

## CHAPTER 2

# THE LEADING SCENARIOS

### **Scenario I: A Consensus Successor**

The optimistic scenario involves an orderly and stable process in which a leader or leadership emerges to succeed Abbas. In this scenario, Abbas will prepare the way ahead of time by choosing a candidate or candidates to replace him in all three positions, based on the understanding that his time as *rais* is limited. He will start to transfer power and strengthen individuals that are loyal to him within the ruling bodies of Fatah, the PLO, and the PA. There are those who believe that Abbas has begun to mark his successors by appointing Hussein al-Sheikh as the secretary general of the Executive Committee of the PLO and by strengthening the regional and international status of Majed Faraj, the head of the Palestinian General Intelligence Service. In this situation, the system would not undergo a shock when Abbas leaves and would continue to function according to the policy guidelines he has established. This increases the likelihood that the PA institutions, including the security apparatuses, will continue to function. The main role is reserved for the National Security Forces, which has the largest force and is perceived as the PA's army. This apparatus has the capability to stabilize the situation on the ground, contribute to the enforcement of law and order, neutralize terrorist threats, and maintain tight security coordination with Israel.

The Palestinian motivation to maintain the PA as a responsible, stable, and functioning government will be based on a number of factors: first and foremost, the desire to prevent Hamas from undermining stability and accumulating power at the expense of Fatah; second, the desire for economic prosperity and assistance from the countries in the region and international sources (the donor countries); third, the personal interest of survival among many of the Palestinian leaders who wish to maintain (and even upgrade) their

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status in the new leadership; fourth, the Jordanian support for the leadership as a stabilizing factor, based on the concern that chaos will spill over from the West Bank into the Kingdom of Jordan; and fifth, a supportive US administration that will view the new leaders as an opportunity to upset the status quo with Israel and demonstrate understanding for Palestinian needs as a means of creating renewed motivation for the political process.

With respect to the new leadership's legitimacy among the public and the processes it will launch, an agreed-upon process for the immediate transfer of power—with a division of power on the basis of internal processes, and above all, elections for the PLC and the presidency of the PA—will presumably receive relatively broad support among the various political factions and among the Palestinian public. On the other hand, avoiding the election process, even after choosing an immediate successor, is liable to contain this positive effect and weaken the support of the Palestinian public for the new leadership, particularly among the younger generation. They are likely to view the new leader as "more of the same," namely a product of the corrupt political system that advances individuals on the basis of authority, money, or nepotism, rather than considerations such as the good of the people and the right to an independent state.

An important and relevant factor in the emergence of a positive scenario is a stable security situation, i.e., a low level of violence on the Palestinian street and friction with Israel and the settlement population, as well as calm on the Gaza border. This will require greater awareness on the part of Israel and a policy to reduce friction and restrain Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

This scenario leaves room for an internal Palestinian process of reconciliation, since Abbas's firm opposition to Hamas was based not only on political considerations but also personal/emotional sensitivities: it was on his watch that Hamas took over Gaza by force. If Hamas views Abbas's successor as a unifying figure, there will be a greater possibility of reconciliation or at least the establishment of a unity or technocratic government, and Gaza's negative influence in the Palestinian arena and in relations with Israel will diminish in the short term. Nonetheless, Hamas will likely exploit the weakness of the new leader or his desire for reconciliation in order to increase its political power and its public legitimacy in the West Bank.

### ***An Optimistic Scenario: Opportunities***

In a calm security situation, both in the West Bank and in Gaza, it will be possible to promote processes that are positive from Israel's perspective as well. On the one hand, Abbas's replacement will presumably share his lack of trust of Hamas and the fear of a Hamas takeover, but will not be subject to the personal-emotional constraints that influence Abbas's attitude to the rival organization. Under these circumstances, a more positive relationship might develop between the organizations, together with a new balance of power. A new and more flexible leadership can move toward a Palestinian unity government and perhaps even the restoration of PA control over Gaza. This will increase the legitimacy of the new government and solidify its status as the exclusive address for Israel and the international community. However, the manner of the PA's return to Gaza, its role in the administration of Gaza, and the status of Hamas's military wing relative to the Palestinian security forces will depend on both the strength of Fatah relative to Hamas immediately after Abbas departs the stage and the question of which organizations have an advantage or are prepared to compromise. Furthermore, a new security situation in Gaza is possible in the case of an Israeli military operation that dismantles the military wing of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza. Egypt will

also have an important role to play in providing guarantees of calm and restraining Hamas in Gaza.

The new Palestinian leadership, if it abandons its opposition to the agreements and joint projects between Israel and the Arab states that emerged from the Abraham Accords, will be able to draw the attention of the regional and international players who wish to increase their influence in Palestinian affairs and their investment in economic/infrastructure projects in PA territory. The revival of projects that are currently shelved will provide positive momentum for the Palestinian economy and build stability. However, the involvement of Hamas in the PA will reduce the willingness of the international community to provide funding to the PA, since Hamas is defined by the EU and the US as a terror organization and the conditions for recognizing its legitimacy are its abandonment of terror and violence and its recognition of agreements between the PLO and the PA on the one hand and Israel on the other. In addition, Hamas is obligated to a third condition, namely, the recognition of the State of Israel and its right to exist within the area of the Land of Israel, but here there may be flexibility in the position of the international community than can prioritize the respective conditions. How Hamas is integrated within the government—whether in key positions; officially as Hamas or through the appointment of individuals who support Hamas but are not members—will also affect the willingness of the international community to assist the new government, and there may be flexibility on this matter as well.

The United States might view the departure of Abbas as an opportunity to renew the political process, since Abbas is perceived as a leader who is unable or unwilling to make fateful strategic decisions. A new and positive leadership based on internal Palestinian forces and led by Fatah, which is less influenced by the politics of the Palestinian diaspora and its demands to prioritize the right of return, may provide an opportunity for jumpstarting the political process. This would likely gain the support and assistance of the international community and the states in the region.

A change in the negotiating paradigm from one that hinders an overall settlement (as part of the condition that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”) to a willingness to progress according to interim arrangements will improve the situation. In other words, this calls for a bottom-up process, namely from small to large, whereby something that is agreed upon will be implemented immediately, alongside a commitment to a final outcome of two states for two peoples. In this scenario, it will be possible to obtain regional and international promises and guarantees for the Palestinians, and in the most far-reaching scenario, the establishment of a Palestinian state within temporary borders. The integration of Hamas within the government, such as in a unity or a technocratic government, will affect the PA’s conduct: even if it is stable and functioning, it is likely to adopt a hostile attitude toward Israel.

These potential positive processes are not expected to occur immediately, since Abbas’s successor or successors will likely at first be confrontational toward Israel, with the goal of solidifying their position. This does not mean that agreements between Israel and the PA will be breached, but presumably there will be less overt cooperation and greater anti-Israel rhetoric in order to strengthen the government’s public image and demonstrate a departure from the Abbas era.

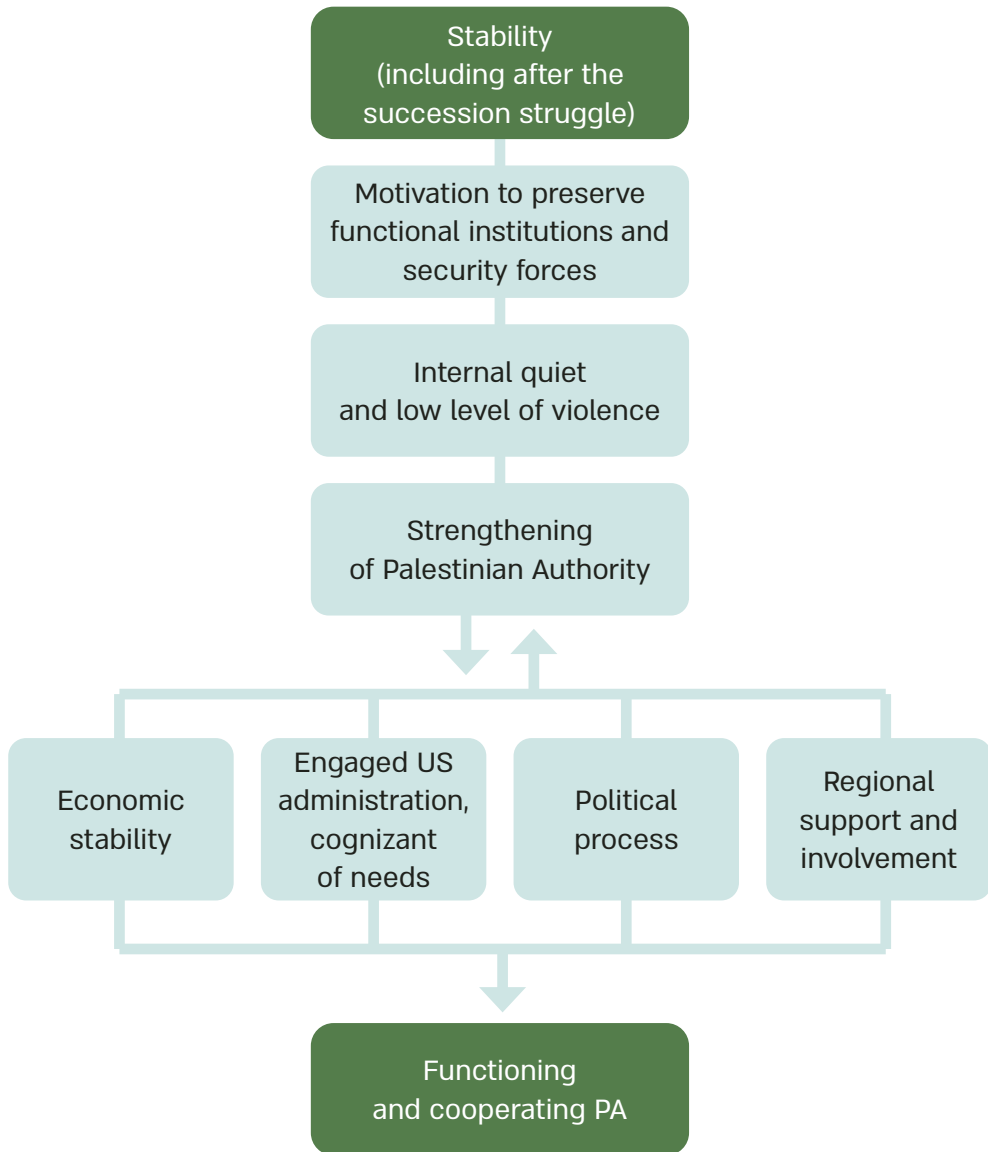
## **Scenario II: A Struggle for Succession**

In this scenario, there is no dominant figure who will replace Abbas, and the result will be a struggle among those “claiming the throne.” The likelihood of this scenario developing in a positive direction and leading to stability is equal to the likelihood that it will lead to prolonged instability and even chaos, since the outcome depends on the course of events.

In view of the relatively large number of candidates who see themselves as worthy of replacing Abbas and the hostility between the camps of those aspiring to power, there is only a small likelihood that a consensus leadership will emerge and that the confrontations between the candidates will be

## Tools to Strengthen the Palestinian Authority

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nullified or deferred to a later stage. In this situation, the competing elements will prefer to establish a temporary leadership whose members are perceived as weak. This will make it possible for power-seekers to preserve their status, continue fighting over the leadership, and eventually depose the temporary leadership. The choice will be made by the Central Committee of Fatah, which will meet and decide on a leader or a joint leadership. At a later stage, there will be a need to convene the PLO institutions, or at least the Palestinian Central Council, in order to approve the appointment of the PLO chairman (whether temporary or permanent). Hamas will no doubt oppose this and try to torpedo the appointments. The ability of the would-be successors to cooperate is what will determine the course of events, in particular, whether they internalize the principle of “we must all hang together or surely we will hang separately” and are able to agree on clear rules of the game.

In view of the tension and rivalries, there is a possibility of an appointment of a “weak” candidate as a temporary leader during the interim period, although he may be able to consolidate his position and overcome the recognized centers of power by distancing them or “domesticating” them. In that case, the temporary leadership will become permanent. On the other hand, there is the possibility of an “officers’ revolt” scenario, in which the struggle for succession continues until the emergence of a strong leader who will be supported by the council of the security apparatuses and obeyed by the majority of the people. If this candidate can form a broad coalition within the institutions of Fatah and the PLO, there will be less likelihood of bloodshed and a violent overthrow. If the struggle for power is prolonged and leads to persistent instability but no resolution, then clan loyalty will become dominant and the PA will lose its effectivity, while the government mechanisms will serve as a tool for political gain and the consolidation of status.

## ***Centers of Power***

Candidates can attempt to harness support from a number of sources of power: the security apparatuses; the political institutions; the factions and armed militias; and grassroots support.

### **Centers of Power that Affect the Succession Struggles**

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**Armed factions  
and militias**



**Popular  
support**



**Security  
apparatuses**



**Political centers  
of power**

### *The Security Apparatuses*

In the scenario of prolonged instability, the influence of the security apparatuses will hinge on their determination to maintain a monopoly on the use of force and on their willingness to confront the factions and armed groups, as well as the level of assistance they receive from the IDF, the Israel Security Agency (ISA), the United States Security Coordinator (USSC), and the Jordanian Armed Forces. Stability will partly depend on their loyalty to the temporary leaders and the scope of cooperation between the various apparatuses. The security apparatus with the greatest influence in the PA is the General Intelligence Service, headed by Majed Faraj, whose authority is based on his proximity and loyalty to Abbas. Other entities include the National Security Forces, headed by Nadal Abu Dohan; the Counterintelligence Forces, headed by Abed el-Khadr a-Tamari; the Military Intelligence, headed by Zakaria Musleh; and the Presidential Guard (which succeeded Fatah's Force 17), headed by Munir Zoabi. Currently there is no information indicating that the latter three will

seek to choose a leader from their ranks, and it appears that they will influence the choice by supporting one candidate or another or by creating a stable and calm environment that will enable the new leader to rule.

#### *Political Centers of Power*

The main political element is the Fatah movement, where political decisions are made and the various candidates wage their campaigns. Based on the current structure of the Fatah Central Committee, there are three main “factions”:

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- a. Abbas supporters, with Majed Faraj the most prominent; Hussein al-Sheikh, who in addition to his responsibility for civilian coordination, was appointed by Abbas as Secretary General of the PLO Executive Committee, a senior position filled by Saeb Erekat until his death; Mahmoud al-Aloul, who was appointed by Abbas to be Vice Chairman of Fatah and a member of the Central Committee; and Azam el-Ahmad, who is also a member of the Fatah Central Committee and Abbas’s emissary for special tasks, such as conciliatory contact with Hamas.
- b. Arafat loyalists who came with him from Tunisia: Prominent among them are Nasser el-Kadwe, who is Arafat’s nephew, and Abbas Zachi. El-Kadwe, formerly the PA Minister of Foreign Affairs and ambassador to the UN, was expelled from Fatah in 2021 after declaring his intention to run in a separate list for the May 2021 PLC elections, which were ultimately canceled.
- c. Independents who have their own sources of power. Prominent among them:

- Marwan Barghouti, a former leader of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and of Tanzim—the military wing of Fatah in the West Bank. He has been in prison in Israel since 2004 and sentenced to five consecutive life sentences and 40 years of imprisonment for acts of terror.
- Jibril Rajoub, former head of the Counterintelligence Force in the West Bank, who transformed his positions as chairman of the Palestinian Football Association and the secretary of the Central Committee of Fatah into sources of power and influence.
- Tawfiq el-Tirawi is former head of the General Intelligence Service and security advisor to the Chairman of the PA. His case is a recent example of the power struggles within Fatah and the rifts within the movement, as he was expelled from the centers of power following a direct order by Abbas. He was terminated from his position as chairman of the Faculty of Independence, which he established in Jericho and is a guise for a university providing academic security training to those serving in the Palestinian police forces. His membership in the Fatah Central Committee was also terminated. These steps were taken after a long period of vocal criticism against Abbas's cronies, mainly al-Sheikh, and after a recording of el-Tirawi slandering al-Sheikh was released on social media.

Forces outside of Fatah will likely try to undermine the existing political institutions; chief among these external forces is the Hamas movement, which has a grassroots base of support, complete control over Gaza, and a political and terrorist infrastructure in the West Bank. Other outside elements include the Popular Front movement, whose Secretary General, Ahmad Sadat, is jailed in Israel for planning the murder of Rehavam Zeevi; and Mohammed Dahlan, who was Abbas's main opponent in Fatah, until he was ejected from the movement.

Dahlan, who was born in the Khan Yunis refugee camp in Gaza, was responsible for the security forces in Gaza at the time of the Hamas takeover.

Dahlan then moved to the West Bank and remained a senior figure in Fatah's political landscape. However, in 2010 there were rumors that he had sought to depose Abbas as Chairman of the PA, and in response Dahlan was stripped of his positions in Fatah. Since 2011, he has lived in the UAE and is not permitted to enter the PA. In 2014 and again in 2016 he was sentenced in absentia to prison for theft and slandering the regime. His supporters are careful not to link themselves to him overtly given the deep hostility between him and Abbas, and consequently, and in view of his remote location, it is difficult for him to amass open support in the West Bank.

Dahlan enjoys the support of the UAE and Egypt, and he has supporters in the Gaza refugee camps and in the West Bank. Although many consider him capable of acting as a bridge between Fatah and Hamas, it is doubtful whether he will play a significant role in this scenario, unless the Fatah leadership agrees to readmit him to the movement once Abbas is gone. This agreement would depend on his ability to build a coalition with some of the members of the current leadership. If he is not readmitted to the ranks of Fatah, he is expected to establish a new party with the assistance of the UAE and possibly Egypt as well. However, even if he makes such a move, after years of being outside the arena and in view of the campaign against him and the fact that he is persona non grata in PA territory, it is doubtful whether he will succeed against a candidate supported by Fatah.

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### *Popular Support*

In the eyes of the Palestinian public, neither Fatah and its leadership nor Hamas has much popular support, and both movements have lost much of their legitimacy. The picture is more dismal for Fatah, which in recent years has seen a drop in its popular support, after government corruption was rampant and after the failure of its agenda with respect to Israel. At the same time, Hamas has seen its support grow, according to the PCPSR surveys carried out by Khalil Shikaki. However, this trend is not merely ideological identification with Hamas, but also reflects opposition to Fatah. Bereft of other intra-organization options, the camp of those disappointed with Fatah has grown and Hamas has more than once succeeded in exploiting Fatah's poor performance in order to gain support. An example is the events surrounding Operation Guardian of the Walls, when Hamas decided to weaken the PA following its frustration at the cancellation of the PA elections through the encouragement of violence and terror and the positioning of Hamas as the defender of Jerusalem and the promoter of the Palestinian agenda.

Therefore, it is not surprising that from the perspective of public popularity the leader in all the opinion polls is Marwan Barghouti, whose name is not linked to any specific movement, even though he is a member of Fatah's Central Committee. Apparently, this support is a result of the fact that he is not perceived as having any responsibility for the current situation, while he also symbolizes the "warrior hero" in the Palestinian ethos. Had he been released from prison and joined the political game within Fatah he would undoubtedly have enjoyed a high level of support; however, presumably his status and popularity would also have eroded over time. A rise to political power by Barghouti is a highly unlikely scenario, since the government of Israel has been adamant against releasing him. However, in situations of chaos, loss of control, and lack of internal Palestinian consensus on a leader, Israel may have to consider Barghouti's release and coordinate with him, as it did with Arafat in the case of the Oslo Accords.

### *Armed Factions and Militias*

Other important centers of power are the active factions and armed militias, which—with their differing and often contradictory agendas—have the power to cause damage that could undermine stability and create chaos after Abbas’s departure. Their military power allows them to influence the political situation, and they seek to promote their candidates while blocking attempts by other groups to promote rival candidates.

Among the main factions and militias that have the capability to influence the dynamic after Abbas exits the scene:

- a. The military wing of Hamas (Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades), led by Mohammed Deif and numbering about 30,000 activists in Gaza. Its main military power includes ground-to-ground missiles and rockets, anti-tank missiles, attack drones, ground-to-air missiles, and light weapons. It is under the leadership of Hamas and executes its decisions, although it sometimes challenges the leadership in view of its hawkish position and influences decision making. In the long term, Hamas is interested in taking control of Palestinian affairs and displacing Fatah. However, at the present time it does not have a sufficient foothold in the West Bank and therefore is working to increase its military strength in Gaza, increase popular endorsement and commitment to armed “resistance,” and gain greater public support as an alternative candidate to rule the PA. In theory, Ismail Haniyeh is the organization’s leading candidate for the presidency; however, he will not achieve any international legitimacy since Hamas is defined as a terrorist organization and his appointment would level a serious blow to the Palestinian economy. Hamas is likely aware of this and therefore when the day comes, Haniyeh will not seek the presidency, but rather the organization will use its political and military power to challenge the presidential candidates, so that they will take Hamas’s demands into

account and adopt a confrontational, and perhaps even hostile, stance toward Israel.

- b. Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) was founded in 1979 and since then has promoted an Islamic-jihadist agenda that opposes any recognition of the Jewish presence in the territory of the waqf, i.e., in any part of the Land of Israel. Thus, it does not recognize the Oslo Accords or the PA as sovereign, and does not support any of the candidates. It is considered a small organization relative to Hamas, with a few thousand fighters and weapon systems similar to those of Hamas. Often referred to as a “spoiler,”<sup>2</sup> its power lies in its ability to challenge the other actors as an organization that operates on the basis of non-state considerations and is directed by Iran. The organization is led by Ziad Nakhalah who is originally from Khan Yunis and currently lives in Damascus. Islamic Jihad has close ties with Iran and Hezbollah, but because it operates from Gaza and in view of its small size, it usually obeys Hamas and is coordinated from the joint war room of the Palestinian factions in Gaza. Islamic Jihad has sometimes been viewed as a “renegade” organization when it violates a ceasefire or launches rockets in an effort to draw Hamas into a confrontation with Israel. Nonetheless, from time-to-time Hamas uses the organization to pressure Israel or the international community.
- c. Tanzim was founded within Fatah by Yasir Arafat in 1995, but it is currently not under the authority of the Fatah leadership. Tanzim is not a formal organization and operates on the basis of local armed militias in the neighborhoods, refugee camps, and villages. Each has a separate leadership that is not closely tied to any other. Tanzim was active primarily during the second intifada, but in recent months it has again reared its head, primarily in the Jenin and Nablus areas. The cells continue to operate locally—sometimes as gangs and sometimes under the auspices of one

2 A term to describe a non-state actor that sabotages the activity of a government or a legitimate actor and opposes any political process or treaties with Israel.

of the senior Fatah leaders in a specific area. The cells are plentifully equipped with illegal weapons. In the case that the succession is not achieved peacefully and there is a violent struggle for succession, Tanzim cells will operate to promote the candidate who represents their area or their agenda. They will use the weapons they have amassed to this end.

- d. Armed gangs: In addition to Tanzim, there are armed gangs without any organizational affiliation that are focused on criminal activity and resistance to the Israeli occupation, as well as to the PA government. These gangs operate in areas that the PA does not effectively control. They may also link up with candidates they favor, or they may take the law into their own hands.

### *Implications*

If the struggle for succession persists and no consensus leader emerges, the result will be long-term instability without any resolution involving the selection of an accepted leader. This will have implications for the PA's ability to take and implement decisions. It appears that in the initial stage the PA will continue to enjoy the economic support of the donor countries and the Arab world, albeit on a limited scale, driven by the desire for stability. However, these countries may try to promote their preferred candidate, and this would essentially exacerbate the confrontations.

In the situation of a weak temporary leadership and differences of opinion within the collective leadership, it will not be possible to make important decisions with regard to inter-organizational reconciliation and the promotion of unity between the West Bank and Gaza, or with respect to relations with Israel and the political process. Although Abbas's departure will obviate his emotional/personal opposition to Hamas, many others in Fatah share his views. A candidate that initiates a process of reconciliation will have to rely on support from the fragmented Fatah, an organization in which the young—known as the *shabiba*—do not obey the leaders. Furthermore, the

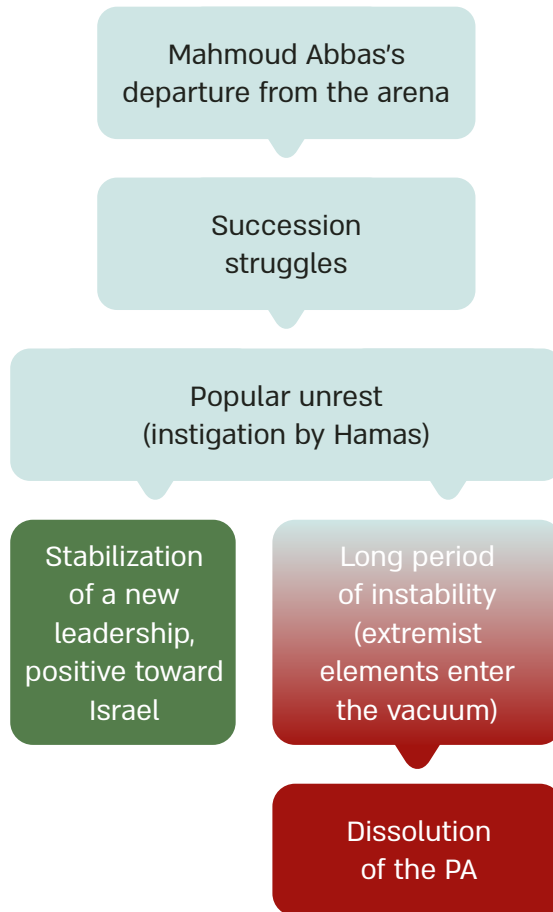
organization will have to be politically flexible to allow for the formation of coalitions.

At least in the initial phase, any new Palestinian regime will have to prove its loyalty to Palestinian nationalism by demonstrating hardline positions against Israel, as long as the confrontational approach does not harm the interests of the PA and its institutions. Therefore, there is little likelihood of a serious threat to the security coordination with Israel, despite continued confrontational rhetoric. Implicit Israeli support (not rhetoric or public support but rather actions that are meant to contribute to PA stability and performance) can prevent harm to the Palestinian economy and the provision of services to the Palestinian population.

*A challenge that the new leadership will incur is acceptance of its authority, particularly in areas where armed groups or clans are in control. Thus, it will have to contend with the subversive activities of the factions, particularly in some of the refugee camps.* The main subversive elements will be Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and supporters of Dahlan, if he himself is not able to integrate within Fatah. If Dahlan finds a place in the ranks of the organization, he is expected to compete for the leadership.

## Positive and Negative Scenarios in the Succession Struggles

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### **Scenario III: Elections**

According to the Palestinian constitution, presidential elections are held within sixty days after an incumbent leaves office. However, the last elections in the PA took place in 2006 (for the PLC) and there have not been any elections since, already in violation of the constitution, which

stipulates elections are held every four years. Therefore, it is difficult to predict whether a temporary leadership will operate according to the constitution and announce elections, or the choice of president will be decided outside the democratic process.

The new leadership might hold elections in order to achieve public and international legitimacy and unite the ranks of the Palestinian camp, but that will occur only if there is a decision regarding a presidential candidate within Fatah, and if the candidate is believed to have a high chance of winning an election, particularly against a Hamas candidate. If the various elements agree to an election, it can be based on an agreement in principle reached between Fatah and Hamas in early 2021 regarding the format of the elections for the PLC in the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the Jerusalem district on the basis of national lists. However, these understandings do not necessarily mean that Hamas will participate in the PLC elections or that it will field a candidate for president. The appointment of a Hamas candidate as president will have major implications for his ability to function independently, in view of the restrictions that Israel is likely to impose on the PA. There will also be ramifications for the international recognition of the PA and its ability to continue raising money from the donor countries.

The question of elections will be determined by how open the temporary leadership is to reconciliation or at least reaching understandings that are

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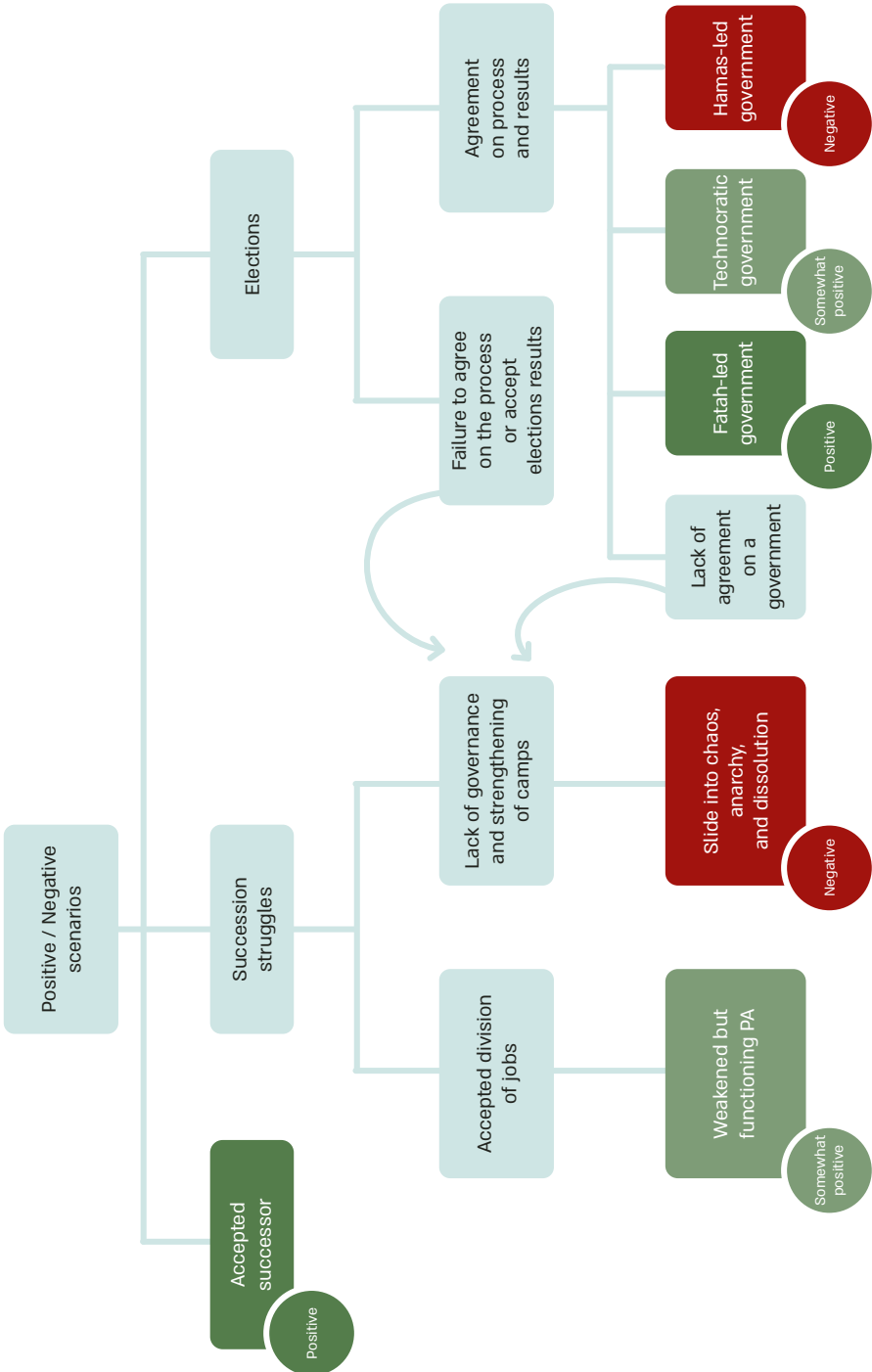
acceptable to Hamas. If this is not achieved because Hamas's conditions are not met or due to the concern among the Fatah leadership about Hamas gaining political power—which is necessarily at its expense—the sides may agree to establish a technocratic government with fair representation for both. If it is decided to hold elections, one of two scenarios will ensue: either there will be a campaign that will rouse the Palestinian street and the winner will enjoy broad public support, or the rivalry between the camps will lead to friction and violence that will destabilize the political arena and the Palestinian street, and lead to a rejection of the election results by one or both of the large movements.

If the Fatah leadership decides to hold elections only in the territory under PA control but not in Gaza, due to the opposition of Hamas or the fear that it will win the elections, then Gaza—including all the factions operating within it, with Hamas taking a leading role—will serve as a spoiler. As such, the excluded organizations will work to undermine stability and will try to sabotage the elections. After the elections, they will try to challenge the legitimacy of the results.

### ***Opportunities and Risks for Israel***

The election scenario can on the one hand lead to a positive outcome, i.e., the election of a candidate with broad public support and the ability to initiate positive processes. On the other hand, it may also lead to a more dangerous outcome in which a Hamas candidate or a candidate endorsed by Hamas is victorious. This second possibility would symbolize the takeover of the PA and the PLO by Hamas. However, initiating an election process and then terminating it could be risky and might turn the Palestinian street against the side that is perceived as responsible. A lack of agreement during the elections or unwillingness to accept its results could fuel the struggle for succession and ignite the anger of the public against the leaders that are perceived as responsible.

Flow Chart: Principal Scenarios



### ***Possible Successors***

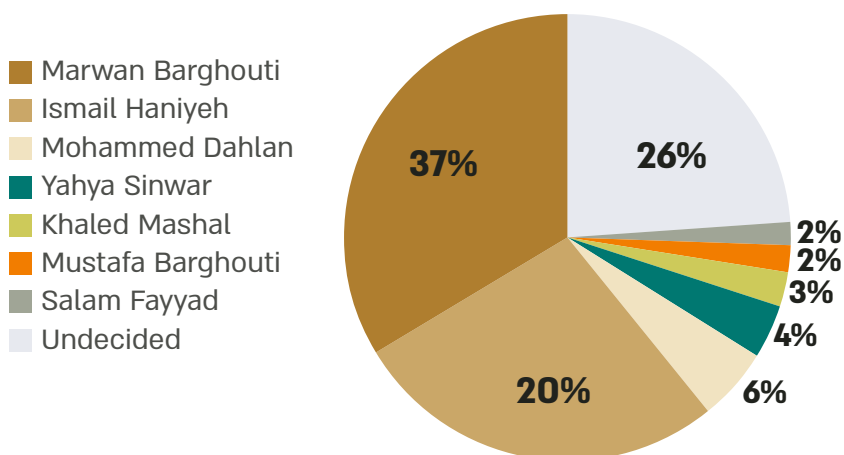
In early 2022, Abbas decided to strengthen the status of his trusted allies Majed Faraj and Hussein al-Sheikh. The latter, the Minister for Civilian Affairs, was appointed by Abbas in May 2022 to become the secretary of the Executive Committee of the PLO (number 2 in the internal hierarchy of the PLO) and to replace the late Saeb Erekat as chief negotiator with Israel. The appointment of al-Sheikh was by means of a personal letter from Abbas and later by a vote of the Executive Committee, which is defined as the main executive body of the PLO and itself was chosen in a controversial process by the PLO Central Council in March 2022.

In theory, the choice of a coalition of Hussein al-Sheikh and Majed Faraj should have been assured. They are the closest officials to Abbas, they both have close ties with Israel and with international organizations, and they are acceptable to the United States and maintain ongoing contact with the US Secretary of State and the CIA. From the perspective of Israel's security establishment, the possibility that they will someday succeed Abbas is the preferred option. At the same time, their popularity on the Palestinian street is the inverse of what it is in the corridors of power in Israel. Many view them as collaborators with the Israeli occupation and both have often been accused of corruption, which allegedly infects the entire PA leadership (al-Sheikh has been accused of sexual abuse as well).

Faraj is 60 years old and was born in the Dheisheh refugee camp. He is very close to Abbas and to Abbas's son Yasir (who is in Qatar) and has been at his side for more than a decade. He has carried out many missions for Abbas, some of which are public knowledge and others not; he is vehemently opposed to Hamas and maintains the security coordination with Israel. During the first intifada, Faraj was a Fatah leader, was arrested many times, and was jailed in Israel for six years, and during the second intifada he was active against Israel. Nonetheless, with his appointment as head of the intelligence apparatus in the West Bank, he moved closer toward Israel, and maintains

political and security contacts with Israel. Al-Sheikh is also a fierce opponent of Hamas, and was appointed by Abbas to be responsible for contact with Israel on civilian affairs. He speaks fluent Hebrew and is familiar with senior Israeli officers and politicians.

## Support for Presidential Candidates if Elections were Held without Abbas



Source: PCPSR survey, March 2022

However, all the Fatah candidates to succeed Abbas lack legitimacy on the Palestinian street and their grip is limited in certain areas and among the clans in the West Bank and Gaza. The exception is Marwan Barghouti. Born in 1959 in Kafr Kobar, northwest of Ramallah, Barghouti became an activist in Fatah at the age of 15. He was one of the leaders of the first intifada in 1987, and was arrested by Israel and exiled to Jordan. He spent seven years there until he was allowed to return as part of the Oslo Accords. In 1996, he was elected to the PLC. With the beginning of the second intifada in 2000, he became popular as the leader of Tanzim and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, which were essentially the armed wing of Fatah. As such, he was responsible

for several terrorist attacks on Israelis. He was captured by the IDF in April 2002 during Operation Defensive Shield. He later stood trial and was sentenced to five life sentences and is currently imprisoned in Israel.

According to Palestinian opinion polls, Barghouti is the only candidate identified with Fatah who enjoys public support. Moreover, the popularity of all the other candidates is lower than that of Hamas leader Haniyeh. To be sure, one quarter of the respondents were undecided, such that the emergence of another candidate or a rise in the popularity of one of the known candidates is possible. In any case, only about one half of potential voters intend to cast their ballot, yet this rate increases when Abbas is excluded from the list of candidates.

The struggle for influence until Abbas departs the stage continues to drive the creation of alliances and axes, and in particular the Faraj-al-Sheikh axis. From time to time, competing axes appear, such as Dahlan and the Barghouti clan; or Jibril Rajoub (who was born in Dura near Hebron and was formerly the head of the counterintelligence apparatus and a senior member of Fatah) and Tawfiq el-Tirawi (who was formerly the head of the General Intelligence Service), each of whom separately maintains ties with Hamas. These axes converge or are untangled based on dynamic changes on the ground, the positioning of potential successors, their public support, and connections with armed factions. It is difficult to assess which axis will be more dominant upon Abbas's departure, but it is clear that their ability to cooperate, or their level of rivalry, already dictates the reality in the West Bank.

## Identity Cards: Possible Candidates to Succeed Abbas

### Majed Faraj

Strongest candidate in view of his control over the security apparatuses. Abbas's right hand man and close to Hussein al-Sheikh, but does not enjoy public support.



### Hussein al-Sheikh

Does not have his own power base or even a loyal clan, and has been accused of sexual abuse and corruption. His public status is improving and he has not remained behind the scenes.



### Jibril Rajoub

Former head of the Preventive Security Force and senior Fatah figure. Has become weaker in his area, in part due to his involvement in the 2021 elections attempt and failure to form a unity government with Hamas.



Photo: REUTERS/Mohamad Torokman

### Mohammed Dahlan

Bitter rival of Abbas and formerly one of the leaders of Fatah and head of the Preventive Security Force in Gaza. Lost power in Gaza despite the financial support he provides from his residence in the UAE.



Photo: REUTERS/Stringer

### Mahmoud al-Aloul

Abbas's Vice Chairman in Fatah; strong among Tanzim. Recently failed in his attempt to link up with Faraj and al-Sheikh.



Photo: (Kudus TV (CC BY 3.0))

### Marwan Barghouti

Has the most popular support among the candidates. Serving life sentences in prison with little likelihood of release in the near future.



Photo: REUTERS/Nir Elias/Files (ISRAEL POLITICS CONFLICT ELECTIONS)

### Tawfiq el-Tirawi

Member of the Fatah Central Committee; formerly head of the General Intelligence Service and a security advisor to the Chairman of the PA. His membership in Fatah is questioned due to criticism he voiced against al-Sheikh.



Photo: Palestinian Official News Agency

### Ismail Haniyeh

Head of the Hamas political bureau since May 2017. Served as PA Prime Minister following the 2006 elections until the coup in Gaza, and later was Prime Minister in the Hamas government.



Photo: REUTERS/Mohamed Azakir

### **Scenario IV: Chaos, Instability, and Collapse of the PA**

Israel and its neighbors are particularly concerned about the stability of the Palestinian system after Abbas's departure, based on the understanding that the emergence of chaos would endanger regional stability. Collapse will lead to a security threat and less restraint on terrorist elements; a slide

back to an Israeli military regime, with an economic and demographic burden on Israel; negative consequences and risks of destabilization to the Jordanian monarchy; and adverse effects on the security reality surrounding Gaza, including the Sinai Peninsula.

The weaknesses of the Palestinian system may, in certain circumstances, accelerate existing chaotic processes, which may even lead to the dissolution or collapse of the PA. The PA does not operate within a vacuum, and alongside its weaknesses and the potential for collapse it is influenced by external forces, with Israel playing a particularly important role in this context. At the same time, there are also stabilizing forces within it, which are concerned about their survival and may act to mitigate negative trends and support provisional arrangements and reorganization.

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#### ***Scenario IVa: Collective Leadership***

With few viable prospects of stabilizing the system by means of free elections, there may be an effort to establish a collective leadership comprising a number of prominent individuals, such as Jibril Rajoub, Majed Faraj, Mahmoud al-Aloul, and Rami el-Hamdallah (former Prime Minister), and perhaps Salam Fayyad (currently a lecturer at Princeton University; he is also a former Prime

Minister) who would be called on to return to the West Bank. These individuals might divide up Abbas's powers, titles, and positions for a defined period of time, until the system is stabilized and elections are held.

Although this scenario has the potential to stabilize the Palestinian system, its success depends on the egos of the partners in the leadership and their ability to cooperate, as well as their ability to blunt public opposition to their taking over the centers of power. The Palestinian system is not used to this type of leadership, given that since the takeover of the PLO by the Fatah movement, it has had only a single autocratic ruler.

The critical interests of the potential partners in a collective leadership, and even their very survival, will call for the preservation of the PA and may help the partners—at least for a limited period—bridge gaps, narrow rivalries, and overcome hatred. If the collective leadership does not manage to cooperate among themselves, consolidate their control of the PA, and give the public a sense of positive change, the Palestinian system will descend into chronic instability with a growing potential for violence and even loss of control: it will face unending opposition from the “old guard” and the renegade factions. Ongoing violent confrontations will lead to anarchy and even collapse in the absence of a central government with a monopoly on the use of force.

### ***Scenario IVb: Takeover by the Commanders of the Security Apparatuses (Coup d'Etat)***

The lack of agreement between the dominant leaders will eliminate any possibility of establishing a collective leadership and will lead the Palestinian system into chaos. Under these conditions, one of the commanders of the Palestinian security apparatuses may exploit the rifts and rivalries to take control of the Palestinian system in a coup d'état. However, it is difficult to imagine rule by a single commander (since Arafat created a complex system of multiple security apparatuses precisely to prevent the concentration of power) and thus in such a case two commanders would likely join forces to

take control of the system. The National Security Forces is the largest armed force from a military perspective. The General Intelligence Service is smaller but wields more control and has a significant presence on the Palestinian street. Despite the advantage in size and military capability of the National Security Forces, it is difficult to imagine a situation in which its commander manages to stabilize the rule of a single military dictator without the cooperation of the General Intelligence Service or the Counterintelligence Security Force. The blue police and military intelligence do not have sufficient military power or control on the ground and among the population.

This scenario is a recipe for chronic instability, unrest, and violence, and places the PA's security apparatuses in direct confrontation with other security apparatuses and power groups that have not joined them, such as armed Tanzim groups, some of whom have allegiance to competing actors such as Mahmoud al-Aloul and Mohammed Dahlan. This is even before the armed groups of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other armed groups join the fighting. The result will be confrontations on the Palestinian street that may lead to anarchy and the collapse of the PA.

***Scenario IVc: Collapse of the PA into Local Subsystems (Cantonization)***

As a result of the instability and inability to control the West Bank, there may be a collapse of the PA into autonomous regional systems, as occurred in Gaza. These systems will be led by local leaders who draw their power from the clan structure of Palestinian society and over the years have consolidated their power and their socioeconomic and political influence. Ramallah is essentially the only district that is under full PA control, and it is where most of the national institutions of the future Palestinian state are situated. But even in the Ramallah area the PA's authority is challenged by NGOs and uncontrolled forces in the Amari refugee camp. The more remote districts, such as Hebron, Jenin, and Nablus, have ruled themselves fairly autonomously for years. The local "aristocratic" families in Hebron, such as the al-Jabri, Natsheh, and other

families, and the al-Masri family in the Nablus district enjoy a special status and the public legitimacy to rule their district. The situation is different in Jenin, where the armed organizations and factions that do not recognize the authority of the PA are in control. A trend that surged and became dominant in 2022 is the participation of the younger generation of Palestinians in armed groups. They are undergoing a process of radicalization and joining terrorist cells associated with Fatah's al-Aqsa Brigades. The implication of this trend is widening the circles of "resistance" beyond Hamas and PIJ, as well as targeting the PA in addition to Israel. The scope of this phenomenon is evidenced by the participation of sons of officers in the Palestinian security apparatuses in shootings and terrorist attacks.

### **Scenario V: Hamas Dominates in the West Bank**

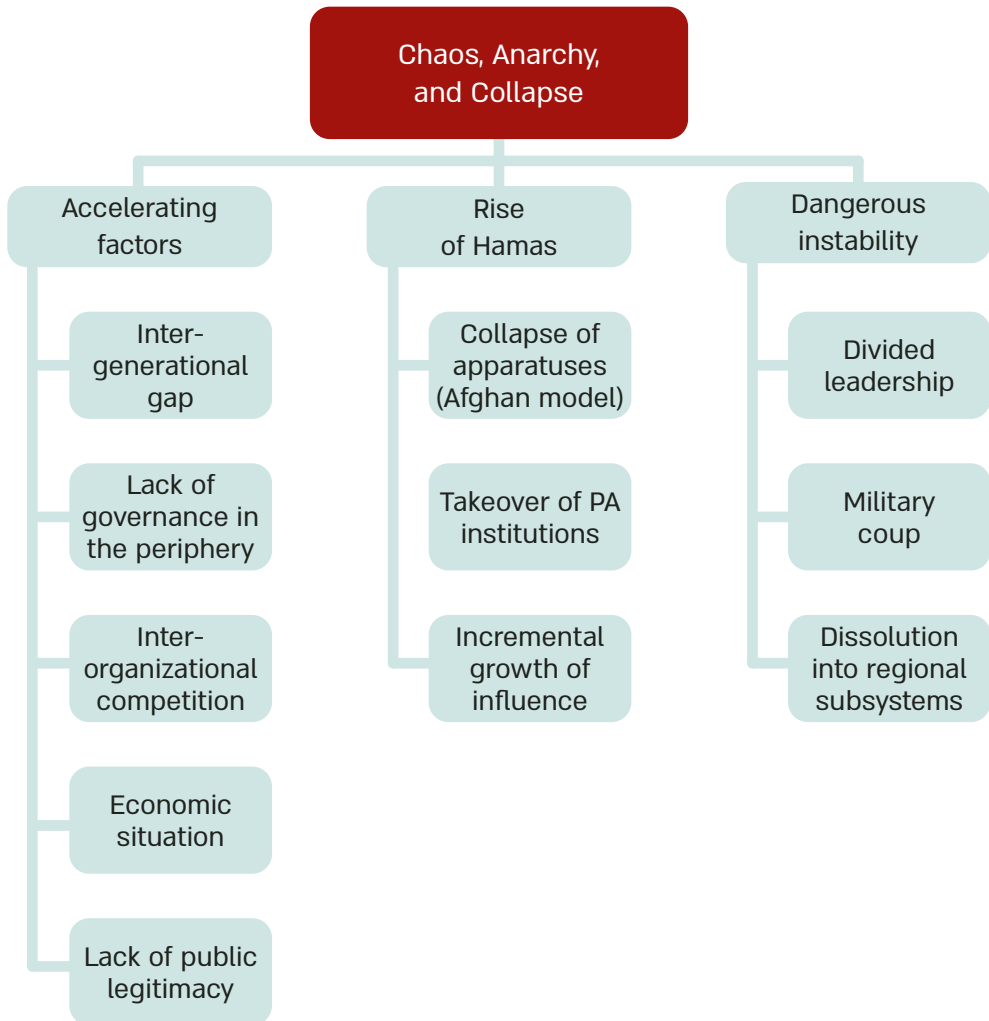
In any scenario, the new leadership will have to deal with Hamas, which competes with it over the commitment to Palestinian national goals and the leadership of the struggle against Israel, challenging it for sovereignty over Jerusalem and al-Aqsa. Hamas fans the flames of resistance and does not recognize Israel's right to exist, thus giving it the status of spoiler.

Hamas's takeover of the Palestinian system is likely to occur in one of three ways: a military coup; a victory in the elections for the PA's institutions; or a slow, incremental expansion of influence.

### **Scenario Va: Forcible Takeover of the West Bank by Hamas**

Under current circumstances, a forcible takeover of the West Bank by Hamas is not a realistic scenario, given Israel's control over security in the West Bank and its ongoing efforts to dismantle the terror infrastructure there. The military wing of Hamas has no access to the territory of the West Bank due to Israel's policy of differentiation and its freedom to operate throughout the area. The PA's security apparatuses have an advantage as long as the security coordination and cooperation with the IDF and ISA continues. Moreover, the

## Possible Radical Scenarios



territorial separation between Gaza and the West Bank prevents a direct military confrontation between the camps and the movement of forces from Gaza to the West Bank. Therefore, maintaining the differentiation between the West Bank and Gaza and the security coordination between Israel and the PA apparatuses will continue to prevent Hamas from increasing its military power in the West Bank, at least until there is a change in the bitter inter-organizational rift in the Palestinian arena or a change in Israel's policy.

### ***Scenario Vb: Hamas Electoral Victory***

A Hamas electoral victory is possible if the efforts by Egypt and Jordan to promote a compromise between Hamas and Fatah are successful and if the two camps agree to hold elections, as was decided in early 2021. However, even in this scenario, Hamas will need Fatah to create a coalition, as it did following the 2006 elections. It is unlikely that the efforts in this direction will bear fruit, for the same reason that prevented agreement then, namely Fatah's refusal to put its security apparatuses, which are currently under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior, under the control of Hamas; and in parallel the refusal of Hamas to accept the PA's demand to disarm its military wing or at least put it under the authority of the PA. Although there have been voices within Hamas expressing willingness to integrate Hamas's military wing within the PA's security apparatuses in exchange for its acceptance into the PLO, and other voices that have agreed to put Hamas's military wing under the authority of the cabinet (without disarming it), it is difficult to imagine the camps coming together sufficiently to allow for such a dramatic move. Moreover, it does not appear that Hamas will settle for mere membership in the PLO without making political demands that Fatah will have trouble accepting.

If Hamas and Fatah reach an agreement that includes holding elections, and even if Hamas is victorious, Hamas will likely prefer to create a unity government with Fatah. Hamas is aware of its problematic international

position and the legal prohibition in many countries to be in contact with it, as well as the negative consequences of Hamas joining the Palestinian leadership for the flow of money to the PA. Therefore, it is expected to occupy a back seat status in the political arena and concentrate on internal issues, rather than seeking a place on center stage.

***Scenario Vc: Hamas's Expansion of Influence Slowly and Incrementally, and the PA's Decline in Status***

Hamas is currently seeking to strengthen its hold on Gaza and continuing its efforts to undermine the stability of the PA in the West Bank, in preparation for the struggle for succession to the presidency. It understands that the tactic of seeking elections or taking over the PLO from within by means of internal Palestinian reconciliation is not practical as long as Abbas is President. The organization believes that it will have difficulty taking control of the West Bank even if the PA collapses due to the restrictions that will be imposed by Israel. Therefore, it has adopted a strategy of taking over the Palestinian national movement in phases and from the outside inward. Its first objective is Lebanon and the refugee camps, and to that end, Hamas has joined the Iran-Hezbollah axis. Haniyeh's first visits to Lebanon demonstrated how—under Iranian auspices and with directive assistance from Hezbollah—the symbols of the Lebanese regime, such as meetings with the Lebanese president, can be exploited to attain regional legitimacy for Hamas. At the same time, the organization is trying to transform all the Palestinian organizations in Lebanon and Syria, apart from Fatah, into its satellites, and thus frameworks for coordination have been created between the various organizations.

Hamas's potential to take over the system varies according to three basic situations:

- a. Ongoing instability is likely to strengthen Hamas's image as an alternative to the PA and perhaps encourage openness (opportunistic openness rather than ideological) among senior officials in Fatah to cooperate with

Hamas. At the same time, if Hamas operates in a subversive and divisive manner, this will presumably increase the motivation of rival factions in Fatah and the PA to close ranks.

- b. Even in the event of a total systemic-institutional collapse in the Palestinian arena, Hamas will not enjoy the legitimacy to assume a leading role in the stabilization. Therefore, the question remains what Hamas can offer the Palestinian public. The organization will attempt to squeeze out as much political and economic benefit as it can and may exploit a direct military confrontation with Israel in order to do so.
- c. Inertia and a continuing increase in Hamas's strength in the West Bank are likely to create a situation similar to that described as ongoing instability. This will occur unless there is a dramatic turning point leading to a change in Israel's policy, such as a willingness to return to the political process or participate in an international peace conference.

### **Ingredients for Chaos: Worsening Trends in Palestinian Society and a Loss of Public Legitimacy**

In all public opinion polls conducted in Palestinian society over the past two years and even before, there has been a clear indication of profound disappointment with the Palestinian leadership and the PA, with respect to its level of performance and the extent of its corruption on the one hand and its degree of success—or more precisely, its failure—to achieve national or socioeconomic goals, on the other hand. The findings point to a lack of satisfaction, a lack of confidence, and a sense of insecurity, which intensified following the cancellation of the elections in late April 2021 and Operation Guardian of the Walls shortly thereafter. According to the PCPSR survey of September 2021, about 80 percent of the Palestinian public favor Abbas's resignation, while only 24 percent are satisfied with his performance. In parallel, and following the confrontation with Israel, Ismail Haniyeh's popularity rose, and when the survey pitted him against Abbas, 56 percent said that they

would vote for Haniyeh while only 34 percent said they would vote for Abbas.

The dissatisfaction is also reflected in the reluctance to participate in the political game, and thus only 40 percent of the Palestinian population said they would vote if Haniyeh runs against Abbas. In contrast, if Barghouti is pitted against Haniyeh, he would be victorious over the Hamas leader (55 percent vs. 39 percent) and voter turnout would rise to 66 percent.

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Given the lack of public support for Abbas, presumably a candidate groomed by him but who would not be elected in a democratic process, such as Hussein al-Sheikh, would not gain public support but rather would be viewed as following in Abbas's footsteps. Even if elections are held, based on the popularity of other candidates such as Jibril Rajoub, Mohammed Dahlan, Salam Fayyad, and Rami Hamdallah, there is no indication that any can win a clear majority. This growing lack of public legitimacy for any one candidate and the general disenchantment with the PA and its institutions may deepen the rifts among the public to the point of a violent struggle for power.

### ***The Generation Gap***

Palestinian society is characterized by a wide generation gap. The younger generation feels alienated from the circles of influence and is not represented in the Palestinian leadership or in PA institutions. As a result of the corruption and the promotion of cronies, many of the PA ministries, and in particular the security apparatuses, are built like an inverse pyramid—a growing layer

of senior officials and little opportunity for the young to enter the system, let alone to advance within it.

The younger generation is not monolithic, and there are various groups and sectors. The younger Fatah generation would like to see an alternative to the current leadership. In contrast, members of Fatah's armed militias, which are active primarily in the refugee camps, are antagonistic toward the security apparatuses and do not allow them to operate freely and effectively in all regions. Others, and in particular university graduates who are not active in Fatah, are focused primarily on the effort to find suitable employment, use their skills, and build normal lives. They are less involved in national issues, although they are usually vehemently opposed to cooperation with Israel; rather, their problems are the result of high unemployment levels and the lack of suitable employment, as well as a feeling that they are without rights. They are frustrated and angry with the old and failed leadership, which is not working to improve their chances of personal and economic advancement.

### ***The Center and the Periphery***

The PA finds it difficult to function and maintain a presence in districts that are remote from Ramallah, such as Hebron, the southern Hebron hills, and Jenin. These areas have over the years developed a kind of functional autonomy that is managed by the heads of the leading clans, which are themselves developing the local economy. In the northern West Bank, the economy relies primarily on commercial ties with Israel's Arab citizens and on commercial cooperation with Israelis.

Palestinian society in the West Bank is to a large extent still organized on a tribal and regional basis, with the population of the refugee camps—which in most cases have become the main centers of unrest in the West Bank—having a unique status. Various figures, both inside and outside Fatah, are trying to build local or organizational centers of power for themselves. Thus, for example, Mahmoud al-Aloul, who is identified with the Fatah-aligned

Tanzim, may use this base of power and armed groups under its influence to gain power in the event of a war of succession.

### ***Inter-Organizational Competition***

Despite the efforts of the PA to restrain Hamas as it strives to organize in the West Bank, Hamas has foci of power and cadres of supporters who will oppose any Palestinian leadership that it is not a part of. Hamas enjoys the support of nationalist groups who believe in “resistance” while at the same time advocating unity to carry out the struggle against Israel effectively. Alongside them, although on a limited scale, there is a base of support for Mohammed Dahlan. The economic support that he enjoys from the UAE and the Egyptian belief that he can restore the PA’s control over Gaza enables him to ignite disruption and foment opposition to other centers of power. However, this core of support does not have the potential to grow to any significant extent, given in part that Dahlan originates from Gaza and in view of his physical distance from the arena.

Jerusalem, and primarily the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Temple Mount, have in the last decade become the focus of confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians, and it is there that one can see the day-to-day competition between the organizations. Jerusalem is distinct from areas in the West Bank as a result of its isolation due to the security barrier, as well as the efforts of the Israeli government to distance it from the PA and its various institutions. This can also be attributed to the involvement of the Israeli Islamic Movement (the Northern Branch) in developments on the Temple Mount. As a result of the combination of religious, national, and historical elements, and the struggle between Israel and Israelis on the one hand and the Palestinians on the other for sovereignty in Jerusalem, each organization views Jerusalem as an opportunity to increase its power and presence. This is compounded by the following external elements:

- a. The Jordanian wakf, based on understandings with the government of Israel, whereby it manages the Temple Mount and is meant to maintain order and calm there. However, the wakf is in effect handled by Palestinians.
- b. Hamas, which seeks to strengthen its image as "the defender of al-Aqsa," on the assumption that incitement related to the Temple Mount will reinforce the spirit of "resistance" among Palestinians. Islamic groups that have linked up with the movement and responded to its calls contribute to Hamas's image as the element in charge of events.
- c. The Israeli Islamic Movement—the Northern Branch—is highly active in fanning the flames and in organizing unrest centered on al-Aqsa.
- d. Hizb ut Tahrir (Islamic Liberation Party) is active against the wakf establishment and the PA, in coordination with Hamas's youth and student organization, which is active in the universities in the West Bank.
- e. Groups of youth in East Jerusalem, which seek to protect al-Aqsa from Jewish worshippers and the settlement population; their agenda does not necessarily align with that of the PA leadership.
- f. Murabitun, led by Sheikh Ekrima Sabri, the preacher at the al-Aqsa Mosque.
- g. Turkey is involved in events related to the Temple Mount as part of its efforts to expand its regional influence.

None of these actors have any allegiance to the PA or its leader and presumably this situation will continue after Abbas. Another example of a city that is not under the authority of the PA and is run by the organizations is Jenin, where the competing organizations have been able to cooperate with each other based on their shared opposition to the PA and to Israel. Hamas has managed to unite the forces of Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and even elements of Fatah's Tanzim against the PA security apparatuses. This trend is liable to expand to other areas of the PA, since the refugee camps are overflowing with unemployed and frustrated young men who become members of dormant cells and criminal gangs.

They are joined by clans that are also organizing to protect their interests in the event that instability develops after Abbas; alternatively, they may try to take control over the area in which they operate and turn against those organizations with which they currently cooperate.

### ***The Economic Situation***

The economic situation in the West Bank is vastly superior to that in Gaza, although it is still a problematic economic reality, particularly in comparison to the standard of living and quality of life in Israel. The Palestinian economy is totally dependent on Israel. About 150,000 Palestinians work in Israel (with or without a permit) and the industrial areas in the settlements, primarily in unskilled employment. Their total wages constitute about 21 percent of the GDP and they support over 120,000 households, which translates into about 800,000-900,000 individuals. Agriculture in the West Bank accounts for about 6 percent of GDP. The business sector is almost completely concentrated in services and retail with little production or exports, due in part to the difficulty in competing with the salaries offered to workers in Israel. The tourism sector could potentially contribute to output and employment, but the pandemic suspended it following the lockdowns and the prohibition on foreigners entering Israel. Currently the sector needs rejuvenation to jumpstart its growth momentum. The public sector is the largest sector in the economy and there are tens of thousands of Palestinians who earn their livelihood from the PA and its institutions. The greatest distress is among the young educated Palestinians who suffer from high levels of unemployment. They have difficulty finding jobs that are suited to their skills and pay a reasonable wage, particularly in comparison to unskilled workers who earn relatively high salaries in Israel.

In view of the large proportion of breadwinners who are dependent on working in Israel, the settlements, and the PA institutions, chaos in the Palestinian system and security instability that leads to a significant reduction in the number workers employed will clearly lead to a large-scale economic

crisis in the Palestinian system. While during the pandemic Palestinians could not officially work in Israel due to lockdowns, in practice this simply led to more workers entering Israel illegally and working without a permit. The IDF did not prevent their entry and did not bother to repair breaches in the security fence since the option of working in Israel was perceived as a stabilizing factor in the Palestinian arena. Thus, a serious crisis is liable to act as a catalyst for escalation and at some point even the collapse of the Palestinian system and confrontation with the security apparatuses, to the point of civil war.

### ***Implications for Israel***

Palestinian society in the West Bank is highly fragmented and organized along tribal and regional lines. It is distrustful of the leadership and its ability to achieve national goals. Against this background, there is diminishing support for the two-state solution, a lack of unity even among the political and social mechanisms, and no consensus on how to manage political differences of opinion. Under these conditions—namely, the difficulty in achieving a smooth succession after Abbas and the potential struggle for power, as well as the declining state of security and the economy—there is strong potential for chaos, anarchy, and collapse of the Palestinian system.

The scenario of chaos and anarchy represents a threat to the cooperation between the PA's security apparatuses and Israel's security forces. There is a significant likelihood that it may even be terminated following the collapse of the security apparatuses and the dispersal of their members among the various rival camps. Thus, there may be an inflow of new members into the terrorist organizations, which will view the anarchy as an opportunity for a violent uprising against Israel within the West Bank.

The working hypothesis is that the collapse of the security apparatuses and the resulting flow of their members to the local militias, according to their geographic or clan allegiance, will force the IDF to occupy territory

with the goal of destroying terrorist infrastructures and disarming armed individuals and groups. If this occurs, it will be difficult to restore the PA and its mechanisms and there will be a need to reestablish Israel's military regime in the West Bank. Even then, the IDF will have to deal with a growing level of friction with the Palestinian population and with a rising level of violence and terror.

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