Anat N. Kurz

The Palestinian Uprisings:
War with Israel, War at Home

Institute for National Security Studies

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INSS
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Executive Summary

The two popular uprisings in the occupied territories, key rounds of the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation, unfolded in opposite directions. The first confrontation led Israel and the Palestinians to political dialogue, while in the second confrontation, dialogue gave way to head-on collision. Various attempts over the years to revive a concrete dialogue between the sides were impeded by the shift in the balance between the two arenas of the Palestinian struggle: the internal arena, and the struggle against Israel. This change evolved incrementally over the years between the two uprisings and gathered momentum during the second uprising, such that the internal struggle in the Palestinian arena intensified and took center stage. The Palestinian inter-organizational rivalry, which for many years assumed a backstage role, became the driving force behind the escalated struggle against Israel, and therefore became a primary component in the dynamic that fed the confrontation.

The first uprising erupted in late 1987 against the background of an economic crisis and a loss of trust in the ability of the veteran national leadership – the PLO, headed by Fatah – to bring about the end of the Israeli occupation of the territories. A traffic accident in the tension-filled Gaza Strip sparked riots and clashes between demonstrators and Israeli security forces. The firm Israeli response to the violence accelerated the spread of the rioting. For close to two years, the uprising mainly featured a civil revolt. Over time, with the population's increasing weariness of the struggle, the uprising became more violent and focused on assaults staged by organized factions against Israeli civilian and military targets, both in the territories and within the Green Line. In the course of the confrontation, the Palestinian arena witnessed a closing of ranks. The locally organized Unified National Leadership was the PLO's extension in charge of the day-to-day management of the struggle. However, alongside the unification of

the national camp, the territories also saw the formation of an opposition movement with the potential for significant popular support – Hamas. The movement, established on the foundations of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip, declared all-out war against Israel and positioned itself as an alternative to the PLO.

The confrontation encouraged dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian leadership. The uprising demonstrated to the Israeli public and decision makers the cost of the ongoing occupation and increased willingness for political and territorial compromise. For the PLO leadership, the political channel was a means for curbing the rise in the territories of a local leadership with which Israel was prepared to engage as part of a regional political process spearheaded by the United States. Talks in the summer of 1993, taking place in a track II channel, led the Israeli government and the PLO to an agreement of principles toward a joint promotion of the vision of two states for two peoples. The Oslo Accord formulated between the sides was the political and legal basis for the arrival of the veteran Palestinian leadership in the territories and its staffing of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

The Oslo process, however, was drawn out and the implementation of its principles lagged. The Israeli settlement activity in the territories continued unabated, and in response to the ongoing violent Palestinian struggle, Israel delayed transferring territory to PA control. The PA for its part blamed Israel's presence in the territories for its inability to stop the violent struggle. At the same time, criticism of the PA for its administrative and political failures grew in the territories. In particular, tension intensified between the Fatah leadership and local forces, especially once the latter's rise to institutional prominence was halted by the establishment of the PA.

Israel's attempt to bypass the reciprocal conditions stipulated by the Oslo process and move straight to a discussion of the permanent agreement ended in a stinging failure. In a summit meeting in the summer of 2000, the concessions Israel reportedly offered to the Palestinians were far from what the Palestinian representatives to the talks were prepared to accept, especially in exchange for a commitment to end the conflict – a requirement that was and remains a sine qua non for any permanent agreement. This was the background to the outbreak of the second uprising.

Again it was a particular incident – though not a random one – that ignited the area. The visit by opposition leader Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount sparked the clashes between demonstrators and the Israeli security forces. The reins of the uprising were grabbed by organized militant factions, and within days the uprising turned violent. The PA led the way and turned its forces, originally charged with keeping law and order, into leaders of the struggle. This tactical move was meant to quell protests against it and preserve its status. The quick escalation of the uprising and frustration over the collapse of the Oslo process made Israel respond with a heavy hand, using more extreme military means than those used in the first uprising. IDF activity caused significantly more loss of life and damage to property than the death and destruction resulting from the first uprising. Widespread and ongoing closures of crossings from the territories to Israel, as well as economic sanctions against the PA, curbed the economic growth experienced in the territories during the years of the Oslo process. Moreover, Israel, which deemed the PA responsible for the outbreak of the uprising and in particular for channeling it toward a wider, more violent course, directly targeted PA institutions and sought to render the PA politically irrelevant.

And in fact, the PA lost authority and legitimacy. Fatah itself floundered, and the intermediate generation's criticism of the movement was directed at the founding generation's impotence vis-à-vis Israel and against Hamas' growing strength. Fatah-spawned factions were heedless of the leadership and took part in the violent struggle against Israel alongside opposition factions, particularly Hamas operatives. Indeed, commanding the struggle against Israel assumed major importance in the inter-organizational confrontation. The violence by opposition forces, whether identified with the national or the Islamic camp, undermined repeated attempts to implement a ceasefire and thus prevented the Palestinian peace camp from meeting Israel's precondition for resuming the political process – an end to the violence. At the same time, the collapse of the PA bumped the political process from the top of the Palestinian agenda. Within the territories, demands for reform in the PA grew, first and foremost the institution of good governance and provision of an opportunity for civil and economic rehabilitation.

The ongoing confrontation restored the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the top of the international agenda. The United States and the European

Union led various initiatives to resolve the conflict. Resolution of the conflict appeared as a central component in a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace initiative accepted by the Arab League. Regional elements in the Middle East, notably Egypt, also worked to renew the political process, in part by promoting a ceasefire between Fatah and Hamas. Egypt and Saudi Arabia even endeavored to regulate the relationship between Fatah and Hamas in order to establish a national Palestinian representation for future negotiations with Israel. However, since the PA's powerlessness in the face of the militant factions was a contributing factor to the violent struggle during the first months of the uprising, Israel harbored reservations as to the PA's ability to act as a viable political partner. Israel even chose a unilateral approach, constructing the separation barrier in the West Bank and withdrawing from the Gaza Strip in response to the immediate security challenges.

The political process was renewed as the result of a political transformation and a coup in the Palestinian arena – developments that dramatized the shifts over the years regarding the balance of power between the warring camps. Hamas won a sweeping victory in the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council. Its success was helped by the failure of the disintegrating Fatah movement to present a cohesive slate of candidates. Again, attempts to reach a political accord between Fatah and Hamas failed, and the struggle between the forces on the street escalated. By means of a military coup, not long after a political victory that granted Hamas the right to form a government, the members of the movement in the Gaza Strip overcame the PA's security forces manned by Fatah members.

Israel and the Fatah leadership then returned to the negotiating table in order to try to contain Hamas' growing power by formulating principles for a permanent agreement. However, gaps on the core issues remained substantial, and in any event, Fatah, though committed to an agreement based on compromise, lacked the ability to impose its policy on the opposition. Therefore, any agreement reached was a priori destined to sit on the shelf and await the right conditions allowing its implementation. Defining the hoped-for compromise as a shelf agreement acknowledged that the political, institutional, and geographical split in the Palestinian arena would be a major obstacle to creating a new reality in the conflict arena.

Introduction

This monograph explores the inextricably intertwined intra-Palestinian and Israeli-Palestinian dynamics that evolved with the outbreak of the uprisings in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in late 1987 and the fall of 2000. The passage of time has made it possible to examine the two uprisings and the rounds of the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation they embodied as an historical continuum. Comparative lenses show that both uprisings erupted against different regional and international circumstances. They were also characterized by different balances between their violent and civil dimensions, and they evolved in different political directions. The discussion below centers on the claim that over the years, the features of the uprisings and their political ramifications were driven increasingly by the internal Palestinian struggle, and in particular by the changes that occurred over time in the balance of power among the leading Palestinian camps.

The first uprising began with a popular protest intended to draw international attention to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, weaken Israel's resolve to continue controlling the occupied territories, and hasten the fulfillment of the dream of Palestinian self-determination. At the same time, the outbreak challenged the Palestinian national leadership outside the territories – the PLO headed by the founding generation of Fatah – for its longstanding failure to end the occupation. In order to curb the threat to its status from the very outbreak of the uprising, whereby it would be eclipsed by local forces, the old guard turned to the political channel and engaged in a process whose declared intention was to divide the land into two states for two peoples. Concomitantly, as a result of the sweeping uprising in the territories, the willingness for political and territorial compromise grew in Israel. These developments enabled for the formulation of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement as to the process that would lay the groundwork for

discussing the permanent resolution. This agreement, formulated in Oslo and signed in Washington in 1993, marked the end of the uprising and allowed the arrival of the PLO leadership in the territories. The Palestinian Authority (PA), in effect an extension of the PLO, was established as the address for security and political coordination with Israel and as the infrastructure for self-rule. Notably, however, its formation curbed the rise to power of the local leaders, both those affiliated with PLO institutions and those aligned with the Islamic opposition.

The years that followed were characterized by futile attempts to implement the spirit and letter of the Oslo Accord and other understandings subsequently formulated between Israel and the PA. Both sides were responsible for a series of violations; both postponed completion of the agreement's implementation, which thereby brought on the next round of the conflict. This period, which continued until the fall of 2000, served – if unintentionally – as an interlude exploited by the various Palestinian factions to prepare for the next round of conflict against Israel and one another. These years of suspension thus link the two uprisings, which emerge as two climaxes on the continuum of the Palestinian struggle.

The second uprising, which erupted after the failure of the Camp David talks in the summer of 2000, also developed out of a rising tide of popular protest. By escalating the struggle against Israel, local forces – opposition elements and factions affiliated with Fatah – sought to wrest the institutional advantages granted by the political route from the veteran leadership. For its part, the veteran leadership sought to preserve its supremacy over the national struggle by suspending the political process and leading the uprising. The PA's taking the reins of the uprising incurred severe military repercussions from Israel, far more significant than those sustained during the first uprising. Israel's moves to present the PA as a powerless entity in both the internal Palestinian and the political arenas, along with the severe inter-organizational struggle, in particular between Hamas and Fatah and the deepening intra-organizational divisions within Fatah, resulted in the disintegration of the PA. By the time the PA tried to halt the violence in an attempt to preserve its last strongholds, it was too late. Against the background of the collapse of the PA and the disintegration of Fatah, the Hamas support base grew, as since its inception, Hamas had presented itself as the local alternative – both institutionally and ideologically – to

the leadership formed in the diaspora. The rise of Hamas, bearing the standard of the unwavering struggle for the liberation of all of Palestine, instilled a basic ideological component to the Palestinian rivalry, and over the years prevented the formation of a central body capable of guaranteeing the implementation of the understandings with Israel, if and when ever formulated. Israel's own readiness to advance a negotiated agreement, which in any case eroded over the years of failure to realize the understandings that had been the basis for establishing the PA to begin with, was worn down even further.

The growing centrality of the Palestinian inter-organizational struggle as a factor steering the course of the uprisings and the ensuing Israeli-Palestinian dynamic is examined below through five principal topics:

1. *Setting the stage* – the background to the uprisings
2. *The anti-Israel arena* – the Palestinian struggle and the Israeli response that together drafted the confrontation's violent course
3. *The Palestinian arena* – the Palestinian political system during the confrontation
4. *The political arena* – the growing willingness to compromise during the first uprising; the severing of relations between Israel and the PA during the second uprising
5. *External forces sidelining internal forces* in the first uprising; *internal forces sidelining external elements* in the second – the changes in the balance of power on the Palestinian arena as these developed over the course of the two uprisings.

The discussion is both topical and chronological, based on the assessment that its foci represent a chronological sequence with built-in causality. Tension escalated and led to the eruption of the uprisings that fueled the cycle of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which in turn accelerated changes in the balance of power in the Palestinian arena. Developments in the Palestinian arena contributed significantly to shaping the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and political and military developments on this level affected the balance of power on the Palestinian front. Of special significance are the two latter subjects: the political dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian arena and the changes in the balance of power in the Palestinian arena itself. The complex implications of the other topics

feed into these two spheres, which assumed the different, in fact opposite, directions in the two rounds of the conflict.

The centrality of the internal Palestinian struggle to the Israeli-Palestinian dynamic does not detract from the effect of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip or Israeli policy towards the Palestinian national struggle and the creation of political and at times competing currents in the Palestinian sphere. The Israeli occupation, as well as its civilian, economic, political, and military expressions, was and remains an authentic motivation for political action. It granted and continues to grant the internal and external raison d'être to associations consolidated in light of and subject to volatile political, economic, and social circumstances. Notwithstanding their ideological and political differences of perspective, the various Palestinian organizations are engaged in a struggle against the occupation, if not against Israel as a political entity, regardless of its borders. At the same time, since its beginning, the struggle against Israel represents one arena – central, to be sure – among the arenas in which the different Palestinian factions struggle for supremacy in the national political framework. Thus the struggle against Israel is the vehicle for political organization and recruitment, and also an instrument in the continual inter-organizational contest for influence on the home front and on the international front relevant to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Nonetheless, if from the beginning of the Palestinian struggle – including the course of the first uprising – it was hard to draw a clear line separating the motives rooted in the inter-organizational strife and those resulting from the approach to the nature of the struggle against Israel and its objective, during the years of the second uprising this distinction became easier to make. A significant change occurred in the relationship between the two arenas of struggle: the internal arena, for years unfolding in the background to the struggle against Israel, moved to the forefront and became a primary motive for escalating the struggle against Israel. Therefore, it became a central component of the dynamics preserving the conflict, and placed obstacles before those seeking political and territorial compromise, Israelis and Palestinians alike. Thus the peace camps on both sides now face a more complex task than was envisioned by those who formulated the various peace initiatives to date. Any idea advanced to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will have to take into account a

resolution of the internal Palestinian conflict, which over the past twenty years and especially during the second uprising has grown increasingly complicated.

* * *

The research study that follows focuses on the two fronts of the Palestinian struggle in the twenty years since the eruption of the first uprising. This English version, based on a previously published Hebrew monograph, includes a postscript that covers more recent events, particularly the late 2008 to early 2009 confrontation between Israel and Hamas and the repercussions in the internal Palestinian arena. Yet rather than presenting a watershed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, these developments conform to and in fact continue the existing tracks of the Palestinian struggle described and analyzed in the body of the study. In particular, the split within the internal Palestinian arena, which was especially pronounced in late 2008 and early 2009, will aggravate even further any attempt to arrive at a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

* * *

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The First Uprising

Setting the Stage

Conditions that led to the outbreak of the December 1987 uprising ripened in a long and complex process, beginning with the political-territorial results of the June 1967 war. It evolved with the continued Israeli occupation of the territories conquered in the war, the Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the tense relations, inherently problematical, between conqueror and conquered – Israel and the population of the territories. This process was likewise part of the greater regional arena, and in particular the ongoing enmity between Israel and the Arab nations, and the military and political struggle waged by Palestinian organizations against Israel along the borders and in the international arena. The following analysis cites the principal trends and events with a direct circumstantial or causal connection to the outbreak of the uprising, which marked a new stage in the Palestinian national struggle – both in the Palestinian arena itself and in the arena of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle.

At least as much as an attempt to advance the end of the Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the uprising reflected a realignment of the balance of power in the Palestinian political system. The outbreak itself and the course of the uprising – called "intifada," meaning "awakening" – saw local activists joining the struggle against Israel and attempting to stand at its forefront. These elements, whether connected to organizations established and consolidated in the diaspora or formed in the territories as organizational and ideological alternatives to the leadership from outside, challenged the traditional supremacy of the veteran PLO leadership. The struggle was aimed directly against Israel, and its declared objective was to erode Israeli control of the territories and turn international public opinion against Israel over the continued occupation. However, the uprising was also indirectly aimed at the PLO leadership. Its outbreak was fueled by

cumulative frustrations with the veteran leadership's inability to promote these same causes and a desire to propose an alternative to its failing ways, both in terms of the nature of the struggle and in terms of the arena in which it was taking place.

The outbreak – its timing and scope – was unforeseen by both the PLO leadership and the Israeli leadership. Yet in retrospect, what is most remarkable is the surprise the uprising caused. The preceding years clearly witnessed a new generation coming of age in the occupied territories, a generation infused with nationalism and a desire for change. Students at colleges and universities in the territories heralded the growing political activism, and the campuses were gradually becoming the focal points for organized activity among members of the different factions. The leaders launched projects to address the daily welfare needs of the population, which as yet remained local initiatives and did not assume a nationalist character. Most of the activists were affiliated with the member organizations of the PLO, and therefore it was impossible to view the associations led by the local activists as autonomous West Bank and Gaza factions, independent of the parent organizations whose headquarters were abroad. Nonetheless, the flourishing of the local institutions indicated a change taking place in the alignment of forces in the Palestinian arena.

Fatah, senior among the organizations constituting the Palestinian national movement and whose leadership had for some two decades steered PLO policy, was at the forefront of the organizations leading institutional affiliation in the territories. Especially active among the Fatah-affiliated associations was Shabiba, a network of primarily youth-based local councils in the West Bank established in 1981 for social action. In 1983 the local associations of Shabiba were united under a single umbrella, and later their activity expanded to include the Gaza Strip. Among the additional institutions established by Fatah over the years were trade, charity, health, and student associations, sports clubs, newspapers, and research institutes. Other organizations took similar initiatives, though their activities were more limited given their resources, which lagged behind those of Fatah. The most prominent among them were the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The ties with the organizational institutions in the diaspora granted the local satellites legitimacy and a financial base, though most of their influence

stemmed from their unmediated connection with the population and their ability to respond to immediate economic and social needs. This was, for example, the reason for the survival of the Palestinian Communist Party in the territories, despite its relatively small membership and lack of means.

The awakening was at once apparent among different organizations, those guided by national-secular ideas and those joined by the camp that preached social and political action in the spirit of – and for the sake of – Islamic values. The nationalist stream and the religious stream differed in their respective conceptual approaches for explaining the miserable state of the Palestinian people, and in turn, the solutions to alleviate its suffering. From the nationalist perspective – which itself was not entirely devoid of religious connotations – self-determination and political sovereignty were necessary conditions for economic and social rehabilitation. To the religious stream – led by a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood from its stronghold in the Gaza Strip – the longed-for establishment of an independent state was necessarily part of a comprehensive struggle to return Islam to its former glory in the Arab world. Other than the different emphases of religious values in the political platforms, the two streams had much in common. Both believed that the Israeli occupation was the root of the Palestinian people's grievances, specifically, their economic inferiority, institutional weakness, and political frustration. National liberation was a sweeping answer to urgent political, social, and economic dilemmas; the struggle against Israel was presented by both streams as the principal means to fulfill the longstanding objectives.

The growing willingness in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to assume responsibility for the national present and future was the combined result of demographic, economic, and political changes in the territories in the years leading up to the uprising. A sharp population increase coupled with a decrease in oil revenues and, as a result, decreasing economic aid from the Arab countries brought about a long recession. A string of regulations imposed on the local population following the victory of the Likud party in the 1977 Knesset elections aggravated the economic situation in the territories. These regulations were intended to limit the economic initiatives in the territories, and thus increase the dependence of the Palestinian economy on Israel. Measures included expanded appropriation of land and building of settlements in the territories, particularly in the West Bank.

Palestinian attempts to form a local, pro-PLO leadership were suppressed. In 1982, heads of local councils identified with the PLO were removed from office, and contact between residents of the territories and PLO personnel and institutions was legally barred. Concurrently, the Israeli Civil Administration dampened the importance of the traditional municipal leadership in the West Bank. The administration, established in 1981, was in charge of managing the budgets of the municipalities and councils, and supplying daily services to the residents.

In response to the violent and non-violent protests against the various economic and political restrictions, Israel instituted an iron fist policy. The arrests of activists, the military presence, and the settlement project made Israeli control of the territories more perceptible and therefore more provocative as well. In 1986, the Israeli government, headed by Shimon Peres, presented a plan to improve the economic infrastructure in the territories. The drive to calm the growing protests with an economic plan was evidence of the Israeli establishment's ignorance of the protests' deep roots and actual force. The implementation of the plan was intended for the West Bank in cooperation with Jordan, through political coordination then developing between the two countries. In April 1987, Peres and King Hussein of Jordan agreed to participate in an international conference as the framework for direct negotiations. Jordan was using its relations with Israel to forge a closer relationship with the United States, Israel was seeking to take advantage of the rift between Jordan and the PLO to forge a closer relationship with Jordan, and both were interested in weakening the PLO's influence in the territories and the region in general.[1]

The growing search in the territories for national expression and direction was demonstrated by the establishment of social and political forums. The possibility that local institutions, whether secular or religious, would serve as an infrastructure for local leadership challenging the PLO's exclusive national representation spurred PLO member organizations to come together in a consolidated bloc to take the lead. With time, the unstated threat took on a more concrete form. Figures from the territories called on the PLO to adopt Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 as the bases for a political process that would end Israeli control. The PLO did not respond favorably, and consequently calls were sounded in the territories to include local representation in future negotiations with Israel.[2] At the same time, a more

passive approach that also threatened to undermine the PLO's traditional status developed, whereby the Palestinians would seek sovereignty over the whole of mandatory Palestine through a natural demographic process. A direct result of this approach was an ostensible acceptance of the Israeli occupation, which potentially could erode the value of the struggle against Israel and therefore also the PLO's leading status.

The concern among PLO ranks spawned by independent thinking and political activity in the territories was also fed by waves of demonstrations, which multiplied and grew more intense throughout 1987, both in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Additional evidence of the growing militancy in the territories was the rise in the number of attacks on IDF soldiers, particularly by factions and individuals acting without organizational direction. The return of 1,150 detainees to the occupied territories in 1985 in a deal between Israel and the Popular Front–General Command (the "Jibril deal") perhaps supplied a partial explanation for the escalation, but was not enough to explain the range of changes taking place at that time in the territories, including the growing involvement of individuals and groups in the violent struggle against Israel.

The Struggle against Israel: Confrontation

A local incident sparked the fire. The deaths of four Palestinian laborers on the Gaza Strip border, killed when their vehicle was hit by an Israeli truck, gave rise to a rumor that the deadly crash was not unintentional. Within days it became clear that the accident was the opening salvo in a popular uprising. The primary significance of the uprising, then the most violent and longstanding since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Israel, was the return of the focus of the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation from the international arena and Greater Israel's borders to the occupied territories and Israel of the Green Line. The riots spread quickly through the refugee camps, villages, and towns throughout the Gaza Strip and spilled over into the West Bank. In the first weeks of the uprising, the demonstrations, rioting, and clashes were understood as an additional wave, albeit more comprehensive and violent than those preceding it, in a chain of clashes between the Israeli security forces and political activists in the territories. In an attempt to restore calm and deter the rioters, the IDF responded with live fire and tear gas, beatings, and widespread

arrests. In addition to clashes with demonstrators, Israel reacted severely to participation in protests. Activists were expelled, mass administrative detentions took place, curfews were imposed on towns and villages, and universities and colleges were shut down. Maintaining its strategy of dealing with violent and non-violent Palestinian protests, in effect since 1967, Israel responded by funneling massive police and military forces to the territories to counter demonstrators and those directly involved in the violent struggle.

The PLO was accused of setting the territories on fire in order to mobilize popular support as compensation for its reduced political status following the expulsion of its operatives from Lebanon in 1982. This explanation for the uprising was not without some merit: after the expulsion from Lebanon and the failure of PLO efforts in the following years to figure in the regional political process, the PLO was in fact in need of some demonstration of its commitment to the national struggle. And indeed, the PLO's role as leader of the uprising after the outbreak testified to this organizational interest. However, contrary to what was widely claimed in Israel, leading the struggle was not positive proof that the organization had in fact initiated the outbreak. Furthermore, the drive to ascribe responsibility for the deterioration to a concrete party was in itself evidence of the Israeli political establishment's blindness to the militant motivations forming in the territories in two decades of life under foreign rule.

In the first months of the uprising, the struggle focused on both civil disobedience and violence, but was characterized primarily by widespread non-violent civilian involvement. Alongside the civilians participating in the rioting, there were also roving groups of activists who in the early weeks of the uprising organized or joined existing factions. The activists encouraged the public to join the demonstrations, erected roadblocks, and provoked clashes with the security forces in which demonstrators hurled Molotov cocktails and rocks. The attacks even spilled over the Green Line, though in a significantly more limited scope than in the territories themselves. Commercial strikes and general strikes, which became everyday occurrences, were widely observed. The protest included the refusal to pay taxes, boycotts of Israeli-made products, and attempts to develop local alternatives to Israeli industry. This stage of the uprising chiseled its image for many years to come. It was especially effective in

enlisting international awareness and sympathy for the struggle emerging from the territories. Particularly successful in garnering attention were the confrontations between children and teenagers hurling stones and armed IDF soldiers. This representation of the Palestinian struggle captured the headlines of the international written and electronic media, and became embedded in the Palestinian collective memory as the symbol of the willingness to enlist in a unifying national cause.

Suppressing the uprising forced Israel to confront the cost of human lives, both Palestinian and Israeli, along with the economic, political, and moral costs of ruling the territories. The uprising renewed the delineation of the Green Line, in both psychological and geographical terms, and aroused in Israel the drive to formulate conditions for a political-territorial agreement. Because of its actual and potential contribution to raising the level of Arab-Israeli tension, the Palestinian question rose to the top of the regional and international agendas. The American administration resumed its efforts to find a way to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The nations participating in the Arab summit in Algiers in June 1988 expressed their sweeping support for the uprising and granted the PLO control of the Arab financial support for the territories. Of particular significance regarding inter-Arab politics relating to the Palestinian question was Jordan's disengagement from the West Bank. This step was meant to relieve the Hashemite kingdom of responsibility for developments in the territories, and to curb the threat of the Palestinian protest spilling over into its territory. On July 31, 1988, King Hussein announced the legal and administrative separation of Jordan from the West Bank and his recognition of the PLO as the sole bearer of responsibility for representing its population and political future.

The Palestinians paid a steep price for these achievements, beginning with the high number of casualties – dead and wounded – among participants in demonstrations, rioting, and terrorist attacks.[3] Many of these were hurt in clashes with the security forces where attempts were often made to scatter the protesters with rubber bullets, which while meant to decrease the number of casualties were at times lethal. Palestinian villages became the target of frequent acts of vengeance and damage by Israelis living in the territories. In addition, the economic crisis in the territories worsened: developing local alternatives to Israeli products was a slow process, so

basic goods were in short supply, and Jordanian economic support ceased altogether. Welfare, education, and health institutions collapsed and were unable to fulfill the tasks that before the uprising were the responsibility of the Israeli Civil Administration. The ensuing difficulties were compounded by limits on laborers entering Israel, imposed as a result of terrorist attacks, as well as limitations and prohibitions on movement within and from the territories.

During the early months of the uprising, the firm Israeli response was deemed responsible for fueling the riots and unrest. However, time passed and the mass demonstrations died down, and the momentum of the civil disobedience stalled. These developments may also have been seen as a result of the Israeli response to the uprising. The tax boycott and participation in strikes did not expand in the wake of property confiscations, closings of businesses, and fines imposed by the military authorities. There was also a decrease in the number of attacks on vehicles bringing goods from Israel to the territories and on laborers going to work in Israel. The difficulties in operating medical institutions in the territories even led to renewed contacts with hospitals in Israel.

In fact, towards the end of the first year of the uprising, it seemed that the uprising was dissipating. As the mass riots waned and in order to neutralize some of the immediate loci of friction, the Israeli military presence was scaled back in the refugee camps and towns. From the middle of 1989, fewer activists were expelled, and the destruction or sealing of homes in response to terrorist attacks declined. In mid 1991, permits were issued for some new economic initiatives in the territories. The Civil Administration approved a temporary tax exemption for new factories and granted retroactive approval for factories that were built without permits. Likewise, economic assistance to the territories was facilitated, elections to boards of commerce were allowed, and the Civil Administration worked to open educational institutions that had been closed as a result of the riots. Nonetheless, influence of the change in Israel's response policy to the force and scope of the uprising was not unequivocal. The uprising did not die down; rather, it changed form.

As civilian participation in the revolt dwindled, the rate of armed attacks rose. Consequently, Israel's input into the confrontation intensified: special units were engaged in pursuit of activists, sweeping arrests were

conducted regularly, people involved in stone throwing incidents were arrested, a steep fine was demanded of parents for the release of children who had been caught throwing stones, and in October 1990, the Ministry of Defense even approved opening fire at stone throwers if the soldiers' lives seemed in danger. PLO spokespeople generally avoided explicit calls for use of arms, but in the course of dramatic events, such as harsh reactions on the part of the security forces to a terrorist attack or a wave of rioting, activists were urged to escalate the struggle against soldiers and settlers "using every available means."[4] The dwindling number of spontaneous demonstrations spurred the activists in the field to escalate the fighting in order to preserve the spirit of the uprising, thereby also firmly establishing their own status as leaders of the national struggle.[5] The escalation was accompanied by violence directed inward, at Palestinian society itself. The reasons for attacks were political differences of opinion, inter-organizational and inter-factional power struggles, and charges of collaboration with Israel. Attacks meant to settle old personal scores and punish various people for "inappropriate moral behavior" also occurred. The territories were enveloped in an atmosphere of an anarchical struggle, lacking a direction, primary axis, or sense of control.

The Palestinian Arena: An Ostensible Unifying of Ranks

At first the PLO leadership took a fairly hesitant attitude towards the uprising. The mixed responses heard from the organization's spokespeople reflected an understanding of the uprising as a challenge to its traditional status, and in particular as a protest against its longstanding failure to fulfill political promises. Senior personnel in the organization repeatedly declared that the uprising was a direct continuation of the struggle they themselves had been leading for decades. Fatah leader and PLO chairman Yasir Arafat even claimed that the uprising was the implementation of a decision reached at the highest levels, though he did admit that the PLO could not have ignited such a fire in the territories had the residents themselves not supported it.[6] Moreover, the PLO leadership hoped to harness the sense of solidarity generated by the uprising among the local population, as well as the support it garnered from large groups and government circles around the world, i.e., strengthen its international and domestic status. In any case, in the first year of the uprising, translating the uprising into a new balance

of Israeli-Palestinian power was merely a secondary goal. In an attempt to curb the threat forming in the territories, the PLO leadership focused first and foremost on controlling the forces that had led the confrontation against Israel and on gaining a firmer grounding from the uprising's popular character and image.

The challenge faced by the PLO leadership was made concrete when the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) was established during the first days of the uprising. Palestinian Communist Party and Fatah activists were affiliated with UNLU, formed on the basis of a local initiative led by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. West Bank intellectuals were also leading figures in this umbrella group. At least in theory, every organization had equal representation in UNLU, an expression of the common assessment that none of the organizations alone was capable of leading the uprising. Without saying so explicitly, UNLU competed with the veteran national leadership in the diaspora and undermined its claim to exclusive representation of the Palestinian people and supremacy at the forefront of the struggle. In this sense, there was no difference between the local national leadership and the local religious elements that were part of the struggle from its beginning. With time, inter-organizational rivalry developed within UNLU, but at its inception it embodied the atmosphere of national solidarity prevalent in the territories in the first months of the uprising. At that time, the uprising itself was more significant to its leaders than the particular achievements of the organizations vying for supremacy.

UNLU relied on a network of popular regional committees and local task forces, some of which were formed even before the outbreak of the uprising. The local committees, made up of members of different organizations, assumed the responsibility for basic civil services, including charity, food supply, and aid to small businesses. Alongside such activities, the task forces were engaged in a direct struggle against Israel – encouraging demonstrations, rioting, and erecting roadblocks. The local committees enjoyed a not inconsiderable amount of freedom of action. The nature of their members and task forces indicated a radical change in Palestinian society in the years leading up to the outbreak. These young people did not necessarily emerge from the Palestinian social or economic elite, and many had spent time in Israeli prisons for participating in the

violent struggle, which heavily influenced both their personal histories and their public status.

UNLU disseminated its message to the public by means of fliers, and their contents were broadcast simultaneously by the Voice of Palestine in Sana'a and Baghdad. The fliers had a standard format, formulating long term objectives of the struggle and commenting on ongoing developments. Additional paragraphs contained directions for action. Overall, and particularly in the first stage of the uprising, the population was directed to maintain the non-violent nature of the struggle, in order to prevent severe retaliation by Israeli security forces. In addition, the fliers contained directives on severing contact with the Civil Administration. The population was called on to refuse to pay taxes, participate in commercial strikes and demonstrations, and extend aid to the needy and to the victims of the confrontation. The fliers fulfilled a central function in encouraging the gradual weaning from the dependence on Israeli products and creating local alternatives to goods, and the resignation of thousands employed by the police and the Civil Administration from their ranks. The first flier put out by UNLU was signed only by UNLU itself. Thereafter, the fliers issuing calls to the public were signed by both UNLU and the PLO.

Indeed, the first step taken by the Fatah leadership in order to control the uprising concentrated on appropriating UNLU and incorporating it into the PLO. The establishment of UNLU, whose members were institutionally identified with PLO member organizations, in fact made it easier for the traditional leadership to gain control the uprising: UNLU served as an address, and its incorporation into the PLO to form one body provided the organization a direct channel to influence the events while at the same time minimize the scope of competition with local activists. PLO control was assisted greatly by the wave of Israel's arrests of UNLU activists and leaders. In addition, the money transferred to the leaders of the struggle in the territories guaranteed their subordination to the PLO leadership outside the territories. For its part, UNLU accepted – at least publicly – its status as the operational arm of the PLO in the territories, although the increasingly clear need to prevent erosion of popular participation in the struggle eventually turned into a source of contention both within UNLU and the PLO, and between the two.

The outward appearance of solidarity was undermined by the establishment of the Hamas movement and its involvement in the struggle. Hamas – The Islamic Resistance Movement – was organized in the first days of the uprising on the basis of the Islamic associations in the Gaza Strip. When the violence erupted, after years when the Islamic stream had focused its efforts on education and social action, its leaders found themselves in a situation that threatened to leave them on the sidelines of the dynamics developing in the territories and the conflict arena. In order to secure a place for itself in the arena, the movement underwent a strategic transformation and prepared itself for a head-on struggle with Israel. Hamas, led by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, offered an "Islamic solution" to the problems of the Palestinian people. Its platform focused on rejecting a political compromise with Israel, calling for a struggle to liberate Palestine from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, and striving to establish a Palestinian state on the basis of Islamic principles while providing a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. Via Hamas, the Islamic camp grew very quickly to become a central factor in the struggle against Israel. The leadership of the religious stream also credited the uprising to its own consistent penetration over the years into the welfare and education systems in the territories, and in the Gaza Strip in particular. However, unlike the PLO leadership, which viewed the uprising in part as a challenge to its status, Hamas saw it as a direct continuation of the decades-long proselytizing efforts in the Gaza Strip by the Muslim Brotherhood.

With the establishment of Hamas, tension arose between the national and religious currents within the Palestinian political system. Aside from the ideological distinctions between the camps, the new movement symbolized the threat to the PLO's status, as the Hamas base drew on local forces in the territories. However, unlike the local forces identified with PLO member organizations, Hamas positioned itself as an alternative to the PLO – its outside leadership as well as its local extensions. In fact, a significant step in this direction was its noted refusal to join UNLU. The first independent flier issued by Hamas came out as early as December 1987. In August of 1988, Hamas published its charter, which included a bold challenge to the PLO leadership. Its initial formulation included the creation of cells whose purpose was the movement's contribution to the

direct struggle against Israel. The Islamic Jihad factions likewise remained outside UNLU, though unlike Hamas, they did not present themselves as an alternative to the PLO. For its part, the PLO leadership tried to limit Hamas' influence by enlisting it into the national camp. During the first days of the uprising, Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), one of the founders of Fatah, was responsible for putting out feelers regarding coordination between UNLU and the PLO on the one hand, and Hamas on the other, as part of an attempt to form a joint meta-organization for the sake of the struggle, albeit under PLO leadership. However, after the assassination of Wazir on April 16, 1988 by an Israeli unit in Tunis – which proved a futile attempt to suppress the uprising – Hamas withdrew from UNLU. At first, Hamas became firmly established in the Gaza Strip, its home base. The lack of representatives from the Gaza Strip in the ranks of UNLU helped Hamas position itself at the forefront of the struggle in this region alongside forces identified with PLO organizations.

Thus the uprising became the arena for the struggle between the two camps, and the public response to their respective directives became the index for their relative impact. Because of the lack of coordination between the organizations, the population was sometimes directed to observe consecutive strike days. As time passed, Hamas reduced the frequency of its strikes as an expression of sensitivity to the needs of the people and the fatigue resulting from the ongoing strikes and IDF activity against the uprising's activists. The national stream, through UNLU, followed suit. Starting September 1988, the number of strike days decreased dramatically. Despite calls by leaders from outside the territories to persevere in the struggle using the model formed in its early days, the local UNLU leadership called for the schools to remain open in order to prevent the disintegration of the educational system. At the same time, the participation of Hamas activists in attacks on individuals accused of collaborating with Israel grew more common.

Israeli security forces reduced Hamas' freedom of action in the Gaza Strip. The movement's leadership then turned its attention to strengthening its hold on the West Bank. There, as in the Gaza Strip, the movement was founded on mosques and associated religious institutions. On the basis of the existing institutions, which for years had been supported by the Hashemite monarchy, the movement's activists established a network of educational

and charity associations. The results of the elections to the trade unions, held in the territories at the urging of the Israeli civil administration, were evidence of the Islamic movement's growing influence over the Palestinian street. The elections were limited to specific regions, but their results were confirmation of the change in the balance of power in the territories. In 1990, Hamas representatives already won the elections in four trade unions, until then the unchallenged stronghold of the PLO in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: the labor union and branches of UNRWA in Gaza and Ramallah, and the student union at Bir Zeit University. At the same time, on the basis of the response to directives for action formulated in the proclamations issued by Hamas, its cumulative influence during the course of the uprising was noted primarily in the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, its status continued to lag behind the national camp, even after some two decades and another popular uprising in the territories.

Incorporating UNLU within the PLO demonstrated the connection between the generation of leaders that arose from within the territories and the veteran external national leadership, and between the uprising in the territories and the longstanding struggle waged by Palestinian organizations – first and foremost by Fatah. The PLO positioned itself in the Israeli, regional, and international consciousness, and on a decisive level also in the intra-Palestinian arena as the factor pulling the strings of the uprising – both behind the scenes and in the foreground. However, this achievement was marred by the repeated failure of the organization's leadership to convince Hamas to join its institutions and UNLU. Hamas maintained its organizational independence, operational independence, and political freedom of action. Its leadership, claiming to enjoy public support of some 40 percent of the population, demanded a similar rate of representation in the PLO as well. This demand was rejected by the PLO leadership – an expression of its desire to translate the hoped-for political achievements of the uprising into an exclusive political asset on the home front.

The Political Arena: From Dissociation to Dialogue

At the end of the first year of the uprising, as the civilian involvement in the struggle waned, the center of gravity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict moved to the political arena. As early as the first months of the

uprising, Secretary of State George Shultz made several trips to the region in order to jumpstart the idea of an international conference as a setting for negotiations for an Israeli-Palestinian resolution. In the spirit of the prior administrations' positions regarding Palestinian representation in talks, the American initiative called for dialogue between Israel and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. A delegation from the territories, which was affiliated with the Fatah faction in UNLU, presented Shultz with a list of demands to be met by Israel as conditions for the dialogue, yet the initiative was in any case rejected by the Israeli government. The PLO leadership also rejected it, because of the American refusal to accept the organization as a partner to the process.[7] The State Department responded by formulating conditions that once fulfilled would open the door for the PLO for a dialogue with the administration. The main conditions were recognition of Security Council Resolution 242 and ending the violent struggle. In other words, in order to allow the beginning of a Palestinian-American dialogue, the PLO was required to change its longstanding strategies and choose the political path over the operational emphasis on violent struggle. In addition, the organization's leadership had to formulate a new composite political objective: surrender, at least in theory, the vision of liberating mandatory Palestine and accept the existence of the State of Israel.

At the same time, there was increased pressure on the PLO from the territories to adopt a pragmatic policy. A plan attributed to Faisal Husseini was disseminated in the territories calling for the establishment of a 152-member legislative body to operate within the context of the Palestinian National Council to formulate a policy that would lead to the end of the Israeli occupation. This was an explicit expression of the zeitgeist informing the uprising, which in essence forfeited the possibility that Israeli control of the territories and the massive Palestinian assimilation into the Israeli labor market would serve as the basis for demanding equal civil rights and would at a later stage pave the way for the establishment of one state for two nations. This plan, which meant giving up the vision of a secular-democratic state, did not appear on the agenda of the 19th Palestinian National Council, which met in Algiers on November 12-15, 1988. Nonetheless, the convention marked the formulation of a political transformation, with the PLO seeking the diplomatic route. The closing

motion included an agreement to divide the land into two states on the basis of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.[8] This was followed by intense diplomatic activity intended to lead to a formal dialogue between the PLO and the American administration. On December 13, Arafat addressed the UN General Assembly (which met in Geneva, since Arafat was barred from entering the United States), and expressed Palestinian acceptance of an arrangement to be based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and General Assembly Resolution 181. The breakthrough to dialogue between the PLO and the American administration came the following day, when Arafat committed himself to abstain from terrorism "in all its forms."

The retreat from a strategic commitment to violent struggle and the adoption of the principle of negotiations towards an agreement were not designed to elicit immediate Israeli concessions through pressure exerted by the US, nor were they meant to improve the PLO's position to further the "strategy of stages," as claimed by those who doubted the sincerity of the organization's leadership.[9] The purpose was to block certain individuals from the territories from serving as Palestinian representatives in the future talks. An interim objective attendant to adopting the political strategy was thus ensuring the organization's influence over both the composition of the Palestinian delegation to the negotiations and the agenda of the forthcoming talks. Only by doing so could the PLO leadership prevent independent political initiatives on the part of the local leadership from gathering momentum and undercut the possibility for progress towards an agreement, which among other things would bypass the refugee problem and thereby also the PLO itself as representing the Palestinian national movement in both the territories and the diaspora. However, Secretary of State James Baker, with the backing of self-appointed intermediary President Mubarak, insisted that the PLO yield its demand to be the sole representative of the Palestinians in order to allow the talks to begin.

While the uprising proved to be a means for enlisting domestic support for the PLO and promoting external recognition of the organization, these achievements nonetheless increased the tension between the goals the organization was seeking to promote: ensuring exclusivity of representation for the Palestinian cause on the one hand, and ensuring its control of the uprising on the other. The PLO's declared renunciation of terrorism

indicated a recognition of the contradiction between continuing the armed struggle and the demand for political recognition, fraught with the risk that continuing the struggle would erode the recognition – reserved and conditional to begin with – the organization had won as a result of the Geneva declaration. At a press conference in Paris in May 1989, Arafat announced the *caduc* – rescinding – of the PLO charter.

However, on the home front, the PLO member organizations upheld their commitment to the path they had chosen over the years and their intention to pursue the violent struggle, as there was still no tangible political/territorial achievement. Within the PLO's own ranks there was fierce opposition to a political route built on recognition of Israel and concessions. Maintaining closed ranks within the organization itself and shoring up its status domestically outweighed considerations of external recognition and thus undermined a retreat from direct involvement in the violent struggle to an extent that would allow progress to be made in the talks with the United States. By contrast, a political freeze threatened the PLO's status at home, particularly in the territories, where there was growing anticipation of a breakthrough that would finally infuse the suffering resulting from the struggle with some meaning. The PLO leadership thus faced a complex situation in which any action it took to take the sting out of the challenge to its status originating in the territories was liable to undermine its already weak international status. However, responding to demands that were a condition for strengthening its status on the world arena threatened to expose the PLO's leadership to criticism from within the territories and from within the ranks of the organization itself. The inability to decide one way or the other would be a constant feature of the Palestinian national leadership for years to come and would be expressed by a prolonged political stalemate.

At the same time, the divisions deepened within the Israeli unity government, namely, between the Likud bloc, headed by Yitzhak Shamir, which still thought it possible to quell the uprising by military means, and the Labor Party bloc, headed by Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin, which advocated political means to help deal with the challenge. Likud categorically refused to allow any participation by individuals from East Jerusalem or from outside the territories in the Palestinian delegation to the talks, and insisted that the subject of elections in the territories was the sole

issue on the table. Labor's position, however, was closer to the American and Egyptian position. In May 1989, Defense Minister Rabin presented a plan for holding elections in the territories, which were to serve as a basis for forming the Palestinian representation in negotiations of a five-year transition period before autonomy. The Hamas leadership, expecting the election results to affirm its rising status, supported the proposal. The PLO, however, rejected the proposal because it did not include its recognition as the sole representative of the Palestinian cause or an Israeli commitment to a land for peace exchange.[10] In March 1990, Israel's unity government collapsed under the massive pressure exerted by Secretary of State Baker to adopt the initiative of the talks, which was accompanied by the US threat to withhold from Israel loan guarantees meant to finance the absorption of the wave of immigration from the former USSR.[11] These developments demonstrated the growing sensitivity of the political system in Israel to events in the conflict arena.[12]

The American-Palestinian dialogue was also cut short. The administration suspended the talks because of Arafat's refusal to condemn an attempted attack on Israel by a cell of the Palestinian Liberation Front, a member organization of the PLO. The initiative for the attack was attributed to the Iraqi regime. Egypt, which had recently rejoined the Arab League as a member in good standing after years of being ostracized for signing a peace treaty with Israel, responded by severing its relations with the PLO. Militant declarations made at the time by Iraqi president Saddam Hussein emphasized the centrality of the Palestinian issue to the Arab cause, and fed the expectations in the territories that Iraq would generate a breakthrough in this stalemate. These expectations were fulfilled, though not necessarily in the way anticipated.

The tortuous path of the political process prompted a closer relationship between the PLO and Iraq. PLO representatives took part in an Arab summit meeting in Baghdad in May 1990, where the first issue on the agenda was the immigration to Israel from the former Soviet republics. The Iraqi regime promised aid to the PLO to continue the uprising, and as an expression of the closer relationship, PLO command centers and forces moved to Baghdad from Yemen, Algeria, and Jordan. The identification of the Palestinian population in the territories, Lebanon, and Jordan with the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was expressed by stormy

demonstrations. PLO spokespeople led the strident line, yet the PLO's public support for Iraq incurred intense criticism by Arab nations. Arafat was denied the right to speak before the plenum of the Arab summit in Cairo just a few days after the invasion. The states incensed by the Iraqi move responded with more than rhetoric against the PLO. PLO representatives and activists of the various organizations were expelled from the Gulf states, and extreme economic sanctions were placed on the organization. Fundraising on behalf of the PLO and the residents of the territories stopped. During the 1991 US-led war in Iraq, a curfew was imposed on the territories and Palestinian laborers were completely barred from working in Israel. These factors deepened the economic crisis further.[13] However, even if the motivation for the escalation of the struggle emerged when the Gulf War broke out, it was reined in by the closure and the fear of a harsh Israeli response.

The crisis in the Gulf boosted diplomatic efforts to stabilize the Middle East, particularly via advancing an Arab-Israeli settlement. As an expression of solidarity marking the end of the Cold War, the Bush administration, of one mind with Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, acted to convene a regional conference. In light of the PLO's political isolation, as well as the cumulative fatigue from the cost of the confrontation in casualties and in infrastructures, the differences of opinion between the Tunis-based PLO leadership and leaders in the territories grew even stronger. The latter demanded that the PLO relax its position on the composition of the Palestinian representation that would guarantee its participation in the talks. In line with the American demand (and despite the opposition of the Popular Front and the Democratic Front), the PLO's executive committee authorized the participation of representatives from the territories as part of the Palestinian-Jordanian delegation in the planned conference. This formula, which had been rejected in the past, was less threatening to the PLO than the possibility that an independent delegation from the territories would represent the Palestinian cause.

Sidelining the Insiders

The International Conference for Peace in the Middle East, convening in Madrid in late October 1991, marked the start of bilateral talks between Israel and Arab states and multilateral discussions about issues on the regional

agenda. Contact between Israel and the Palestinian representatives took place as planned in the context of the talks between a delegation headed by Government Secretary Elyakim Rubinstein and the Jordanian delegation. The PLO was not an official participant in the process, though it was involved in the talks by means of its ongoing contacts with representatives from the territories who joined the Jordanian delegation. The talks focused on technical and procedural issues, and at least regarding the Palestinian issue, ultimately led nowhere. Above all, they reflected the intensity of the mutual suspicions and the chasm between the Palestinian and the Israeli visions regarding an eventual agreement.

The representatives from the territories sought to formulate understandings that would ease the burden on the local population and ensure the continuum between immediate gestures and a future permanent resolution. For its part, the Israeli delegation avoided topics of substance, and thus the Palestinian delegation claimed that for the Likud government, the talks were a means to perpetuate the existing situation and legitimate continued occupation of the territories. At the same time, the PLO leadership was highly concerned that at some stage the delegation from the territories would reach an understanding with their Israeli counterparts. Yet because from its perspective the Washington talks were first and foremost a means for renewing a dialogue with the American administration, it too supported a continuation of the talks. Despite the PLO's political weakness and the divisions within its ranks, the organization remained a symbol of Palestinian national aspirations. Therefore, the local leadership needed its blessing to translate its rising domestic and international status into practical political influence. However, the delegation from the territories sought to expand its influence on the PLO's decision making process. Therefore, the Washington talks became an arena of contention between the "inside" forces and the Palestinian national leadership based in Tunis.

In December 1992, the talks were suspended by the Palestinian representatives. The immediate cause was the expulsion of over four hundred activists and Islamic leaders, mostly Hamas operatives, from the Gaza Strip to Lebanon in response to the kidnapping and murder of an Israeli soldier. The Palestinian delegation conditioned its return to the negotiating table on the immediate repatriation of those expelled. The PLO leadership took a more flexible approach, and advocated a renewal

of the talks in return for a promise to gradually return those expelled. The Labor Party victory in the Knesset elections of June 1992 reflected the disappointment of the Israeli public with the Likud government's handling of the ongoing uprising. Labor's campaign had stressed the intention to promote an interim agreement in the territories. Yitzhak Rabin's promise "to take Gaza out of Tel Aviv" reflected a recognition of growing public support for the "Gaza first" idea. In order to allow the renewal of the talks, Rabin, then prime minister and minister of defense, rescinded the ban on dialogue with people from the territories affiliated with the PLO.

The Israeli government's agreeing to talk with a delegation from the territories headed by Faisal Husseini convinced the Palestinian representatives to return to the negotiating table. Under Egyptian, British, and American pressure, accompanied by the promise of a renewal of financial support from the Gulf states, Arafat authorized the Palestinian representatives to participate in the next round of talks. However, the talks, which resumed in April 1993, did not yield anything new. The Palestinian delegation rejected the draft of the interim agreement placed on the table by President Clinton's administration with the claim that it was very close to the familiar Israeli position that even in the wake of the Labor victory had changed little. An additional difficulty in advancing an understanding stemmed from Arafat's demand that Jerusalem be included on the agenda, despite the concern expressed by the Palestinian delegation that raising the issue would spell failure of the talks. Indeed, about a month after their renewal, the negotiations hit a dead end and Arafat announced a suspension.

The PLO leadership and in particular the leadership of Fatah were now in a position in which both the success of the talks in Washington as well as their failure would undercut their status. Progress towards an Israeli-Palestinian accord would be credited to the delegation from the territories, whereas suspension of the talks without results would postpone the translation of American recognition of the PLO into a concrete political achievement to some distant future. In the background, Hamas persisted in its efforts to escalate the uprising: by exacerbating the conflict, the Hamas leadership sought to prevent the PLO from reaping the fruits of the political move made by its leadership at the end of the first year of the uprising. In an attempt to curb the erosion of the PLO, Arafat instructed

that the unofficial dialogue taking place concurrently in Oslo between PLO representatives and Israeli representatives be accelerated.[14]

The idea for the secret talks first came up in a meeting between Terje Larsen of the Norwegian Institute for Applied Social Research and Yossi Beilin, then deputy minister of foreign affairs in the Israeli government. President Mubarak also supported the idea. Israel's agreeing to the talks was motivated by the need to formulate an alternative to the blocked official channel and by the concern about a crisis in the relationship with the United States as a result of the deadlock. The talks, kept secret from the delegations to the official talks trailing along in Washington, began in December 1992 and were held under the auspices of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. The talks focused on economic coordination between Israel and the territories and the rights and responsibilities to be enjoyed by a temporary Palestinian authority. Arafat, who viewed the talks as yet another possible means to renewing a dialogue with the United States, gave them his blessing despite the clear risk inherent in granting Israel de facto recognition in exchange for uncertain benefits. The secretive nature of the Oslo talks ensured that Arafat and his inner circle were at least temporarily free of regional and inter-organizational pressures from Arab governments and opposition elements within the PLO.

In May 1993, the Israeli delegation offered Arafat a foothold in Gaza, in the spirit of "Gaza first." Arafat responded with a demand for a foothold in the West Bank as well, and suggested a formula of "Gaza and Jericho first." Rabin, who like Arafat was concerned by the escalation of the violent struggle in the territories, the PLO's gradually weakening control over the course of the uprising, and the growing influence of the Islamic camp, accepted the counter-offer. Another source of worry was the dead end between Israel and Syria in the Washington talks as a result of Israel's categorical refusal for a comprehensive withdrawal from the Golan Heights. The need to nonetheless move the political process forward directed Israeli attention towards the talks held in Oslo.

The delegations formulated a declaration of principles about interim arrangements of an autonomous government (together with the PLO) in the territories. The plan outlined a gradual process that would last no more than five years and lead to a permanent settlement on the basis of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 383. The document presented a detailed

plan for Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho region and the establishment of an authority for autonomous rule in the territories to include education, health, welfare, taxation, and tourism administrations; further, the document formulated a plan for holding elections for the Palestinian authority in July 1994. These principles were meant to furnish the psychological and political foundations for discussing the permanent agreement, which was supposed to begin two years after the signing of the document of principles. Formulation of the document concluded on August 20, 1993. Over the next few days, information about the talks and their contents was leaked to the Israeli press.

Arafat was concerned that the negotiated principles would arouse bitter controversy in the PLO and might even lead to a split in the Fatah leadership. However, the need to maintain relevancy for the political process demanded at least formally declared recognition of the State of Israel. Therefore, Arafat deviated from his traditional strategy, which was to translate Palestinian domestic support for the PLO and inter-organizational support for Fatah into international recognition, and instead chose to try and translate international recognition into domestic and inter-organizational support for Fatah. On September 13, 1993, the main stream in the PLO celebrated its recognition by Israel as the sole legitimate representative of a political entity entitled to self-determination and territorial sovereignty. The Declaration of Principles was officially signed at a ceremony on the White House lawn, marking the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Palestinian national movement and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[15]

The Second Uprising

Setting the Stage

The Palestinian Authority was inaugurated in Jericho and the Gaza Strip in June 1994 on the basis of the agreement signed between the Israeli government and the PLO.[16] In September 1995, Oslo II was signed between the sides; this agreement focused on the gradual transfer of territories to Palestinian control and the format for elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council. It was further agreed that negotiations for a permanent agreement would begin no later than May 4, 1996.[17] The elections took place in January 1996. As anticipated, the results gave Fatah control of the Legislative Council. The joy occasioned by the arrival of the movement's leadership in the territories was the popular counterpart to Fatah's electoral victory. Both reflected widespread recognition of Fatah as the organization that led the Palestinian national movement to this historic achievement, and therefore as entitled to the leadership that was now charged with realizing the potential of the moment. Arafat was appointed chairman of the Palestinian Authority.

The PA – which was, in fact, an extension of the PLO – was granted the formal mandate to construct the infrastructure for an independent Palestinian state. The veteran Palestinian leadership was supposed to promote this mission, in all its complex economic, social, and political aspects, while at the same time waging an ongoing struggle to consolidate its own status. Not only did Israeli policy reflect skepticism as to the PA's capability, not to mention its willingness to embrace new objectives and patterns of action, but from its first day in office Fatah's leadership at the PA helm was forced to deal with domestic militant opposition that challenged its popular support. The intra-Palestinian rivalries that surfaced during the first uprising would over the coming years mold the relationship between the PA and the population of the territories, and between the PA

and Israel. The dynamics created in the Israeli-Palestinian arena were in part the reason that the discussions over the permanent status settlement did not begin within the designated timeframe.

The Oslo Accords included concrete action items that were meant to serve an essentially amorphous objective – building mutual trust, without which it would be impossible to proceed to discussing issues relating to the permanent settlement. The leadership on both sides hoped to build trust gradually by following the steps detailed in the accords, yet each side signed the accords based on the expectation of an immediate change in the policy of the other. From Israel's perspective, the end of the violent struggle was the most important means for building trust. A change in the struggle's strategy was supposed to signal a transformation in its purpose, and therefore an absolute ceasefire was, from the point of view of the Israeli governments – that which approved the Declaration of Principles and those that came afterwards – a condition for Israel's fulfilling its obligations. For their part, the Palestinians expected steps that would demonstrate an Israeli intention of widespread if not comprehensive withdrawal. From the Palestinian perspective, halting construction in the territories and evacuating settlements were meant to justify and encourage abandoning the violent struggle, after years when precisely violence was the mainstay of PLO's strategy and that which conferred upon Fatah senior inter-organizational status. At the same time, the dependence between what was expected of Israel and the PA defined the potential for opposition elements to undercut the political process and undermine the very foundations of the PA.

The Islamic current, including Izz a-Din al-Qassam, the military arm of Hamas, and Islamic Jihad capitalized on Israel's routine responses to terrorist attacks to campaign against the process and the PA. Indeed, the armed struggle they continued to wage played a decisive role in undermining the hopes both sides had pinned on the Oslo Accords. As the festive signing ceremony receded in memory, mutual disappointments accumulated over time and eroded the little trust that had allowed the signing in the first place and the already qualified willingness to pay the price involved in fulfilling respective commitments.

Oslo II was signed against a background of a heated argument in Israel as to the political and security wisdom in transferring territories to PA control. The debate was aggravated by terrorist attacks, in particular the

suicide attacks that since 1994 had become part of Hamas' operational repertoire.[18] The argument was further fueled by declarations made from time to time by Palestinian spokespeople, including Arafat, whereby the peace process was nothing but a step on the way to liberating all of Palestine. On the other side, the ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements in the territories was a pressing issue on the Palestinian agenda and became a cause and/or pretext – there is no way and no point to try to distinguish between the motives – to continue the terrorist attacks. In an effort to extricate the political process from a dead end, then-Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Yossi Beilin and Mahmoud Abbas, second in command in the PLO under Arafat, formulated a detailed settlement proposal, the "Document of Understandings for a Permanent Settlement between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization." The document, never formally signed, attracted much attention both in Israel and the territories but did not generate an in-depth, purposeful discussion of its details, certainly not a joint Israeli-Palestinian deliberation.

Dramatic and painful testimony to the difficulties that remained with regard to jumpstarting the political process came with the assassination of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin on November 4, 1995. The assassin was a member of the Israeli radical right that was vehemently opposed to the transfer of any territories to PA control. The government headed by Shimon Peres, Rabin's successor, rejected the Beilin-Abu Mazen document, in effect acknowledging that the time to begin discussing the permanent resolution lay in the future. In early 1996, the government transferred five West Bank cities to PA control, though as a result of a wave of suicide attacks, it postponed transferring control of Hebron.

In June 1996, after an election campaign that was dominated by the issue of Islamic terrorism, a new Israeli government headed by Binyamin Netanyahu was sworn in. The results could be viewed as a Hamas achievement.[19] Three months later, the crisis between Israel and the PA deepened. Rioting broke out in Jerusalem following the opening of an entry to the Western Wall tunnel of the Temple Mount complex at the directive of Prime Minister Netanyahu. The clashes between demonstrators and Israeli soldiers spread to other parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and took the lives of dozens of Israelis and Palestinians. In January 1997, as the result of pressures from the Clinton administration to renew the process,

Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat agreed on a withdrawal of IDF troops from Hebron. In October 1998, Israel and the PLO yet again agreed on a redeployment of IDF troops in the West Bank and on the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.[20] The IDF withdrew from several areas of the West Bank, but contact between the two sides was again suspended because of a wave of terrorist attacks. However, in the Knesset elections of May 1999, against the background of a deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian arena and dialogue with Arab states begun in the framework of the Declaration of Principles for Interim Self-Government Arrangements, the Labor party returned as the ruling party. More than principled and consistent support for either the harder line taken by Likud or the policy of compromise represented by Labor, Israel's electoral swings demonstrated the desire for an answer to the rising tide of Palestinian violence, including some sort of political breakthrough.[21]

The escalation in terrorist attacks was gradual and came in waves parallel to events that Hamas and Islamic Jihad felt demanded a response, including contacts between Israel and the PA about Oslo II or discussions regarding the Legislative Council elections. The dialogue between Israel and the PA, though far from ensuring progress towards an historical compromise, presented the Islamic camp and Hamas in particular with a strategic challenge: joining the path sketched out by the PA would erode the logic underlying both its ideological objective and its organizational existence, but staying in the opposition was also problematic. When the PA was established, Hamas' political path lost something of its luster, and the movement was losing support in the territories. Its leadership had to carve out a method to leave its imprint on the Palestinian arena. Meantime, cracks in the united ranks between the local Hamas leadership headed by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and the external branch of the movement headquartered in Jordan and Damascus began to emerge.[22] The local leadership sought to reach an understanding with the PA in order to develop its civilian infrastructure and continue on its mission to capture the hearts and minds of the population. The PA for its part strove to regulate relations with Hamas so that the political process could continue, while the PA would continue to solidify its domestic and international standing.

Unlike the local leadership, Hamas leaders in the diaspora adopted a hard line. They led Hamas' attempt to form a coalition of rejectionist

organizations, a move that failed as a result of the left wing organizations' accusation that Hamas' struggle against Israel and the Oslo process was not tough enough. They encouraged the military wing of the movement to persist in the violent struggle and were also the ones who tipped the scales against the movement's participation in the Legislative Council elections. The concurrent terrorist attacks demonstrated simultaneously the limits of the PA's influence over opposition factions, and the limits of the local Hamas leadership's influence over the activists of the military wing of the movement itself. In 1994, after an incident in which Palestinian policemen opened fire on Hamas demonstrators, Fatah and Hamas reached an understanding on the need to refrain from direct confrontation with one another. Hamas even recognized the Palestinian police's exclusive authority to bear arms in public in the Gaza Strip, though it refused to expand the agreement to include the West Bank as well. In the summer of 1997, as a result of an effort by the PA to weaken Hamas' main stronghold – the welfare and educational institutions – the Hamas spokesmen in the territories mentioned readiness to consider a ceasefire in the struggle against Israel. Israel dismissed the idea, and it was likewise rejected by the Hamas military wing.

The opposition's responsibility for the majority of the terrorist attacks did not temper the outrage the terrorism aroused in Israel. In response to the attacks and to the PA's failure to prevent them, Israel – as expected – hindered the political process: in addition to postponement of the implementation of plans to redeploy in the territories, contacts between Israel and the PA were suspended; curfews were imposed frequently on large areas, and at times the territories were under complete lockdown. Entrance of Palestinian laborers to work in Israel was limited and sometimes denied altogether. Although in the second half of the 1990s the Palestinian economy grew, the steps taken by Israel in response to terrorist attacks slowed the growth.[23] A comprehensive, long-lasting closure of the territories catapulted unemployment to double digits. Hardships were felt particularly in the Gaza Strip, which lacked its own economic infrastructure, and the sector dependent on agricultural export to Israel was especially hard hit. However, popular rage was not directed at Hamas, rather against Israel and especially the PA. A determined struggle by the PA against the militants was supposed to prevent or at least slow down the decline of the PA's

image among the Israeli public and political establishment. Indeed, as the result of pressure exerted by Israel and the American administration, the PA took steps to weaken the Hamas and Islamic Jihad military infrastructures. Nonetheless, the PA's awareness of its shaky position at home dictated a hesitant approach that did nothing to stop the motivation and capabilities of the militant factions to escalate the confrontation, and therefore did not contribute to an improvement in its international status.

In fact, the PA's war on terrorism, limited though it was, was considered a policy serving Israeli interests that did not earn reasonable returns, and therefore it became another reason for the growing alienation of the PA with the local Palestinian population. Common to both the radical Islamic camp and the national camp – including local factions identified with Fatah yet opposing the PA – was a shared background. This was the generation that led the uprising that produced a political process and the establishment of the PA, which in turn drove them from the center of the political system that was evolving in the territories. A very small coterie of PA personnel and their inner circles had access to the resources channeled to the territories to build an economic infrastructure. While this small group grew rich, the public at large was left behind. Aside from a proven failure to fulfill the promise of the political process and an inappropriate use of contribution funds, criticism of the PA was further inflamed by the systematic civil rights abuses, a failure to advance democratization, and the silencing of calls for liberal norms and good governance. Without concrete evidence of any benefit to the local population from the political process, it was hard for the PA to gain any mandate for a determined struggle against the Islamic opposition, which was endowed with solid operational capabilities and a growing civil infrastructure.

Predictably, Israel and the PA had differences of opinion on the reasons for the political deadlock. In September 1997, the Israeli government made public a list of the Palestinians' violation of the Oslo Accords. Focusing on terrorism, the list included the unfulfilled demand that the PA destroy the military infrastructure of all Palestinian organizations and factions, particularly the Hamas civil infrastructure. The PA responded with a list of its own, which focused on welfare and the economy. It included the demand to release the taxes Israel had collected on behalf of the PA and then frozen in response to the terrorist attacks. Additional demands were lifting

restrictions on agricultural export from the territories and authorization for completing construction of a seaport and airport in the Gaza Strip. The PA also demanded that Israel free Palestinian prisoners, and insisted on the cessation of settlement construction in the territories.[24]

The lists reflected contradictory perspectives about the connection between the violent Palestinian struggle and the political process. From Israel's point of view, terrorism was the reason for the deadlock. To the Palestinians, Israel's policy, and especially the responses to the attacks, motivated the violence. Particularly frustrating to the PA was Israel's unwillingness to accept that the terrorist attacks were meant to hurt the chances for an understanding between the sides. In any case, developments connected to the cycle of violence – terrorist attacks on the one hand, and Israeli responses on the other – demonstrated the already weak foundations for building mutual trust.

The inability to revive the political process by incremental, phased progress, subject to the fulfillment of the demands of the previous stage, guided the effort to promote an arrangement separate from the Oslo process. In September 1999, incoming prime minister Ehud Barak and PA chairman Yasir Arafat met in Sharm al-Sheikh and drafted a timetable for implementing signed agreements and renewing the talks about a permanent status agreement.[25] This summit meeting ended without any breakthrough. In July 2000, the two leaders met again in Camp David, this time with President Clinton. The talks ended without an understanding: this was the undisputed result of the summit meeting, even if there were different versions of the proposals reportedly put on the negotiating table by Israel, the PA, and the US administration.[26] From the Israeli perspective, the concessions reportedly offered to the Palestinians were sweeping, but they were far from what Arafat was prepared and able to accept in exchange for a commitment to end the conflict, a demand that for Israel was an irrevocable condition for an agreement on a permanent resolution. Barak's proposal for permanent borders between Israel and the Palestinian state left non-contiguous territories under PA control, which would necessarily result in a host of administrative and economic difficulties. Accepting Israel's position vis-à-vis the refugee problem would have left the Palestinians in the diaspora outside the framework of a settlement. From the PA's perspective, any compromise on the issue might have undermined

its domestic status even more. In addition, PA representatives came to the summit without inter-Arab backing and therefore without a mandate to make substantive concessions on any core issue.[27]

A few weeks after the failed summit, the PA presented itself at the forefront of the second uprising, which like the first was set off by a local event that released pent-up tension. Unlike the sequence of events before the outbreak of the first uprising, this time the potential for conflagration was clear. The visit by opposition leader Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount in late September 2000 was the incident that ignited the fire. Rioting that broke out in the territories developed into clashes between demonstrators and Israeli security forces.

From the end of the Camp David conference until the outbreak of the uprising, the PA was focused on enlisting international and especially pan-Arab support for the status it enjoyed during the talks, and on supplying explanations for their failure. Concomitantly, the Palestinian security agencies prepared for the possibility of a direct confrontation with Israel. Once the rioting broke out, the PA had an opportunity to try to rehabilitate its international standing by diverting public attention to Israel's harsh response. In addition, by standing at the forefront of the struggle, the PA sought to fortify its status at home. In this sense, the PA was trapped: as with the first uprising, in light of the growing rioting and clashes with Israeli security forces, the PA had no choice but to place itself at the head of the camp if it wanted to keep holding the reins of leadership. The institutional advantages of this goal outweighed even the long term political costs that would unquestionably be incurred by the renewed violent conflict.

The Struggle against Israel: Confrontation

As in the first uprising, a central objective of the Palestinian national leadership was to promote the popular image of the second uprising – the al-Aqsa Intifada. Therefore, the PA encouraged the active involvement of the various armed factions as well as the security apparatuses in the riots. From keeping public order, the regional preventive security apparatuses and Tanzim factions – street forces – were reassigned to leading violent disturbances.[28] This redirection of Fatah-associated task forces, meant to protect the PA from losing control of the street, shortened the spontaneous, popular phase of the uprising. The organized violence escalated quickly. Al-

Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, coming from the ranks of Tanzim and nominally affiliated with Fatah – though not practically under the authority of the movement's leadership – joined the violent effort. This front was also joined by factions from Islamic Jihad, the Izz a-Din al-Qassam military wing of Hamas, and the Popular Front. These elements competed for the glory that quickly became the symbol of the escalated struggle against Israel: suicide attacks within the Green Line.[29] However, loosening the reins was a double-edged sword. Leadership of the uprising passed into the hands of the local militant factions and the institutionalized opposition organizations.

In the first months of the uprising there was still diplomatic activity under American auspices, meant to renew the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. In October 2000, a summit meeting between Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat was convened in Sharm al-Sheikh under the auspices of President Clinton. The meeting was dedicated to discussing understandings that would lead to an end of violence, yet the confrontation continued. In December, President Clinton publicized his mediation proposal. Highlights of what became known as the Clinton parameters were: the establishment of a Palestinian state, to include the Gaza Strip and most of the territories of the West Bank; a solution to the refugee problem whereby refugees could repatriate to the future Palestinian state or find homes in a third country; and division of Jerusalem such that Arab areas would be under Palestinian control and Jewish areas under Israeli control. In January 2001, Israeli and Palestinian delegations met in Taba, Egypt, to focus on the permanent status agreement. The meeting, however, concluded only with an announcement of the joint intention to implement a security arrangement consistent with the understandings reached at the Sharm summit. The escalation in the confrontation, accelerated after the Taba talks, demonstrated that the meeting was too late even for this modest interim goal. Moreover, fundamental commitments from the Israeli delegation were in effect impossible, since the Barak government had fallen and the Israeli political system was in the midst of an election campaign for prime minister.

As with the outbreak of the first uprising, Israel responded to the organized violence with an iron fist, which further fueled the fire.[30] The rapid escalation of the uprising – weapons transferred to the PA security forces with Israeli approval made this possible – encouraged Israel's

determination to act with far greater severity to curb it than during the first uprising. Counteraction included the use of airpower to target activists from the political and especially military wings of the organizations associated with the violence.[31] The result of the February 2001 elections for prime minister ousted Labor as the ruling party and granted the mandate for establishing a government to Likud leader Ariel Sharon, who was seen as capable of containing the situation. The war on terror and especially on Islamic militants announced by the American administration after September 11, 2001 was interpreted by the Sharon-led government as a green light to act uncompromisingly against the rioters.

Because the PA was seen as responsible for the outbreak of the confrontation, Israel held it responsible for bringing the confrontation to a halt, though early on it was clear that the uprising was out of control. Israeli military action, which from the outset was intended to force the PA to rein in the street forces, very quickly took on the character of a focused drive to punish the PA for its direct and indirect involvement in the rioting and terrorist attacks, and to undermine its foundations. The PA, a representational body established on the basis of a commitment to political dialogue and abandonment of the violent struggle, provided Israel with a target in an attempt to impose calm. The PA was a clearer and more defined target than the PLO, which was the address for military and diplomatic activity to quell the first uprising. The PA was no longer seen in Israel as a partner to a strategic dialogue or as the address for security coordination, rather as a rival responsible for disappointment and frustration, and therefore a target for accusations and efforts to weaken it to the point of political irrelevance.[32] PA institutions and symbols – police stations, security forces, compounds, and Arafat's own headquarters – became direct targets for IDF attacks. Israel again resumed control of areas that until the outbreak of the uprising were under PA control. In turn, the ability of the PA's security forces to affect what transpired was eroded, both for good and for bad.[33]

The Israeli response grew correspondingly harsher, and the Palestinian economy again found itself in crisis. As during the first uprising, closures of large areas of the territories made it hard to maintain contact with the outside world.[34] As before, however, curfews, closures, arrests, and military attacks did not entirely put an end to the terrorist attacks. The majority of the Palestinian public, while consistently supporting a negotiated agreement,

also supported continuing the struggle, hoping that an ongoing confrontation would weaken Israel's international standing. Indeed, throughout the conflict Israel was widely accused of using excessive force, causing the deaths of civilians, and destroying Palestinian infrastructures.[35]

Despite its doubts about the chances to rehabilitate the PA's control in the territories, the American administration acted to renew security coordination between Israel and the PA. However, these efforts ran into a multi-dimensional obstacle: the PA refused to commit itself to a period of calm as long as Israel maintained its military presence in the territories and as long as the political deadlock remained unchanged, and the Israeli presence in the territories was presented as an insurmountable barrier to governmental reform. On the other hand, Israel, having expanded its control over the territories in the wake of the upsurge in terrorist attacks, refused the demand to withdraw as long as the PA failed to commit itself to decisive action against terrorism.[36] The contradiction between the Israeli and Palestinian perspectives on the link between the cycle of violence and the political deadlock matched the opposing logic used by Palestinian and Israeli officials and spokespeople during the years preceding the uprising to explain the connection between the terrorist attacks and the delays in Israeli withdrawal from the territories. The outbreak also supplied the two sides with an after the fact justification for the difficulty in bridging the political gaps, and therefore the failure to bring the Oslo process to its designated conclusion.

The suicide attack on Passover eve March 27, 2002 at a hotel in Netanya was a particularly showcase-type incident in a sequence of suicide attacks. Two days later, after some weeks of avoiding massive retaliation – expressed by Prime Minister Sharon's assertion that restraint would transmit a message of strength – the IDF expanded its activities in the West Bank in Operation Defensive Shield. Four weeks later, towns and refugee camps were again under Israeli military control. The escalation of the confrontation was one of the reasons for the Israeli political establishment's concurrent ignoring of a development that might have become the basis for renewing Israeli-Palestinian dialogue in a regional setting. In late March, the Arab summit conference in Beirut dealt with the principles of an Arab-Israeli settlement based on a Saudi initiative. The concluding statement of the summit called for Israel's withdrawal to the 1967 borders in return for a normalization of

relations between it and the Arab states. This initiative, in contrast to the international initiative that brought about the Madrid Conference in 1991, was the result of inter-Arab diplomacy, which made it subject to traditional suspicions on Israel's part. In any event, reference in Israel to this proposal was relegated to the margins of public discourse against the background of the military move underway in the West Bank.[37] A full five years would pass before the initiative would again reappear on the regional agenda and garner international interest.

While Israel was criticized internationally for the renewed conquest of the West Bank, the PA also did not escape unscathed. The suffering of the residents of the territories did not earn the PA any credit, rather served as additional evidence of its failed conduct, evinced by its role when the riots that launched the uprising escalated into sweeping organized violence, and by its inability to prevent the militant opposition from dictating the agenda. In June 2002, President Bush again emphasized America's commitment to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, and also called for the establishment of a Palestinian leadership untainted by terrorism. His speech demonstrated a significant loss of stature for the PA, as it both affirmed the Palestinians' national rights while at the same time undermined the PLO's longstanding claim to being the exclusive Palestinian national representative. A change in the Palestinian leadership was presented by President Bush as a condition for progress towards realizing Palestinian national aspirations.[38]

This approach was the basis of "The Roadmap for Peace in the Middle East." The Roadmap was originally formulated by the European Union, which was less critical of the PA than the American administration. In September 2002, it was adopted by the Quartet, composed of the United States, Russia, the EU, and the UN, which was established in order to promote an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. The final version of the Roadmap was published in April 2003, after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and as part of the effort to construct a new Middle East agenda. The Roadmap reflected the general intention of the administration to spread democracy in the region as a means of blocking rising Islamic radicalism, and reflected the assessment – or at least the hope – that democratizing the Palestinian system would help advance an Israeli-Palestinian settlement and thus contribute to stabilization of the region.

The Roadmap detailed three stages, starting with a cessation of violence and reforms in the PA, followed by general elections in the territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state within provisional borders, and finally the formulation of a permanent settlement in the course of 2005.[39] The Israeli government adopted the Roadmap despite its opposition to the document's emphasis on IDF activity and continued construction in the territories as catalysts for Palestinian violence, and to its lack of conditioning progress on the basis of "step by step" (though it was defined as "performance based"). Israel's demand that the Palestinians be required to give up their claim to a right of return in the interim stage and not as part of negotiations over the permanent settlement was rejected. Still, as long as the PA did not act directly against factions involved in terrorist attacks, Israel did not see itself as obligated to lessen the military pressure, stop settlement momentum in the territories, or adhere to the timetable laid out in the Roadmap. In addition, the demand for elections in the territories suited the Israeli stance in that the PA, especially as headed by Yasir Arafat, was no longer a partner for dialogue.

The PA was also exposed to harsh criticism at home. The tension between the veteran leadership and the younger generation of Fatah members was reflected in the declining control over the Tanzim ranks, and was expressed in the closer relationship between al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Lebanese Hizbollah. Frustration resulting from the PA's helplessness in the face of the deteriorated security situation, disappointment with its continuing inability to jumpstart a political process, and rage at its corrupt and inefficient conduct on the civil level fueled harsh public condemnation.[40] In the summer of 2002, in light of the erosion in the PA's status, calls from within the Fatah ranks were heard for administrative reforms, a revamping of the security forces, and a return to the pattern of popular struggle that characterized the first chapter of the first uprising. The PA's leadership was asked to consider the burden thrust onto the shoulders of the population and to set realistic goals for the struggle. The Israeli government and the American administration joined together in a demand for administrative reforms and greater efficiency in the PA's law enforcement bodies.

The combination of domestic and external pressure on the PA set a process of change in motion. In June, even before President Bush's call for a change in leadership in the PA and the Quartet's adoption of the

Roadmap, Arafat presented an institutional reform program that included appointment of a Cabinet; the intention was to respond to the American administration, the EU, and domestic critics. However, the Cabinet was staffed by Fatah old-timers and therefore did not bespeak willingness on Arafat's part to make room for the movement's intermediate generation. Moreover, he ensured that structural changes made in the PA's security branches would not impinge on his control. Arafat thus avoided moves that might have improved the PA international image because of their two-pronged cost: weakening both the organizational strongholds of the founding generation of Fatah and his own personal position. At the same time, he appointed Salaam Fayyad, an economist who enjoyed the trust of both the Israelis and the Americans, as finance minister in the government. The goal was to deflect criticism of corruption in the PA and focus on the Palestinians' economic plight. Israel responded by releasing some of the tax revenues that it had not transferred to the PA since the beginning of the uprising. In March 2003, Mahmoud Abbas, a member of the old guard of Fatah, was appointed prime minister. Abbas lacked a power base of his own, and his status derived from his many years of close association with Arafat. However, from the first day of the uprising he had expressed opposition to violent struggle. Therefore, his appointment symbolized a willingness to reassess the PA's contribution to the confrontation cycle and the cost-benefit ratio over the course of the years.

With the reduced scope of the terrorist attacks – attributed to Israel's renewed control of the territories and the steady pursuit of activists from among Hamas and other militant factions – Abbas sought to formalize a ceasefire. He invested much effort into an attempt to regulate the relationship between Fatah and Hamas, in effect acknowledging that the rivalry between the movements was a key factor in the deteriorated relationship between Israel and the PA and in the status of the PA itself. About a decade earlier, efforts by the PLO leadership to marginalize politically both the Islamic opposition and the local branches of the organization itself were successful. The integration of the PLO leadership into the political process was meant to fortify its status vis-à-vis these elements. Now too the PA leadership sought to fortify its status via the political process, but this time it needed an understanding with local elements, headed by Hamas, to suspend the campaign of terrorist attacks and thus allow the resumption

of the process. This change in the balance of power between Fatah and Hamas reflected the growing strength of Hamas, a trend that was greatly accelerated by the failure of the Fatah leadership to take advantage of the years since its arrival in the territories to expand its popular support base. Setting norms of proper administration might have helped it acquire public trust. A significant appointment of local activists from the territories into key positions would likely have strengthened the movement itself. And of course, a resolute struggle against opposition militants would have derailed their intention to block the political process, and thus undermine the political / legal support of the authority it embodied.

The Palestinian Arena: In Effect, Division

From the first months of the uprising, there were contacts between Fatah and Hamas to formulate tactical understandings regarding the struggle against Israel; an understanding in principle over the strategic objectives of the struggle was never on the agenda. Israel itself was not a party to the inter-organizational talks or to any agreement they occasionally produced, although Israeli policy, especially the fight against Palestinian violence, affected the contents and progress of the talks. Inevitably their results were highly significant for Israel's security and influenced its attitude to renewing the political process. However, Israel remained an involved spectator. More than anything else, the difficulty in promoting a ceasefire expressed the escalating rivalry in the Palestinian arena itself.

The escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict spurred direct Egyptian involvement in the inter-organizational talks, or, to be more precise, Egyptian pressure on Hamas and Fatah to coordinate a ceasefire in the struggle against Israel. The rounds of contacts between the PA and the opposition began in 2001, and from November 2002 were conducted in Cairo. In contrast to Egypt, the host and mediator that labored to promote a period of calm as a stage towards the renewal of the dialogue between the PA and Israel, Hamas sought to arrive at an understanding with Fatah that would complicate the PA's integration into the political process. An aerial attack on Hamas' military infrastructures in the Gaza Strip provided both Hamas and Fatah with the excuse to break off the talks. And still, at the same time, the possibility of reviving the political process seemed more realistic than in previous months in light of Ariel Sharon's declaration,

as part of the campaign for Knesset elections, that a lasting settlement between Israel and the Palestinians would be based on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Prime Minister Abbas' declared commitment to work to minimize the influence of militant elements also aroused hopes for a political breakthrough.

In June 2003, President Bush and Prime Ministers Sharon and Abbas met in Aqaba for a summit meant to mark the beginning of the realization of the Roadmap, i.e., to arrive at an understanding about a period of calm in the conflict so that it would be possible to move on to the second stage, whose main point was the establishment of a Palestinian state within provisional borders. In exchange for a ceasefire, Fatah's leadership expected Israel to release Palestinian prisoners, stop the pursuit of activists involved in the violent struggle, withdraw its forces from the population centers in the territories, evacuate the settlements – or at least those defined by Israel as illegal – and release frozen tax revenues. In addition, the PA expected increased financial aid from the EU. Beyond these changes, the PA sought to take advantage of the period of calm for improved security and administrative reorganization that would decrease the freedom of action enjoyed by the independent militant factions and curb the expanding influence of Hamas. The leadership of Hamas, for its part, was willing to risk the strengthening of the PA in exchange for the possibility that it too would recoup as the result of the IDF easing its pressure. This joint but contradictory interest thus formed the basis for the agreement between Fatah and Hamas for the ceasefire that went into effect in July 2003.

In the weeks that followed, the security tension relaxed somewhat. This development was rewarded with Israel's removal of a few roadblocks in the West Bank, which allowed the renewal of the transport of goods and eased civilian movement. Similarly, the number of residents from the territories allowed to work in Israel was increased, and hundreds of prisoners were released from Israeli prisons. Nonetheless, of the possible efforts to enhance Abbas' personal status and the status of his government, these gestures were insufficient. Moreover, the political process was not renewed. Terror attacks, which did not abate entirely, continued to serve as a reason for Israel to persist in its pursuit of activists. Thus, the PA was denied the opportunity to spotlight a political horizon and enlist public

support for the struggle against the factions determined to generate another round of escalation.

A suicide attack in Jerusalem on August 21, 2003 carried out by a joint cell of Hamas and Islamic Jihad marked the end of a short grace period. Israel announced a counter-offensive against the leadership of Hamas, with immunity for none. At the same time, Israel continued to pressure the PA to disarm the militant factions. The PA's renewed efforts to have Hamas agree to a *hudna* (ceasefire) in the struggle against Israel were rebuffed. In response, Arafat ordered the confiscation of weapons of Hamas activists – which was rhetoric only, as the PA then lacked both the motivation and the ability to make good on it – as well as the resources that supported Hamas' social and political activities. People in need were told to turn to the offices of the PA for assistance. In this atmosphere of heightened pressure from both Israel and the PA, Hamas leaders went underground. However, this step was far from sufficient to stabilize the PA, and in September Abbas resigned as prime minister. He attributed the brunt of the failure to promote a period of calm to Arafat who had prevented the implementation of meaningful structural reforms in the security services. The task of convening a new government was given to Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala), until then the chairman of the Legislative Council. On November 12, his government was sworn in; its members, too, were Arafat loyalists. Qurei announced his intention to implement the Roadmap, but unlike Abbas, he did not commit to contain the violent struggle.

Indeed, curbing the violence, which in the early days of the uprising seemed a less formidable task than renewing Israeli-Palestinian trust, with time became more and more ambitious and in effect, impossible. Upon taking office as prime minister, Qurei renewed the contacts between Fatah and Hamas. The Egyptian pressure, backed by encouragement from the EU and the American administration and at the time Syria as well, did not ensure an ongoing round of talks, and these ended a few days after they started without results. The immediate cause for their cessation was the December 2003 publication of the Geneva initiative, the fruit of unofficial talks between Israeli and Palestinian representatives.[41] The initiative, which formulated principles for a lasting settlement – including Palestinian concession of the right of return in exchange for Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount, as well as Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip

and most of the area of the West Bank – aroused criticism and protest both in Israel and in the territories. The Fatah leadership was split on the very concept of the initiative and its contents. The opposition representatives, who stressed the essential contradiction between striving for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement and for an agreement between Fatah and Hamas, left the negotiating table.

In addition to the differences between Fatah and Hamas on the objectives and means of the struggle, militant factions that resisted any organizational authority presented a stiff challenge to any efforts to establish a ceasefire. Parades of armed men belonging to the declared rejectionist organizations, especially Hamas, as well as to al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades became a routine feature of the West Bank and Gaza Strip street. Activists took over entire neighborhoods, villages, towns, and refugee camps in the West Bank. In Gaza, the factions affiliated with the Islamic camp built up independent military capabilities. During the first uprising too, the struggle against Israel was waged by competing elements, which differed from one another ideologically and operationally. Then, however, given the centrality of the PLO in the Palestinian political system, it was possible to display, at least outwardly, a united front and thus present, at least formally, the political option as at the center of national achievement. During the second uprising, by contrast, the escalation of the struggle against Israel reflected the institutional dissolution of the PA, the loss of control over the factions driven by independent agendas, and worsening inter-organizational rivalry.

In light of the ongoing failure to comply with the requirements of the first stage of the Roadmap, the PA in practice adopted a unilateral approach intended to address burning internal questions, first and foremost those connected with its own status. The PA attempted, without too much consistent success, to arrive at an understanding with Hamas over the calm that was supposed to deny Israel an excuse to exert military pressure on the territories, ease the security and economic distress, and consequently rehabilitate public trust in the government. Therefore, reversing the priorities that had guided the PLO leadership at the end of the fist uprising – when it strove for political negotiations as a means to consolidate its hold on the territories, deepening the hold on the territories became the goal in and of itself. Promoting the political process was seen as a possible result of a period of calm, but it certainly was not its main objective.

The Political Arena: From Dialogue to Disengagement

In the course of the second uprising, Israel's longstanding insistence that it could not disengage from the territories without a viable Palestinian partner gradually weakened. As a response to ongoing security challenges, the government adopted a unilateral policy for managing the conflict and reducing the friction. The policy was shaped by a departure from the philosophy that had guided the Oslo Accords, the Roadmap, and the other proposed settings for negotiations, namely, independence of coordination with the PA. This development was far more dramatic than the unilateral tendency that had developed within the ranks of the PA, if only because the theory was put into practice.

The notion of a unilateral separation from occupied territories – though not *the* occupied territories – was given public expression in December 2003 by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. At the time, Israel was already invested in a unilateral move – the construction of a barrier, part fence and part wall, designed to separate areas in the West Bank from one another and to separate the West Bank from the Green Line demarcation of Israel.[42] The idea for the barrier and its initial plans were approved by the Israeli government in April 2002 and the updated plan was approved in February 2005. The project was defined as a barricade against terrorist attacks – particularly suicide attacks within the Green Line – and therefore a security measure of the highest importance. Along its entire length, especially in Jerusalem, the barrier demonstrated the determination to erect a physical separation between Israel and populated Palestinian areas, without ceding control of the territories beyond the barrier. Over the coming years changes were made in the original route of the barrier, so as to ease the impact on the Palestinians' means of livelihood and routines. However, adjustments to the route, in response to petitions to the Israeli Supreme Court by both Palestinians and Israelis, did not blunt the civil, economic, and therefore also political significance of the barrier. Long stretches of the barrier were built east of the Green Line and encircled Israeli settlements and settlement blocs in such a way as even to split Palestinian towns and villages in half or isolate them in enclaves. In the Jerusalem area, Palestinian neighborhoods were encompassed within the city's municipal area because of the barrier; other neighborhoods were severed from the urban center or divided in a way that did not take into consideration the daily needs of the population.

The demand to tear down parts of the barrier or at least change the route so that it would mirror the Green Line became a central and consistent demand by Palestinian spokespeople. In addition, the barrier aroused disagreement between the Israeli government and the American administration because of its political significance.[43] The criticism voiced in the administration over the very existence of the barrier and its route in particular reflected the concern that the enclaves created would undermine the chances for the establishment of a Palestinian political entity with territorial contiguity that was economically and administratively viable. Nonetheless, in a letter to Prime Minister Sharon in April 2004, President Bush proclaimed his vision of a Palestinian state within the framework of an agreement that would deny the return of Palestinian refugees to Israeli territory, preserve the Israeli settlements blocs in the West Bank, and be implemented in line with Israeli withdrawals from the territories. The letter did not ignore the basic Palestinian demands altogether. In making any settlement conditional on Palestinian agreement, it granted the PA the right to veto proposals that were not coordinated with it. At the same time, this stance, clearly more in line with the Israeli approach, demonstrated the political marginality of the PA.

In contrast to the route of the barrier in the West Bank, which from the outset was highly problematic especially because of the Israeli settlements scattered across the area, the disengagement plan from the Gaza Strip did not involve redrawing any borders. The Gaza Strip is in essence an enclave that was already separated from Israel by a fence. Therefore, as in the end stages of the first uprising, the territorially defined Gaza Strip was chosen as the area in which the principle of separation would be realized to the letter. The disengagement plan was approved by the Israeli government in June 2004 and by the Knesset in October of the same year, against a background of heated public discourse over its problematical components. Spokespeople representing the security establishment trumpeted the concern over a security vacuum in the Gaza Strip and the likely increase in terrorism following a withdrawal of IDF troops. Vociferous public criticism heralded the challenge that would be involved in evacuating the twenty-one Israeli Gaza Strip settlements and the four northern Samaria settlements stipulated by the plan. However, despite the demonstrations,

protests, and mass disturbances led by religious, public, and settlement leaders, the plan was implemented in August 2005.[44]

The Palestinians – correctly – did not consider the planned disengagement from the Gaza Strip as a gesture of good will. Rather, they saw the plan as a denial of responsibility for a locus of distress, repudiation of a commitment to work jointly for a settlement, and a move meant to strengthen Israel's hold on the West Bank. Like the PA and the Hamas leaderships, which feared the unilateral withdrawal would serve Israel as an opportunity to strengthen its hold on the West Bank, the American administration also demanded that the withdrawal plan be in line with the future intention to withdraw from the West Bank and dismantle Israeli settlements there. This demand was meant to minimize the growing gap between the Roadmap and the unilateral approach adopted by the Israeli government. However, in the absence of a practical political alternative, the administration did not block the disengagement even in face of a possible link between a withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and non-withdrawal from the West Bank.[45] Unlike Egypt, which persisted in an effort to regulate the relationship between Fatah and Hamas in order to pave the way to the PA's involvement in the political process, the administration clung to its demand to distance Hamas from the PA, ignoring Fatah's difficulty to minimize the scope of the violent struggle without coordination with Hamas.

In advance of the disengagement, coordinating meetings were held between Israeli and PA representatives, focusing on the immediate security aspect rather than on the period after the withdrawal. The PA, for its part, prepared for the evacuation of Israeli forces and settlements from the Gaza Strip by mobilizing increased forces that would help undermine any intention to accompany the disengagement with violence, which would grant Hamas credit beyond what it had already earned as the factor responsible for the withdrawal.[46] However, the calm that prevailed on the Gaza Strip front during the withdrawal did not reflect the PA police's efficiency or professionalism. Rather, the Hamas leadership itself ensured calm in order to avoid provocation, out of concern that an Israeli response would delay Hamas' progress towards the center of the political stage.[47] Knowing that the reprieve was temporary, the PA, together with Egyptian and British security elements, formulated a plan to curb the spreading anarchy in the territories and especially in the Gaza Strip. As would soon

become clear, the objectives of this plan in terms of the Gaza Strip were merely wishful thinking.

Israel too prepared for the post-withdrawal period, and agreed that hundreds of Egyptian policemen deploy along the Philadelphi route on the southern Gaza Strip border. They were supposed to succeed where the IDF had failed, i.e., to stop the weapons smuggling into the Strip. Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and President Mubarak finalized the opening of the Erez and Karni crossings to goods and travelers. In November 2005, after the completion of the withdrawal, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice worked hard on an agreement based on a draft formulated by the Quartet's representative, James Wolfensohn, whereby the crossings would be opened, except in cases of concrete security warnings.

These understandings remained on the books, though increased deterioration in the security situation prevented their implementation. A ground siege, in addition to air and naval blockades, as well as IDF activity in the area of the Gaza Strip to attempt to stop the continuous rocket fire originating there did not allow for economic recovery.[48] The transfer of fuel and goods meant to prevent a humanitarian disaster continued, even after the inauguration of a Hamas government following the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections and Hamas' military takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007. However, the export of goods from the Strip was limited and sporadic, though the border – especially below the surface – remained porous in the Rafah region. Weapons smuggled through the tunnels beefed up the infrastructure built by Hamas to continue the struggle against Israel and Fatah, serve as an alternative to the PA's security forces, and deter those that would attempt to disarm it.

As Israeli political and security analysts who were skeptical about the rationale behind the disengagement had warned, Israel did in fact withdraw from the Gaza Strip but hardly disengaged from it. The Gaza Strip did not become a model of self-government, but continued to be a focus for fighting against Israel and fighting on the internal Palestinian front. Israeli control of the Gaza Strip borders and the massive Israeli military pressure in response to the fire from there at Israel reduced the significance of "disengagement."[49] Moreover, Israel's limited capacity to stop rocket fire, despite the attacks on the Hamas infrastructure and the heavy toll exacted of Gazan civilians – evidenced after the withdrawal but even more so the

following year in the war against Hizbollah – postponed other withdrawals in the West Bank envisioned by the "convergence" plan proposed by Ehud Olmert, who led the Kadima party to victory in the March 2006 elections.

Tabling the plan, however, did not completely blunt the historical significance of withdrawing from the Gaza Strip.[50] The intention to take leave of the territories, which had coalesced in Israel even during the first uprising, remained valid during the second uprising too. The continued confrontation even accelerated the search for a way to minimize the friction, which over time became more focused on unilateral options. Relying on public support, Israel acted to implement a unilateral approach while showing flexibility about established guidelines: the Palestinian struggle remained a political and security challenge, but its violent expressions were no longer seen as justification for a comprehensive hold of the territories. Plans for interim territorial steps were adapted and applied while suspending the traditional principle of binding them to a comprehensive and negotiated settlement of the conflict.

Sidelining the Outsiders

While Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian political system was on the brink of an upheaval formed by the convergence of two trends: the erosion in the status of the PLO and the veteran Fatah leadership, and the transfer of the nexus of the national struggle from the diaspora to the territories. This pattern had long infused the two uprisings. Forces with various organizational affiliations with roots in the territories demanded to forge the path of the national movement and its representation – what traditionally had been the exclusive domain of the PLO. The death of PA chairman Arafat in November 2004 added symbolic value to the consolidation of these two trends, although the symbolism was also tagged with concrete significance, as Arafat's death was seen as unlocking a door to reforms in the PA. With the upcoming 2006 elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council, the American administration saw an opportunity to include the PA in the hoped-for regional democratization. Contrary to President Bush's 2002 call to change the Palestinian leadership, the US now sought to grant renewed legitimacy to the veteran Fatah leadership committed to dialogue with Israel. Despite the concern that elections would demonstrate nothing but Fatah's weakness, Israel was unable to

demand that they be postponed, having for years demanded the institution of reforms in the PA.

Mahmoud Abbas, elected PA president in January 2005, shared the concerns expressed in Israel. His reservations regarding the elections were based in part on the results of the municipal elections in the territories in 2004-2005, in which Hamas won some 30 percent of council seats. This evidence of the centrality of internal issues to the Palestinian discourse, coming necessarily at the expense of dealing with the political process (despite approximately 60 percent support for Abbas' candidacy for president), encouraged Hamas to change its policy. According to the movement's spokespeople, in light of the non-viability of the Oslo Accords, there was no longer any obstacle to Hamas' joining the PA. In exchange for a promise by Hamas to suspend the struggle against Israel, Abbas gave his agreement to Hamas' participation in the elections and even accepted its demand, based on assessment of its advantage in the municipal campaign, to calculate the results proportionally. Thus Abbas was forced to bring Hamas into the bosom of the political system, with the hope that it would not derail the efforts to revive the political process. Hamas, assuming that from within the ranks of the PA it would find it easier to undermine political initiatives, proved itself flexible and capable of restraint in the very sphere of activity that ever since its establishment had served as its principal battle cry. In light of its expected gains in the elections, it was not a very significant concession; moreover, the political opportunity was granted without exacting any price: while the Hamas-sponsored Coalition for Reform and Change was preparing for the elections, its activists, together with Islamic Jihad, persisted in rocket fire from the Gaza Strip to emphasize its role in prompting the disengagement. Fatah, helpless and anxious about its status, did not enforce the commitment to a period of calm. However, Fatah's avoidance of a confrontation came with its own price tag. The rocket fire provided the Israeli government with an excuse to suspend the intention to return parts of the West Bank to PA control, remove roadblocks, and release prisoners. Thus, the PA was denied an opportunity to solidify its status on the eve of the elections. In addition, Fatah's failure to present the voters with a united list of candidates who were determined to promote reforms and change in the movement in particular and in the PA in general, helped pave the way for Hamas to take center stage.

Though at least outwardly the leadership succeeded in maintaining unity, Fatah ranks were split from the start. In the years when its status relied on international recognition, the leadership neglected the organizational and popular infrastructure. Furthering the trend that spurred the first uprising and thereafter continued unrelentingly, the cracks in the movement deepened. Fatah's organizational backbone disintegrated, and it became an umbrella for loosely affiliated factions and splinter groups somewhat associated together by converging interests. In fact, what united the various groups was the fault line between the founding generation on the one hand, and the intermediate and young generations on the other. Individuals and groups positioned themselves on both sides of the divide, on the basis of geographical region, family ties, and inter-organizational politics. At a time when the older generation's inter-organizational, national, and international status was growing steadily weaker, the intermediate generation's desire to distance itself from Fatah's failing image grew, as did the demand to translate its public influence into official positions of power. The tension between the camps intensified in light of the Homeland List, drafted to represent Fatah in the elections. As chairman of the steering committee of the movement, Abbas reserved places on the list, headed by Ahmed Qurei, for his allies from the historical leadership. Tanzim leader Marwan Barghouti, imprisoned in Israel, had won a majority in the primaries and was second on the list. The intermediate generation was sufficiently incensed to found a separate party, also headed by Barghouti, called Future. The two lists were later united in an attempt to promote both camps' common interests – preventing a Hamas victory – but to no avail.

In January 2006, less than two decades after its founding, and against the background of two popular uprisings and a failing political process, Hamas captured the road to the national institutions.[51] Its success, reflecting the expectation that it would extricate the territories from their dire security and economic straits, obviated Fatah's consistent refusal to accept its demand for 40 percent representation in PLO institutions. By contrast, the large number of Fatah candidates in the regional lists caused by intra-movement disputes led to a diffusion of votes, a dent in the real support it enjoyed, and a Hamas advantage. The Hamas success was thus more than a readjustment of the Fatah-Hamas balance of power and a contest between the national and Islamic streams, but also reflected the rivalry

between the leadership that was established in the diaspora and the grass roots leadership. Claiming proportionate representation that demonstrated the fundamental political upheaval in the territories, the Hamas victory put an end to the hegemony of the founding fathers of Palestinian politics. On February 17, 2006, a parliament with a Hamas majority was sworn in, and the Hamas government was sworn in on March 28.

The Hamas government sought to consolidate its power while maneuvering between two different commitments: national and organizational. The pronounced tension between these constraints surfaced already in the elections. The movement's institutional opportunity would not have been fully realized without some ideological compromise. However, the ideological purity, crucial in the context of a united party line, tipped the scales and directed Hamas' conduct. Loyal to its path and with the ideological glue holding the ranks together, the leadership persisted in its refusal to recognize Israel. Its spokespeople announced that past agreements with Israel would be honored, but on condition that they were adjusted to "Palestinian national interests," in other words, to agreements' compatibility with the movement's ideology. The inherent contradiction between the ongoing struggle against Israel and the possibility of rebuilding the infrastructures in the territories underlay Hamas' response to the Egyptian demand to renew the calm, yet the demand that the calm be contingent on a halt of Israeli activities in the territories thereby negated its practicability. Movement spokespeople repeated their acceptance of a *hudna*, but in exchange for a comprehensive Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders. Taken together with Hamas' refusal to recognize Israel, it was easy to question the proposal's seriousness and interpret it rather as a means to continue the continuation of the struggle under improved conditions.[52]

The challenges faced by the Hamas government were not fundamentally different from those that confronted the preceding Fatah governments. Like its predecessors, the Hamas government had to consolidate its rule without coordination between the branches of the PA. Like previous governments, it encountered international isolation and a determined opposition. At the same time, the hurdles encountered by Hamas were higher than those Fatah faced. An international coalition, led by Israel and the Quartet, presented Hamas with three conditions for lifting the boycott: dismantling of the military infrastructure, recognition of agreements signed between

Israel and the PA, and recognition of Israel. An economic boycott, more comprehensive than any sanctions placed on the Fatah-headed PA, did not allow rehabilitation of the infrastructures in the territories, even if the necessary financial resources were available.[53]

At the same time, the boycott gave Hamas an address for venting anger over the local population's suffering. Fatah was at the top of the list. In response to the Hamas victory, President Abbas received increased economic, military, and political support, which made the PA a part of a coalition determined to bring the Hamas government to the point of collapse or at least defeat. Following the elections, Hamas sought to share the burden of government with Fatah. Its invitation to Fatah to join the government was rejected out of hand, though Abbas called for the Arab donor nations to abstain from the boycott against Hamas, and thereby grant the leadership an opportunity to retract its positions. For his part, Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniyeh declared that he would not prevent Abbas from maintaining international contacts and political dialogue – a right in any case granted the president by the Palestinian constitution. At the same time, in order to minimize the president's legal authority, Hamas demanded control over the security branches of the PA, manned since its inception by Fatah personnel. The struggle for control of the security forces was hotly contested by Fatah and Hamas, and the streets of Gaza became the arena for bloody battles between the activists.

Gunfire, assassinations, kidnappings, and destruction of organizational infrastructures were daily occurrences and spilled over to the West Bank, though in smaller scope than in the Gaza Strip. The expanding confrontation aroused efforts to curb it. Haniyeh and Abbas agreed to a ceasefire several times. In November 2006, because of the escalation in the internal arena and in the confrontation with Israel – which, from Fatah's point of view, overshadowed the need for renewing the political process, and from the point of view of both Fatah and Hamas overshadowed the need to ease the economic boycott – the two arrived at an agreement regarding a period of calm. Overall, however, inter-organizational understandings did not survive the pressures from the street. At the same time, there was also an escalation in the confrontation with Israel on the Gaza front. The hardships in the Gaza Strip fed militant ambitions, resulting in increased fire on the western Negev. Predictably, the Israeli response to the fire became an excuse to

continue it. The crossings from the Gaza Strip to the outside world were closed, except for the transfer of essential materials on limited occasions. The hardships in the Gaza Strip went from bad to worse.

Unlike Abbas and the intermediate generation of Fatah, Farouq Qadoumi, the head of the PLO's political department, joined younger Fatah activists in expressing a willingness to cooperate with Hamas. Significantly, they were ready to sanction Hamas' failure to fulfill the conditions laid down by Israel and the Quartet as well as Abbas' demand that it recognize the Arab peace initiative from March 2002 and the resolutions passed by the UN on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The younger generation of Fatah even aligned with Hamas activists imprisoned in Israel, and in May 2006, together with members of other factions – all of them from the territories – formulated the National Reconciliation Document, which included principles for a unity government. However, the prisoners' document became another arena for the struggle between Fatah and Hamas. Abbas adopted it verbatim, whereas a divided leadership led Hamas to reject it. Khaled Mashal, the head of the movement's political bureau in Damascus, postponed accepting the conditions presented by Abbas, and Hamas activists at large, under guidance from Damascus, waged a militant policy and thereby challenged the policy of restraint Haniyeh had attempted to institute. For their part, the PA's security branches struggled against Hamas – though not necessarily in an attempt to curb the escalation in the violence against Israel. Their leaders, from the ranks of Fatah's intermediate generation, were opposed to Abbas' intention to stabilize the internal arena via an inter-organizational dialogue. The split in Fatah that had cushioned Hamas' way to electoral success was thus one of the factors that undermined the establishment of a Hamas government as part of the PA and the intention to stabilize the PA on the basis of coordination between the movements. And so, a number of months after it was made public, the prisoners' document lost relevance because of the escalation its formulators sought to prevent, indeed, on both fronts of the struggle.

Worried about the possibility that an inter-organizational bout in the territories would spark rioting elsewhere, the leaderships in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Qatar urged the heads of Fatah and Hamas to conclude principles for cooperation. The unity government they sought to establish was meant to end the boycott of the PA and thereby curb the expansion

of Iranian influence over Hamas through economic support, and also be a basis for Palestinian representation in the political process, which would promote the Arab initiative. The talks between Fatah and Hamas were held in Mecca, as part of the preparations for the Arab summit meeting in April 2007 in Riyadh, which ratified the initiative. The leaderships of the movements yielded to the inter-Arab pressures and agreed to a joint political platform.

From the point of view of Mahmoud Abbas and Khaled Mashal, the unity government they endorsed was intended little more than to stabilize the Palestinian arena. The renewal of dialogue with Israel was merely a secondary goal, and that only from Fatah's point of view. Therefore, in order not to nullify the unity objective, Abbas conceded his demands of Hamas, and the platform of the government (sworn in on March 17, 2008) did not include recognition of Israel. Therefore, the convening of this government could not have represented a stage on the way to renewing the political process. Moreover, the difference of opinion between Fatah and Hamas over the division of power remained unsolved, and street fighting between the two movements continued with intensified vigor.[54] In June, the struggle in the Gaza Strip escalated further, with rumors circulating of a military coup planned by Fatah forces. By overcoming the PA's security branches in a struggle that incurred multiple casualties, Hamas overcame the PA security forces and completed a counter-coup that gained it what the political upheaval had failed to ensure, though at this stage only in the Gaza Strip.

The revolt added a political dimension to the geographical and economic severing of the Gaza Strip from the West Bank. In response to Hamas' takeover of Gaza, Abbas disbanded the unity government and established an emergency government in its stead. Fatah's leadership again pinned its hopes on dialogue with Israel as a means to resurrect its status at home, after years of focusing on consolidating its power around the internal arena while conceding the political process. This approach guided the attempt, which proved futile, to establish political coordination with Hamas. The return of Fatah to the political arena, despite its being a last resort, was interpreted outside the territories as a recipe for curbing the rise of Hamas and denying the regional Islamic stream overwhelming success.

In this context President Bush called for an international conference to advance the establishment of a Palestinian state. Israel responded positively

to the invitation, believing that a thaw in the freeze would offer it a new agenda and would strengthen the Palestinian camp committed to a negotiated settlement. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan were involved in preparing for the meeting. Their designated role would be to underwrite concessions required of the Palestinians; encourage Israeli willingness for concessions through diplomatic and security incentives; and in coordination with American interests in the Middle East and the idea at the base of the Arab initiative, be a part of a regional front countering rising Iranian power. At a festive gathering in Annapolis in November 2007, with the participation of the parties directly involved in the Middle East conflict and representatives of dozens of other nations, President Bush read a declaration of joint intent to formulate an agreement by the end of 2008. It soon became clear that any agreement would be destined for the shelf until conditions for applying it ripened. Defining the hoped-for understandings as a "shelf agreement" reflected the recognition that the political, institutional, and geographical split within the PA – which for a while was thought of as the factor likely to accelerate the political process – would be the first element to undermine the attempt to create a new reality in the arena of conflict.

At the end of the ceremonies, Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas returned to the same reality whence they came, which regularly provided both of them with new excuses to postpone substantive dialogue on the core issues of the conflict – the Palestinian refugees, the future state's borders, and Jerusalem. Therefore, along with senior contacts to discuss the borders, the sides focused primarily on ongoing conflict management. Continued Israeli construction in the West Bank and the ever-present roadblocks were seen by the Palestinians as a clear obstacle to the continuation of the political process. By contrast, the increasing rocket fire from the Gaza Strip denied the Israeli government the possibility of enlisting support to counter security-conscious and ideological opposition to a military redeployment or evacuation of settlements in the West Bank, with or without an agreement with Fatah. Even security understandings between Israel and Fatah were of limited use. Fatah concerns over a public protest and internal violent strife, which for years had tempered decisive action against the militant opposition, remained in place. Despite the economic and security assistance, international support did not help Fatah compensate for its weakness. In any case, Fatah's leadership was

only nominally interested in formulating a binding agreement, because any attempt to promote an agreement in which the Gaza Strip under Hamas control was not included would, from its perspective, be equal to conceding any chance of rehabilitating its status in the occupied territories, in the Palestinian diaspora, and finally in the international arena as well.

Along with the talks between Israel and the Fatah leadership, Israeli security forces continued their pursuit of militants in the West Bank, which served both as support for Fatah and an excuse for Islamic Jihad and Hamas to continue rocket fire from the Gaza Strip. For Hamas, the rockets were meant to weaken Israel's opposition to a ceasefire, which would enable Hamas to reinforce without the need to bend any fundamental principles concerning both Israel and Fatah. As such, Hamas was prepared to risk an Israeli military incursion, which would inevitably entail many casualties. Nevertheless, to forestall a military strike and a complete closure of the area, Hamas in effect made the Gaza Strip population into a human shield. At the same time, it imposed its will on the Strip by strong-arm tactics while making measured and selective use of its resources. Thus it prevented the possibility of easing the strain on the local residents.

In June 2008, one year after Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip, its policy bore fruit. Seeking to quell domestic criticism over the proven difficulty of controlling the security threat from the Strip and the international criticism over the civilian suffering in Gaza, the Israeli government recognized Hamas as a partner for dialogue, if only in a security context. Based on understandings formulated between the Israeli government and Hamas through Egyptian mediation, Israel committed itself to gradually ease the closure of the Gaza Strip in exchange for a cessation of the rocket fire and enforcement of the calm on all the factions active in the area. The delay of the political process did not seem like a major missed opportunity, and so the Israeli government chose to try to reduce the immediate security threat even at the cost of souring its relations with Fatah and adding another obstacle to those already plaguing the political process. Fatah, which for years turned to the political avenue in light of its hardships on the domestic front and periodically sought to accelerate the national dialogue in light of the political deadlock, reacted as expected to the coordination of principles for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas with renewed efforts to thaw its own relations with Hamas. The road remained long to settling ideological

and institutional differences between the rival movements, but a significant hurdle to an agreement between them was eased somewhat.

The Annapolis conference was meant to turn the wheel back by at least seven years, both on the intra-Palestinian level and on the Israeli-Palestinian one. Against the background of escalation on both fronts of the Palestinian struggle and the political deadlock, it did in fact seem as if the wheel had turned back, though by far more than seven years, and not necessarily in the direction that the Annapolis conference and other peace initiatives meant to outline. In light of the declining possibility to implement the vision of two states for two nations, the belief in that vision as a solution to the political, economic, and security plight waned amongst the Palestinians. Responsibility could be assigned to a host of sources, ranging from Israel, whose policy negated the practical viability of the vision, to the expansion of forces from within the territories committed to a Palestinian state from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, to the Israeli-Palestinian dynamic, which eroded the possibility of dividing the land into two states. In any case, the result was the same: the idea of a bi-national state resurfaced, and became part of the public discourse in the territories as an echo to the discourse there and in the Palestinian diaspora until the eruption of the first uprising.[55] Musings along these lines, and even an explicit challenge to the State of Israel's right to exist, were also heard in select Western intellectual and political circles.

Without a doubt, reviving the vision of a bi-national state represented another aspect of the challenge to Fatah's veteran leadership. Beyond the Islamic camp, which consistently opposed the idea of dividing the land, members of the intermediate and younger generation of Fatah were prominent among those urging a reexamination of the idea. A significant measure of historical irony lies in the fact that during the second uprising, some Fatah-affiliated residents of the territories began to adopt the ethos rejected by the veteran leadership during the first uprising, which in the meantime had instead adopted the vision of dividing the land into two nations in order to prevent its younger rivals denying them their senior status on the front of the national struggle.

Retrospection and Assessment

Continuity and Change

The rounds of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict sparked by the outbreak of the uprisings on the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1987 and 2000 represent two distinct episodes. The differences between them are especially clear on two levels that evolved in the course of the uprisings, the balance of power in the intra-Palestinian arena and the Israeli-Palestinian dynamic. These contexts are of course intertwined. The struggle in the internal Palestinian arena steered the course of the uprisings, and therefore fueled developments in the Israeli-Palestinian one. Conversely, Israeli-Palestinian relations – both the military conflict and the attempt to set a political process in motion – formed the context and rationale for the Palestinian inter-organizational struggle for supremacy on the national front. This view of the rounds of the conflict does not deny their being a part of an historical sequence, whereby the second wave was steered by developments that initially sparked the first round. As a result of conditions and circumstances in the intra-Palestinian arena and on the Israeli-Palestinian front, these same trends became further pronounced and entrenched during the second uprising.

In the course of the first round of the conflict, Israel and the PLO forged a closer relationship, and both sides cultivated a willingness to advance a political-territorial compromise. The start of the dialogue between Israel and the PLO leadership was facilitated by the erosion in Israel's readiness to continue controlling the territories. This of course was not enough to guarantee dialogue or formulate understandings towards a permanent status settlement. The PLO itself underwent a process of change in its fundamental positions – clearer than the parallel process in the Israeli arena – that was meant to respond to the challenge rooted in the intra-Palestinian arena itself. Recognition of the growing willingness in the

territories to reach a compromise with Israel; the particular concern that in a political breakthrough Palestinian interests would be represented by a local delegation from the territories; or, alternately, concern that the political process would grind to a halt and thereby block the PLO's way to international recognition, all pushed the organization's leadership to talks with Israeli representatives.

The initial talks were held through unofficial channels, which paved the way for open, official talks. Sidelining the representatives from the territories who were supposed to participate in the dialogue with Israel, PLO chairman Yasir Arafat led the veteran leadership from Tunis through Oslo to the White House lawn. There, the PLO and Israel signed the Oslo I agreement – the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Additional understandings were bound to a political-legal formulation, known as the Oslo Accords. These spelled out operational directives, essentially comprising the cessation of the Palestinian violent struggle against Israel and an Israeli staged withdrawal in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, meant to build trust between the sides towards discussion of the core issues of the conflict, namely Jerusalem, the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the refugee problem.

Proponents of the spirit and contents of the Oslo Accords saw them as a political masterpiece. Others viewed them as evidence of a lack of willingness, among both Israelis and Palestinians, to commit themselves to a compromise that necessarily entailed substantive mutual concessions. The accords drew extensive criticism because of central clauses that were ostensibly doomed to failure from the outset, including their highly questionable ability to advance self-determination and Palestinian sovereignty while ensuring a Palestinian political system that was ready to guarantee peace. The imbalance of power between the sides was also highly criticized. The Palestinian system was rightly seen as too weak to ensure the realization of its part in implementing the accords. It was also correctly noted that Israel's strength secured its power to dictate the tempo and scope of the accords' implementation, or lack thereof. Moreover, from the outset the accords were not meant to do anything but prepare the ground for the moment of truth. The fundamental discussion of the core issues was postponed to some later time, which was supposed to happen at the end of the defined preparation period, with its particular conditions and stages.

The already anticipated difficulty of using the interim period to realize the plans laid out in the accords led to the assessment that the Oslo process would end without achieving its results. In time, this assessment proved to be something of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

As it appeared at the time – and it is still possible to read the situation this way today – the PLO seemingly reached its peak in terms of its political evolution in September 1993. After years of struggle for institutionalization in an environment where most were hostile to the organization's goals and methods, the leadership managed to gain international recognition on the basis of its domestic status, and to make use of that international recognition to strengthen its ranks and expand its popular support base. Because the agreement with Israel was seen in the territories as way to advance the national objective, the PLO leadership also managed to block, albeit temporarily, the ascent of the local leadership. These achievements were advanced through a continuous maneuvering between violence and politics and finally through replacing the traditional emphasis on violent struggle with the political route.

In the years after the Oslo Accords were signed, replete with truncated plans and multiple obstacles for implementation, it seemed as if international recognition of the PLO and the Palestinian Authority would continue to encourage the formation of a national leadership in the territories that would be ideologically and politically based on the strategic change to which the PLO leadership had committed itself. Yet in hindsight, the seven years until the outbreak of the second uprising proved to be the maturation period towards another round of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a direct contest between the veteran Palestinian leadership and the rejectionist factions. While these factions were affiliated with a variety of ideological streams and belonged to different organizations, they all had local roots in the territories, and that is where their political formation took place.

Precisely in light of the closer ties between Israel and the Palestinian leadership following the first uprising, the divergent opinions that had to be bridged in order to reach an agreement were clearer; so too the reluctance of both sides for ideological and security concessions increased, with immediate electoral implications and ramifications in terms of what would eventually be recorded by history. The second uprising was thus preceded by years that were no stranger to violence and counter-violence.

Over those years the Palestinian policy was imbued with the concern, not without foundation, over Israeli reluctance to withdraw from territories, and in essence, from *the* territories. This concern weakened the motivation and ability to enforce a cessation of the violence against Israel among the militant opposition, which was determined to escalate the conflict. For its part, Israeli policy was guided by the concern, also not without foundation, about committing to an agreement that the PA would not want or be able to fulfill, especially regarding Israel's security requirements. This concern delayed the implementation of the understandings about territorial withdrawals.

Would Israeli-Palestinian history have developed otherwise, that is, would the potential of the Oslo Accords have been achieved, had the understandings been reached by Israel and local representation from the territories such that the rivalry between the grass roots and veteran leaderships would have been less acute? Would Israeli-Palestinian history have evolved differently had the two sides been more tolerant of one another, particularly in understanding the difficulties inherent in making the conceptual and political changes to apply these understandings? These remain open questions. Beyond dispute, however, is the nature and direction of the Israeli-Palestinian dynamics as these developed immediately after September 13, 1993.

As relations between Israel and the Palestinians deteriorated, the internal Palestinian rivalry played a key role. The PA never grew into a functioning authority. From the day of its inception, it was undermined by tension within its leadership, staffed by members of the founding generation of the national movement from the diaspora, and the leaders from the territories who had borne the burden of the first uprising. Younger Fatah members and the veteran leadership shared the belief in the need and ability to reach an agreement based on dividing the land into two states. However, their path to official positions of influence was blocked when the veteran leadership arrived in the territories. In contrast, the members of the Islamic current in the territories viewed the vision of compromise as an ideological and political threat, and their dedication to the violent struggle weakened the calls in Israel for dialogue. Suspending the dialogue eroded the inter-organizational and national legitimacy of Fatah's veteran leadership, whose claim to institutional supremacy rested on the vision of

compromise. The weakening of the Palestinian Authority was significantly accelerated because of the failure of the political process it itself was a part of, and as a result of steps Israel took when the PA failed to fulfill its part of the agreements. Its leadership lost its ability, limited to begin with, to enforce its policy or authority.

Thus the way was paved for Hamas' ascent. The movement took responsibility for social and economic tasks neglected by the PA. At the same time, it disseminated its proposal for a long term political agenda, severed from the disappointing constraint of coordination with Israel. Because of the corruption-free image of Hamas' leadership and the belief that it would act to enforce law and order with the welfare of the residents in mind, support for it as a ruling alternative expanded. With the erosion of the Palestinian public's belief in the chances of a negotiated agreement, the dedication to the two-state solution – i.e., Fatah's political platform – waned, and the identification with Hamas' call for the liberation of all of Palestine grew stronger. Hamas' victory in the elections to the Legislative Council and its takeover of the Gaza Strip, abetted by the split in the Fatah ranks between the diaspora-formed leadership and the local one, were part of the process whereby the national leadership, which had arrived in the territories bearing the message of the end of the conflict, was undermined by the locals advocating perpetuation of the conflict.

How the security barrier and the disengagement were formulated and implemented reflected the relationship between Israel and the PA. From the beginning of the dialogue between Israel and the PLO, and later on between Israel and the PA, the costs entailed in a settlement came into sharper relief. Contrary to the expectations of the Oslo formulators, the very dialogue itself did not increase the willingness to compromise, rather raised the threshold of mutual expectations and demands. As these remained unfulfilled, the trust in dialogue as a measure to promote a solution grew increasingly thin, both in Israel and among the Palestinians. At the same time, the longer the confrontation endured, the more Israeli sensitivity to the social challenges of continuing the occupation increased, particularly the future of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. Alongside the recognition of the limitations of military measures to quell the uprising, massive as such an attempt might be, the Israeli awareness of its role in the ongoing cycle of violence also rose. However, without coordination with

an authoritative Palestinian partner interested in a compromise, a break in the cycle, which might help pave the way to a comprehensive settlement, was not a viable option.

In light of the disintegration of the PA, even before the second uprising erupted and before Hamas' growing electoral and military strength was proven, the notion that there was no Palestinian partner for formulating and implementing understandings no matter what the specific details were gained popularity in Israel. The outbreak of the uprising bolstered this view. Thus, directives in Israel were abandoned that for years had been inviolable – reciprocity and coordination as conditions for new arrangements in the territories – and Israel chose to create facts on the ground. However, the unilateral approach did not provide answers to ongoing challenges, and some even intensified, as evinced by the escalation in the Gaza Strip after the Israeli withdrawal. Moreover, by its very nature, the unilateral approach offered no basis for an agreement and therefore contributed to maintaining the conflict with all of its strategic challenges.

Recognition of the limitations of the unilateral approach aroused in Israel new, though guarded, interest in the political process. However, efforts to renew it launched seven years after the beginning of the second round of confrontation were met with the same difficulties that had previously led Israel down the unilateral path. The deadlock in the political arena, fed over the years by inter-organizational rivalries and upheavals in the Palestinian arena, became the direct result of the divided base. Any Hamas attempt to consolidate its control over the Gaza Strip and achieve supremacy on the Palestinian stage by seizing control of the West Bank would remain fraught with significant hurdles. On the other hand, significant hurdles would stand in Fatah's way to stabilize its control of the West Bank and regain control of the Gaza Strip.

However, in this situation of neither camp being able to subdue the other, Hamas achieved a significant advantage. Over the years, it managed to create a situation in which a political deadlock instigates violent struggle against Israel, yet at the same time political progress encourages escalation that in turn dooms those moves to failure. This was the fate of the Oslo process, whose launching marked the end of the first uprising, and of the Roadmap, intended to bring to an end the confrontation that developed with the second uprising. The Annapolis framework was launched with

the hopes of a different outcome. However, Hamas' determination to weaken Fatah domestically in order to hurt its international standing and undermine political initiatives in order to deny Fatah the last scraps of its domestic standing threatened to doom the renewed political framework to the same fate.

Nonetheless, What Lies Ahead?

One essential condition to settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the willingness of both the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to accept ideological, political, and territorial compromise. A second essential condition is the acceptance by both the Israeli and Palestinian publics of the compromises reached by their leaderships. A third essential condition is the capability to enforce the agreement despite the opposition that for ideological reasons and concern over the loss of raison d'être will not be willing to pay the price. Fulfilling each of the essential conditions is by itself not enough to ensure the realization of the compromise-seeking leaderships' intentions. Only fulfillment of all three conditions together will enable the realization of an agreement, though not necessarily its longevity or its basis as a fundamental change in the Middle Eastern arena as a whole.

The first two conditions, without which there will be no resolution, set the same challenges before the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships and societies. However, the situation of the two sides is radically different in terms of the challenge involved in fulfilling the third condition. The components of an historical compromise will presumably be acceptable to most of the Israeli public and the Israeli government will likely be able to implement it, even if it encounters vocal and determined opposition. The Palestinian arena, by contrast, is split into two camps. As the balance of power between them evolved over the course of the second uprising, neither camp is capable of imposing its vision and authority on the other and therefore on the system as a whole. Even if the compromise-seeking camp manages to formulate an agreement jointly with the Israeli government, and even if the proposed agreement earns significant popular support, its enforcement will present a complex, perhaps even impossible task because of the inter-organizational rifts within that camp itself and the worsening rivalry between that camp and the other, opposed to any settlement as a matter of principle. Formulating

the principles of a settlement is an enormously difficult task, evidenced by years of failure to complete it. The growing difficulty demonstrated during the second uprising to install a central authoritative body in the Palestinian arena renders the chances for practical dialogue between the sides all the more slim.

The challenge faced by Israeli and Palestinian leaders seeking a compromise is thus doubled and quadrupled. The intra-Palestinian struggle is far from over and decided. This assessment, together with the understanding of the centrality of the internal Palestinian struggle to the nature of the struggle against Israel, suggests that the chances for generating a reversal in the Israeli-Palestinian dynamic and implementing a political agreement are slim as long as the Palestinian arena itself remains destabilized. Different initiatives formulated over the years by Israeli, Palestinian, and international bodies, together or separately, focused on a process in which a measure of mutual trust would be built and which would allow discussion of the core issues of the conflict and agreement over how to settle them, or focused on the contents of a proposed settlement. However, most ignored a central structural feature of the Palestinian political sphere – the ideological and organizational rift and the inter-organizational rivalry. Alternately, other plans were based on the assumption that renewing the political process, in particular the formulation of an agreement, would help stabilize the sphere. However, the various efforts to bring about a political breakthrough failed to a great extent because the Palestinian system was focused on the internal struggle, in which a central component was always the prestige inherent in the struggle against Israel. For Israel – both the public at large and the decision makers – the Palestinian relegation of the political process to the margins of its agenda because of the internal struggle and especially because of the weakened nationalist camp and the ascent of a militant Islamic opposition provided an excuse, legitimacy, and opportunity to postpone dealing concretely with a compromise.

In Israel, territorial concessions have always been considered a risk. The various political camps differ from one another in their assessments of the significance of the risk, the state's ability to manage and contain it, and anticipated benefits from a concession in terms of the cost-risk ratio. During the second uprising, both the Palestinian and Israeli failure to stifle the Palestinian violence strengthened the opposition in Israel to a withdrawal

from the West Bank, and threatened to undermine the plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. These failures also weakened the motivation of the political echelon in Israel to take electoral risks inherent in putting the withdrawal from the West Bank to the security and political test involved in an open, unavoidable confrontation with the security and ideological right wing.

In addition, in light of the continuing political deadlock and the protracted violent confrontation, the deterministic view of the conflict and Palestinian strategic objectives grew among Israelis. The period between the two uprisings was seen more and more as a tactical time-out that from the start was not supposed to have led to true peace between the two peoples, rather the countdown to the inevitable next round of the confrontation, which did in fact arrive. In this view, even if Israel had behaved differently than it did, i.e., had it been more determined about evacuating areas of the West Bank, demonstrated willingness to discuss key questions regarding the permanent borders and the future of the refugees, and responded in a milder manner than it did to the continuing violence by militant Palestinian factions, no change would have occurred in the fundamental positions of either the national or Islamic stream. In other words, without any connection to its tactical decisions, Israel would have faced the same refusal to accept Jewish settlement of the land of Israel that it faced in the first half of the twentieth century; in any case, the root conflict between Israel and the Palestinians would have propelled them to the same point in the course of the second uprising. Furthermore, this approach, which downplays the link between Israel's presence in the territories and Palestinian militancy, suggests that suspending withdrawals from the West Bank spared Israel the need to deal with even more severe security threats than those it faced during the second uprising. From this point of view, efforts toward a political breakthrough, including those renewed seven years after the outbreak of the second uprising, look hopeless.

Likewise the school that argues against a deterministic view of the conflict and contends that the dynamics are indeed interactive and therefore fundamentally malleable paints a highly complex picture. The conflict is difficult and the road to settling it has been strewn with stumbling blocks over the years, many stemming from the intra-Palestinian arena, in particular the tension between the leadership formed in the diaspora and the local

forces. Because the arrival of Fatah's veteran leadership in the territories curbed the ascent of local leadership, many – Israelis, Palestinians, and others – viewed it as the root of the rivalry on the Palestinian arena and the upheavals on the Israeli-Palestinian front since 1993. The struggle by the local forces to overcome the veteran leadership focused on undercutting its philosophy and rendering it politically irrelevant. An accessible means with proven efficiency in this context was the violent struggle against Israel. From here, the road was short to a situation in which the growth of Hamas' influence in the territories preserved the conflict and fueled it, while the political deadlock helped Hamas' influence to grow. The political process became hostage to this dynamic, which seems destined to continue to fuel the conflict.

This is precisely what will happen, unless instead of waiting for the Palestinian arena to stabilize and form an agreed-upon representative body, Israel makes the attempt to reverse the situation and commits to a resolute political process to prompt the creation of an agreed-upon Palestinian partner for dialogue. It is possible that Israel might thus be able to extricate itself from the dynamics of conflict that have become entrenched over the years of the uprisings, repair the atmosphere in the territories, and breathe new life into the Palestinian peace camp.

The concerns of the Israeli leadership and the Fatah leadership over taking immediate electoral and long term security risks make it hard for them to pursue that direction, despite their mutual recognition of their shared objectives. Fatah appointed itself head of the militant camp when the second uprising broke out, and so became highly culpable for the escalation of the confrontation. Its leadership's presence in the territories did play a role in inflaming the inter-organizational tension and rivalry on the Palestinian arena. Nonetheless, this leadership's commitment in principle to compromise remains the main foundation of its legitimacy, in fact the only justification from the Israeli and international perspectives. This commitment represents a central component of the support this leadership still enjoys among the residents of the territories who are tired both of the occupation and of the struggle against the occupation. This commitment is what distinguishes it from Hamas, which is wearing down the steadily weakening peace camps on both sides.

Given this reality, since the arrival of Fatah's leadership in the territories and especially during the second uprising, Israel has found no alternative but to strengthen Fatah despite its well-known limitations and flaws. At the same time, the institutional weakness of Fatah's leadership seeking a settlement does not encourage an Israeli desire to commit to a compromise. The reluctance to compromise, which in any imaginable scenario will involve substantial risks, bolsters the longstanding assessment that progress towards a compromise will be accompanied by violent resistance on Hamas' part.

However, despite the inclination to postpone compromise's moment of truth, a trend in the territories is developing that may spur Israeli efforts to imbue the political process with concrete contents. Many in the national Palestinian camp are beginning to abandon the vision of dividing the land. The threat inherent in this trend is that it has the potential to bridge the political rivalries in the territories, especially between Fatah and Hamas. A closer strategic relationship between the camps on the basis of a joint desire to create a territorial and economic situation that can establish a bi-national state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean is cause for worry among the Israeli public and decision makers even more than the inter-organizational rivalry and the role it plays in stimulating the struggle against Israel. The growth in popular support for a common denominator and for the camps joining hands threatens Israel's security and ideological foundations, because this will extinguish any chance for compromise whereby Israel may translate its ethos as a democratic state with a Jewish majority from vision into reality.

A weakened commitment to the idea of dividing the land is also ominous from the Palestinian point of view, first and foremost to Fatah. Widespread support for a bi-national state will deny its raison d'être, as it evolved in the Palestinian and international arenas at the end of the first uprising as a result of the movement's strategic shift and adoption of the idea of compromise. Any attempt by Fatah's leadership to recreate its historical standing by presenting itself at the forefront of the Palestinian violent struggle has only slim chances of succeeding: the supremacy on this sphere was wrested from it by Hamas during the second uprising in a process that was greatly helped by the disintegration of Fatah's leadership because of internal dissent and a loss of a clear political course. Therefore,

to survive Fatah must help itself by exerting increased efforts to formulate a negotiated settlement. For its part, Israel needs Fatah to help form an improved strategic environment for itself and for the Palestinian people.

These two goals represent a joint objective, as promoting one is impossible without promoting the other. In any case, attaining this objective will not be possible without Herculean Israeli-Palestinian efforts to close the gaps between maximum concession and minimum demands on Israel's part, and maximum concessions and minimum demands on the Palestinians' part. The formulation of the compromise must be driven by the desire to generate a conceptual paradigm shift among both sides regarding the peace process and the strategic advantages of a permanent agreement. It must challenge the solution to the hardships of the Palestinian people formulated in Hamas' platform, and erode the growing attraction of a bi-national state. A proposed detailed agreement that would earn public support in the territories could bolster Fatah's ranks and reestablish the movement's domestic status. Progress in this direction would coincide with Hamas' reduced strength, and may encourage within Hamas a softening of the opposition and political cooperation with Fatah according to the compromise agenda the latter would dictate. While there is no way to ensure that a compromise proposal, far-reaching as it may be in terms of the borders of the Palestinian state, the division of Jerusalem, and the future of the refugees would be able to generate an immediate, fundamental change in Palestinian public opinion, without an effort to formulate such a proposal it is clear that the hoped-for change, which is a condition for the realization of a resolution, will never materialize.

A concrete breakthrough cannot be generated without abandoning the effort, proven futile time and again, to subdue the violence completely as a condition for the gradual building of a conditional willingness to compromise. It is true that such a direct approach met with utter failure in the past and brought with it an escalation of the confrontation – the second uprising. However, in the ensuing round of the conflict, the costs of suspending the dialogue, the escalation, and the commitment to a Roadmap with stages on the way to an agreement while indefinitely postponing substantive discussion of the principles of the compromise, as well as the cost of Israel's unilateral approach for dealing with the conflict, became clearer than ever. At the same time, the principles of an agreement

necessitating painful concessions and risks that would have a chance to realize the national and security requirements of Israel and the Palestinians also became clear. The principles have been formulated in various formats in unofficial forums with Israelis, Palestinians, and others in attendance. The parameters proposed by President Clinton, for example, or the Arab peace initiative ostensibly lends these principles official sanction and thus should make it easier to enlist Israeli, Palestinians, and international support for an agreement formulated in the same spirit. If there is a way to institute a central authority in the territories that would be committed to a negotiated resolution and to encourage in Israel the willingness for political-territorial compromise – this is it.

Postscript

When the original Hebrew version of this monograph was published, the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip that was agreed on by Israel and Hamas in June 2008 was still largely in effect. Sporadic rocket fire from the Gaza Strip at towns and cities in the western Negev and weapons smuggling into the Strip continued. Israel avoided responding, although it continued to close the border crossings into the Gaza Strip, except for allowing entry of essential goods. The possibility of renewing the ceasefire – let alone extending it to include the West Bank – did not materialize.

At the same time, discussions between Israel and the Fatah-headed PA within the framework of the Annapolis process trudged along. Under international aegis, reforms were instituted in the Palestinian Authority's security apparatuses in the West Bank to train the security services in the areas from which Israel would eventually withdraw. Israel's sustained military presence in the West Bank continued to block Hamas' attempt to expand its influence there, and therefore served as support for the PA. Likewise, a certain easing of Israel-Palestinian tensions and the economic burden on the residents was felt in the West Bank. However, this was not accompanied by any practical progress towards a settlement. In fact, at the end of months of discussion between Israel and the PA, the most significant achievement one could point to was the agreement reached between the negotiating teams to continue the talks on the conflict's core issues alongside an effort to fulfill the dictates of the first stage of the Roadmap, although this would necessarily extend beyond the year envisioned by the Annapolis agreement to advance these goals.

The relative though tense calm in the Gaza arena ended in November 2008, and in late December, after several weeks of rapid escalation Israel embarked on Operation Cast Lead, a full scale campaign against Hamas' military and civilian infrastructures. During the operation, which lasted

three weeks, the talks between Israel and the PA were suspended. At the same time, Israel was in the midst of an election campaign in advance of the Knesset elections. The fighting in Gaza and a transition government, which in any case would have been unable to promote a binding compromise with multiple security, territorial, economic, and conceptual implications, compounded the already formidable obstacles toward any permanent settlement.

As a result of the confrontation with Israel, Hamas suffered a significant military – though not political – blow. Israel's drive to impede Hamas from continuing to empower itself militarily in the Gaza Strip earned extensive international backing. However, along with understanding in Arab and European capitals and in the United States for Israel's attack on the Gaza Strip, there was harsh criticism of the numerous Palestinian casualties and the massive damage to the area from the operation. Calls on Israel by the international community to revoke the boycott in effect against Hamas since its victory in the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections and to remove the embargo of the Gaza Strip in place since Hamas' takeover of the region in June 2007 grew louder, on the assumption that easing the pressure on the organization and the Gaza residents would reduce the imminence of the next confrontation. However, while Israel made easing the embargo contingent on Hamas' stopping its rearmament and maintaining an absolute ceasefire, Hamas' leadership conditioned the ceasefire on opening the border crossings. This circular set of conditions would likely preserve tensions on the Gaza arena. Indeed, Israel accepted the Egyptian initiative for a ceasefire, but no ceasefire was agreed upon by all parties. Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip continued after the IDF withdrew from the area and was met with Israeli retaliatory attacks, while Hamas' leadership haggled with Egypt over the terms of the lull that in any case – according to Hamas stipulations – would be limited in time. Moreover, even a stable and lasting ceasefire, whether officially agreed upon by Israel and Hamas or a result of both sides choosing independently to maintain the calm, will not accelerate the political process. Unlike the security lull agreed upon by Israel and Fatah, lull between Israel and Hamas was a goal unto itself, not a move designated to facilitate dialogue towards resolution of the conflict.

Elections for the Israeli Knesset were held in February 2009, before the echoes of the confrontation in the Gaza arena had faded. The results showed a strengthening of the center and right wing parties. A government formed on the basis of the election results may well seek to reassess the principles that guided the talks launched by the Annapolis process, and will likely be even less determined than its predecessor to advance a binding understanding with the Palestinians, even on issues considered less complex than others, chief among them the proposed border between Israel and the future Palestinian state. If and when the talks between Israel and the PA are renewed as a result of international pressure on the sides to adhere to the political process, the atmosphere around the table may show that Hamas' determination to undermine the process by amplifying the Israeli fear of concessions that involve security risks will have contributed to the slowing down of the process: the confrontation in the Gaza arena dramatized the heightened security threats in a region where a hostile Palestinian entity gained a foothold. In light of this reality, any Israeli government – without regard to its coalition makeup – would find it difficult to encourage public willingness for concessions that are a condition for a permanent settlement.

The ceasefire agreed upon by Israel and Hamas in June 2008 provided a relative advantage to Hamas because it facilitated the organization's consolidating its rule. Operation Cast Lead and the ensuing developments advanced the leading role of Hamas in the Palestinian national movement even further. Military defeat did not undermine Hamas' accomplishments in recent years, particularly national prestige and leadership, which were earned at Fatah's expense. Attributing responsibility for the Gaza Strip to Hamas acknowledged the organization's rule over the region. Even Israel, in demanding that Hamas halt its rocket fire and weapons procurement and enforce a ceasefire on other militant factions, recognized Hamas' responsibility for what happens in the Gaza Strip and what is exported from it. The feasibility of limiting Hamas' freedom of action on the Gaza Strip-Egyptian border and the viability of rebuilding the civilian infrastructures in the Gaza Strip while blocking rehabilitation of Hamas' grip on the region were highly in doubt. Ideas proposed for renewing the Fatah presence in the Gaza Strip were limited to the possibility that Fatah might take part in reconstruction of the civilian infrastructure there and supervise the Rafah

border crossing. These proposals, however, were not accompanied by any expectation that Fatah would regain control of the area in the foreseeable future.

As such, Fatah was a victim of Operation Cast Lead. The PA's security services suppressed demonstrations held in the West Bank to protest the suffering in Gaza by the Israeli operation, and the PA expected a significant weakening of Hamas as a result of the Israeli attack. This did not materialize, however, and in reality Fatah's leadership paid a steep price in terms of public support. Thus, its ability to commit to a compromise or to ensure the implementation of a settlement, should one be formulated, was further eroded. While representatives of the PA will sit on the other side of the table if and when negotiations resume, the PA is even weaker than it was before the war in Gaza, and Fatah's weakening strengthened Hamas' bargaining position vis-à-vis the PA. Even if Egypt succeeds in stabilizing the PA by convening a unity government, the likelihood is low that the policy of that government will be guided by Fatah and mandate the continuation of the political process.

These assessments do not refute the argument about what is needed in order to generate a political breakthrough, as presented in the concluding chapter of the study. This view urges an accelerated and concrete political process as a means of changing the balance of power between Fatah and Hamas as it has developed in recent years, and the change in the balance of power in the Palestinian arena as a means of improving the chances for the implementation of a settlement. At the same time, the path charted in Annapolis and followed by Israel and the PA in an attempt to lay the foundations for a settlement and formulate its principles will be strewn with new obstacles and be even more tortuous than before. In light of the political and security situation in the Israeli-Palestinian arena and in the Palestinian arena itself after the confrontation between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the chances for formulating even a "shelf agreement" between Israel and the PA – slim to begin with – have been significantly reduced. It may be that the very concept of the political process has been doomed to spending many years on the shelf.

The rivalry with Fatah that began upon Hamas' establishment intensified when Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip. The divide between the organizations, which deepened during the confrontation between Hamas

and Israel in Gaza, is expected to widen further should real progress occur in Israel-PA dialogue. At the same time, political progress will likely aggravate tension within the Hamas ranks between the radical Damascus-based branch and the more pragmatic leadership in the Gaza Strip. This in turn may prepare the groundwork for a dialogue between Fatah and pragmatists in Hamas. Presumably, the more tangible the promise of a political breakthrough, the more likely there will be support among the residents of the territories for a negotiated compromise – even among those sectors that were led by the political stagnation to support Hamas. As such Fatah's potential ability to head a national representation based on its platform would grow. From this perspective, persistence in the political process will make it more possible that understandings reached in the talks will approach the implementation stage. Conversely, political deadlock, regardless of whether a Palestinian unity government is formed or the split in the Palestinian arena continues and is institutionalized, will preserve Hamas' ability to foil attempts to regulate Israeli-Palestinian relations, while a weakened Fatah will be unable to offer the Palestinian public or Israel a practical alternative in the spirit of two states for two peoples.

It may be that vigorous external intervention with enforcement ability is what is needed to generate the change that the Annapolis partners strove to promote in both arenas of conflict. In any case, the possibility that external intervention will alleviate both conflicts whose intertwined development has been the subject of this study, is an issue for a different inquiry.

Notes

1 In September 1982, the Reagan administration proposed an initiative for a regional agreement on the basis of Security Council Resolution 242, whereby a Palestinian autonomy would be established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and linked to Jordan. Jordan was supposed to represent the Palestinian side in the agreement and in the contacts that would take place to promote the plan. A similar proposal was raised by Saudi Arabia at the Arab summit meeting in Fez, Morocco that same month. These proposals were rejected by both the PLO and Israel – each side for different reasons – though in light of the possibility of regional political momentum and the concern lest Jordan win the right to Palestinian representation in this process, the PLO turned to Jordan for cooperation. For its part, Jordan, through coordination with the PLO, sought to reject claims made in Baghdad, Damascus, and Tripoli that it had taken over the Palestinian issue. This cooperation agreement was signed between the PLO and Jordan in February 1985. However, the agreement was annulled by Jordan in July 1986 because of the PLO leadership's refusal to recognize Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 as a basis for the political process.

2 Among those calling for representation of the occupied territories in the political process were Faisal Husseini, Sari Nusseibeh, and Saeb Erakat. These individuals even conducted talks with unofficial Israeli representatives in order to promote the idea. Later, they would become leaders of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising.

3 Data from B'tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories: From the beginning of the uprising until September 13, 1993, 1,060 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces. Fifty-four others were killed by Israeli civilians.

4 Particularly widespread rioting took place in May 1990, in response to the murder of seven Palestinian laborers by an Israeli civilian in Rishon Letzion, and as a result of clashes that took place on October 8, 1990 between Palestinian demonstrators and the security forces on the Temple Mount, when seventeen Palestinians were killed. As a result of this incident, there were violent attacks on Israeli security forces in the territories, instances of arson, and disturbances of public order. This wave was accompanied by a wave of knife attacks within the Green Line by individual activists. The escalation died down only with the imposition of a curfew

on widespread areas. Its gradual lifting was followed by renewed demonstrations and disturbances of the peace.

5 Data from B'tselem: From the outbreak of the uprising and until the signing of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993, fifty-three Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks within the Green Line. Forty-seven Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. During the same period of time, forty-three soldiers were killed in the territories, and seventeen soldiers were killed in terrorist attacks within the Green Line. Prominent among the active groups that resorted to firearms were the Black Panthers, associated with Fatah, the Red Eagles, associated with the Popular Front, and groups affiliated with the religious stream.

6 An interview with *Der Spiegel*, cited in *Haaretz*, December 30, 1987.

7 Already in January 1988, Arafat recognized dialogue with the United States as a condition for translating the struggle into political gains. Later that year, during the Algiers PNC convention, Arafat's political advisor Bassam Abu-Sharif made public a proposal for talks with Israel on the basis of the idea of establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel. This proposal earned much criticism from Fatah ranks. First and foremost among the critics was Farouq Qadoumi who was then involved in an attempt to improve the PLO's relationship with Syria.

8 At the end of the PNC deliberations, Arafat declared the establishment of a Palestinian state that "believes in the settlement of regional and international disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with the U.N. Charter and resolutions" ("Declaration of Independence," November 15, 1988). The Algiers declaration did not include a commitment to accept a two-state agreement as a permanent solution to the conflict, and the reference to Security Council Resolution 242 in the announcement stressed the validity of the Palestinian refugee problem as the basis for future claims.

9 Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad): "Our ultimate goal is the establishment of a Palestinian state in all of Palestine," quoted in *Yediot Ahronot*, December 18, 1988.

10 In advance of the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, it would again be Israel and Hamas that would support holding the elections, though for different if not contradictory reasons. The Israeli position would reflect a belief that elections would strengthen the leadership of Fatah, and the commitment to strive for a negotiated settlement with Israel. Hamas would be guided by the expectation that the election results would support its demand for significant representation in the PA. Israel's enthusiasm regarding the elections decreased notably in light of Hamas' growing popularity, but it could not withdrew its support for the move, which since 2002 had been presented as a focal phase in the desired institutional reform in the PA. The elections took place against the desire of Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, and according to the preference of the American administration. The results gave Hamas a majority in the Legislative Council, and therefore the right to convene a government.

11 The wave of immigration was seen as a development capable of offsetting the possibility for a Palestinian demographic advantage between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Settling new immigrants in the territories was seen as evidence of an Israeli intention to realize the "Greater Israel" vision. Israel responded harshly to the escalation in the uprising that occurred against the backdrop of the immigration wave.

12 In the Knesset elections in early November 1988, the Likud Party won a single seat advantage over the Labor Party (forty vs. thirty-nine seats, respectively). This tiny difference, which allowed the Likud to form a government headed by Yitzhak Shamir, was thought to be a direct result of a bloody terrorist attack in the Jericho region one day before the elections.

13 In 1989, Palestinians working in the Persian Gulf sent some $140-150 million to the territories. An additional sum of $250 million was transferred from Arab countries, UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency), and foreign institutions – especially European. In November 1990, there was a 50 percent drop in income. Money transfers by Palestinians working in the Gulf ceased altogether. Additional damage occurred with the devaluation of the Jordanian dinar because of Jordanian support for Iraq. Some 250,000 out of 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from the Gulf states.

14 The Israeli representatives to the talks were Dr. Yair Hirschfeld and Dr. Ron Pundak. Staring in April 1993, in response to the Palestinian demand for official Israeli representation in the discussions, they were joined by Ministry of Foreign Affairs director-general Uri Savir. Attorney Joel Singer subsequently joined the delegation. Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Dr. Yossi Beilin were updated on an ongoing basis. The Palestinian delegation was headed by Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala), and included Hassan Asfor. Their reports were sent back to Arafat, Yasir Abd Rabbo, and Mahmoud Abbas. Officials at the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs updated the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the US State Department on the developments and progress of the talks.

15 See http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/asp/event_frame.asp?id=37. The Declaration of Principles was signed by Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas in the presence of President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and Chairman Yasir Arafat. The witnesses were Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs Andrei Kosirov.

16 The Israel-PLO Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area (on a transfer of power and responsibilities), Cairo, May 1994; http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/asp/event_frame.asp?id=38.

17 The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/asp/event_frame.asp?id=42.

18 An unequivocal turning point by Hamas to this modus operandi occurred in response to the massacre of Palestinian worshippers in the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron in February 1994 by Baruch Goldstein, a resident of the Israeli settlement Kiryat Arba.

19 Hamas spokesperson Ibrahim Goseh declared that the terrorist attacks were meant to secure the victory for the Likud Party, thereby stopping the political process; cited in *al-Hayat*, London, February 2, 1995.

20 The Wye River Memorandum, http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/asp/event_frame.asp?id=47.

21 From the signing of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993 until September 2000, 256 Israeli civilians and soldiers were killed in terrorist attacks carried out by Palestinian factions, most of them from the Islamic camps. See: Fatal Terrorist Attacks in Israel Since the DoP: http://www.mfa.gov.il.

22 As was the case with Fatah, tensions between the leadership in the territories and the leadership in the diaspora developed over the years in the Hamas movement as well. More than once, this tension was expressed by various cost-benefit considerations regarding provoking Israel and Fatah, with the external leadership guided by a more militant stance. As opposed to the division between internal and external leaderships in Fatah, reflecting the different arenas of development of the two divisions of leadership, almost all Hamas leaders belonging to the external group were from the occupied territories and had their political philosophy and organizational affiliation shaped there. Like the case of the Islamic Jihad factions, the establishment of Hamas offices and headquarters outside the territories was a direct result of the expulsion of activists by Israel. The fact that the internal leadership was dependent on the resources controlled by the external leadership prevented the outbreak of open rivalry between the two groups.

23 Starting in 1997, the Palestinian economy grew, especially as a result of the growth of the number of Palestinians working in Israel, the transfers of tax revenues that Israel collected on behalf of the PA, and widespread international aid. See G. Pyler, *Economic Aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, BESA Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, Studies in Middle Eastern Security, No. 59 (2004).

24 Data from B'tselem: In 1996, the Israeli population of the West Bank stood at 139,974. In 1997, the number rose to 152,277, and in 2000 the number reached 190,206. Other than natural increase, this growth reflected the expansion of existing settlements and the establishment of new ones.

25 See Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/asp/event_frame.asp?id=48.

26 See for example D. Rubinstein, R. Mali, H. Agha, E. Barak, B. Morris, *Camp David 2000: What Really Happened There?* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2003).

27 Referring to the peace initiative adopted in March 2007 by the Arab League, Saeb Erekat wrote in his article "The Arabs Have Chosen Peace": "The Arab peace initiative offers a vision, a setting for negotiations, and the backing of the Arab nations, but is no substitute for direct negotiations between Israel and Palestinians about the issues linked to the permanent agreement. The practical importance of the initiative lies in that the fate of two of the most difficult issues of the permanent agreement cannot be sealed without the agreement of the Arab nations, their blessing and support, the issues being the refugees and Jerusalem," *Haaretz*, June 4, 2007.

28 The Tanzim factions numbered tens of thousands. Some were active also in the context of the PA's security forces meant to prevent terrorist attacks in the West Bank, commanded by Jibril Rajoub. See Roni Shaked, "The Tanzim: Fatah Militants on the Scene," *Yediot Ahronot*, October 3, 2000.

29 A. Moghadam, "Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 2 (2003): 65-92; Y. Schweitzer, "Palestinian Istishhadia: A Developing Instrument," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 8 (2007): 667-89.

30 Harsh measures were used also in response to incidents when solidarity of Palestinian citizens of Israel with the residents of the territories translated into riots and disturbances of public order. In October 2000, during the first days of the uprising, thirteen Palestinian citizens of Israel were killed in clashes with the police.

31 The targeted assassination, which during the second uprising was used extensively, became part of the repertoire of Israeli military measures for dealing with the situation starting November 2000. It became a locus of internal Israeli and international criticism because of the collateral deaths that occurred more than once in the course of pursuing Palestinian activists.

32 Some ten days after the end of the Taba summit, in the course of the campaign for prime minister, Ehud Barak made it clear to President-elect George W. Bush that he had done everything in his power to bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to an end, but that his efforts did not bear fruit, and therefore the talks held in Camp David (2000) and in Taba would not obligate Israel beyond the term of his government. See Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 8, 2001.

33 R. Drucker and O. Shelah, *Boomerang: The Failure of Leadership in the Second Intifada* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2005). This study points to Israeli management of the conflict as a critical element in the escalation. The authors claim that Israel knowingly missed opportunities to quell the violence and try to establish a ceasefire. About Israel's handling of the uprising, which included intentional gradual escalation of the conflict, see also Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, E. Lavie, K. Michael, D. Bar-Tal, *The Violent Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 2000-2004: The Transition from Conflict Settlement to Conflict Management*, Studies of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, No. 101 (2005); Akiva Eldar, "The Political-Security Default Setting," *Haaretz,* February 21, 2005.

34 A report published by the World Bank in September 2007 noted a new low point in the Palestinian GDP, from $1,612 in 1999 to $1,129 in 2006. Infrastructure projects were frozen, foreign investments in development dried up, trade was in a shambles because of the closures, and because of the difficulty in movement in the territories and between the territories and Israel, export of goods from the territories was disrupted and in response to terrorist attacks was halted altogether. The entrance of foreign laborers into Israel ceased almost completely. In the absence of local alternatives, unemployment in the territories reached dozens of percentage points. Almost all the external aid transferred to the territories was

dedicated to immediate solutions to the hardships experienced as the result of the collapse of the health and welfare systems, to salaries of public servants in order to quell unrest, or to maintenance of the security forces.

35 Data from B'tselem: Since the outbreak of the uprising until the end of June 2008, 4,712 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces. Forty-seven Palestinians were killed by Israeli civilians. Some 1,700 of the Palestinian dead were definitely involved in fighting against Israel.

36 An attempt to renew contact was made by a delegation headed by former senator George Mitchell. His mission was meant to establish terms for the renewal of Israeli-Palestinian dialogue on the basis of the agreement formulated in October 2000 at the summit meeting between Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, PA chairman Yasir Arafat, and American president Bill Clinton. Afterwards, George Tenet, head of the CIA, was sent to the region to try to find a way to implement the recommendations of the Mitchell delegation. His plan included a proposal for a ceasefire, a renewal of the security coordination between Israel and the PA, the return of IDF forces to the deployment lines before the outbreak of the uprising, and the renewal of political talks between Israel and the PA. The plan was accepted by the Israeli and PA representatives who met with Tenet, but did not reach the implementation stage. Like previous efforts, the mission of General Anthony Zinni, who arrived in the region in March 2002, also ended without any results. That same month, there were seventeen suicide bombings (2002 set a record in terms of suicide attacks: sixty terrorist incidents, killing 220 Israelis).

37 A. M. Said Ali and S. Feldman, *Ecopolitics: Changing the Regional Context of Arab-Israeli Peacemaking* (Cambridge: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2003).

38 "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership," http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/ release/2002/06/20020624-3.html.

39 "A Performance Based Roadmap to a Permanent, Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," Press Statement, Office of the Spokesman, US Department of State, Washington DC, April 30, 2003, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/pre/2003/20062.htm.

40 K. Shikaki, "Palestinian Public Opinion and the al-Aqsa Intifada," *Strategic Assessment* 5, no. 1 (2002): 15-20. See also Y. Sayigh, "Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt," *Survival* 43, no. 3 (2001): 40-47.

41 See http://www/knesset/gov/il.

42 Based on B'tselem data: Since the beginning of the conflict until the end of June 2008, 1,056 Israelis – of these 334 were members of security forces – were killed in Palestinian terrorist attacks. Of those, 486 were killed within the Green Line. According to "Four Years of Conflict Between Israel and the Palestinians – An Interim Report" (Israel Intelligence Heritage & Information Center, Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center): Since the beginning of the conflict until the end of 2003, 920 Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks, some 70 percent of whom were civilians and the rest members of security forces. From Prime Minister Ariel

Sharon's speech at the December 2003 Herzliya Conference: "We wish to speedily advance implementation of the Roadmap towards quiet and a genuine peace. We hope that the Palestinian Authority will carry out its part. However, if in a few months the Palestinians still continue to disregard their part in implementing the Roadmap – then Israel will initiate the unilateral security step of disengagement from the Palestinians." Like the separation barrier in the West Bank, the disengagement plan from the Gaza Strip was also presented by the prime minister as "a security measure, and not a political one." According to him, "The steps which will be taken will not change the political reality between Israel and the Palestinians, and will not prevent the possibility of returning to the implementation of the Roadmap and reaching an agreed settlement." www.pmo.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/743D65BA-068A-4466-B683-BCC5836316AF/0/7212582517.doc.

43 http://www/securityfence/mod/gov/il; http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_current_security_fence/php: "Israel's Security Fence"; J. Rynhold, "Israel's Fence: Can Separation Make Better Neighbours?" *Survival* 46, no. 1 (2004): 55-76. Regarding the security value of the barrier: in the course of 2003, there was a significant drop in the number of suicide attacks. This trend, attributed mainly to the long term results of Operation Defensive Shield and to the completion of large sections of the barrier, continued also in the years to come: during September-December 2000, there were four attacks, thirty-five in 2001, sixty in 2002, twenty-six in 2003, fifteen in 2004, and seven in 2005. See "The Features of Palestinian Terrorism in 2005," The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center. See also S. Arieli, and M. Sfard, *A Wall of Folly* (Tel Aviv: Aliyat Gag Books, Yediot Ahronot and Hemed, 2008).

44 Public support for the disengagement plan was fairly stable. Based on the Peace Index, February 2005, 62 percent of those questioned supported it and 30 percent were opposed. In March 2005, 54 percent supported the disengagement, while those opposed increased to 41 percent. In May, support for the disengagement rose to 57.7 percent and opposition dropped to 35.5 percent. In June, 56.1 percent supported the plan, while the opposition increased to 38.6 percent. See *Surveys of the Peace Index*, Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Studies, Tel Aviv University.

45 Dov Weisglass in an interview with Ari Shavit, *Haaretz*, October 8, 2004: "The disengagement is the preservative of the President's initiative [the Roadmap]. It's the bottle of formaldehyde in which you put the President's formula in order to preserve it for a very long time. The disengagement…provides the amount of formaldehyde needed so that there won't be a political process…enables Israel to park conveniently in an interim position as far as possible from any political pressure." This formulation undermined the claim that the disengagement from the Gaza Strip was meant to respond to the long term demographic challenge, which remains as long the Israeli control of the West Bank continues.

46 Eighty-four percent of respondents among Palestinians attributed the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip to Hamas' success. See *PSR – Survey Research Unit*, poll no. 17, September 28, 2005.

47 Sheikh Yassin had expressed the willingness to consider a halt in the violence if the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip were to be accompanied by a withdrawal from the West Bank, and threatened to renew the struggle if it were not. Yassin himself was killed in another round of violence, which demonstrated the dynamics that were background to the disengagement plan. On March 14, 2004, a joint cell of the Islamic Jihad and al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, with the encouragement of the Lebanese Hizbollah, launched a suicide attack at the Ashdod port. The attack was supposed to convey that the Israeli withdrawal would be carried out under fire despite the intention of Fatah's leadership to allow a calm withdrawal. Because of the attack, a planned meeting between Ariel Sharon and Ahmed Qurei was cancelled, and the Israeli Cabinet approved the escalation of the struggle against the militant leaders. Sheikh Yassin was assassinated on March 22 and his successor, al-Aziz Rantisi, was assassinated on April 17.

48 During the uprising, there was a steady decline in the Gaza Strip economy, while since 2004 it was possible to see a certain recovery in the West Bank economy as a result of the easing of some – though hardly sweeping or ongoing – restrictions in the transfer of goods. *Globes*, February 13-14, 2005.

49 In 2006, 946 incidents of rocket fire from the Gaza Strip were reported. In 2007, there were 896 incidents. In 2001, there were seven instances, in 2002 – 42, in 2003 – 105, in 2004 – 157, and in 2005 – 241. See "Anti-Israel Terrorism: Features of 2007 and Trends Towards 2008," The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, May 2008; "Five Years After the Start of the Violent Confrontation Between Israel and the Palestinians, Features and Data," The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, October 2, 2005.

50 Ehud Olmert succeeded Ariel Sharon as head of the Kadima Party after Sharon went into a coma as the result of a stroke. Sharon founded Kadima when senior members of the Likud attempted to undermine his leadership against the background of the planned disengagement from the Gaza Strip and its aftermath.

51 Hamas won seventy-four of the 132 seats in the Legislative Council, while Fatah received only forty-five. In the previous Council, elected in 1996 without the participation of Hamas in the elections, Fatah held sixty-three of the eighty-three seats.

52 Messages put out by Hamas spokespeople about Israel were not unequivocal. Alongside calls for its destruction, the willingness for a *hudna* was also made explicit, and not always made conditional on Israel's comprehensive withdrawal. In January 2007, Khaled Mashal steered the discussion away from the ideological realm and towards a practical context by announcing that Israel was "a fact" that a Palestinian state, when it arises, could recognize. See, e.g., "Mashal: We Will Agree to a State in the '67 Borders," *Haaretz*, April 2, 2008.

53 The PA's revenues decreased by about 60 percent from the inauguration of the Hamas government until September 2006. In this period, the PA received some $500 million, compared to $1.2 billion in the same period the previous year. The decrease in the PA's revenues was primarily the result of the delay in the

transfer of taxes (some $360 million) frozen by Israel. Most of the aid, some $300 million, came from Arab countries. The largest portion was transferred directly to President Abbas, but it helped pay the salaries of PA employees and thus eased the pressure on the Hamas government; *Jerusalem Post*, November 2, 2006. At the same time, the boycott of the PA would ease already in the first years of the Hamas government. The aid transferred directly to President Abbas or to welfare NGOs by, among others, the EU, actually exceeded the aid given to the PA in previous years. See also M. Samhouri, "Gaza Economic Predicament One Year after Disengagement: What Went Wrong?" *Middle East Brief*, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, No. 12, 2006.

54 Data from B'tselem: Between September 29, 2000 and June 30, 2008, 577 Palestinians were killed in inter-organizational clashes in the territories.

55 Danny Rubinstein, "We Don't Have Anything to Sell Them," *haaretz.co.il*, June 15, 2007; Avi Issacharoff and Barak Ravid, "The PA to Israel: We Can't Take Security Responsibility for the Towns in the West Bank," *haaretz.co.il*, August 6, 2007; Akiva Eldar, "What Has Livni Really Worried," *haaretz.co.il*, February 22, 2008; "Embracing the One-State Solution," *al-Ahram*, March 20-26, 2008; Sari Nusseibeh, "The One-State Solution," *Newsweek*, September 29, 2008.

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