

The Political Process Entangled in the Triangular Gordian Knot

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Ten years after the outbreak of the second intifada, the American administration, backed by the Quartet, once again called upon Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) to renew a direct dialogue. The talks, as defined by the administration, were intended to advance the principles of a final status agreement within a year. A response to the challenge will require that the parties labor to overcome the wide gaps in their basic positions. Moreover, the institutional rift that has deepened in the Palestinian arena during and because of the years of stalemate presents serious obstacles to any future attempt to implement principal understandings, even if they are successfully formulated.

During the years of the intifada, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict splintered into three spheres: Fatah-Hamas; Israel-PA led by Fatah; and Israel-Hamas. The friction in the three respective arenas fed on one another; attempts to assuage the tensions in one of them sparked tension in the others, and this complex dynamic erected a further stumbling block toward an Israeli-Palestinian compromise. This essay examines the military and political moves that accelerated the development of the split in the Palestinian arena. It reviews the lessons of the dialogue launched at Annapolis, which proved a failed attempt to exploit the split to bring about a political breakthrough. It concludes by analyzing the nature of the complex, circular interface between the political stagnation and the split in the Palestinian arena.

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Be Careful What You Wish For

Mahmoud Abbas: "The second intifada was one of our worst mistakes."¹

George W. Bush: "Peace requires a new and different Palestinian leadership...I call on the Palestinian people to elect new leaders."²

The two summit meetings held in the first months of the second intifada, in October 2000 in Sharm el-Sheikh and in February 2001 in Taba, were failed attempts to stop the deterioration of Israeli–Palestinians relations. The outbreak of the intifada in and of itself expressed at least a temporary renunciation of the political option by the Palestinian Authority. It was also clearly a rejection of dialogue, which at most would have been based on the compromise proposal that Prime Minister Ehud Barak placed on the negotiating table at Camp David and was refused by the Palestinian Authority. The government of Israel consequently considered itself exempt from formulating a plan to place the political process back on track.

The years since the intifada erupted saw many conflict resolution proposals. In December 2000, President Clinton presented parameters for a compromise that addressed the core issues of the conflict. In 2002 and again in 2007, the Arab League adopted a peace initiative that outlined the conditions for Arab–Israeli normalization incumbent on Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Syria. Among the unofficial proposals for a settlement, the Geneva initiative, which was formulated by Israelis and Palestinians and published in December 2003, was far reaching. The same year, the Quartet adopted a staged roadmap for an Israeli–Palestinian settlement. The Roadmap was accepted by Israel and the Palestinian Authority, albeit with reservations, and remained an agreed-upon framework for the political process, even after 2005, the time originally allotted for its completion. However, these various proposals, formulated in the first seven years of the conflict, did not produce concrete results, and when Israel and the Palestinian Authority returned to the discussion table at the end of this period, significant gaps in their positions continued to divide the sides. Furthermore, their ability to advance a comprehensive settlement, and even more, the Palestinian Authority's ability to guarantee its implementation, were greatly reduced. This was to a great extent a result of the split of the Palestinian arena into

two authorities, Fatah, which controlled the West Bank, and Hamas, which controlled the Gaza Strip.

The rivalry between Hamas and Fatah is as old as Hamas, which was founded in the early days the first intifada. In the first seven years of the second intifada, the rivalry between the organizations intensified, until an institutional rift in the Palestinian arena became a fait accompli. Ironically, the rift was accelerated by moves intended to enable the renewal of the political process, including the Israeli demand that the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority contain the violence as a precondition for renewing the Israel-PA dialogue, and the United States' conditioning its renewed recognition of the Palestinian Authority as a political partner on a comprehensive administrative-governmental reform and general elections in the territories. The institutionalization of the rift was also hastened by the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip, which was intended to create a more comfortable security environment for Israel in the absence of a dialogue.

Israel's demand to contain the violence: With the outbreak of the uprising, Palestinian Authority security forces joined the vanguard of the struggle against Israel. In tandem, the PA adopted a permissive approach toward organizations with an independent agenda – led by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and joined by various factions nominally connected to Fatah itself – which led to an escalation of the struggle. Israel responded with a comprehensive military campaign against the Palestinian Authority's institutions, facilities, and power centers, and imposed severe economic sanctions on the PA. The intensity of the response in part expressed frustration at the Palestinian Authority's withdrawal from the mutual agreement to manage the conflict through dialogue, which was the basis of the Oslo accords. Indeed, the escalation was seen as a realization of the scenario envisioning the Palestinian Authority's abuse of the military capabilities granted it by Israel, expressed concisely in the slogan, "Don't give them guns," which was emblazoned on the standards of those who opposed the Oslo process.

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In accordance with the Oslo-based approach that had become the framework for Israel's relations with the Palestinian Authority, the PA was held responsible for any manifestation of violence, including

terror attacks by groups that opposed the PA and the political process. The terrorist attacks, regardless of their perpetrators, were likewise interpreted as evidence of the PA's weakness, and therefore of its unsuitability as a partner in dialogue. The government of Likud leader Ariel Sharon, which was established after the February 2001 elections, demanded seven days of quiet as a condition for renewing the dialogue – in itself a diluted version of the thirty days of quiet initially demanded in order to recommence negotiations. Yet the PA suffered a swift loss of enforcement ability and institutional authority once it loosened its hold on factions involved in the struggle against Israel, and also as a result of the offensive conducted against it by Israel. Therefore, it was clear that it could not fulfill the demands for total calm.

At the same time, the demand for calm defined for Hamas and the factions spearheading the violent struggle the kind of activity that would prevent the renewal of dialogue. And in fact, during the first years of the confrontation, the rounds of the confrontation – waves of terrorist attacks followed by sharp Israeli responses – preempted attempts to restore mutual trust, bring the sides back to the negotiating table, and renew the political process on the basis of the initiatives formulated by the US administration. In the absence of any dialogue with Israel, the Palestinian

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Authority was also unable to rehabilitate its status in either the international or the domestic arena. As the PA grew weaker, and against the backdrop of increasing anarchy in the territories, Hamas consolidated its military infrastructure. The political stagnation and the PA's helplessness in the face of the continued Israeli occupation strengthened public identification with the strategy of struggle that Hamas embraced, preached, and led. Sympathy for Hamas crossed organizational lines, and also included strata that for years had been identified with the Fatah-led national camp. Because Hamas was perceived – and for good reason – as more trustworthy and

less corrupt than Fatah, support grew for Hamas as an alternative to the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority.

Elections in the PA: The severe international criticism leveled at Israel because of the force and scope of its offensive against the Palestinian Authority was offset by the understanding shown by the US administration for the struggle against Palestinian violence. After the events of September 11, 2001, the sense of common goals and a shared destiny between the government of Israel and the US administration was strengthened. The war on terror declared by the US administration was interpreted in Israel as approval for a comprehensive offensive against the PA and against the infrastructure for attacks carried out in the territories and within the Green Line. At the same time, the US administration strove to renew the political process in order to enlist pragmatic Arab regimes in the battle against radical Islam. Against this backdrop, a demand was formulated for institutional reform in the PA. Israel joined the demand for reform, though it expressed reservations about the administration's call for general elections in the PA, which was inspired by the assumption that democratization in the greater Middle East would curb the drift toward fundamentalist Islam. President Bush even explicitly demanded that the PA's founding leadership be replaced by new leadership that would be capable of engaging in dialogue.

Like the government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority was not eager to hold elections because it feared results that would demonstrate the widening influence of Hamas. On the other hand, in order to preserve the remains of its international standing, the Palestinian Authority acceded to the US demand and began to prepare for elections. Recognition of the inability to hold elections during a violent confrontation with Israel, along with the need to include Hamas in the elections in order to lend credibility to the results, impelled Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas and Fatah to coordinate the election campaign with Hamas. Contacts between Fatah and Hamas, conducted since 2001 under Egyptian sponsorship and intended to advance coordination between the camps, failed. However, Hamas saw the election initiative as a golden opportunity to promote the goal it set for itself when it was established: to take the reins of the national struggle from Fatah. Therefore, the Hamas leadership assented to the call by Abbas to suspend the inter-organizational struggle and the struggle with Israel during preparations for the forthcoming elections.

Coordination of the election campaign between Fatah and Hamas was used by the respective parties to promote antithetical organizational

interests. The PA leadership hoped that the election results would reinforce its senior status despite the rise in Hamas' strength, and that it would be recognized as a partner for dialogue. This in turn would strengthen its standing at home, especially if it generated a political breakthrough. For its part, the Hamas leadership sought to gain public support that would allow it to continue to diminish Fatah's status, in part by foiling moves toward a political settlement. The two sides attained their objective, though Hamas' achievement was more direct and concrete. The Hamas electoral victory in January 2006 (which was boosted by the vote counting method and the power struggles in the Fatah ranks) brought in its wake a period of political paralysis. Although the PA would again be recognized as a political partner after the Hamas takeover of Gaza, the split in the Palestinian arena added a structural and political difficulty to the substantive difficulties that already delayed progress toward a settlement and would continue to do so.

Physical disengagement, political break: The burden of the struggle against Palestinian violence in and from the Gaza Strip, the aspiration to reduce the direct friction with the Palestinian population, and the desire for international legitimacy for a military response to the skirmishes prompted Israel to take a unilateral move involving comprehensive withdrawal from the Strip.³ The disengagement from Gaza took place in August 2005 following another unilateral move that Israel had initiated six months earlier: construction of a physical barrier in the West Bank to separate Israeli and Palestinian population centers. In April 2004, against the backdrop of preparations for the disengagement from Gaza and despite American opposition in principle to moves that would disrupt Palestinian territorial contiguity and therefore hamper the establishment of a viable state, President Bush delivered a letter to the government of Israel, which conveyed the understanding that "pending agreements or other arrangements," Israel would continue to control the territorial space in the territories, and that blocs of Jewish settlements in the West Bank would be preserved. The letter granted the Palestinian Authority the right to veto proposals that were not coordinated with it, but it still clearly inclined to the Israeli approach. The erection of the separation fence in the West Bank and the lack of coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the security arrangements regarding the Gaza Strip after the disengagement reflected Israel's lack of confidence in

the PA's ability to ensure security stability. Indeed, both moves, as well as the letter from President Bush, testified to the PA's political marginality.

The Israeli closure of Gaza was tightened when the Hamas-led government was sworn in, and an international boycott of the Hamas government was imposed. The boycott was considered a diplomatic achievement for Israel: as conditions for lifting the boycott, Israel and the Quartet demanded that Hamas cease the violence, recognize Israel, and honor agreements previously signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. In response to the kidnapping of a soldier in late June 2006 and the increased rocket fire at the western Negev from the Strip, Israel conducted an extensive military operation in the Gaza Strip – while it was engaged in a war with Hizbollah in Lebanon. The fear of a recurrence of the Gaza (and Lebanon) scenario thwarted the idea of transforming the military-political situation in the West Bank on the basis of the rationale underlying the withdrawal from Gaza: that Israel would entrench itself behind a border of its choosing, without making the complete cessation of violence a condition for withdrawal, and without guarantees of security coordination with the Palestinians after the withdrawal. The “convergence” plan for the West Bank, which was among the ideas that led Kadima, headed by Ehud Olmert, to victory in the March 2006 elections, fell from the agenda. Concurrently, economic and security aid to the Abbas presidency was increased, although an Israeli political plan for reviving the dialogue with the Palestinian Authority was not discussed.

In any case, Fatah was not able to consider the renewal of dialogue at the time. Its leadership was coping with an accelerated deterioration in relations with Hamas after the invitation to join a national unity government was rejected. An escalation in the inter-organizational struggle, which developed in Gaza and overflowed into the West Bank, spurred intensive efforts at restraint in the Palestinian arena and the pan-Arab sphere. In November 2006, Hamas and Fatah agreed on a lull in their struggle with each other and in the struggle with Israel. Fatah and Hamas members imprisoned in Israeli jails took part in mediation attempts. Egypt, Jordan,

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and Saudi Arabia also worked intensively in this direction; the regimes in these countries were troubled by Hamas inspiration of radical Islamic forces in the Middle East; by Iranian penetration of the Gaza Strip through support for Hamas; and by the stalemate in the political process, which enhanced Hamas' rise to power. In March 2007, in advance of the Arab League meeting, the Mecca agreement, a formula for a national unity government, was agreed upon. Its platform did not include explicit recognition of Israel: inter-organizational reconciliation required the PA to forgo an immediate political option. However, Fatah refused to transfer control of PA security forces to the Interior Ministry headed by Hamas, as required by the PA's Basic Law, and this prevented the consolidation of the national unity government. A fierce confrontation broke out between the camps in the Gaza Strip, facilitated by the absence of Israeli troops in the Strip. In June 2007, Hamas forces defeated Fatah operatives in the area. Israel observed the development from across the Gaza border.

The geographic divide between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank prevented an all-out war from developing between Fatah and Hamas in the West Bank as well. The authority headed by Hamas entrenched itself in the Strip under the Israeli- and Egyptian-imposed closure, while being boycotted diplomatically and economically (with the exception of consumer goods defined as essential) by Israel, the United States, and the European Union. Since then the Fatah-led authority has focused on the attempt to preserve its hold on the West Bank, while enjoying increased economic and military support. This backing was provided with the goal of preventing the fall of the West Bank into Hamas hands, and on the basis of the PA's declared adherence to the political path.

The Annapolis Junction

Ehud Olmert: "Annapolis' greatest strength lies in the fact that...it is taking place without Hamas...The international community understands that Hamas cannot be a part of the process."⁴

The Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip demonstrated the PA's weakness, and at the same time, inspired hope for the revival of the political process. The rift in the Palestinian arena was perceived as an opportunity to bring about a breakthrough leading to an agreement: it drew a clear dividing line between the camp committed to a compromise and the camp that,

along with willingness to agree to security and economic understandings with Israel, remained steadfastly opposed to a permanent settlement. The intention “to strengthen Abu Mazen,” i.e., to strengthen the influence of the Palestinian camp that supported a negotiated settlement, was stressed in the preparations for the international conference that would announce the renewal of talks between Israel and the PA. The conference took place in November 2007 in Annapolis, with the participation of the concerned parties and in the presence of representatives from dozens of countries.

Two negotiating channels were launched at the conference. One dealt with ongoing conflict management, and the other was devoted to a discussion of the various aspects of a permanent settlement. The talks were intended to conclude within a year with principles for a settlement, even if it was a formula that would be shelved until conditions were ripe for its implementation. The one year allocated to complete the process testified to the US administration’s desire for an achievement in the Middle East before the end of President Bush’s term. The relatively modest ambition to formulate only a “shelf agreement” reflected awareness of both the difficulty in bridging the substantive gaps and the internal political obstacles that would hamper the parties in moving forward on an implementable agreement. It is no wonder, therefore, that progress was achieved especially on the conflict management track. Increased economic aid and the easing of restrictions on movement of people and goods in the West Bank, as well as a fundamental reform of the PA’s security forces under American, European, Jordanian, and Israeli auspices, produced impressive results. The cooperation between Israel and the PA in these areas would persist, and the trends toward economic improvement and stabilization of the security situation in the West Bank would continue, even after the political process was again suspended and despite public criticism of

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the PA for cooperating with Israel without assured political gains anchored in a binding timetable.

Notwithstanding the renewed recognition of the PA as a negotiating partner and despite Hamas' political isolation, Hamas remained a key player in molding the Israeli-Palestinian arena. Progress in the talks between Israel and the PA was impeded by differences of opinion on critical topics, in particular, the route of the border between Israel and the future Palestinian state. In the background hovered the shadow of the anticipated difficulty in reaching agreement on other subjects that (precisely for this reason) were not discussed, mainly Jerusalem and the refugees. In addition, the barrage of rockets from the Gaza Strip – frequent reminders of the threat latent in withdrawing without political understandings and coordinated security arrangements – undermined Israeli opposition to tactical understandings with Hamas. The ceasefire negotiated between Israel and Hamas with Egyptian mediation in June 2008 in exchange for an Israeli promise to ease the closure clouded the atmosphere around the negotiations table. Fatah then renewed the attempt to reach understandings with Hamas by itself: while the negotiations with Israel were intended to compensate the PA for its weakness on the home front, the attempt to settle disputes with Hamas expressed the aspiration to promote the same goal in the absence of a concrete political option. In any event, Fatah's contacts with Hamas came to naught, as did the dialogue with Israel.

Toward the end of the year allotted by the Annapolis process and the end of the tenure of the Olmert government, Olmert sought to exhaust the potential of the dialogue and presented the PA a proposal for a far reaching withdrawal from the West Bank, including a plan to exchange territories. Even if this proposal was not "too little," it arrived "too late." According to Olmert, his proposal went unanswered by the Palestinians; Palestinian spokesmen claimed that Israel entered a campaign period before a counterproposal was submitted and therefore lacked clout to pursue political proposals. What the main points of the PA's response would have been, and whether it would have promoted an agreement or merely emphasized differences of opinion is not known. In any event, it was Hamas that signaled an end to the discussions. In late December 2008, war broke out in Gaza after Hamas failed to heed explicit Israeli warnings that a military offensive loomed if it did not stop the rocket fire.

The end of the war left Hamas at the helm of a stricken region. Ongoing Iranian aid helped the movement rehabilitate its military infrastructure and improve its capabilities, although civilian rehabilitation was delayed by difficulties created by the closure and the distribution of resources that favored military goods and entrenchment of the regime. Hamas became a focus of public criticism, in part for irresponsible conduct that wreaked havoc in the Strip. Indeed, public support for Hamas, polled in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip ten years after the intifada broke out, was significantly lower than support for Fatah. However, the erosion in Hamas' prestige did not help Fatah restore its control of the Strip.⁵ Furthermore, with time, the scope of the diplomatic boycott of Hamas narrowed. European governments did not hide their intention to engage with the organization, claiming that dialogue was essential for reducing the burden on the Gaza population. International criticism of Israel for the numerous casualties and the extensive scope of damage caused by the war in Gaza, and the cumulative civilian price of the closure caused Israel itself to ease the economic embargo. Thus, the military and economic pressure Israel brought to bear on Hamas with the intention of weakening it actually accelerated the erosion of the boycott, and the institutionalization of the division in the PA as well.

The mark left by the war between Israel and Hamas was evident in the results of the February 2009 elections in Israel. The public supported parties that took a hard line toward Hamas and the question of negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. Binyamin Netanyahu, who headed the new government, delayed a formal acceptance of the two-state solution for several months, and even then it was accepted primarily to deflect massive American pressure. He also demanded Palestinian recognition of Israel as the national state of the Jewish people. For its part, the PA demanded a total Israeli freeze on construction in the settlements. These demands, which were presented for the first time as conditions for the very renewal of talks, embodied a mutual hardening of positions. The US administration provided a way out of the stalemate through indirect negotiations with American mediation. Nevertheless, the May 2010 launch of the indirect talks was nothing more than the semblance of renewing the political process. Quickly, even before the months allotted for completing this stage ended, it became clear that this

was a time-out in advance of renewed American pressure on the parties to return to direct talks.

Untying the Gordian Knot?

Barack Obama: “Both sides – the Israelis and the Palestinians – have found that the political environment, the nature of their coalitions or the divisions within their societies, were such that it was very hard for them to start engaging in a meaningful conversation. And I think that we overestimated our ability to persuade them to do so when their politics ran contrary to that.”⁶

The split in the Palestinian arena did not create the political stagnation; rather, the stalemate encouraged a search in the Palestinian arena for a conceptual and strategic alternative to a dialogue that was a disappointment, that fed the rivalry between the camps supporting various solutions to their national distress, and that accelerated the creation of an inter-organizational rift. But the split unquestionably had a destructive influence on the political process.

Once this meaning of the split became clear, Israel, Fatah, and relevant international players focused on direct or indirect efforts to weaken Hamas. An economic and military struggle was launched against the movement and its stronghold in the Gaza Strip, and the Annapolis initiative was intended to promote a settlement, and at the same time to strengthen support in Palestinian public opinion for the PA as the authorized representative for negotiations. This combined policy did not bear fruit.

The struggle against Hamas did not undermine its control of Gaza, and even increased belligerent tendencies in the ranks of the organization and among its supporters. The Hamas campaign to take control of the West Bank has been contained, at least for now, but the governmental divide between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, when added to the geographical split – which is inherently problematic – has necessarily decreased the extent of the PA’s influence in the territories. With a Hamas threat looming, the PA hardened its positions on the opening conditions for talks with Israel and the conflict’s core issues. At the same time, the PA’s ability to guarantee implementation of a compromise with Israel has been reduced, even if it is only a partial agreement and certainly if it is a comprehensive settlement. From Israel’s point of view, the threat

of security deterioration initiated by Hamas from its stronghold in Gaza, or through its operatives in the West Bank, strengthened the fear of security risks in a military withdrawal from the West Bank. Israel has also increasingly recoiled at the anticipated political and public-social price of withdrawing from settlements in the West Bank without the possibility of mitigating the risky potential of the move by assuring an end to the conflict. The Annapolis talks took place under these circumstances, and after they broke off, the trust of both parties in the very ability to advance an agreement declined. Israel and the PA have since reiterated their commitment to the vision of two states for two peoples, but declarations in this vein have not been interpreted as an expression of a policy with immediate operative implications, rather as statements intended to satisfy the US administration and place responsibility for the stalemate on the other side.

The stalemate is clearly circular: political stagnation deepens the rift in the Palestinian arena because it weakens the Palestinian Authority, which is committed to negotiations, and reinforces the power of the camp that opposes a permanent settlement. On the other hand, the rift in the Palestinian arena weakens the chance to formulate a comprehensive, implementable settlement, and thus deepens the political stagnation. In light of the continuing dead end, ideas have been raised in the Palestinian arena and the international arena for stabilizing the conflict theater, not necessarily on the basis of negotiated understandings and Israeli-Palestinian coordination. These ideas, whether they are about the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state or a plan for an imposed settlement, are nothing more than proposals for conflict management. Indeed, without an agreed-upon compromise, the end of the conflict will not be advanced, and the constant danger of conflagration will remain.

Ideological commitment, security concerns, opposition at home, and lack of confidence in the willingness of the other party to fulfill its declared intentions stand in the way of a compromise between the governments of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Furthermore, any agreement drafted by them will be limited, and will serve as a potential backdrop for renewed escalation unless it is signed by a Palestinian authority that controls both the West Bank and Gaza, and whose platform includes a commitment to a permanent settlement. Nonetheless, the logic that guided the Annapolis initiative is still valid: the circular connection

between the political stagnation and the rift in the Palestinian arena can be broken through dialogue between Israel and the PA, which will be based on mutual recognition of the necessity of giving up maximalist desires. The more practical the formula for a settlement and the more it is backed by mutual and international guarantees to protect substantive security and economic interests, the greater the chance that with time, opposition to it will decrease in Israel and among the Palestinians. This will also lower obstacles to its implementation that originate in the split in the Palestinian arena. Conversely, the longer the breakthrough to an historic compromise is delayed, the more formidable these obstacles will become.

Notes

- 1 *Haaretz.com*, May 26, 2010.
- 2 June 24, 2002, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html>.
- 3 One of the explanations of the disengagement was that the move was intended to respond to the long term demographic challenge to Israel. Indeed, Israel did withdraw from an area saturated with a Palestinian population, but presenting the move as a step intended to diminish American pressure for continued withdrawals in the West Bank limits the validity of the demographic claim. Dov Weisglass, Prime Minister Sharon's bureau chief, stated in a newspaper interview (with Ari Shavit, *Haaretz*, October 8, 2004): "The disengagement...is a bottle of formaldehyde in which you place [the Roadmap]...it supplies the amount of formaldehyde necessary so that there will not be a political process...it allows Israel to park comfortably in an intermediate state that deflects political pressure from us as much as possible."
- 4 *Ynet*, November 29, 2007.
- 5 According to a public opinion poll conducted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in April-May 2010, 49 percent of the respondents expressed confidence in Mahmoud Abbas, as against 13 percent who expressed support for Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniyeh. Sixty-one percent supported the government of Salam Fayyed, as against only 11 percent who supported the Haniyeh government. Fifty percent of the respondents replied that they would vote for Fatah in the elections, 10 percent answered that they would give their vote to Hamas. As for support for parties by regional distribution, in the West Bank, there was 52 percent support for Fatah, as against 5 percent for Hamas, and in the Gaza Strip, there was 44 percent support for Fatah and 14 percent for Hamas. Source: NEC's monthly monitor of Palestinian perceptions, Bulletin V, nos. 4 and 5, <http://www.neareastconsulting.com>.
- 6 *Time Magazine*, January 21, 2010.