn't even represent the PLO bodies themselves . . . and therefore, Hamas will continue the long battle against the Zionist enemy. The Gaza-Jericho agreement does not commit our people or ourselves to anything stated in the agreement. These events and developments only consolidate and increase our belief in the righteousness of our Islamic belief and approach to liberate Palestine. These developments make Hamas and the other factions strongly believe in our ability to meet our people's aspirations and to lead the people on the path of jihad and liberation."[7]

Hamas's hard-line stance on the agreement stems from two basic factors. The first was the belief, articulated above, that the agreement did not meet Palestinian demands because it did not address the basic issues of the conflict. The

second factor was that the agreement was reached without any consultation with the Palestinians within Palestine. As Ghousheh declared in his September 4 statement: "The agreement was for meager autonomy over less than 2 percent of the land of Palestine. This autonomy would be dominated by the occupying power without any authority or sovereignty, without the return of refugees, and with Jerusalem remaining under the occupation, which would also retain control over border passages."[8]

A review of these positions reveals that Hamas focused on final status issues, and believed that the way in which those issues were addressed in the agreement constituted a violation of the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinians. For Hamas, the fact that the agreement lacked solutions for these issues constituted a strong reason to consider the agreement a threat to the essence of the Palestinian cause and to resist it.

Thus, Hamas viewed its relationship with Israel in zero-sum terms, meaning that ultimately there could be only one winner. According to this logic, the process of dialogue and negotiation is not a priority, and peaceful means are unlikely to achieve the Palestinians' legitimate rights. Therefore, the probability is high that the evolving relationship between Israel and the Palestinians will end in failure.

Khaled Hroub, a Palestinian researcher, has argued that "Hamas has defined its mechanism for rejecting the agreement, which limits it in political and media opposition, as well as its public mobilization, and that the ball is now in the PA's hands, as Hamas drew a red line and asked that the authority adhere to it, in return for averting violent opposition by Hamas."[9] This idea runs counter to the practices adopted by Hamas, which did not limit itself to media resistance, and even embraced armed resistance as a basic means of resisting the agreement. Thus, the implication is that Hamas's approach to resisting the agreement entailed military operations, aiming at creating a de facto situation in which the agreement would be put on hold. This strategy should, therefore, be considered within its context, and its effects on the implementation of the agreement should be examined.

Moreover, Hamas stood opposed to the conventions signed by Israel and the PNA. The latter is required by the agreement to curb "acts of violence" and end "terrorism" and "incitement" against Israel. On this basis, Israel accused the PNA of not fulfilling its commitments, and, conversely, of sometimes even encouraging violence. Consequently, the agreement began to collapse.

The armed operations of Hamas, and of the Islamic Jihad, cast a shadow over negotiations between the two sides over the Gaza-Jericho Agreement in 1994. Dennis Ross, the American envoy for peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, declared that "following the attacks against Israel, the state

focused more on the subject of security and on insisting that the Palestinians implement their commitments in this area, while the Palestinian side wanted a real transfer of authority from Israel to the Palestinians, including security responsibilities, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which, according to Israel, was difficult to do in light of the violence that was raging."[10] Therefore, Arafat was to take a decisive stand on Hamas and other factions, which he considered a threat to the agreement. He began a campaign of arrests against Hamas and Islamic Jihad in order to prevent their operations against Israel, which had escalated and intensified, especially in 1996.

Thus, the relationship between the Israeli and the Palestinian sides entered into a cycle of actions and reactions. For example, on April 6, 1994, Hamas carried out an armed operation in response to the Israeli massacre in Hebron's Al-Haram al-Ibrahimi Mosque. Hamas also carried out the largest of its military offensives after Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres ordered the assassination of Yahya Ayyash, a Hamas leader considered by Israel to be the mastermind behind most of Hamas's operations against Israel. The assassination was carried out on January 5, 1996. During the last week of January 1996, Hamas conducted four military operations in retaliation, killing sixty Israelis.[11] After these armed operations, Shimon Peres issued orders to impose barriers in the West Bank, and to halt the negotiations on the withdrawal from Hebron, which was scheduled for May 15, 1996.

When the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to commence construction of the Jabal Abu Ghneim (Har Homa) settlement in East Jerusalem, Hamas carried out a military operation in Tel Aviv, killing three Israelis. This allowed Israel to shift the international focus away from the issue of settlement to the issue of Israeli security. Israel announced that if the PNA wanted the prompt resumption of peace talks with Israel, they should cooperate more over security and fighting "terrorist organizations," and should destroy the terrorist infrastructure.[12]

With the growing number of Hamas's armed operations against Israel, the relationship between the PNA and the Israeli government entered a new phase in which each side became more intransigent in its demands for the other to respect its commitments. Each side leveled a series of accusations of negligence at the other side, in addition to acting unilaterally and pursuing a policy of actions and reactions. The U.S. secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, declared, "There is no proportionality between military operations, Israeli bulldozers, the killing of innocent people, and the building of settlements; therefore, it is difficult to talk of political issues in a climate of fear and terror."[13]

However, despite the tense relationship between Hamas and the PNA, some Hamas leaders sought to find common ground with a number of PNA and Fateh

officials in order to deal with events as they unfolded and even to try to coordinate operations among themselves. Through these joint efforts, they often succeeded in gaining control over some events, and in preventing other events from occurring. Hamas and the PNA also reached a secret agreement, according to which Hamas committed not to launch any military attacks against Israel. This agreement lasted for almost a year, but Hamas violated it by carrying out a military operation in retaliation for Israel's assassination of Yahya Ayyash. The relationship between the movements developed to the extent that they cooperated in confronting the Israeli occupation forces following the outbreak of Al-Aqsa intifada.[14]

Hamas's decision on March 12, 2005, to participate in the second Palestinian legislative elections generated substantial change in Palestinian public life and even within Hamas itself. Some analysts viewed this decision as a possible gateway to the transformation of the movement into a political party. Indeed, Hamas had counted on changing the political process in the Palestinian arena through its participation in the elections.

Tensions Resulting from the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Election Results

Two general factors contributed to escalating tensions between Fateh and Hamas following the declaration of the legislative election results on January 25, 2006. One was the political program of each party, and the other was the disparity in power between the presidency and the government, and the resulting competition between them.

The political programs of Fateh and Hamas differ significantly from each other. Fateh's position is essentially focused on embracing the political option and the agreements between Israel and the PNA. Fateh also adopts a negotiations-based approach that seeks to realize the interests of both peoples. Hamas, however, has adopted a program based on resistance as the basis for any national action. It does not recognize the agreements signed by the PNA and Israel. Hamas also follows an Islamic ideological approach. In order to understand these differences, it is important to comprehend the way in which each side manages the conflict with the Israelis, and whether or not it aims to achieve the complete liberation of all the Palestinian territories in historic Palestine.

Some Palestinian and Arab observers believe that the PNA and PLO have negotiated for far less than has been granted to the Palestinians by international resolutions, mainly those of the UN. Some observers have even accused the PNA of doing the security work for the Israelis. According to Khaled Hroub, for ex-

ample, "The PLO's management of its relation with the Israelis has deteriorated to the extent of accepting the Israeli security solution. It is enough to see the publicly made commitments in order to conclude that the PLO has accepted, one way or another, even without any superficial beautifications, the forced role of a prop for the Israeli security forces." He added, "An exaggerated fear prevailed in the mentality of some PLO leaders that the end of the PLO draws nearer the greater Hamas's power grows, and so the easiest way forward would be to accelerate and conclude the peace process, which, if left at its current pace, would allow more time for Hamas to grow, and create conditions for the swifter demise of the PLO."[15]

The basic problem for the PLO is the economic and political crisis it underwent after the Gulf War, which was subsequently exacerbated by the strong growth of Hamas, as well as an external situation that prompted some international parties to pressure the PLO into signing the Oslo Accords with Israel. Some Israeli observers believe that Yasser Arafat's signing of the accords was a preliminary tactic to advance the goal of the liberation of historic Palestine. However, this assumption is unrealistic given Arafat's personality[16] and his acceptance, through the Oslo agreement, of Israel's existence on the land of historic Palestine. Thus, the PLO is seeking a two-state solution, and its strategy is not an interim, transitional strategy or a prelude to the full liberation of historic Palestine. Moreover, in the current reality, Fateh is desperately exerting pressure on the Hamas government to recognize Israel and its right to exist, and by implication to accept the two-state solution, which is incompatible with the idea of the liberation of historic Palestine.

Once Hamas assumed power and formed a government, it declared, under domestic, Arab, Israeli, and global pressure, its acceptance of "the interim solution." Many commentators believe that accepting the "interim solution" would entail the relinquishment of Hamas's "strategic solution," as was charged by Mohamed Belqaziz in an article published on September 14, 2006, in *Al-Bayan,* a newspaper published in the United Arab Emirates. In his article, "The Oslo Agreement: The Bitter Harvest of the Experience of the Palestinian Authority," Belqaziz said that "Hamas is going down the same path that Fateh went down, years ago, and is taking the very same political tracks that Fateh went down." To support his view, Belqaziz cited three examples:

First, Hamas adopted the political option of a solution based on establishing an independent Palestinian state in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. However, Hamas would still say that it is committed to the liberation of all Palestine. While true, this claim is an intellectual and ideological commitment, similar to that adopted by some Fateh cadres, such as the PFLP, or the PFLP General Command. However, this commitment has nothing to do with the actual

political position taken by Hamas except for the ideological link, which is used as a tactic for public mobilization.

Second, the political project of Hamas culminated, as did that of Fateh, in the assumption of power in the PNA, which is an explicit demonstration of adopting the option of settling with Israel. The PNA is a product of the Oslo Accords, and for this reason Hamas is governed by the limits set by that agreement, with all its restrictions and ambiguities, which consequently provide no horizon for the settlement of the conflict. Hence, entering into the PNA, even with the desire of "revolutionizing" or rationalizing it from within, will ultimately lead Hamas to the assumption, reached by Fateh, that the Palestinian people has entered the stage of state building. This assumption indirectly indicates that Hamas has ended the stage of national liberation; otherwise, the struggle for power would have no justification.

Third, Hamas reproduced the same fatal political mistake which Fateh had previously made: the monopoly of power and representation. Hamas formed a single-party government without making any concessions for the sake of forming a national unity government or a coalition government with the PFLP. Hamas also refused to recognize the PLO as a framework for national action, as Fateh did during its period in power. However, paradoxically, Hamas did recognize the Oslo agreement, which produced the PNA, and even implied that the PNA could serve as that framework.

On September 25, 2006, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* published "All for Not Recognizing Israel," by Avi Yisacharov. In this article, the writer stated: "It seems that the reason behind Hamas' reluctance to recognize Israel is the impression that such a recognition would ultimately imply that Hamas would be acknowledging the mistake, before the world and the Palestinian people, that Hamas had been adopting the wrong path all these years and that Fateh had been right. On the other hand, if Hamas had continued with the current situation in light of the international sanctions, then it would lose its popularity and status among the Palestinian people." This opinion lends further weight to the idea that the differences between Fateh and Hamas involve the management of the conflict, and not substantive issues. Thus, Hamas's conduct can be seen as an attempt to furnish itself with more choices than Fateh, which limit its alternatives within the framework of a settlement with Israel.

On the other hand, Hamas's motivation in signing a truce agreement with Israel needs deep and thorough consideration. It is true that Hamas began hinting that it might accept the idea of a temporary truce with Israel in return for the establishment of a Palestinian state within the pre-1967 borders. However, this development reflects only acquiescence to the principle of an interim solution, as Fateh did previously. Yet, Hamas did not reach this stage after a slow,

thorough process of maturation, as did Fateh, but after confronting the challenge of providing for the daily needs of the Palestinian people under siege. Moreover, Hamas has never stated in any official declaration that it believed the two-state solution to be the final solution, as was made clear by the fact that Prime Minister Haniya made all negotiations with Israel the sole responsibility of Abu Mazen, as head of the PLO. In this regard, Haniya declared, "The government has nothing to do with the negotiations with Israel as only the PLO is responsible for that."[17] The government's spokesperson, Ghazi Hamad, told the same source, "The national unity government would not object to President Abu Mazen conducting negotiations with Israel," but stressed that "Hamas will not recognize Israel."

Thus, differences in the management of the conflict undoubtedly reflect the political platforms of the two movements. This applies to Hamas in the way that it has sought to acquire what it wanted in the present stage by adopting a policy of making higher demands as part of the conflict with Israel. It even gave some indications of what it wants at the present time, i.e., a long-term truce with Israel in order to accomplish the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, but without sacrificing its principles and upper-limit demands. Mousa Abu Marzouk, the deputy head of Hamas's Political Bureau, declared in a June 24, 2006, interview with Majid Keyyaly,[18] "A truce does not imply any recognition of Israel, but implies that Israel exists as a *de facto* reality; yet, it is illegitimate and we will not recognize it . . . There is a need to accept the existence of a Palestinian State and for Israeli recognition of Palestinians' rights."[19]

Fateh's Participation in the Hamas-Led Government

Immediately after the 2006 elections, Fateh was in shock at the results and responded by refusing to participate in a coalition government with Hamas. This was a hastily made decision, announced even before Hamas had declared its political program. On January 26, 2006, one day after the election, Fateh's Central Committee announced that it would not participate in a coalition government. Two days after the elections, on January 27, 2006, Mohammad Dahlan declared in a statement published by the *Al-Ayyam* newspaper on January 28, 2006, that his movement rejected participation in a Hamas-led government. When asked about likelihood of that decision being changed, he replied, "Certainly not; this is a final decision. We are not going to participate in that government." He added, "We congratulate Hamas for assuming all of its responsibilities. If Hamas does well we shall support it, and if it fails, the people will evaluate its performance . . . we shall respect the elections results and assume our role in opposition. We shall

provide a strong constructive and positive opposition. This is our opportunity after Hamas has been stabbing us for ten years." Dahlan warned that "Fateh will be a very strong opposition, and if anyone thinks that he could take any citizen's job, it will be the last mistake of his life."

Fateh was not satisfied with merely maintaining its stance, but rather took some steps to obstruct Hamas's victory as international conditions started to intrude on Hamas's political program. In a press conference held in Damascus on January 28, 2006, with *Al-Ayyam,* which published excerpts from that conference the following day, the head of Hamas's Political Bureau, Khaled Mish'al, warned against "obstructing Hamas's victory through accelerating the premature passage of power to the movement." He also indicated that "forming a new government might take weeks or months, while the current government is responsible for administering state affairs." Mish'al further added: "We will not accept being pushed into limited deadlines. In all states and old democracies, elections are held and then deliberations begin for the formation of the government, which takes weeks and sometimes months." Mish'al added: "Any obstruction or creation of crises will be their responsibility. Therefore we need to talk with Abu Mazen, who was elected on the basis of his clear program; we were elected as we, too, have a clear program. That is why we need to understand each other. I called President Abu Mazen and told him that we need to talk, as we have no other choice. Creating crises for us both doesn't serve the Palestinian cause."

Additionally, Mish'al stressed that his movement "would deal with any agreement or convention rationally and in the service of our people's interests . . . we shall take whatever serves our interests or otherwise reject it; nevertheless, we shall not reject just for the sake of rejection . . . We have an authority that was established according to the Oslo Agreement, and so we shall be very realistic in dealing with this situation, but in such a way that does not affect our rights." He also stated that "Hamas will not budge because of pressures to recognize Israel, as occupation has no legitimacy, and we will not cede our rights . . . nevertheless, we are realistic and understand the fact that when a certain party does not recognize the other, this does not necessarily mean that there will not be steps taken in accordance with the requirements of the current reality." Mish'al also reiterated Hamas's position that "the Oslo Agreement expired and died long ago . . . we abide by the liberation of our land, keeping Jerusalem, the right of return, rejecting settlement, the right to resist occupation and the right to armed resistance."

Fateh soon reconsidered its rejection of a coalition government with Hamas after losing ministerial portfolios and facing the possibility of losing positions within the public sector. On February 15, 2006, presidential adviser and Fateh

Revolutionary Council member Jibreel Rjoub explained to journalists following a meeting with the secretary general of the Arab League, Amr Musa, that Fateh's participation in a Hamas-led government coalition must be based on its acceptance of the Arab Peace Initiative, the principle of two states and recognition of the signed agreements. Rjoub added that "Hamas' acceptance of these points would enable it to form a coalition government in which Fateh would participate, and would create leverage for the Palestinian cause." He also called on Hamas to "develop its stance in this direction," adding that "we in Fateh believe that national unity is an agenda and that partnership requires having a realistic view . . . Hamas is not expected to recognize Israel; nor does Fateh ask Hamas to do so. Fateh also does not condition joining a national unity government on recognition of Israel because this matter is for the PLO and the Arab official stand."

On February 22, 2007, after mandating that Ismail Haniya form the government, Fateh stressed that its participation in the incoming government would be contingent on the political program adopted by that government. Fateh PLC member Azzam al-Ahmad expressed Fateh's intention to participate in the government after agreement on a political program. Following a meeting between Fateh and Hamas delegations at the residence of Dr. Mahmoud Zahar in Gaza on February 22, 2006, to discuss the possibility of Fateh joining the government, al-Ahmad also pointed out that "Fateh was seriously considering joining the government and neither accepted nor rejected that issue, although the movement is inclined to join the government should an agreement be reached over the political program." Al-Ahmad revealed that the main focus of the meeting had been political issues; he said there were several areas of common ground regarding the current situation and how to tackle the challenges faced by the Palestinian people in the light of Israeli intransigence and Israel's violation of the agreements signed with the PLO. Hinting at the differences between the two movements, al-Ahmad stated that Fateh would insist that the Hamas-led government adopt the vision of President Abu Mazen for reaching a negotiated peace with Israel.[20]

Differences between the Political Agendas

Differences between the political platforms adopted by Fateh and Hamas surfaced before the 2005 Palestinian elections. Indeed, each party tried to highlight its adherence to its political principles even before the polarization became more acute as a result of Hamas winning the majority in the Legislative Council (74 out of 132 council seats). On January 14, 2006, President Abu Mazen stressed

that he would respect the results of the upcoming elections but conditioned his participation in the government on its adherence to the Oslo agreement. Abu Mazen declared in an interview with Al Jazeera TV: "In 1994, we returned to Palestine on the basis of the Oslo agreement, which established the Legislative Council and all subsequent agreements with Israel. Anyone who wishes to participate in the government should do so on this basis. If Hamas wants to participate, it must respect this on the principle of a single authority."[21]

In the same period, Mahmoud Zahar said that "Hamas will stick to its principles and will not change its stance." Zahar's statement, published by the *Al-Ayyam* newspaper on January 15, 2006, was made during an electoral campaign for the Change and Reform bloc conducted in Khan Younis[22] on January 13, 2006. He further reiterated Hamas's stances of rejecting negotiations with Israel and confirmed that "we will not negotiate as we have a living example of people who negotiated for ten years without achieving anything."

With the publication of exit polls, contradictory positions continued to be expressed. When the election results were finally declared, Ismail Haniya stated that Hamas would deal with the existing reality without recognizing the signed agreements. In this regard, too, Haniya stated in a press conference, as reported by *Al-Ayyam* on January 27, 2006, that Hamas neither acknowledged nor respected the signed agreements with Israel; yet, he added, there is a "reality that Hamas has to deal with." Haniya further said, "We must not give in to the reality and adapt our people to the reality of the occupation."

On the same day, Abu Mazen stressed his dedication to his electoral platform and the commitments of the PNA. Abu Mazen's statements came in a speech delivered to the Palestinian people following the declaration of the legislative election results. Abu Mazen stated: "As much as I was resolute in holding elections throughout the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, I am as resolute in adhering to the platform upon which you elected me, which is a platform that understands the world and the circumstances around us. It is a platform that embraces negotiations and a peaceful solution to the conflict with Israel."

On February 1, Abu Mazen reaffirmed that the incoming Hamas government was obliged to adhere to the signed agreements between Israel and the PNA in their entirety. According to the February 2 edition of *Al-Ayyam,* Abu Mazen stressed, "Every government established must fully respect and adhere to the Palestinian policy and commitments that began with the signing of the Oslo agreement, through to the Road Map peace plan." In Abu Mazen's view, Hamas must commit itself to recognizing Israel, renouncing violence, and respecting all the agreements signed with Israel before he directed Hamas to form a government.

Nevertheless, Hamas insisted on its strategic political program and on the rejection of negotiations with Israel. On February 4, one week after the legislative elections, Mahmoud Zahar responded to Abu Mazen's statements at a press conference held following a meeting between a delegation of Hamas leaders and President Abu Mazen at the president's headquarters in Gaza. In his response, Zahar said that "Hamas would never negotiate with Israel in the way that former Palestinian governments did."

The differences between the two parties and their political platforms appeared in the designation letter issued by President Abu Mazen on February 21, 2006, to Ismail Haniya. The main part of the letter, its third article, was published by *Al-Ayyam* on February 25, and became a subject of disagreement between the two parties. In article 3, President Abu Mazen wrote: "I expect you, as prime minister to the incoming government, to be committed to the supreme interests of the Palestinians, to protect and develop Palestinian resources, and to accomplish Palestinian goals according to the Declaration of Independence, PNC resolutions, the PNA's Basic Law, the resolutions of the Arab summits, and our commitments as articulated in our speech before the PLC in its inaugural session in February 2006." Before issuing this letter, President Abu Mazen had made a speech before the PLC session of February 18, 2006, in which he emphasized the political platform on which he was elected and called on Hamas to commit itself to it. In the meeting that Abu Mazen held with a Hamas delegation on February 4, presidential adviser Nabil Abu Rudaina similarly underlined the main points in Abu Mazen's program. Abu Rudaina stated that the new government, when established, would comply with PLO policy and the resolutions of the Arab summits. He added: "There is no doubt that any government would be formed as a continuation of the former governments, as we have the general policy adopted by the PLO, the Palestinian principles that we have agreed on, as well as the Cairo Declaration, to which all the Palestinian factions are committed . . . These are the policy for the coming phase and every Palestinian government shall follow the PLO's political line, the Palestinian stands, and the resolutions of the Arab summits."[23]

Differences over the different political platforms of the two parties deepened to the point that President Abu Mazen threatened to resign unless Hamas respected and committed itself to his political program and vision. On March 22, 2006, the PLO's Executive Committee rejected the Hamas government's political program and Hamas rejected the committee's position. Later, on March 23, 2006, after Ismail Haniya submitted his government's program to President Abu Mazen, the latter responded that the program did not take into consideration some points articulated in the designation letter and that, although he had the authority to force the prime minister to resign, he would give Haniya the

chance to present his cabinet before the PLC for approval, after amending the government's program in line with the designation letter.

The points of difference between the two parties were captured in a letter sent by Abu Mazen to Ismail Haniya on March 25, in which he set out the central points that he and Fateh believed Hamas had ignored in articulating the draft program for the incoming government. The letter stated that the draft program disregarded the third article of the designation letter, requiring the government to adhere to the agreements signed by the PLO and Israel. According to the letter, the program also ignored the Declaration of Independence issued by the PNC at its session in Algeria in 1988. The brief eighth article of the proposed program stated only that the incoming government would deal with the reality arising from the agreement between the PNA and the occupying state, and that the government retains the right to reconsider that agreement based on international law and the interests of the Palestinian people. Abu Mazen's letter also stressed the need to consider the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, not to violate its provisions.

Significantly, the proposed program of the Hamas government was later amended to include references to the PLO in six different parts, more than the program of any former government; indeed, Ahmad Abu Alaa's ninth government referred to the PLO as a sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people only once in its program.

In this regard, Dr. Aziz Dwiek, speaker of the PLC, concluded in an interview with *International Studies* magazine: "The PLO was marginalized throughout the last ten years. I have looked at the statement of the former PM Ahmad Qurei (Abu Alaa), which did not include any reference to the PLO, whereas, the statement of Ismail Haniya's government referred to the PLO in more than six parts."[24]

In a statement delivered on March 27, 2006, before the PLC, seeka the council's confidence in his government, Ismail Haniya avoided directly addressing the condition of recognizing Israel and stressed the need to tackle basic issues. Haniya affirmed that "perhaps the major challenge, missions, and issues facing our government include the occupation and its terrible practices against our people, land, holy sites, and resources." Haniya emphasized the importance of "protecting our people's right to defend itself against the occupation, removing the settlements, removing the racial separation wall, continuing the struggle to establish a fully sovereign independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital, rejecting partial solutions, temporary borders and de facto policy, and rejecting every project that prejudices our rights and interests, such as the Disengagement Plan . . . We stress that we commit ourselves to the Palestinian refugees' right to repatriation and compensation, which is a collective and individual right which cannot be ceded or bargained."[25]

The government was granted the confidence of the PLC on March 28, 2006, based on the government's program, which was supported by the Hamas majority and the Popular Front in the council. Fateh and the other factions voted against granting confidence to the government, on the grounds that the government's political program was unrealistic. Fateh PLC member Dr. Saeb Erekat asked how the government could adopt and realize such a program while Palestine is a non-member observer at the UN, and the Palestinian government does not recognize the UN General Assembly's resolutions. Mohammad Dahlan, a Fateh member of the PLC, commented that on the basis of the government's political program he expected the government to continue along the political track as soon as possible, further elaborate on the vague language concerning political issues, embrace the PLO's political program, explain the government's stance on the Arab Peace Initiative, and follow the relevant international (United Nations) resolutions.

After the formation of the government, President Abu Mazen tried to go ahead with his political agenda without having reached an agreement on a unified program with the government. Thus he sent messages to the Israelis stating his readiness to engage in immediate peace negotiations with them on the basis of the Road Map peace plan. On February 6, 2006, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported that Abu Mazen had conveyed through various channels that he was still in charge of overseeing political communications, even after the election of Hamas. The Palestinian delegates to the negotiations with Israel demanded the continuation of the political dialogue.

According to *Haaretz,* Abu Mazen conveyed several messages to Israel. One was that the PLO, not the PNA, as the party that signed the agreements with Israel, would be in charge of overseeing negotiations. Under these circumstances, PLO chairman Abu Mazen would continue with the political contacts, to which the PNA is not a party. Abu Mazen would attempt to take control of the PNA security forces, and would try to reclaim control over the PNA's budget, which was taken from his predecessor Arafat under Israeli pressure and passed on to the former PNA finance minister, Salam Fayyad. The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, heeded these messages and said that, considering the current situation, he would continue contacts with Abu Mazen, as the newspaper reported.[26]

Hamas tried to deal with the new situation in the context of the Palestinian president's attempts to maintain contacts with Israel and in light of the pressures exerted on Hamas and its government. Hamas responded positively to the situation, and the head of Hamas's Political Bureau, Khaled Mish'al, declared in an interview with a Russian newspaper[27] that his movement would put an end to its armed struggle against Israel should the latter withdraw from all of the occupied Arab territories. Mish'al also stated in an interview with the *Nezavisimaya Gazette* that "if Israel recognized all our rights and was committed to withdrawing

from all of the occupied Arab territories, then Hamas and all the Palestinian people would decide to put an end to the armed struggle."[28]

Mish'al had previously made a statement that Hamas "would agree to a long-term truce with Israel if the Jewish state withdrew to the 1967 borders and recognized all the rights of the Palestinian people."[29] Likewise, Ismail Haniya acknowledged that Hamas was ready for a long-term truce with Israel as a prelude to achieving regional stability. Ismail Haniya also stated in an interview with the German news agency DPA given at his Gaza office on May 30, 2006,[30] that "a long truce could be reached with Israel if it withdrew from all the territories it occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem, and released all the prisoners in the Israeli prisons." In response to a question on whether the truce he was talking about was aimed just at gaining time or was a prelude to a comprehensive peace, Haniya responded that the truce "serves as a real introduction to calm and stability in the region." He pointed out that "the truce can be extended after that," and stressed that "the problem of the Palestinian people, government, and Hamas was not with the Jews. The problem is with the military occupation that occupied the land and caused the Palestinian people to suffer . . . there is no problem with the Jews just because they are Jews."

Initiatives to End the Political Deadlock

The crisis between Fateh and Hamas deepened after an embargo was imposed on the Palestinians by Israel, the U.S., and the European Union following Hamas's election victory. A public discussion began over the "impracticality" of Hamas's political program. In this discussion, different parties, including Hamas, proposed various initiatives for breaking the deadlock. Hamas attempted to hold on to its strategic political program, while at the same time giving signals of readiness to deal with Israel, not on the basis of recognizing Israel, but of the political context. In response to Abu Mazen's announcement that he was ready to negotiate with Israel, Prime Minister Haniya said, "The President can negotiate with anyone," but did not say whether or not he would be committed to the outcome of these negotiations. On April 30, 2006, Haniya declared, in an interview published on May 1, 2006, by *Al-Ayyam,* "The President, owing to his position as President of the PA and PLO Chairman, can negotiate on any political issue with any party . . . the Palestinian people and government will deeply and seriously consider any offer made by any party in the interest of the Palestinian people." He also indicated the irrelevancy of negotiations with Israel that "do not acknowledge the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people for statehood, Jerusalem, the right of return, and prisoners' release."

Other social, economic, and political organizations and committees continued to deliberate over ways to end the infighting between Fateh and Hamas and the crisis between Israel and the Palestinians. For instance, a group calling itself the Private Sector proposed an initiative on May 1, 2006, that called on the president and the government to form a national unity government and to accept the Arab Peace Initiative endorsed at the Beirut summit of 2002. As deliberations started for the Palestinian national dialogue, the Private Sector handed its initiative to President Abu Mazen, Prime Minister Ismail Haniya, PLC speaker Aziz Dwiek, and speakers for the various PLC blocs. The initiative called for a Palestinian peace plan based on the international legitimacy resolutions (UN resolutions dealing with the Palestinian case), the Beirut summit's Arab Peace Initiative, and Palestinian rights. Politically, the initiative also called for a comprehensive program, enjoying a national consensus and in conformity with the relevant UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, that would serve as "a reference for the Palestinian efforts to end the occupation."

The Private Sector initiative calls for the establishment of a national unity government "with the genuine participation of factions and parties, in addition to experts and professionals." The initiative appealed for immediate national dialogue sessions between the parties represented in the PLC, in order to reach agreement on the government's program and meet security, social, and economic needs and priorities.

The initiative also called for the establishment of a national committee, to include all parties, factions, and national figures, to reform the PLO in line with the Cairo Agreement of March 2005 and discussions arising from it (between Hamas and Fateh), and to "restructure the organization and develop representation within the PLO based on democratic principles."

The initiative's most important principles are respecting the democratic choice of the Palestinian people and the results of the recent legislative elections, adhering to the principle of political plurality, respecting the Basic Law as the basis for settling differences, respecting the rule of law, and banning infighting.

At a press conference held in Ramallah to launch the Private Sector initiative, representatives of seven major private sector companies and other private sector bodies expressed their "strong" support for President Abu Mazen and the PLC's call for a national dialogue. The press conference was attended by prominent businessman Muneeb Al-Masri; Mohammad Hirbawi, Private Sector Coordination Council chairperson; former national economy minister Mazen Sinokrot; Ahmad Zghayer, chairperson of the Palestinian Chambers of Commerce Union; Basem Khuri, president of the Palestinian Industries Union; Mohammad Masrouji, head of the Palestinian Businessmen Society; and Dr.

Sameer Abdullah, the director of the Economic Policies Research Center, as well as a large number of other businesspeople.

Muneeb Al-Masri stressed that the initiative presents a chance for all parties to end the crisis of the Palestinian people. He said: "We understand that the situation is extremely difficult and volatile, and that is why there is a need for collective efforts by all parties to end the situation . . . We believe that the situation at this stage is worse than ever and that it is time for the private sector to have its say. We believe that the solution is to form a national unity government of qualified national figures and believe that Hamas understands that." Mazen Sinokrot added that the private sector, "by proposing this initiative, wanted to indicate that the situation has deteriorated to a very dangerous stage. We are not just considering the economic and investment dimension, but we, the private sector, want to be partners during these difficult and painful times." Sinokrot also stated that private sector institutions "will exert efforts in the field to explain and garner public support for the initiative," and added that "we stress that economic and political responsibility must be a collective one if we want to attain the goals that we aspire to."

In addition to the Private Sector initiative, many other initiatives were proposed by numerous parties, including Hamas. On May 4, 2006, *Al-Ayyam* published the statement of Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Eddin al-Sha'er that the government should and would create and present to the world a formula for ending the political stalemate. Al-Sha'er then declared on Palestine radio that "we will present that formula to the world and see if the world accepts it or not . . . What is more important for the Palestinians is to agree on a certain formula to present to the world, and then see if the world wants to punish the Palestinians or just to find a way out of the crisis." He said, "If the world wanted to find a way out of the crisis then we all would be ready for that. But if the world wanted to punish the Palestinians, then I believe that the Palestinians would be capable of finding suitable responses to that." Al-Sha'er added that "if the world just wanted a way out of this crisis, then it would be a matter of only two weeks before the comprehensive national dialogue that we hope for produced a certain formula to present to the world. We are ready to accept a formula acceptable to the Palestinian people."

The "Prisoners' Document" and Its Role in the Internal Palestinian Dialogue

The most significant initiative for ending the crisis was the so-called "Prisoners' Document." On May 10, 2006, leaders in Israeli prisons representing the different factions agreed on a national conciliation document which proposed

a common ground program to serve as a basis for resolving the crisisCalled the "National Conciliation document," it was signed by the imprisoned Fateh West Bank Secretary Marwan Barghouti, leading Hamas member Sheikh Abdul Khaleq al-Natsheh, Islamic Jihad movement leader Sheikh Bassam Saadi, PFLP deputy secretary general and Executive Committee member Abdul Rahim Mallouh, and the DFLP leader Mustafa Badarneh.

These leaders stated that the different factions—at least Fateh and Hamas—needed to work for "the liberation of Palestine" by agreeing on a common and comprehensive program. The document focused on the points of divergence over three main issues: "international legitimacy resolutions," the Beirut summit Arab Peace Initiative, and the PLO. Hamas refused to acknowledge the "international legitimacy resolutions" and the Arab Peace Initiative, which stipulated complete Arab recognition of Israel in return for a complete withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, thereby implying recognition of Israel's legitimacy. Hamas also refused to recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and refused to join it before reforming the organization and "restructuring its bodies." Fateh rejected this latter proposition, fearing that it might bring an end to Fateh's hegemony over the PLO.[31]

As a solution to Hamas's refusal to recognize the PLO, representatives of some PLO factions suggested that a timeline for restructuring the PLO be drawn up in accordance with the recommendations of the committee designated for that purpose under the Cairo Agreement. The Hamas government's refusal to recognize the PLO was the main reason for the reluctance of some PLO factions to join the government; these factions were not expected to join unless Hamas or the government changed its stance on this issue. Hamas, according to many PLC and government officials, believed that Israel and the United States would not recognize any incoming Hamas-led Palestinian government, even if the various factions joined the government.

In his detailed report on how the Prisoners' Document was developed, published by *Al-Ayyam* on May 27, 2006, Abdul Rauf Arnaut, a Palestinian journalist, stated: "The bilateral and follow-up committees' dialogues in Gaza brought no hope for success, and this was when the Fateh secretary in the West Bank, PLC member Marwan Barghouti, talked to Hamas's leaders, including Hamas leader Sheikh Abdul Khaleq Natsheh, who were with Barghouti in Israel's Hadarim prison. They talked on the pressing need to reach a comprehensive agreement that could help to prevent a civil war and the looming infighting. It will also help the Palestinian people to emerge from their economic and political crisis."

Five weeks later, the Prisoners' Document was published, bearing the signatures of the leaders of five Palestinian factions. In those five weeks the document developed from a conceptual paper encouraging bilateral and collective dia-

logue. These dialogues, which were themselves amended and at times generated crises, were to be first submitted to President Abu Mazen and the leaders of the various factions for ratification.

It is noteworthy that it was by coincidence that Barghouti, Natsheh, and Abdul Rahim Malouh, the Popular Front secretary general and a PLO Executive Committee membera were being held together in one Israeli prison cell in the Hadarim prison, along with the Islamic Jihad leader Sheikh Bassam Saadi. As a result, they were able to establish direct and constant contact to formulate and develop the finalized document. The prisoners used their own channels of communication to contact Democratic Front leader Mustafa Badarneh.

Barghouti took the initiative. His attorney, Khader Shkirat, who regularly visits him in the prison, told *Al-Ayyam* on May 11, 2006, that "Barghouti felt the need for an initiative that could help to end the current crisis; this requires having something major, not a superficial document limited to slogans and generalized stances." Shkirat added that "Barghouti understood how sensitive the situation was, mainly after the infighting in Gaza."

The fast pace of developments on the ground, mainly the infighting in the Gaza Strip, led to a willingness to accelerate the process. Therefore the document was sent on the same day to President Abu Mazen; to the head of Hamas's Political Bureau, Khaled Mish'al, who was in Doha; to Islamic Jihad secretary general Ramadan Shallah, who was abroad; and to Prime Minister Ismail Haniya, as well as the leaders of the other factions.

The signatories of the document also agreed that if the faction leaders outside prison failed to agree on the document within ten days, they would demand that the agreement be put to a referendum, so that the Palestinian people could accept or reject it.

The DFLP and PFLP acclaimed the agreement.[32] MP Jameel Majdalawi, a member of the PFLP's Political Bureau, emphasized that "the initiative of the prisoners' leaders, if completely accepted, could serve as a good comprehensive basis for a national consensus for restructuring the PLO's bodies on a national, democratic basis." DFLP Political Bureau member Qais Abdul Kareem affirmed that "the prisoners' initiative has established an acceptable and realistic political solution for national unity and could be one of the main documents to be discussed in the national dialogue conference to be held later this month." He also pointed out that "the initiative facilitates the work of the conference and helps to produce common ground principles for a united political orientation. It can also serve as a basis for a national unity government and progress in the development and activation of the PLO."

As for Fateh and the institution of the presidency, Abu Mazen accepted the Prisoners' Document on the day he received it and asked the government

to amend its own program in light of its content. President Abu Mazen stated that he thought the document was a basis for ending the current crisis, and described it as very important. As he told journalists in his office on May 10, 2006, "I adopt the stance of these heroes . . . the document embodies a deep, realistic political vision that is close to my own outlook, and therefore, I adopt the document." He then pointed out that some states were using the status of the Palestinian government as a pretext to impose sanctions, and he demanded that the Palestinian government amend its stance and policies to those on which he was elected, which include respecting all international commitments, the Road Map peace plan, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

On May 12, 2006, Prime Minister Ismail Haniya spoke about the Prisoners' Document to *Al-Ayyam,* which published his statements on May 13, 2006, declaring, "The document proposed by the prisoners in the Israeli occupation prisons contains useful and interesting points and can help to break down some obstacles; yet, the document requires a great deal of examination and consideration." Haniya also stressed that the document, and any other initiative by the prisoners, should be respected, as "the document was drafted and developed in the Hadarim prison," but he added that "prisoners in the other prisons did not participate in discussing or drafting it." When asked by *Al-Ayyam* whether or not he accepted the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, Haniya answered, "First, the occupation has to recognize our rights to statehood, return, and freedom for the prisoners. Then we can take a position that serves the interests of the Palestinian people."

Soon after, PLC Speaker Dr. Aziz Dwiek called for the convening of a national dialogue conference with the participation of all factions to discuss the existing political situation and ways for ending the crisis. The conference was held with the agreement of the factions on May 25, 2006, and its participants accepted the Prisoners' Document as a basis for discussion.[33] Dr. Dwiek read out the conference's concluding statement before a session of the PLC in Ramallah which was attended by representatives of several national and Islamic factions, and the private sector in the West Bank and Gaza. The statement announced the formation of a National Dialogue Committee headed by President Abu Mazen, the members of which included representatives of the PLC, the PNC, civil society and the national and Islamic factions. The committee's priority was to hammer out a unified national program to strengthen national unity. The statement stressed the sanctity of Palestinian blood and the unity of the Palestinian factions, as the shield against the occupation and its settlement strategy. "The initiatives," it said, "were proposed by all those who care about the Palestinian cause. Any differences that might arise should be dealt with in a democratic spirit, and there is no place for the use of weapons among the one nation."

In addition, the statement appealed to PLO Executive Committee Chairman Abu Mazen to call for a meeting of the Higher Committee established after the Cairo dialogue. The Cairo dialogue had produced a statement that this meeting needed to be held before the end of June, in order to activate and develop the PLO and consolidate its status as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The statement issued at the end of the national dialogue conference also declared, "Resistance is a legitimate right of the Palestinian people, as enshrined in all international conventions and agreements," and called for establishing unity committees "to defend man and land." The statement further emphasized "adherence to the Palestinian right of return, as a sacred right, and adherence to UN Security Council resolution 194 on the refugees' right of return to their property and homeland," and that "this individual and collective right is eternal and can be abolished by no one." The conference commended the documents submitted and praised the Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli prisons and called for their release.

The head of Fateh's parliamentary bloc, Azzam al-Ahmad, considered the concluding statement "repetition of what was announced during the Cairo conference." Al-Ahmad summarized the outcome as "referring points of difference to the follow-up committee," and believed that "the dialogue had not been concluded yet." The points of difference encountered during the closed session can be summarized in two points: the recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and the status of the international resolutions from the Palestinian point of view. In this context, President Abu Mazen announced that he would submit the document for a national referendum if the parties to the dialogue failed to agree on it within ten days, with the exception of articles 4 and 7.

Article 4 aims "to formulate a Palestinian plan aimed at comprehensive political action; to unify Palestinian political discourse on the basis of the Palestinian national goals as mentioned in this document and according to Arab legitimacy and international legitimacy resolutions that grant justice to the Palestinian people maintaining their constant rights to be implemented by the PLO leadership and its institutions." Article 7 of the initiative states: "Administration of the negotiations falls within the jurisdiction of the PLO and the President of the PNA, which will be on the basis of adhering to Palestinian national goals as mentioned in this document on condition that any agreement must be presented to the new PNC for ratification to hold a general referendum wherever it is possible."

Nonetheless, a positive atmosphere generally prevailed in the dialogue session at the PLC's Rashad al-Shawwa Hall in Ramallah. Thus, for example, the head of Fateh's parliamentary bloc in the PLC passed a note to Speaker Dr. Aziz

Dwiek, informing him that Interior Minister Said Siyam had decided to dissolve the Executive Force which he established on the streets of Gaza, and that the minister's decision would create a positive atmosphere for the dialogue.

The Crisis Deepens Once Again

President Abu Mazen caused a surprise on the first day of the national dialogue conference by announcing that the Prisoners' Document would be the basis for dialogue, and that in case no agreement was reached on the document, he would put it to public referendum within ten days after the start of the dialogue sessions on May 25, 2006. President Abu Mazen made this announcement at the end of his speech in the national dialogue sessions, in which he stated that "the future of the Palestinian cause is in danger . . . We do not have any time for further deliberation. We have only ten days for the dialogue, and the issue cannot wait any longer. We do not want any senseless arguing. This situation is unbearable, and I am going to present this document for public referendum within forty days if you fail to reach an agreement . . . I am not going to wait any longer." Abu Mazen added: "This is not a threat, . . . but I tell you frankly, that if you do not conclude it, then we will all be irresponsible . . . Within forty days I shall call for a public referendum and ask the people to decide . . . The entire homeland is either for us or it is not for us. Our homeland is threatened, so what do you choose? That's all I have to say."[34]

However, response to the Prisoners' Document was negative. Prime Minister Haniya stated that it could not substitute for the government's political platform, and stressed that the government would consider the legality and constitutionality of holding a referendum. He added that he was not going to offer any concessions harmful to the national principles. On May 27, 2006,[35] during Friday prayers, Haniya declared, "The issue is that documents cannot be substituted for the political platform on which the government was elected. However, I am keen to ensure the success of the dialogue." He reemphasized, however, that "the government will not concede any national principles, however tight the siege, and will not recognize the legitimacy of the occupation or denounce the resistance." To chants of public support, he stated that his government would "continue to adopt our political stance and our plan for enforcing law and order."

At the national dialogue conference, serious differences erupted concerning certain points of the document, all of which related to the adoption of a clear political program for the government: recognition of the PLO, the need to adopt the Arab Peace Initiative, and recognizing the international legitimacy resolutions. A Hamas leader, Adnan Asfour, declared on May 26, 2006,[36] that Hamas

agreed to 90 percent of the Prisoners' Document, "and yet had reservations related to the article concerning the adoption of the 'international legitimacy resolutions' for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

In response to Asfour's statements, Fateh's Central Committee member Abbas Zaki declared in a statement to Agence France-Presse, "The two major differences in the national dialogue sessions are those relating to accepting the 'international legitimacy resolutions' and recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

Hamas subsequently demonstrated flexibility toward a more general terminology in the Prisoners' Document, which was accepted by the rest of factions. Thus on May 25, 2006, it was agreed to form a national unity government. Hamas's position was based on two considerations. One, Hamas was concerned that it might face an internal split. If Hamas accepted the document, this would imply recognition of Israel and acceptance of all past peace agreements, contrary to Hamas's previous stance. Two, Hamas's leaders were afraid to accept the document as it could anger the movement's more extremist leaders, which in turn might stir up strong internal differences within the movement. In addition, Hamas feared losing the public support of the Palestinians.[37] In fact, the agreement was hampered by a large-scale Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip in response to the capture on June 25, 2006, of the Israeli soldier Gilad Schalit, followed by Hezbollah's capture of another two Israeli soldiers on July 12, which was followed by the war on Lebanon. Thus, the rise of Israeli military actions in this period resulted in increased support for Hamas among the Palestinian public.

On July 20, 2006, the national dialogue committee held a meeting at the president's office in Gaza; the meeting was led by the president, and the prime minister was present. It addressed the Prisoners' Document and the mechanisms for implementing it, as well as ending the state of security chaos in the Palestinian territories and enforcing the rule of law. Ibrahim Abu Al Naja, head of the National Factions Follow-up Committee, confirmed that everyone had agreed on the need to produce a unified political declaration, and also to form a committee to tackle the internal situation, as had been agreed three weeks earlier.[38] He added that the participants had discussed the issue of the captured Israeli soldier Gilad Schalit, and particularly whether it should be categorized as a foreign or a local issue. He revealed that all of the participants had stressed the need for it to be classified as a local Palestinian matter. The participants also discussed the issue of forming a national unity government, and agreed that this could be achieved after putting an end to the crisis which erupted following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

However, differences between Hamas and Fateh resurfaced after Israel arrested thirty Hamas PLC members and three ministers between June 26 and August 20, 2006. These arrests prompted Haniya to set the following three basic conditions for the formation of a national unity government: a new government headed by Hamas, the release of the detained legislators and ministers as a precondition for the formation of the new government, and the lifting of the siege imposed on the PNA.[39]

Hamas defined the main conditions for the establishment of a national unity government as follows: someone nominated by Hamas should form the government; ministerial portfolios must reflect the same representation of the various blocs and factions within the PLC, which meant that Hamas ministers would be assigned the majority of the portfolios; and the government's platform should be based on the Prisoners' Document. Hamas made the assumption that international sanctions would be lifted immediately after the formation of the national unity government. Following a meeting with President Abu Mazen, Prime Minister Haniya declared that they had agreed that the most important subjects were embarking on deliberations on the formation of the national unity government, lifting the sanctions imposed against the PNA, and securing the release of the detained ministers and legislators.

On August 17, 2006, *Al-Ayyam* published the statement of PLC secretary Mahmoud Rimahi that the Hamas Change and Reform bloc "will not give its vote of confidence to any Palestinian government formed prior to the release of the detained ministers and members of the PLC." The independent Palestinian news agency *Ramattan* quoted Ramahi as declaring that "our stand is clear: no national unity government can be formed before the release of the detained PLC members and ministers, regardless of the statements that we have heard from Fateh that the formation of a national unity government serves the national interests whatever the fate of the detained PLC members."

Thus, the formation of a Palestinian national unity government once again provoked a crisis between the political parties, in this case between Hamas and the other factions. In response to Haniya's statements, the Fateh-dominated PLO Executive Committee rejected his conditions[40] on the ground that they would waste more time. On the same day, August 19, 2006, *Al-Ayyam* reported that the PLO's Executive Committee had said, "The formation of a national unity government is an extremely urgent issue given the intensification of international political sanctions against our cause and our people in the past four months." In a statement issued following a meeting with President Abu Mazen, the committee explained that "since the formation of the current government, the political achievements that have been realized through a comprehensive national struggle are under threat, and our people became more impoverished, our economy has

declined in a dangerous way, security chaos and anarchy have spread, professional citizens have immigrated, internal social tensions have grown, and the ministries and institutions have become almost completely paralyzed."

Given this situation, the Executive Committee decided to "give the deliberations in the coming days, headed by President Abu Mazen, a chance," and expressed its "total rejection of the conditions which only reflect limited partisan interests." It further stressed the need to "achieve a national consensus over the platform of the new government that should be formed on the basis of the National Conciliation document, as a result of which will be able to end the siege imposed on our people."

Thus the Executive Committee of the PLO rejected as irresponsible the Hamas suggestions that had been put forward, believing that they risked turning the fate and sustainability of the PNA into a bargaining chip in return for the recognition by Israel and the United States of the role and existence of Hamas. The committee stressed that "the PNA is a national historic achievement attained with blood and sacrifices, and is not a bargaining chip for anyone. It represents a stage on the way to freedom and independence, and the project of independence and our institutions can never be the subject of sectarian considerations."

Internally, Fateh achieved nothing at the June 2006 Central Committee meeting, which was held in Amman, in terms of activating the movement or ending its organizational crisis. Many Fateh leaders and cadres noted that the meeting was more a formality than a means of making practical achievements. Jibreel Rjoub described the Central Committee meetings as disappointing; in an interview with the *Al Quds* newspaper on July 28, 2006, he stated: "The Central Committee's meetings, discussions, and decisions revealed the determination of some to keep the movement in a state of internal polarization and conflict." Rjoub hinted that the legitimacy of the current leaders of the movement could be stripped in order to reactivate it, saying in the same interview that "monopolizing the movement's legitimacy, resources, and capabilities, as is reflected in the outcome of the long-awaited Central Committee meeting, is regrettable, and makes Fateh's cadres in Palestine resolve to reject despair. Consequently, they have to rise up and take legitimate action and face the challenges, out of their commitment to the movement's customs and traditions."

Similarly, Nabil Amr, the president's consultant and an active member of the Palestinian leadership, considered the meetings of the Fateh Central Committee to have been futile and to have achieved no results: "The Central Committee provides an escape from nothing."[41] Amr acknowledged that "everyone agrees on the fact that there is no chance that what has been agreed can be realized," and added in another part of the interview that "what is new in the Central Committee's decisions is its preaching that there are no crises within

Fateh, which logically means that there is no need for it to trouble itself with thinking of any solutions."

The deepening controversy during the last months of 2006 and all of 2007 between followers of Fateh and Hamas necessitates a deep consideration of the reasons behind it, which are attributable to basic and substantive differences between these two major Palestinian movements.

The dispute certainly involves the strategic objectives and short-term goals of the Palestinian national movement. They can also be attributed to differences over the political and military tactics adopted vis-à-vis Israel. As detailed above, the status of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people constitutes one of the most important differences between Fateh and Hamas. Deep division between the two movements also exists over the administration of the daily affairs of the Palestinian people under the PNA, issues such as education, the distribution of resources, social policy—particularly with regard to the status of women and gender relations—the status of religion in public life, and the phenomenon of administrative and financial corruption, which are issues that concern every Palestinian.

These differences have contributed to the serious and divisive dispute that led to the intensification of the crisis in the latter months of 2006. This crisis has brought about the internal defeat of the national movement and an uncontrollable state of conflict. Thus, what is needed is not more formalities, but fundamental strategic choices that can lead to internal conciliation and the management of the internal conflict.

Conclusion

Is There a Way Out of the Crisis?

More than fifty years after the revival of the Palestinian national movement, it is clear that this movement, which reached its zenith in the 1970s and 1980s, is disintegrating. It has become a failed national movement, because it has been unable to achieve the objectives it set for itself. The movement is in a state of shock and internal disintegration, the practical reflection of which is the absence of a political platform accepted by all factions and a broad internal mobilization around defined national goals. Fateh and Hamas, and the smaller organizations which exist in their wake, have reached a fateful juncture of deep disagreement. The Palestinian national movement's ability to change Israel is limited and may even be negative. The argument that the Israelis have adopted a solution in recent years that is close to the Palestinians' demands is only superficially true. Still, the vast majority of Israelis envision a solution that is far from what the Palestinians demand, even within a two-state compromise. There has also been a significant deterioration in the status accorded the Palestinian national movement by societies and states that have traditionally been supportive of the Palestinian cause; namely, the Arab states, Europe, and the former Communist bloc. In addition, the Palestinian national movement has not recorded any substantial achievement on the issues it pursued during the second half of the twentieth century. The establishment of a Palestinian state, even on part of Mandatory Palestine, the return of the refugees, and the rallying of all Palestinians around defined

goals have not materialized and seem even farther from realization today than they were ten or twenty years ago.

This situation is the result of diverse factors and causes, including the internal state of the Palestinian national movement, the conflict among the various factions, Arafat's leadership style, the antagonism displayed by some Arab states and regimes, and, above all, Israeli policy, which has sought to torpedo the Palestinians' ability to function as a national group. The change that took place in Israel in the early 1990s, through its recognition of the PLO, did not bring about a practical willingness on the part of Israeli officials to resolve the Palestinian problem in accordance with international resolutions. The fact that Israel itself is split between two different approaches to the Palestinian problem renders progress toward its solution difficult. At the same time, the Israeli right, which has been intermittently in power for most of the last decade, gained control of the process, or at least the capacity to threaten the stability of the Israeli government, thereby blocking any Israeli commitment to an acceptable resolution of the issues associated with the Palestinian problem, such as the return of the refugees, the partition of Jerusalem, the dismantling of the settlements, and a return to the June 1967 borders. Furthermore, Israel is in the throes of a number of identity battles that undermine its political stability and add new impediments to internal stability, which is a fundamental prerequisite for any serious progress toward a solution to the Palestinian problem.

In the post-Arafat era the Palestinians and their national movement have sunk into a profound crisis that is manifested in a deep internal schism and an inability to function as a national group with national aspirations and a consensual vision of self-expression. This crisis was exacerbated by the January 2006 elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council, which gave Hamas more than two-thirds of the seats and produced a new government under Ismail Haniya in place of the former Fateh-led government. Since then, the rivalry between the two organizations has degenerated into street battles between their militias, the burning down of party headquarters and government ministries, and the use of live fire to disperse Fateh demonstrators. Waves of anarchy have resulted in mutual recriminations and violent confrontations between Hamas and Fateh members.

In early February 2007, while street battles were being waged by the two groups in several Palestinian cities, the Saudi ruler, King Abdullah, invited Fateh and Hamas to a conference in the holy city of Mecca to try to reach an agreement that could extricate the Palestinians from their plight.[1] On the ground, however, the confrontation escalated and continued to claim lives among militants as well as among civilians and bystanders.[2] King Abdullah's intervention and many other calls for a cease-fire and reconciliation between

the rival Palestinian factions, including internal Palestinian initiatives, have been chiefly procedural, aimed at a compromise between Hamas and Fateh and their respective leaderships, including proposals for a national unity government. However, they have disregarded the depth of the schism within the Palestinian national movement and within Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The main argument in this book has been that the crisis among the Palestinians is so severe that the street fighting and confrontations in the media scarcely scratch the surface. The Palestinians have actually lost the ability to function efficiently, internally or externally, as a single national group. This can be traced back to the roots of fundamental processes within the Palestinian national movement that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s and subsequently intensified, particularly after the signing of the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority.

The disputes that fully ripened only after Arafat's death are played out at several levels.

Ideology: Fateh, established in 1957, later affiliated itself with the PLO and eventually gained control of it. In 1988 it passed resolutions to accept the notion of two states for two peoples; later, in 1993, it recognized Israel and signed the Oslo Accords with it. The PLO agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state on the land occupied in 1967. Unlike Fateh, Hamas, established in 1988, sees all of Mandatory Palestine as an Islamic *waqf* (property). Consequently it does not recognize Israel and is not willing to accept it as a fact on Muslim ground.

Policy: Fateh and the PLO recognized Israel and the agreements signed with it. They agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders and pursued policies based on this understanding, including holding negotiations with the Israelis. They believe that it is in the Palestinian interest to deal with Israel and establish an alliance with it (and with its main ally, the United States). Hamas, by contrast, does not recognize Israel, the agreements signed with it, or international agreements relating to the Palestinians. It prefers to establish alliances with countries that are opposed to the American hegemony, such as Syria and Iran, and it follows policies based on these working assumptions. Politically, Hamas refuses to implement the three conditions set by Israel, the Quartet, and the international community at large: recognition of Israel, recognition of the PLO and the agreements signed by it, and condemnation and abandonment of terrorism. Hamas's refusal to accept these three conditions is the main

reason for the boycott of its government by both Israel and the international community, and for the economic blockade of the PNA and its citizens.

Military action: Fateh and the PLO favor negotiations and are opposed to military operations by Palestinians inside pre-1967 Israel. Hamas, by contrast, supports the armed struggle everywhere, including against Israeli citizens inside the Green Line.

Legitimacy and representation: Fateh and the PLO, including its various member organizations, consider the PLO to be the sole national representative of the Palestinian people and have invited Hamas to join it. Hamas, however, opposes this key element of the Palestinian national movement: it considers itself the representative of all the Palestinians, as a parallel to the PLO. This is the starting point for its policies.

The power struggle within the Palestinian National Authority: This conflict goes back to 2003 and the rivalry between Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas), then the Palestinian prime minister, and the president, Yasser Arafat. Until March 2003, there had been no prime minister in the PNA. The PNA had a presidential system, under Yasser Arafat, whose position was established in accordance with the Oslo Accords in 1993. All power, both executive and managerial, was held by Arafat, who was the sole authority for all decisions. In March 2003, in response to pressure exerted by the Quartet and the United States, which maintained that Arafat was dysfunctional and not making any effort to prevent terrorism, he agreed to appoint a prime minister. This concession contrasted with his previously vigorous opposition to such a step before the definitive establishment of a Palestinian state.

In March 2003 Arafat accepted Abu Mazen's candidacy for prime minister. The Legislative Council amended the 1996 Basic Law and instituted the position of prime minister, conferring upon it executive powers previously reserved for the president.[3] The creation of this position generated serious power struggles within the PNA and Fateh. Arafat was careful to retain full decision-making powers and did not allow the new prime minister to compete with him, in particular because the latter enjoyed the support of the United States and Israel.

Arafat ensured that the amended Basic Law preserved his status as head of the executive branch and authorized him to appoint two deputy prime ministers. Nevertheless, Abu Mazen's supporters in the PLC were able to bury Arafat's proposal that the prime minister require the president's permission to dismiss ministers or alter the composition of his cabinet. It was stipulated in an appendix to the Basic Law, and not in the law itself, that the prime minister should

present his or her government to the president before the vote of confidence by the PLC.[4]

The law that created the post of prime minister also created confusion and unnecessary legal complications with regard to the respective powers of the president and prime minister. For example, Article 39 of the original Basic Law stipulated that the president is the supreme commander of the Palestinian forces; but in the amended law the prime minister, through the minister of the interior, was made responsible for the Palestinian police, the preventive security force, and the civil defense forces, while other military units, such as the presidential guard, remained under the president's command. This confusion has been a major cause of the power struggles between the presidency and the government, and of the current tensions between the factions.

Attempts to Solve the Crisis

Much effort has been invested in trying to resolve the crisis between Fateh and Hamas, with no success to date. The first attempt was made by Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, who drafted what came to be known as the Prisoners' Document.[5] The authors, who came from all factions, agreed to recognize the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, to honor all agreements that it had signed, and to adopt the Beirut Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. However, the document ignited serious disagreements between Fateh and Hamas.[6]

The protracted crisis in the PNA pushed the Palestinians to seek a political solution to the stalemate in the Palestinian arena, ease Israeli military pressure, and end the international blockade of the Hamas-led government. It was in Abu Mazen's interest to offer a political initiative of his own and record some tangible achievements in his post. Economic pressure, a result of the continued nonpayment of civil service salaries, caused popular unrest, which accompanied the spreading anarchy and violence. One expression of this unrest was the general strike launched in early September 2006, which involved almost the entire public sector; even the Palestinian security apparatus joined the strike.[7]

The proposed solutions called for the establishment of a national unity government, a cabinet of technocrats, or an emergency government. Evidently, all the senior echelons within the PNA preferred a national unity government, a solution that would serve the interests of Abu Mazen, the Hamas government, and Fateh. However, the attempts to set up such a government ran into difficulties because of substantive disagreements between Hamas and Fateh.[8]

The idea of a national unity government first emerged immediately after Hamas's victory in the elections, but was rejected out of hand by Fateh, which

hoped that the new government would rapidly fall. The prospects for a national unity government in the PNA depend chiefly on a convergence of interests between Abu Mazen and senior Fateh figures on one side, and the Hamas leadership in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and abroad on the other. Such a convergence is contingent on their shared commitment to solve the internal crisis in the PNA and to lift the economic and political blockade. However, each camp has major interests that are mutually incompatible and faces pressures from within that complicate the reaching of an agreement for a national unity government.

Abu Mazen and many in Fateh evidently want to exploit the dynamics of the establishment of a national unity government to breathe new life into the peace process. Hence they want to resolve two other key issues: the kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Schalit and the release of Palestinian prisoners; and a ceasefire with Israel. Fateh also believes that participating in a national unity government could rescue the movement from its current state, free it of the need to carry out painful internal reforms, and, most significantly, help it hold on to its remaining positions of power in the PNA, which are slipping away from it the longer that the Hamas government remains in office.

Senior figures in Fateh have given their public blessing to the establishment of a unity government, but many other senior figures have expressed reservations about the idea. They see it as a "gift" to Hamas, which is offering nothing in return, although its government has been banished to a corner by the international community. Various elements within Fateh believe that a unity government would actually strengthen Hamas, whereas Fateh's basic interest lies in focusing all its efforts on weakening Hamas and removing it from power. In addition, the establishment of a national unity government would initiate an internal power struggle within Fateh for ministerial positions; this, on top of the current squabbles, would further damage the movement's unity.

From the perspective of Abu Mazen and Fateh, any new government must lead to Arab and international legitimacy, including acceptance of the Arab Peace Initiative and of the agreements signed by Israel and the PLO. They believe that the international community might take Hamas's acceptance of these points as compliance with its three conditions, or at least with some of them.

Hamas viewed a government based on these principles as unacceptable. Accordingly, it conditioned its consent to a national unity government on several points that resolve the contradiction between the political platform of the proposed unity government and Hamas's strategic principles and interests.[9]

After the failure to implement the Prisoners' Document, and in light of the harsh and deteriorating economic situation, the idea of establishing a national unity government resurfaced. Ismail Haniya, the Palestinian prime minister, and Abu Mazen, the president, reached an agreement in principle to do so. How-

ever, at a certain point the process shifted into reverse, because of opposition within Hamas, particularly from its leader in Damascus, Khaled Mish'al, to relinquishing the right to resist Israel (including by military means) as and to agreeing to the Arab Peace Initiative, which entails recognition of Israel. Abu Mazen announced that Hamas's conditions were incompatible with the demands of the Quartet.[10] Thus, despite the agreement in principle between Abu Mazen and senior Fateh officials and the Hamas leadership to establish a national unity government, it did not come into being and the discussions to determine its political line and composition were never fully pursued.

Ismail Haniya and his associates, the so-called pragmatic leadership of "internal" (inside the occupied territories) Hamas, though willing to allow Abu Mazen to conduct a political process with Israel, are themselves fully aligned with the movement's uncompromising ideological and strategic plan. However, they need to be more attentive than their colleagues in Damascus to the Palestinian street and to the Palestinians' misery, which the military, economic, and diplomatic siege has exacerbated. They are also aware that the Palestinian public supports the establishment of a national unity government that could extricate it from its iternal distress. These factors induced Haniya to try to cobble together a political partnership with Fateh and the other factions, in the hope of thereby removing the international blockade, improving the economy, and thus buttressing Hamas's public standing, which was beginning to suffer. From his headquarters in Damascus, however, the head of Hamas's political bureau, Khaled Mish'al, and his representatives in the West Bank and Gaza continued to pile up obstacles to the establishment of a national unity government, which they insisted should have more of a Hamas character. Opposition by the external Hamas leadership presented a severe dilemma for Haniya and his associates, who found themselves caught between the position of Abu Mazen, which ostensibly offered hope of breaking the international blockade and allowing Hamas to continue in power, and the strong pressure exerted by Mish'al and his faction to reject any concessions.

In practice, despite the optimistic announcement by Abu Mazen and Haniya of an agreement to establish a unity government, substantial problems concerning its guiding principles emerged immediately.[11] The foundation of Abu Mazen's opposition to Hamas is his ambition to give the unity government a political agenda that he can present to the international community as complying, even partly or indirectly, with the Quartet's three fundamental conditions. In so doing he would therefore effect a compromise between Hamas's refusal to accept any major deviation from its political strategy and the international demand, stated most forcefully by the United States, for clear compliance with the three conditions.

Given the difficulties and substantive disagreements that stood in the way of a national unity government, and in light of the negligible prospects of setting up a cabinet of technocrats, some in Fateh advised Abu Mazen to dismiss Haniya's government and replace it with an emergency government. Although Abu Mazen did not reject the idea out of hand, it is unclear whether it is practicable or not. Constitutionally, the establishment of an emergency government requires that the Palestinian president declare a state of emergency, after which he can dissolve the government and form a new cabinet of his own choosing. He cannot, however, disband the PLC and call new elections.

The president can appoint an emergency prime minister and thereby influence the composition of the new government. Thus he could install a cabinet of apolitical technocrats or give most of the portfolios to Fateh. But the term of such a government is limited to thirty days. According to the Basic Law of the PNA, after one month in office the tenure of an emergency government can be extended for a further thirty days, but only with the support of a two-thirds majority of the Legislative Council. Clearly, the prospects of gaining such a majority are slim. In any case, at the end of this state of emergency a new government must be set up, following the standard procedure enshrined in the law and on the basis of political coalitions and agreements rather than presidential diktat. Such a government also requires a vote of confidence by the PLC.

As an aside, it should be noted that at the start of 2007 Hamas did not hold a voting majority in the Legislative Council, because around a third of its delegates were incarcerated in Israeli prisons. At least theoretically, then, Fateh today could control a majority and pass various measures.

At around the same time Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, the leader of the small Independent Palestine party in the PLC who is active in Palestinian civil society and supports the peace talks and a two-state solution, but is also extremely critical of the way in which the PLO is run and demands fundamental reforms of it, floated his own initiative for reconciling Fateh and Hamas. He proposed a compromise to overcome the major disagreements between the two factions—about the nature of the government, its composition, and chiefly its guidelines—which, he believes, are a corollary of their political rivalry and impede the formation of a government.[12]

Thus Hamas wants to preserve its power in the PNA and avoid political concessions based on the amended Prisoners' Document; that is, it will not commit itself to the minimum conditions laid down by the international community for the removal of the boycott of the PNA (recognizing Israel, abandoning violence, and accepting previous agreements between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel). For his part, Abu Mazen wants to erode Hamas's strength and ultimately to renew the political process and achieve a permanent solution

with Israel. Accordingly Abu Mazen would like to see a cabinet of independent, apolitical technocrats, which would steer totally clear of political issues, leaving them to be handled by the PLO, the organization that has signed all agreements with Israel to date.

Under the Barghouti plan, the new government would be both technocratic and political, and both Hamas and Fateh would make concessions. Hamas would replace Ismail Haniya with someone acceptable to Abu Mazen—a less prominent member of Hamas. Other senior ministers representing Hamas would also be replaced, and the new ministers would be selected in consultation with Fateh.

The governmental guidelines would be based on the Prisoners' Document.[13] The first goal of the new government would be to eliminate the international political and economic boycott of the PNA. As soon as it was established and before it took office, Abu Mazen would commit himself to securing the lifting of the boycott and the release of the Hamas ministers and legislators currently held in Israeli jails.

Although it is unclear where the initiative between the two sides stands for long, it is obvious that the fate of the initiative depends on its content. In this respect, the fact that the current version is closer to Hamas's position and does not require it to accept the conditions of the international community makes it easier for it to demonstrate some inclination to accept it, or at least to continue negotiations over it. Nonetheless, it is hard to imagine that Abu Mazen, who would have to make more substantial concessions, could agree that the government's guidelines follow the amended Prisoners' Document alone, since it does not satisfy the three conditions of the international community.

Accordingly, and in light of his recognition that Hamas would continue to reject these conditions, Abu Mazen sought to supplement the Prisoners' Document with other elements that are closer to his own political stance and could be a source of political authority for the governmental guidelines. The discussions over the formation of a new government took place amid fears that their failure would plunge the Palestinian government into an extremely serious political and constitutional crisis; the Palestinian Basic Law does permit Abu Mazen to dismiss Haniya's government, and requires that a new government win the confidence of an absolute majority of the PLC. But, because some of Hamas's legislators are being held by Israel, neither Fateh nor Hamas can muster an absolute majority in the PLC. Hence, any government that Abu Mazen might attempt to establish, even in a state of emergency that he is entitled to proclaim, would not be approved by the council and could serve for only one month.

Another option is for Abu Mazen to persuade Hamas to establish a caretaker government of technocrats for a period of one year, to be succeeded by a government acceptable to both factions, or else hold new elections. In such a

case, too, the government's guidelines would pose a problem. Yet another possibility is the unilateral establishment of a caretaker government without Hamas's participation and overlooking the need for a vote of confidence by the PLC. This maneuver would run the risk of precipitating a constitutional and political crisis, a harsh reaction by Hamas, and perhaps yet more violent confrontations within Palestinian society.

In November 2006 substantial progress was made in the discussions between Abu Mazen and Hamas for the establishment of a unity government of technocrats. Both sides agreed to the prime ministerial candidacy of Professor Muhammad Shubair, the former president of the Islamic University of Gaza.[14] However, the distribution of portfolios in the unity government remained vague.

As contacts between Fateh and Hamas to set up a national unity government continued, serious difficulties emerged. It became apparent that they had not overcome their major disagreements, including Hamas's demands for guarantees that the economic boycott would be lifted when the new government took office, and for important ministerial portfolios. There were also serious problems regarding the governmental guidelines.

In the aftermath of the new wave of anarchy that swept through the Palestinian territories in November and December of 2006, including violent clashes between Fateh and Hamas members, and the failure of the talks to establish a national unity government, and the intensified power struggles left in the wake of that failure, the PLO's Executive Committee recommended that Abu Mazen call early elections for the presidency of the PNA and the PLC. In mid-December, Abu Mazen delivered a particularly harsh speech against the Hamas-led government and its policies, and announced that he was indeed calling early elections.[15] The Hamas leadership abroad and in the occupied territories saw this as a challenge to the legitimacy of its government and attempted a coup. It made clear that it would do whatever was necessary to prevent early elections, despite, it claimed, its confidence that it would rout Abu Mazen and Fateh at the polls. But Hamas did not rule out the renewal of unity talks on its own terms.

The day after Abu Mazen called for early elections, he showed Hamas the seriousness of his intentions by meeting with the Central Elections Committee to begin the necessary technical preparations. Hamas, for its part, expressed its opposition to early elections and said it would act to prevent them. The Palestinian street was evidently divided on the issue, although a survey by Professor Khalil Shikaki found that 61 percent of the eligible voters among the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip supported early elections and only 37 percent were opposed.[16]

In the meantime, the violence between armed Fateh and Hamas members intensified, mainly in the Gaza district, despite an agreement to halt the violence

brokered by Egypt and the other Palestinian factions. Later, when the two sides had already met in Mecca at the invitation of King Abdullah, reports were still being received of tension on the ground between forces of the two sides.

In Mecca, on Friday, February 9, 2007, the chairman of the PNA, Abu Mazen, and the head of Hamas's political bureau, Khaled Mish'al, signed an agreement on a unity government. Hamas was to have nine ministers in the new government and Fateh six; five ministers would be independents and four would represent the smaller Palestinian factions. Ismail Haniya would remain in the prime minister's post, but would be assigned a deputy from Fateh. The confirmation of Haniya's appointment as prime minister, which had been a major bone of contention for weeks, included wording that accepted Hamas's position of "respecting" (rather than "adhering to") the agreements signed by the PLO, but not its demand that this wording should also refer to "agreements that serve the interests of the Palestinian people." Nor was the government asked to recognize Israel or renounce terrorism and violence, as required by the international community. Finally, it was agreed that the PLO, and not the Palestinian National Authority, would continue to conduct negotiations with Israel and other parties.[17]

In his speech, Abu Mazen promised that the agreement would be respected by the two sides. "We will reject anyone who dares shoot at his Palestinian brethren," he said. Prime Minister Haniya said that the Palestinian prisoners should continue to believe that their release was imminent and that the Palestinian refugees would return to their homes and lands. Abu Mazen's political adviser, Nabil Amr, read out Haniya's writ of appointment as prime minister, which charged him with setting up the new government and bringing it before the Palestinian Legislative Council for a vote of confidence. It was agreed that the three most senior ministers would be independents: the finance minister would be Salam Fayyad, a member of the Third Way party who had held the post in the Abu Mazen government; the foreign minister would be the independent council member Ziad Abu Amar; and the interior minister would be an independent selected from a list submitted to Hamas by the chairman of the PNA. Hamas received seven portfolios—*waqf,* education, justice, communications, youth and sports, local government, and labor and economic affairs—plus another portfolio once the other factions had selected three out of the quartet of tourism, information, women, and culture. Fateh received health, welfare, public works, transportation, agriculture, and prisoner affairs. Hamas was to appoint two other independents as minister of planning and as minister without portfolio, and Fateh a third independent as minister without portfolio.

The Mecca accord was another failure, and efforts for ending the crisis were postponed. Hamas continued to build its own government and authority in the Gaza Strip. During the first week of June 2007, Hamas opened an armed attack

against Fateh institutions and activists in Gaza, and took overall control of the Gaza Strip. This stage deepened the split among Palestinians and created de facto two separate political entities, one in the West Bank and one in Gaza.

Meanwhile, the clashes with Israeli armed forces increased and Israeli attacks against Palestinians inside Gaza intensified, and Palestinian armed factions continued to attack Israeli localities surrounding the Gaza Strip. As tensions escalated, Abu Mazen and his appointed government, headed by Salam Fayyad, continued to negotiate with Israel, and to urge Arab countries and the West to continue their boycott against the Hamas government in Gaza.

In June 4, 2008, in a speech in Ramallah, Abu Mazen asked Hamas to return to the negotiating table in order to "re-unite the two separated regions of our homeland." He committed himself to holding new general elections for the presidency and for the PLC, "if these internal talks succeeded."[18]

Is It Possible to Emerge from the Crisis?

The existential crisis that currently afflicts the Palestinians and their national movement is no accident. It is a direct result of historical processes that intensified after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994, and erupted into the public sphere in the post-Arafat era. The crisis has led to a real splitting of the Palestinians into two almost equal parts, and it interferes with both internal and external processes, so that one cannot even speak of stable government, deal with fundamental issues that affect Palestinian citizens, establish norms of good governance, promote serious legislation, or pay serious attention to corruption. As far as the outside world is concerned, the Palestinians are maintaining two separate groups of political and diplomatic relations, each of which broadcasts its own separate message. In such a situation the Palestinians are completely incapable of responding to any initiative to settle the problem of the occupation or the Palestinian problem as a whole. There is no doubt that because the Palestinians since late 2006 have been so deeply split, Israel has been able to recycle its old refrain that "there is no Palestinian partner," and to claim that it cannot reach an agreement with representatives of only one half of the Palestinian people. This crisis has prevented and will continue to prevent the development of a Palestinian consensus that would permit progress in the political process. Unquestionably, any discussions aimed at putting an end to the conflict will have to wait for fundamentally different conditions than those that prevail today.

The crisis in the Palestinian national movement is linked to its choice of Arafat and the PLO to guide Palestinian affairs. Freeing themselves from the

crisis requires new thinking by the Palestinians about all of the options available to them in their internal affairs and in their relations with Israel, the West, and the Arab world. As things currently stand, it is hard to envision the various factions and currents in the Palestinian national movement taking a consensual and logical step in this direction, and therefore it is improbable that it can extricate itself from the crisis.

For the PNA and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, technical solutions like a unity or emergency government or a cabinet of technocrats are no solutions at all. The crisis is deep and widespread, and relates to many spheres of life. A solution requires a genuine attempt to deal with the results of the January 2006 elections, which indicate a complex situation that requires fundamental transformations within the two political entities, the PLO and the PNA,s and a willingness to adopt democratic principles in full, and not only when they suit those in power. In the current constellation of Palestinian politics, such changes are essential in three areas.

First, there must a change in the structure of government, with a return to the old presidential system, in which the president heads the government, appoints the ministers and can dismiss them, and manages the internal and external affairs of the PNA for a set term prescribed by law. Alternatively, the PNA could adopt a parliamentary system in which power rests with the cabinet and prime minister, and the president is a figurehead. Either option would reduce or eliminate the existing duplication and redundancy. Such changes would require the amendment of the Basic Law, but this is only possible if the representatives of the two major factions, Fateh and Hamas, agree. The change would take effect at the end of the term of the incumbents.

Second, there needs to be a fundamental change in the PLO. In the current reality, we can envisage the election of a president from Hamas, which would exacerbate the situation. The PLO consolidated its internal standing among the Palestinians and its international significance in the 1960s and 1970s; it led the international struggle against Israel and the Arab world, until it was recognized as the Palestinians' sole legitimate representative. It then led them to their Declaration of Independence in November 1988, and later to the Oslo Accords and mutual recognition with Israel, which are stages in an ongoing process that is supposed to lead to an overall solution of the Palestinian problem.

There is no doubt that until his death in November 2004 Arafat's personality played a central role in the evolution of the PLO. After the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994, the PLO operated in the shadow of its governing institutions. Arafat deliberately created a confused and ambiguous relationship between the PNA and its institutions, and the PLO and its institutions, in order to consolidate his own control. What actually happened is that

the PLO under Arafat invested most of its efforts in solving the problem of the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while setting aside other pressing issues. Matters deteriorated in the post-Arafat era. Abu Mazen, also one of the founders of Fateh, is considered to be less representative than Arafat and does not enjoy similar standing among the Palestinians. He, too, is viewed as seeking to solve the problem of the occupation at the expense of other issues. Today the PLO is engaged almost exclusively in negotiations to end the occupation; the problem of the refugees, of the Palestinians in Israel, and even the distress of Palestinians in the diaspora (such as the difficulties they encountered in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein) have been reduced to marginal issues to be solved only after the emergence of the Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. In other words, the PLO's agenda excludes most of the Palestinian people.

This narrow focus makes it difficult to serve the Palestinian interest by presenting the consequences of the Nakba of 1948 as a general Palestinian problem that requires a solution. To end this state of affairs, the PLO must be divorced from the governing institutions of the PNA, so that the former can focus on solving the overall Palestinian problem and represent the supporters of the major organizations that are still not part of it, most conspicuously Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Third, the constitutionally elected government must be allowed to serve out its term and the public must be permitted to judge its performance. The suspicions that Abu Mazen and Fateh are working in the diplomatic and political arenas to bring down the Hamas government and that Fateh is taking steps to establish its own institutions—it has declared its intention to set up an independent military force funded by the United States and a number of European countries[19]—exacerbate the internal crisis and certainly do not constitute a suitable legal and political situation. The Palestinians must act as a united force in the international arena, behind their legitimate, elected government, and avoid undermining its rule, while preserving, of course, the basic right of Fateh and its representatives to criticize, within the boundaries of the law, the activities of the government and its ministries. The end of the present government's legal term of office and the holding of elections once the Palestinians have experienced a full term of Hamas rule will permit a reexamination of its achievements and a change of political leadership if the public deems it to be warranted. Alternatively, Fateh and Hamas can agree to have early elections that will put an end to the current situation where two government act in two different areas, the West Bank and Gaza. They have to agree in advance about the two requirements mentioned earlier, the PNA structure and the PLO partnership.

Changes in the aforementioned three areas cannot guarantee that the rift in the Palestinian national movement will heal. But they would certainly mark the beginnings of a process of becoming a normal national movement that pursues its goals effectively. Ultimately, the situation in which the Palestinians and their national movement find themselves will be a direct consequence of rational choices made by the leadership of its two main arms, Hamas and Fateh, under the influence of regional and international actors, including the Arab states, Israel, the United States, and Europe.

Epilogue

The "Gaza War" between Israel and Hamas (December 2008–January 2009) started while this book was in production. Although the implications of this war are highly relevant to the themes and arguments discussed in this book, I was not able to present full analysis of these aspects, and will limit the discussion, at this stage, to the following notes.

The Israeli-Hamas war on Gaza carries far-reaching and historic implications for Palestinian politics, making this possibly the most important event after the June 1967 war. That war represented a new phase and laid the groundwork for factors that played a role in the years that followed, through transformation of the Palestinian role in the conflict and consolidation of the PLO's position as the "sole representative of the Palestinian people."

The war on Gaza is the official beginning of the post-PLO period in modern Palestinian history. The most important development was the absence of any role for the PLO and the limits imposed on its participation by the Palestinian authority (PA) on the one hand, and Hamas on the other.

The Gaza war was the first Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the re-emergence of the Palestinian national movement in the 1950s and 1960s in which the PLO did not officially take part in the fighting between the Palestinians and Israel. Quite the opposite: Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian authority and the leader of the PLO, justified the Israeli attack on Gaza by holding Hamas responsible for the war, and even preceded that with a campaign of incitement against Hamas. On the other hand, Khaled Mash'al, the head of the

political bureau of Hamas, declared, following the end of the war activities, that Hamas is looking for the establishment of an alternative political organization that will represent the Palestinians instead of the PLO.

Meanwhile, a major split emerged within the Fateh movement: on one side, the "internal faction," headed by Mahmoud Abbas, leader of the PLO and the PNA, and on the other side, the "external faction" led by the head of the political department of the PLO and the head of Fateh movement, Faruk Kadumi. Abbas and Kadumi reached a deadlock in their negotiations concerning the agenda and place for holding the sixth summit of Fateh in July 2009, a situation that deteriorated quickly towards an internal split between the two factions.

The internal split and the failure to present one united political agenda mean that the Palestinian goal of a unified national movement continues to be a failed mission.

Notes

Introduction

1. See Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge, 1998).

2. See Ernest Haas, "What Is Nationalism and Why Should We Study It?" *International Organization* 40 (1986): 707–744; Ernest Haas, *Nationalism, Liberalism and Progress* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997); Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

3. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nation and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

4. See, e.g., Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

5. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention,* p. 230.

6. See, e.g., John Macarthy and Mayer Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movement," *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1977): 1212–41; Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation* (New York: Longman, 1975); Charles Tilly, "Social Movement and National Politics," in C. Bright and S. Harding, eds., *Statemaking and Social Movements* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), pp. 297–317; William A. Gamson, ed., *The Strategy of Social Protest,* 2nd ed. (Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth, 1990).

7. See, e.g., Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Craig J. Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movement," *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 527–53.

8. Ted Robert Gurr, ed., *Handbook of Political Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1980); David Colby, "Black Power, White Resistance and Public Policy," *Journal of Politics* 47 (1985): 579–95.

9. Gamson, *Strategy of Social Protest.*

10. Paul Schumaker, "Policy Responsiveness to Protest Group Demands," *Journal of Politics* 37 (1975): 488–521.

11. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention,* pp. 243–44.

12. Ibid., pp. 252–53.

13. Ibid., p. 244.

14. Ibid., p. 253.

15. Ibid., p. 245.

16. Ibid., pp. 253–54.

17. Ibid., pp. 245–46.

18. Ibid., p. 254.

19. Guy Bechor, *The PLO* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1995), p. 283 (in Hebrew).

20. Maher al-Sharif, *In the Wake of the Entity* (Nicosia: Center for Socialist Research and Studies in the Arab World, 1995) (in Arabic), p. 371.

21. Ibid., pp. 408–409.

22. Ibid., pp. 413–18.

23. See Yossi Beilin, *Touching Peace: From the Oslo Accord to a Final Agreement* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999).

24. See, Uri Savir, *The Process: 1,100 Days That Changed the Middle East* (New York: Random House, 1998).

25. See, e.g., Beilin, *Touching Peace;* Savir, *The Process;* Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), *The Road to Oslo* (Beirut: Printing and Distribution Co., 1994) (in Arabic).

26. See, e.g., Gilead Sher, *The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations, 1999–2001: Within Reach* (London: Routledge, 2006); Akram Haniyah, *Camp David Papers* (Ramallah: Al-Ayyam, 2001) (in Arabic).

27. See chapter 1 in this book, "The Israeli Post-Oslo Strategy."

28. For details see Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

1. The Israeli Post-Oslo Strategy

1. Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1992).

2. Gabriel Lefshetz and Yobert Leon, "The New Settlement in the Galilee: Aims and Characteristics," *Research in the Geography of Eretz Yisrael* 13 (1993): 179–197 (in Hebrew).

3. The Green Line is the Israeli border following the end of the war actions in 1948, today this line is expected to be the border between Israel and the future Palestinian state.

4. Shaul Arieli, Doubi Schwartz, and Hadas Tagari, *Injustice and Folly: On the Proposal to Cede Arab Locations from Israel to Palestine* (Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute, 2006) (in Hebrew).

5. See *Haaretz* (Israeli daily newspaper), February 13, 2002.

6. Arnon Soffer, *Israel's Demography 2003–2020: Risks and Opportunities* (Haifa: Haifa University, the National Security Studies Center, 2003) (in Hebrew)

7. *Haaretz,* June 28, 2002.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. See the full text of the Kadima platform at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kadima.

11. For more details see Mohammad Amara, "The Political Situation," in As'ad Ghanem, ed., *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2004* (Ramallah: Madar—The Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies, 2005), pp. 73–113 (in Arabic); As'ad Ghanem, ed., *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2004* (in Arabic); Mustafa Kabha, "The Strategic Situation," in Ghanem, *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2004,* pp. 115–45 (in Arabic); Jonny Mansour, ed., *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2005* (Ramallah: Madar—The Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies, 2006) (in Arabic); Mamdouh Nawfal and Antwan Shalhat, "Israel, the Peace Process and International Relations," in Mansour, *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2005* (in Arabic); Mahmoud Muharab, "Israel: The Palestinian Question and International Relations," in Ghanem, *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2004,* pp. 37–70 (in Arabic).

12. *Haaretz,* October 15, 2004.

13. Olmert speech on the last day of the Herzliya Conference on Israeli security held January 21–24, 2006. See http://www.herzliyaconference.org/_Articles/Article.asp?CategoryID=289&ArticleID=2233 and http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/_Uploads/1401olmert.doc.

14. See details: http://www.herzliyaconference.org/_Articles/Article.asp?CategoryID=289&ArticleID=2233.

15. For more details see: Ghanem, *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2004;* Amara, "The Political Situation"; Kabha, "The Strategic Situation"; Muhareb, "Israel: The Palestinian Question"; Mansour, *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2005*; Nawfal and Shalhat, "Israel, the Peace Process and International Relations."

16. For the full text of Sharon's speech before the UN General Assembly on September 15, 2005, see www.zionism-israel.com/hdoc/sharon.un.htm.

17. Madar Center, *The Israeli View,* vol. 128 (March 7, 2006).

18. As'ad Ghanem, *The Palestinian Regime: A "Partial Democracy"* (London: Sussex Academic Press, 2001).

19. Muhareb, "Israel: The Palestinian Question"; Nawfal and Shalhat, "Israel, the Peace Process and International Relations."

20. Ghanem, *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2004;* Amara, "The Political Situation"; Kabha, "The Strategic Situation"; Muhareb, "Israel: The Palestinian Question"; Mansour, *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2005;* Nawfal and Shalhat, "Israel, the Peace Process and International Relations."

21. Quotations from http://www.un.int/palestine/docs/advisoryopinion.pdf.

22. See Nawfal and Shalhat, "Israel, the Peace Process and International Relations."

23. Ibid., p. 63.

2. Israeli Public Attitudes toward Peace with the Palestinians

1. The data source is the "Peace Index" surveys conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University (referred to below as the Steinmetz Center), because they have been done continuously since the mid-1990s and are subject to the close academic supervision of Professors Ephraim Yaar and Tamar Herman. Their 550–600 interviewees constitute a representative sample of the Israeli public, with a sampling error of about 4.5%.

2. The Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," April 1997, January 1998 (See website: http://www.tau.ac.il/peace/.)

3. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," April 1997, December 1997, January 1998.

4. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," December 1994, September 1995, October 1995.

5. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," August 2000.

6. Madar—The Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies, "Attitudes of Israeli Jews on Various Topics Associated with the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the Palestinian Citizens of Israel," March 14–16, 2005.

7. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," March 1995.

8. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," June 2000.

9. Madar—The Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies, "Attitudes of Israeli Jews on Various Topics Associated with the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the Palestinian Citizens of Israel," March 2003.

10. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," February 2000.

11. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," June 1994, January 1995, January 1996, January 1997, January 1998, January 1999, January 2000, July 2000, August 2000, September 26, 2000, October 2000, January 2001, January 2002, January 2003, January 2004, January 2005.

12. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1994, 1998.

13. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998.

14. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, June 2000, July 2000, August 2000, September 26, 2000, October 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005.
15. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," November 1999, June 2000.
16. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1996, 1997, 1998.
17. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," June 2000, December 2000.
18. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," April 1996.
19. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," July 2000.
20. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, October 30, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.
21. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1994.
22. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 2002, 2004.
23. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 2002.
24. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index" 2003, 2004, 2005.
25. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 2005.
26. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1995, 1998, 2003.
27. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999, October 30, 2000.
28. National Security Studies Center, "National Security Survey," 2003, 2004.
29. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1999.
30. National Security Studies Center, "National Security Survey," 2003.
31. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1999.
32. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1999, June 2000, December 2000.
33. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1999.
34. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," May 2001.
35. Ibid.
36. See the results of a joint survey that was conducted by the Truman Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah: http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2003/p10ejoint.html.
37. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1997, 1999, July 2000, August 2000.
38. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1995, 1999.
39. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," July 2002.
40. National Security Studies Center, "National Security Survey," 2003, 2004, 2005.
41. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 2001, 2004.
42. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," October 1995, November 1995.
43. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1995, 1998, July 2000.
44. See http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1188302092.pdf.
45. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," 1996.
46. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index" May 1997.
47. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," December 1998.
48. National Security Studies Center, "National Security Survey," 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005.
49. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," December 1999.
50. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," October 1999, August 2003.
51. See http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1188302092.pdf.
52. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," January 2006, February 2006.
53. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," January 2006, February 2006.
54. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," January 2006, February 2006.
55. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," December 2003, February 2004.
56. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," February 2004.
57. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," February 2002, May 2002.
58. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," August 2005, September 2005.
59. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," August 2004.

60. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," June 2004, April 2005.

61. The term "Quartet" has been used to refer to the United Nations, the European Union, the United States, and Russia and international organizations which have coordinated efforts to further peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

62. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," May 2002, June 2003, October 2003, February 2004.

63. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," July 2003, October 2003, February 2004, June 2004.

64. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," June 2002, June 2003, July 2003.

65. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," October 2003, February 2004.

66. Steinmetz Center, "Peace Index," June 2003, February 2004.

3. Arafat's Heritage of Political Control

1. Abd el-Satar Qasim, *The Road to Defeat* (privately published, 1998) (in Arabic); see also As'ad Abd el-Rahman, *The PLO: Its Roots, Founding, and Activity* (Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1987); Maher al-Sharif, *In the Wake of the Entity* (Nicosia: Center for Socialist Research and Studies in the Arab World, 1995) (in Arabic); Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), chapters 1 and 11.

2. Said Aburish, *Arafat: From Defender to Dictator* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), chapters 10 and 11.

3. *Palestinian Encyclopedia* I, vol. 4, pp. 317–20 (in Arabic).

4. Azmi Bishara, "What Is the Meaning of the Discourse on Palestinian Democracy?" in *Palestinian Democracy: A Position Paper* (Ramallah: Mowaten—The Palestinian Institute for Democracy Studies, 1995), p. 139 (in Arabic).

5. Musa al-Budiri, "Democracy and the Experience of National Liberation: The Palestinian Case," in *Palestine Democracy: A Position Paper,* p. 43 (in Arabic).

6. Ibid., pp. 52–53.

7. Jamil Hilal, "The Problems of Democratic Institutions in Palestinian Public Life," in *Palestinian Democracy: A Position Paper,* p. 94 (in Arabic).

8. Ibid., p. 44.

9. *Palestinian Encyclopedia* I, vol. 4, p. 108.

10. Ibid., p. 118.

11. Ibid., p. 110.

12. Naji al-Khatib, *A Discussion of Palestinian Democracy: A Dialogue* (Paris: Civil Alternative Association, 1993) (in Arabic).

13. Al-Budiri, "Democracy and the Experience of National Liberation," p. 52.

14. Bishara, "What Is the Meaning of the Discourse," p. 138.

15. *Palestinian Encyclopedia* I, vol. 3, p. 104.

16. Ibid., p. 320.

17. Ibid., p. 321.

18. Helal, "The Problems of Democratic Institutions," p. 94.

19. *Al-Ayyam* (Palestinian daily newspaper published in Ramallah), June 1, 1999.

20. *Palestinian Encyclopedia* I, vol. 3, pp. 322–25.

21. Anis Sayegh, *September 13* (Beirut: Beisan Library, 1994), p. 30 (in Arabic).

22. Ibid., pp. 126–27.

23. *Palestinian Encyclopedia* I, vol. 3, p. 61.

24. Ibid., p. 3.

25. Qasim, *Road to Defeat,* p. 162.

26. Ibid., p. 159.

27. Ibid., p. 160.

28. *Palestinian Encyclopedia* I, vol. 3, p. 470.

29. Sayegh, *September 13,* pp. 72–74.

30. Ibid., pp. 75–76.

31. Mamduh Nofal, *The Oslo Stew* (Amman: Civilian Institution for Publication and Distribution, 1995) (in Arabic).

32. Aburish, *Arafat: From Defender to Dictator,* p. 323.

33. Tawfiq Abu Bakr, *The Process of the Political Settlement, 1977–1994: Dialogues and Testimonies* (Amman: Center for Strategic Studies in Jenin, 1998), p. 13 (in Arabic).

34. Ibid., p. 10.

35. Sayegh, *September 13,* p. 31.

36. Sakher Habash, *Historical Adventurism and Constraints of National Security* (Beirut: Fatah Office for Thought and Research, 1998), p. 5 (in Arabic).

37. See Khaled al-Hassan, *Lest the Leadership Become a Dictatorship: From My Own Experience* (unpublished) (in Arabic).

38. Sayegh, *September 13,* p.121.

39. Aburish, *Arafat: From Defender to Dictator,* p. 325.

40. Qasim, *Road to Defeat,* p. 72.

41. Al-Sharif, *In the Wake of the Entity,* p. 326.

42. As'ad Abd el-Rahman, "The Palestinian Struggle in the Context of the PLO," *Palestinian Encyclopedia* II, vol. 5 (1990), p. 249 (in Arabic).

43. Sayegh, *September 13,* p. 119.

44. Ibid., p. 126.

45. Al-Sharif, *In the Wake of the Entity,* p. 320.

46. Sayegh, *September 13,* p. 123.

47. Ibid., p. 126.

48. Interview with Samir Shehada, September 24, 1996.

49. For details see As'ad Ghanem, *The Palestinian Regime: A "Partial Democracy"* (London: Sussex Academic Press, 2001), chapter 6.

50. See PECDAR, *Activity Report 1996,* p. 1.

51. For more details, see Ghanem, *Palestinian Regime,* chapter 6.

52. For more details, see Barry Rubin, *The Transformation of Palestinian Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); and Ghanem, *Palestinian Regime,* chapter 6.

53. See Interim Agreement, section 14.

54. For more details, see, Ghanem, *Palestinian Regime,* chapter 6.

55. For details see Rubin, *Transformation of Palestinian Politics;* and Ghanem, *Palestinian Regime.*

56. *Al-Raqeb 1* (January 1997). *Al-Raqeb* is a monthly newspaper published by the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, which is based in East Jerusalem.

57. Interview conducted by the author in his office in Ramallah on January 10, 1998.

58. *Al-Ayyam,* January 1, 1998.

59. Section on the Ministry of Health at General Comptroller Office, *Comptroller's Report 1997* (Gaza: Comptroller Office of the Palestinian National Authority).

60. See Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), chapter 9; and Ghanem, *Palestinian Regime,* chapter 2.

4. The Politics of Reform in the Palestinian National Authority

1. As'ad Abd el-Rahman, ed., *The PLO: Its Roots, Founding, and Activity* (Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1987) (in Arabic).

2. Ghazi Hussein, *Palestinian Political Thought, 1963–1988* (Damascus: Dania Publishers, 1993), p. 120 (in Arabic).

3. Naji Alloush, *Thought of the Palestinian Resistance Movement, 1948–1987* (Beirut: Palestinian Encyclopedia, II, vol. 3, 1990), p. 921 (in Arabic).

4. As'ad Abdul Rahman, *Palestinian Resistance within the Framework of the PLO* (Beirut: Palestinian Encyclopedia, II, vol. 5, 1990), p. 187 (in Arabic).

5. Mohamad Hassanein Heikal, *Secret Negotiations between the Arabs and Israel: Illusions, Peace, Oslo—the Before and Aftermath* (Cairo: Al-Shurouq House, 1996) (in Arabic).

6. Hussein, *Palestinian Political Thought,* p. 120.

7. Maher al-Sharif, *Searching for an Entity: A Study of Palestinian Political Thought* (Nicosia: Center for Socialist Research and Studies, 1995), p. 147 (in Arabic).

8. Abdul Rahman, *The PLO,* p. 188.

9. Ibid., p. 189.

10. Hussein, *Palestinian Political Thought,* p. 121.

11. Maher al-Sharif, *In the Wake of the Entity* (Nicosia: Center for Socialist Research and Studies in the Arab World, 1995), p. 320 (in Arabic).

12. Ibid., p. 321.

13. Ibid., p. 341.

14. Ibid., p. 322.

15. Ibid., p. 340.

16. Palestinian Monitoring Body, *The First Annual Report of the Head of the Public Monitoring Body* (Ramallah: Public Independent Monitoring Body, 1996) (in Arabic).

17. See http://www.hussamkhader.org/internal/maqal/18.htm.

18. See the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights website: www.piccr.org.

19. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (newspaper), July 15, 2002.

5. Palestinians in Search of Authoritative Leadership after Arafat

1. All press releases concerning the presidential elections can be obtained from the Palestinian Central Elections Committee, Ramallah.

2. Conflicts were so deep that some candidate ministers announced their reluctance to join the government in the local newspapers, as did Dr. Jad Issac, who announced in the *Al-Quds* daily newspaper on February 24, 2005, that the succession of events and differences over the formation of the government had led him to decide not to join the government.

3. *Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda* (Palestinian daily newspaper), February 24, 2005.

4. The Independent Palestinian Commission for Citizen's Rights, *Report on the Performance of the Higher Elections Committee for Local Elections* (Ramallah, 2005), p. 5.

5. On October 13, 2005, the Ministry of Local Government decided on short notice to defer elections to the metropolitan municipal councils of Gaza, Khan Younis, Beit Lahiya, Jabalya, and Al Nussairat in the Gaza Strip to a fifth stage. This angered some political factions, mainly Hamas, which considered the decision a violation of the Cairo Agreement and of the Local Councils Election Law.

6. Dr. Riyad Malki, the Palestinian Media Center, Ramallah, May 17, 2005

7. These reasons were also addressed in an article written by Bilal Al Hasan published in the London-based Palestinian daily newspaper *Al-Hayat* on May 8, 2005, a few days after the local elections were held.

8. Refer to the Hamas semiofficial website: http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/Hamas/ and http://www.palestine-info.co.uk/en/.

9. This section is mainly based on the central newsletter published by the Palestinian Elections Committee: Central Elections Committee, *Second Legislative Elections* (Ramallah. Central Elections Committee, May 2006).

10. *Ma'ariv* (Israeli daily newspaper), January 27, 2005.
11. *Yediot Ahronot* (Israeli daily newspaper), January 27, 2006.
12. *Ma'ariv,* January 27, 2006.
13. *Haaretz,* January 29, 2006.
14. *Ma'ariv* supplement, February 24, 2006.
15. Dov Weisglass stated that Israel should impose hunger on the Palestinians, not to kill them, but rather to put them on a "diet."
16. *Yediot Ahronot* supplement, February 10, 2006.
17. *Yediot Ahronot* supplement, January 27, 2006.
18. *Ma'ariv*, February 1, 2006.
19. *Ma'ariv,* January 30, 2006.
20. *Haaretz* supplement, February 10, 2006.
21. *Haaretz,* February 10, 2006.
22. Nihmia Kresler, "Waiting for Al-Qaida," *Haaretz,* February 21, 2006.
23. *Yediot Ahronot* supplement, February 24, 2006.
24. Shaul Mishaal and Avraham Sela published a book on Hamas in 2005, *The Hamas Stage: Violence and Solution* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2005) (in Hebrew). In the book, they advised the Israeli government to negotiate with Hamas.
25. *Yediot Ahronot* supplement, February 24, 2006.
26. Meir Litvak wrote a scholarly article, "Hamas, Islam, Palestinian Identity and Jihad," which became a chapter of a book he edited: *Islam and Democracy in the Arab World* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibutz ha-Meuchad, 1997) (in Hebrew).
27. *Yediot Ahronot* supplement, February 24, 2006.
28. Matti Steinberg, former Palestinian affairs adviser to two former Shabak heads, Ami Ayalon and Avi Dichter. Interview by *Haaretz,* January 1, 2006.
29. *Yediot Ahronot* supplement, January 27, 2006.
30. *Yediot Ahronot* supplement, January 27, 2006.
31. *Yediot Ahronot* supplement, February 3, 2006.
32. *Ma'ariv,* January 27, 2006.
33. *Yediot Ahronot* supplement, February 3, 2006.
34. Ibid.
35. *Haaretz,* February 7, 2006.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. *Haaretz,* February 23, 2006.
39. *Ma'ariv,* February 17, 2006.
40. *Yediot Ahronot* supplement, February 3, 2006.
41. Ibid.
42. For further details, see As'ad Ghanem, *The Palestinian Regime: A "Partial Democracy"* (London: Sussex Academic Press, 2001).

6. The Empowerment of Hamas and the Outbreak of Palestinian Infighting

1. See the Palestinian daily newspapers *Al Quds, Al-Ayyam,* and *Al Hayat al Jadeeda* for December 17, 2006.
2. Mohamad Hassanein Heikal, *Secret Negotiations between the Arabs and Israel: Illusions, Peace, Oslo—the Before and Aftermath,* part 3 (Cairo: Al Shurouq House, 1996) (in Arabic).
3. Yazeed Sayegh, *The Palestinian National Movement: Armed Struggle and the Search for Statehood* (Beirut: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1993) (in Arabic).

4. Ibid., p. 908.

5. Muheeb Nawati, *Hamas from the Inside* (Gaza: Al Shorouk House, 2002), p. 174 (in Arabic).

6. Ahmad Yassin, "Two Letters Sent from the Prison by Hamas Leader to His Followers," *Majallat al-dirasat al-falistinia* 4.16 (Autumn 1993): 249–52 (in Arabic).

7. Ibrahim Ghousheh, "A Statement by the Hamas Spokesperson Denouncing the Draft Israeli-Palestinian Agreement," *Majallat al-dirasat al-falistinia* 4.16 (Autumn 1993): 210–13 (in Arabic).

8. Ibid.

9. Khaled Hroub, "Hamas and the 'Gaza-Jericho First' Agreement: The Stance and the Practice," *Majallat al-dirasat al-falistinia* 4.16 (Autumn 1993): 16–36 (in Arabic).

10. Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), pp. 190–91.

11. Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Fatal Terrorist Attacks in Israel since the DOP,* September 24, 2000. Available at www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/ (accessed August 30, 2005).

12. Melissa Mahle, "A Political-Security Analysis of the Failed Oslo Process," *Middle East Policy* 12, no. 1 (2005): 76–79.

13. Ross, *Missing Peace,* p. 354.

14. Nawati, *Hamas from the Inside,* pp. 180–84.

15. Hroub, "Hamas and the 'Gaza-Jericho First' Agreement," p. 27.

16. According to Jonathan D. Halevi's statement, "Arafat's Signature on the Oslo Agreements Was Nothing but a Step for Liberating the Historical Palestine." Jonathan D. Halevi, "Understanding the Breakdown of Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations," *The Jerusalem Viewpoints,* the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, internet edition (2002). Available at www.jcpa.org/jl/vp486.htm.

17. *Al-Quds* newspaper, September 13, 2006.

18. Interview published in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* 67 (2006): 14–15.

19. The interview was published in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 67 (Summer 2006): 7–25.

20. *Al-Ayyam* newspaper, February 23, 2006.

21. Abu Mazen's statement was made in an interview with Al Jazeera satellite television channel on January 14, 2006.

22. A small locality near Gaza.

23. *Al-Ayyam,* February 5, 2006.

24. The interview was held on April 3, 2006, by George Jaqaman and Khaled Farraj, and published by *International Studies Magazine* 66 (Spring 2006): 60–64.

25. The speech delivered by Ismail Haniya before the PLC in the closed session held on March 27, 2006.

26. The above was also published by the *Al Quds* newspaper on February 7, 2006.

27. Published by *Al-Ayyam* on February 14, 2006.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Published by *Al-Ayyam* on May 31, 2005.

31. See http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/news/2006-06/17/09.shtml.

32. *Al-Ayyam,* May 11, 2006.

33. *Al-Ayyam,* May 27, 2006.

34. The text of the speech was published by *Al-Ayyam* on May 26, 2006.

35. *Al-Ayyam,* May 28, 2006.

36. *Al-Ayyam,* May 27, 2006.

37. Source: http://ar.chinabroadcast.cn/189/2006/06/06/82@56921.htm.

38. *Al-Ayyam,* July 7, 2006.

39. *Al-Ayyam,* August 17, 2006.

40. In a meeting held on August 19, 2006.

41. Published by *Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda* (Palestinian daily newspaper) on August 27, 2006.

Conclusion

1. See, e.g., the Palestinian daily newspapers *Al-Ayyam, Al-Hayyat al-Jadeeda* and *Al-Quds,* January 29, 2007; and the Arabic and Israeli press on the same day.

2. See the Palestinian, Israeli, and world press for January 30, 2007.

3. See Hani Al-Masri, "The New Palestinian Government," *Journal of Palestine Studies (Mujallat al-dirasat al-falistinia)* 14, no. 54 (Spring 2003): 15–30.

4. Ibid.

5. *Al-Hayyat al-Jadeeda,* August 16, 2006.

6. See the previous chapter about how this document is a major source of the disagreement between Hamas and Fateh, and not only a means of resolving the debate.

7. *Al-Quds,* September 26, 2006.

8. *Al Hayyat al-Jadeeda,* October 4, 2006.

9. *Al-Hayyat al-Jadeeda,* October 9, 2006.

10. *Al-Ayyam,* October 5, 2006.

11. *Al-Ayyam,* October 12, 2006.

12. *Al-Hayyat al-Jadeeda,* November 23, 2006.

13. *Al-Hayyat al-Jadeeda,* November 27, 2006.

14. *Al-Ayyam,* December 4, 2006

15. *Al-Hayyat al-Jadeeda,* December 18, 2006.

16. *Al-Quds,* December 20, 2006.

17. *Haaretz,* February 9, 2007; see also Shlomo Brom (2007), "The Agreement to Set Up a National Unity Government," *Overview 10,* Center for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University.

18. *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (daily newspaper published in London), June 5, 2008; *Al-Ittihad* (daily newspaper published in Haifa), June 6, 2008.

19. See, e.g., *Yediot Ahronot,* January 29, 2007.

Bibliography

Abbas, Mahmoud [Abu Mazen]. *The Road to Oslo.* Beirut: Printing and Distribution Co., 1994 (in Arabic).

Abd el-Rahman, As'ad, ed. *The PLO: Its Roots, Founding, and Activity.* Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1987 (in Arabic).

Abd el-Rahman, As'ad. "The Palestinian Struggle in the Context of the PLO." Beirut: Palestinian Encyclopedia II, vol. 5 (1990): 249–260 (in Arabic).

Abu Bakr, Tawfiq. *The Process of the Political Settlement, 1977–1994: Dialogues and Testimonies.* Amman: Center for Strategic Studies in Jenin, 1998 (in Arabic).

Aburish, Said. *Arafat: From Defender to Dictator.* London: Bloomsbury, 1998.

Al-Hassan, Khaled. *Lest the Leadership Become a Dictatorship: From My Own Experience* (unpublished) (in Arabic).

Al-Khatib, Naji. *A Discussion of Palestinian Democracy: A Dialogue.* Paris: Civil Alternative Association, 1993 (in Arabic).

Alloush, Naji. 1990. *Thought of the Palestinian Resistance Movement 1948–1987.* Beirut: Palestinian Encyclopedia II, vol. 3: 132–160 (in Arabic).

Al-Sharif, Maher. *Searching for an Entity: A Study of Palestinian Political Thought.* Nicosia: Center for Socialist Research and Studies in the Arab World, 1995 (in Arabic).

Amara, Mohammad. "The Political Situation." In *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2004,* ed. As'ad Ghanem, pp. 73–113. Ramallah: Madar—The Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies, 2005 (in Arabic).

Arieli, Shaul, Doubi Schwartz, and Hadas Tagari. *Injustice and Folly: On the Proposal to Cede Arab Locations from Israel to Palestine.* Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute, 2006 (in Hebrew).

Bechor, Guy. *The PLO.* Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1995 (in Hebrew).

Beilin, Yossi. *Touching Peace: From the Oslo Accord to a Final Agreement.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999.

Bishara, Azmi. "What Is the Meaning of the Discourse on Palestinian Democracy?" In *Palestinian Democracy: A Position Paper.* Ramallah: Mowaten—The Palestinian Institute for Democracy Studies, 1995 (in Arabic).

Brom, Shlomo. "The Agreement to Set Up a National Unity Government." *Overview 10.* Tel Aviv: Center for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2007.

Cobban, Helena. *The Palestinian Liberation Organization.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Colby, David. "Black Power, White Resistance and Public Policy." *Journal of Politics* 47 (1985): 579–95.

Cornell, Stephen, and Douglas Hartmann. *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World.* Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge, 1998.

Freeman, Jo. *The Politics of Women's Liberation*. New York: Longman, 1975.
Gamson, William, ed. *The Strategy of Social Protest,* 2nd ed. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1990.
Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
Ghanem, As'ad. *The Palestinian Regime: A "Partial Democracy"*. London: Sussex Academic Press, 2001.
Ghanem, As'ad, ed. *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2004*. Ramallah: Madar—The Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies, 2005 (in Arabic).
Ghousheh, Ibrahim. "A Statement by the Hamas Spokesperson Denouncing the Draft Israeli-Palestinian Agreement." *Majallat al-dirasat al-falistinia* 4.16 (Autumn 1993): 210–13.
Gurr, Ted Robert, ed. *Handok of Political Conflict*. New York: Free Press, 1980.
Haas, Ernest. "What Is Nationalism and Why Should We Study It?" *International Organization* 40 (1986): 707–44.
Haas, Ernest. *Nationalism, Liberalism and Progress*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998.
Habash, Sakher. *Historical Adventurism and Constraints of National Security*. Beirut: Fatah Office for Thought and Research, 1998 (in Arabic).
Halevi, Jonathan D. "Understanding the Breakdown of Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations." *The Jerusalem Viewpoints* (2002). Available at www.jcpa.org/jl/vp486.htm.
Haniyah, Akram. *Camp David Papers*. Ramallah: Al-Ayyam, 2001 (in Arabic).
Heikal, Mohamad Hassanein. *Secret Negotiations between the Arabs and Israel: Illusions, Peace, Oslo—the Before and Aftermath*. Cairo: Al-Shurouq House, 1996 (in Arabic).
Hilal, Jamil. "The Problems of Democratic Institutions in Palestinian Public Life." In *Palestinian Democracy: A Position Paper*. Ramallah: Mowaten—The Palestinian Institute for Democracy Studies, 1995 (in Arabic).
Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Nation and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
Hroub, Khaled. "Hamas and the 'Gaza-Jericho First' Agreement: The Stance and the Practice." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, no. 2 (1993): 16–36 (in Arabic).
Hussein, Ghazi. *Palestinian Political Thought, 1963–1988*. Damascus: Dania Publishers, 1993 (in Arabic).
Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Fatal Terrorist Attacks in Israel since the DOP,* September 24, 2000. Available online at www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/.
Jenkins, Craig. "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movement." *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 527–53.
Kabha, Mustafa. "The Strategic Situation." In *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2004,* ed. As'ad Ghanem, pp. 115–145. Ramallah: Madar—The Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies, 2005 (in Arabic).
Kimmerling, Baruch, and Joel S. Migdal. *Palestinians: The Making of a People*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993.
Lefshetz, Gabriel, and Yobert Leon. "The New Settlement in the Galilee: Aims and Characteristics." *Research in the Geography of Eretz Yisrael* 13 (1993): 179–97 (in Hebrew).
Litvak, Meir. *Islam and Democracy in the Arab World*. Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibutz ha-Meuchad, 1997.
Madar—The Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies. *Attitudes of Israeli Jews on Various Topics Associated with the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the Palestinian Citizens of Israel,* March 14–16, 2005.
Mahle, Melissa. "A Political-Security Analysis of the Failed Oslo Process." *Middle East Policy* 12, no. 1 (2005): 76–79.
Mansour, Jonny, ed. *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2005*. Ramallah: Madar—The Palestinian Centre for Israeli Studies, 2006 (in Arabic).

Masalha, Nur. *Expulsion of the Palestinians.* Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1992.

McAdam, Doug. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930–1970.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. *Dynamics of Contention.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

McCarthy, John, and Mayer Zald. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movement." *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1977): 1212–41.

Mishaal, Shaul, and Avraham Sela. *The Hamas Stage: Violence and Solution.* Tel Aviv: Yideot Ahronot, 2005 (in Hebrew).

Muharab, Mahmoud. "Israel: The Palestinian Question and International Relations." In *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2004,* ed. As'ad Ghanem, pp. 37–70. Ramallah: Madar, 2005 (in Arabic).

Nawati, Muheeb. *Hamas from the Inside.* Gaza: Al Shurouq Publications, 2002 (in Arabic).

Nawfal, Mamdouh, and Antwan Shalhat. "Israel, the Peace Process and International Relations." In *Madar Strategic Report: Israel 2005,* ed. Jonny Mansour, pp. 34–65. Ramallah: Madar, 2006 (in Arabic).

Nofal, Mamduh. *The Oslo Stew.* Amman: Civilian Institution for Publication and Distribution, 1995 (in Arabic).

Palestinian Central Elections Committee. *Second Legislative Elections.* Ramallah: Central Elections Committee, May 2006.

Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights. *Report on the Performance of the Higher Elections Committee for Local Elections.* Ramallah: Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizen's Rights, 2005.

Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights website: www.piccr.org.

Palestinian Monitoring Body. *The First Annual Report of the Head of the Public Monitoring Body.* Ramallah: Public Independent Monitoring Body, 1996 (in Arabic).

Qasim, Abd el-Satar. *The Road to Defeat.* Nablus: privately published, 1998 (in Arabic).

Ross, Dennis. *The Missing Peace.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.

Rubin, Barry. *The Transformation of Palestinian Politics.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Savir, Uri. *The Process: 1,100 Days That Changed the Middle East.* New York: Random House, 1998.

Sayegh, Anis. *September 13.* Beirut: Beisan Library, 1994 (in Arabic).

Sayegh, Yazeed. *The Palestinian National Movement: Armed Struggle and the Search for Statehood.* Beirut: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1993 (in Arabic).

Schumaker, Paul. "Policy Responsiveness to Protest Group Demands." *Journal of Politics* 37 (1975): 488–521.

Sher, Gilead. *The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations, 1999–2001: Within Reach.* London: Routledge, 2006.

Smith, Anthony D. *The Ethnic Origins of Nationalism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

———. *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.

Soffer, Arnon. *Israel's Demography, 2003–2020: Risks and Opportunities.* Haifa: Haifa University, National Security Studies Center, 2003 (in Hebrew).

Steinmetz Center. "Peace Index." http://www.tau.ac.il/peace/.

Tilly, Charles. "Social Movement and National Politics." In *Statemaking and Social Movements,* ed. C. Bright and S. Harding, pp. 297–317. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984.

Yassin, Ahmad. "Two Letters Sent from the Prison by Hamas Leader to His Followers." *Mujallat al-dirasat al-falistinia* 4, no. 16 (Autumn 1993): 225–49 (in Arabic).

Newspapers

Al-Ayyam, Palestinian daily newspaper, published in Ramallah.
Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, Palestinian daily newspaper, published in Ramallah.
Al-Ittihad, Arabic daily newspaper, published in Haifa.
Al-Quds al-Arabi, Arabic daily newspaper, published in London.
Al-Quds, Palestinian daily newspaper, published in Jerusalem.
Al-Raqeb, a monthly newspaper, published by the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, based in East Jerusalem.
Al-Sharq al-Awsat, Arabic daily newspaper, published in London.
Haaretz, Israeli daily newspaper, published in Tel Aviv.
Ma'ariv, Israeli daily newspaper, published in Tel Aviv.
Yediot Ahronot, Israeli daily newspaper, published in Tel Aviv.

Index

AS'AD GHANEM

is Senior Lecturer in the School of Political Science, University of Haifa. His books include *The Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel: A Political Study* and *The Palestinian Regime: A "Partial Democracy."*