

Palestine and America's 'Global War on Terror': A History 2000-2008

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Key Terms

AMA	Agreement on Movement and Access
COGAT	Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority (Iraq)
DoD	Department of Defense – Pentagon (US)
DFID	Department for International Development
EUBAM-Rafah	EU Border Assistance Mission to Rafah Crossing
EUPOL-COPPS	EU Police and Rule of Law Mission
GIS	General Intelligence Services (Palestinian)
GWOT	‘global war on terror’
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
NAD/NSU	Negotiations Affairs Department/Support Unit
NSA	National Security Advisor
NSC	National Security Council
NSF	National Security Forces (Palestinian)
NUG	National Unity Government
PG	Presidential Guards (Palestinian)
PA	Palestinian National Authority
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PSO	Preventative Security Organization (Palestinian)
PRDP	Palestinian Reform and Development Plan
Quartet	US, United Nations, Russia, European Union
Shin Bet	Israeli Security Agency (Shabak)
SSR	security sector reform
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USSC	US Security Coordinator

Abstract

This thesis, “Palestine and America’s ‘Global War on Terror’: A History 2000-2008” is a contemporary political history of American foreign policy in Palestine. It examines the transformation of US interventions in the Palestinian Authority after the attacks of September 11, 2001. This thesis shows how Washington’s diplomatic and defense interventions broke with preceding decades of engagement with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, transforming to treat the Palestinian struggle for national liberation as a front in the ‘global war on terror.’ Drawing upon leaked negotiations documents and personal papers as well as original interviews with US and Palestinian security personnel, this thesis charts the effects of US-sponsored technical assistance programs on the day-to-day lives of Palestinians. It argues that US engagement with the Palestinians since 9/11 has increasingly been shaped by policies applied in other sites of the ‘global war on terror,’ collapsing the Palestinians first into the ‘freedom agenda’ and then into a counterterror-driven program of securitization. In the course of securitizing the Palestinian Authority (PA), the US-Israeli strategic convergence during the ‘global war on terror’ took on new meaning. Through assistance designed to build the PA’s capacity, the US reproduced a counterinsurgency policy it lifted from other sites of the ‘global war on terror,’ managing the stabilization of the West Bank through the PA, which increasingly became a proxy for Israel. In particular, Washington’s representatives directed a program of security sector reform within the PA that conformed to priorities handed down from Israel. A case study of the West Bank city of Jenin in this thesis highlights how in creating a capable counterterror partner, American requirements and monitoring incentivized the PA to stifle dissent. These American controls in the heart of the PA continued even as it became evident that the PA’s increased capacity would not result in American pressure on Israel to come to a political compromise. Through a detailed narrative history of how US interventions at the policy level unfolded in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, this thesis shows the ways in which the US realigned its approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to match the ‘global war on terror,’ and how that realignment effected Palestinians lives and Palestinian futures.

Résumé

Cette thèse, “Palestine et la guerre américaine globale contre le terrorisme: une histoire 2000-2008” est une analyse de l’histoire contemporaine de la politique étrangère des États-Unis en Palestine. Elle examine la transformation de l’intervention américaine au sein de l’Autorité nationale palestinienne après les attentats du 11 septembre 2001. Cette thèse montre comment les interventions diplomatiques et militaires de Washington ont rompu avec des décennies d’interprétation du conflit israélo-palestinien, transformant ainsi le traitement de la lutte palestinienne comme cause de libération nationale en un autre front dans la ‘guerre contre le terrorisme.’ S’appuyant sur les documents divulgués depuis les négociations, les papiers personnels de certains négociateurs, en plus de plusieurs entretiens originaux avec des officiels sécuritaires américains et palestiniens, cette thèse trace les effets des programmes d’assistance soutenus par les États-Unis sur la vie quotidienne des Palestiniens. La thèse constate que l’engagement américain avec les Palestiniens a de plus en plus été affecté par des politiques appliquées dans d’autres sites de la ‘guerre globale contre le terrorisme,’ amenant ainsi les palestiniens d’abord dans le contexte de la démocratisation et, ensuite, dans un programme de sécurisation dirigé contre le terrorisme. Au cours de la sécurisation de l’Autorité nationale

palestinienne (AP), la convergence des intérêts américano-israéliens pendant la ‘guerre globale contre le terrorisme’ a pris un nouveau sens. À travers l’assistance conçue pour reconstruire les capacités de l’AP, les États-Unis ont reproduit une politique de contre-insurrection adaptée d’autres sites de la ‘guerre globale contre le terrorisme,’ encourageant la stabilisation de la Cisjordanie par l’AP, qui devint progressivement un proxy d’Israël. En particulier, les représentants américains ont dirigé un programme de réformes des forces sécuritaires de l’AP conformément aux priorités transmises d’Israël. Une étude du cas de la ville de Jénine souligne comment, en transformant l’Autorité palestinienne en un partenaire capable de combattre le terrorisme, les exigences et la surveillance américaines ont incité celle dernière à réprimer les voix de l’opposition. Ce contrôle américain au coeur de l’AP continua même après qu’il fut devenu évident que la capacité renforcée de l’AP n’aboutirait pas à une pression américaine sur Israël pour arriver à un compromis politique. Utilisant un récit détaillé des événements, cette thèse démontre comment l’intervention américaine au niveau politique se déroula en Cisjordanie et la bande de Gaza, relevant les manières dans lesquelles les États-Unis ont réaligné leur politique par rapport au conflit israélo-palestinien en réponse à la ‘guerre globale contre le terrorisme,’ et comment ce réalignement a influencé les vies et les futurs des Palestiniens.

Introduction

The American Consulate General in downtown Jerusalem is tastefully decorated with Palestinian ceramics and framed embroidery pieces. The second floor houses the offices of the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) mission. The hallways are adorned with images of Palestinian and Israeli armed forces, emblazoned with titles like "Partners in Peace." In one office hangs a whiteboard with an elementary Arabic lesson. "Mosque, university," from the root *j-m- 'a*. "Book, author, *k-t-b*." Seasoned in Iraq, the officials busy at the desks are the centerpiece of multiple American administrations' engagement with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹

The presence of these Pentagon officials in the heart of the American diplomatic mission in Jerusalem raises a number of questions for a historian of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also for those concerned conceptually with American empire. How does security coordination advance a just resolution of the conflict? Why are military officials stationed in a consulate? What experiences have these personnel brought from their service in the US military? With the activities of the USSC as a point of departure, this dissertation examines how the 'global war on terror' affected American policy toward Palestine between 2000 and 2008.

Tracing changes at the policy level against the daily implementation of American interventions in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, I argue that after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the US reconfigured its approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The USSC mission and its endurance today - through the Bush, Obama, and now Trump administrations, can only be understood in relation to the 'war on terror.' The counterterrorism prerogative colored George W. Bush's presidency, and US leadership in the 'peace process' shaped the international community's interventions in the conflict. Crucially, the focus on counterterrorism determined the form of interventions to end the second Palestinian *intifada*, or uprising, which was a year old when 9/11 occurred. The counterterror framework drove subsequent attempts to reshape the Palestinian polity. In doing so, the US lifted policies directly from the wider 'global war on terror,' transplanting them onto the struggle for national liberation in occupied Palestine.

The narrative of this dissertation reflects three distinct changes to America's policies that occurred in succession. First, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the Bush Administration found common cause with the unilateralism Israel had embraced in countering the Palestinian uprising.

¹ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

Then, in the buildup to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the US mobilized its ‘freedom agenda’ to push for democratization of the Palestinian Authority (PA). When the elections mandated by the ‘freedom agenda’ resulted in a victory for Hamas, considered a terrorist organization, Washington shifted gears once more. The US led the international community to upend Palestinian democracy, using reforms to meet securitization priorities derived from the ‘global war on terror.’ After the demise of the Palestinian experiment in democracy, the US turned to counterinsurgency tactics that married economic development and humanitarian assistance in the PA to control by proxy. In the process, the US became a full partner in Israel’s pacification of the West Bank.

Since 2007, the USSC has stood at the forefront of Washington’s ongoing policy of managing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The USSC is a site of interface between Palestine and Washington’s broader ‘war on terror’ paradigm. Through close connections and exchanges in personnel, the USSC weaves Palestine into the ‘war on terror,’ casting experience in Iraq and Afghanistan as a form of expertise to engage with Palestine.

These American interventions have distorted the place for political pluralism in Palestinian society, inserting the counterterror paradigm into the structure of Palestinian self-governance. Taken together, it is evident that the ultimate factor driving American engagement with the Palestinians since 9/11 has been a clear strategic convergence with Israeli aims. The onset of Washington’s ‘global war on terror’ provided an unprecedented opportunity for Israel to present its security logic as in line with American interests, offering a powerful shared discourse for waging war since 2001.

Scholars concerned with American empire have theorized the ways in which the post-9/11 moment has taken on a “boundless geographical logic.”² While hubs of American control spread globally during the Cold War, today Washington’s reach pervades the daily functions of Palestinian life at every level. Directly and indirectly, the US decides upon the substance of intermittent negotiations between the PLO and Israel; the payment of salaries to Palestinian civil servants; and who is eligible to represent Palestinian municipalities.³

² Ian G. R. Shaw, *Predator Empire: Drone Warfare and Full Spectrum Dominance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016): 111.

³ Amy Kaplan, “Where is Guantanamo?” *American Quarterly* 57, 3 (2005): 832. In December 2017, the Trump Administration moved the US Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, thereby endorsing the Israeli position that Jerusalem will remain the undivided, eternal capital of Israel. This position violates international law, which holds that East Jerusalem is occupied territory, and contradicts the position of every American administration since President Johnson. It effectively changes the substance of any future negotiations to be brokered by the US by removing a final status issue from the negotiating table. The same month, the

Most scholars of American policy in Palestine take a top-down, policy-level approach to understand the impact of the US's ideological and strategic identification with Israel. Authors pay attention to the ways individual American presidents and policymakers have understood the Israeli-Palestinian conflict against their own domestic agendas, military priorities, and personal beliefs.⁴ This dissertation recognizes the depth of American control, and its impact on the everyday reality of all those in sites of US strategic interest. As Marilyn Young notes, Washington operates without awareness of the ways in which “even minor exercises of U.S. power affect the lives of others.”⁵ I analyze the intersection between Palestine and US defense policy in the context of the ‘global war on terror,’ and the effects of that intersection on the fabric of Palestinian life.

The contemporary political situation in Palestine is entangled with the ascent of the ‘global war on terror’ framework, some ten years later. The rise and fall of Palestinian democracy and the solidification of a security quasi-state under the PA in Ramallah today cannot be divorced from the stark effects of the American policies that created them between 2000 and 2008. In 2018, American backing for the PA in the West Bank ensures a degree of daily normalcy for some Palestinians, at the detriment of those marginalized by a Palestinian elite amenable to US and Israeli demands. Such normalcy evades the besieged Gaza Strip.⁶ This fruitless bargain has come at the cost of any form of popular representation or advancement of the movement for Palestinian national liberation. Washington has only become more entrenched

US Congress passed the “Taylor Force Act,” named for an American citizen who was a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and was murdered by a Palestinian assailant while visiting Israel. The bill conditions US funding to the Palestinian Authority on the PA's end of payments to the families of political prisoners and martyrs, cast as payments to terrorists by the Taylor Force Act. United States Senate, “H.R. 1164 – Taylor Force Act.” (Washington, DC: 115th Congress, 1st Session, 7 December 2017.); Gilbert Achcar, “‘Şafqat al-qarn’ wa istikmāl al-nakba” Al Quds, 4 July 2018.

For example, Lisa Bhungalia has demonstrated the self-policing that occurs with Washington's endorsement at the Palestinian municipal level through the Anti-Terrorism Certification that is attached to all US aid, and replicated by US allies in Europe and elsewhere. These conditionalities preclude the participation of any Palestinian political groups not amenable to Washington's vetting in Palestinian governance and civil society. Lisa Bhungalia, “‘From the American People’: Sketches of the US National Security State in Palestine,” *Jadaliyya* 18 September 2012.

⁴ This tends to be the case regardless of the political orientation of the author; for an array of perspectives, see for example: Rashid Khalidi, *Brokers of Deceit: How the U.S. Has Undermined Peace in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014.); Robert Malley and Hussein Agha, “Obama and the Middle East,” *New York Review of Books* 11 June 2009; Dennis Ross, *Doomed to Succeed: The U.S.-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2015.); Daniel C. Kurtzer, Scott B. Lasensky, William B. Quandt, Steven L. Spiegel, and Shibley Z. Telhami, *The Peace Puzzle: America's Quest for Arab-Israel Peace, 1989-2011* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013.)

⁵ Marilyn Young, “The Age of Global Power,” in Thomas Bender, ed. *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 275.

⁶ Tareq Baconi, *Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018.)

in its acceptance of the Israeli right's vision to deny Palestinian statehood in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip.⁷

Historiography

A history of US policy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the context of the 'global war on terror' intersects with several interdisciplinary bodies of scholarship. In selecting my secondary sources, I have drawn from historical works as well as those that speak to the political economy and sociological effects of US policy in Palestine.

In the first place, a number of works address the failures of the 'peace process' in its various stages since 1991. The memoirs of participants in the political negotiations from the Israeli, Palestinian, and American sides provide considerable insight into structural problems that pervaded the 'two-state solution' agenda. These memoirs thus serve as both primary and secondary sources. Rashid Khalidi, for example, highlights the tensions between the premise of state-building under the PA after the Oslo Accords and the reality of the PLO's minimal preparations for an eventual Palestinian state. Khalidi also points to the internal competition that dominated the Palestinian political scene as the PLO leadership that returned from Tunis confronted the grassroots activists at the forefront of the First Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.⁸

The memoirs of chief PLO negotiator Ahmed Qurei, known by his nom-de-guerre Abu Alaa, bear out many of Khalidi's critiques. At each stage of the 'peace process' between the 1993 Oslo Accords and the collapse of the Annapolis talks in December 2008, the PLO contended with two challenges. On the one hand, persistent Israeli intransigence blocked the negotiating progress. On the other, rejection of the 'land for peace' formulation from some corners of Palestinian society, and later the PLO's legitimacy as the sole representative of the Palestinians, compounded the difficulties of reaching a deal. Qurei's records of the 2007-2008 Annapolis negotiations function as a comprehensive account of his interactions with the Israeli team. Critically, they depict the full scale of the barriers to Palestinian statehood, in spite of the

⁷ The examples of this reality are perhaps too many with the advent of the Trump Administration to recount in full: "Kushner Reportedly Worked to Strip Jordan's Two Million Palestinians of Refugee Status," Haaretz 4 August 2018; Noa Landau and Aaron Rabinowitz, "U.S. Ambassador to Israel Pictured with Controversial Image of Jerusalem Third Temple Replacing Muslim Mosque," Haaretz 23 May 2018; For a comprehensive account of the ascent of the Israeli right, see Colin Schindler, *The Rise of the Israeli Right: From Odessa to Hebron* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.)

⁸ Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), 160-164.

significant unity of purpose and mutual respect that sustained the PLO's participation alongside Israeli Foreign Minister Tzivi Lipni and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.⁹

Authors who address the American role in the 'peace process' tend to emphasize the implicit biases and structural shortcomings of the talks, both in the 1990s under President Bill Clinton, and in the 2000s under President Bush. Hussein Agha and Rob Malley, for example, highlight the ill-conceived gradualism that undermined confidence between the Israelis and Palestinians during the Oslo process, where incremental changes were intended to foster trust. Jeremy Pressman, meanwhile, stresses the ideological dispositions that made the American brokers more likely to sympathize with the domestic Israeli political constraints, failing to recognize the redlines of the public to whom the Palestinian negotiators answered.¹⁰ Such critiques appear well-warranted when one reads the recollections of top American diplomats like Martin Indyk and Dennis Ross, whose accounts of the 'peace process' make clear not only their own strong support for Zionism, but also the proximity between the White House and Israeli political elite even in moments of friction.¹¹

Problematizing International Assistance to the 'Peace Process'

Scholars who have studied the shortcomings of aid to the Palestinians, meanwhile, typically use social science methodology and focus on the pitfalls of economy and governance in Palestine since 1990. While the economic concerns merit an entire historiography alone, critiques of the way aid affected Palestinian civil society and governance are particularly relevant to this dissertation's examination of American interventions in the Palestinian Authority.¹²

One has only to spend a few hours in Ramallah, the Palestinian town that has become a veritable bastion of aid coordination since 1993, to grasp the scale of international assistance to the Palestinians and its transformative effects. An array of scholars critique the aid industry's impact on Palestinian civil society. In the early 1990s, as Rema Hammami points out, the decline

⁹ Ahmed Qurei, *Beyond Oslo, The Struggle for Palestine: Inside the Middle East Peace Process from Rabin's Death to Camp David* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008.); Ahmed Qurei, *Al-rawaya al-filasṭīniyya al-kāmila lil-mufāwāḍāt: min Oslo ilā Annapolis* (Beirut: Institute of Palestine Studies, 2014.)

¹⁰ Robert Malley and Hussein Agha, "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors," *The New York Review of Books* 9 August 2001. Jeremy Pressman, "Visions in Collision: What Happened at Camp David and Taba?" *International Security* 28, 2 (2003): 5-43.

¹¹ Ross, *Doomed to Succeed*; Martin Indyk, *Innocent Abroad: An Intimate Account of American Peace Diplomacy in the Middle East* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.); For an Israeli perspective, see Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

¹² See, for example: Rex Brynen, *A Very Political Economy: Peacebuilding and Foreign Aid in the West Bank and Gaza Strip* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 2000.); Anne Le More, "Killing with Kindness: Funding the Demise of a Palestinian State," *International Affairs* 81, 5 (2005): 981-999.

of the PLO's leftist factions through first the demise of a key sponsor, the Soviet Union, and second the ascent of the PA framework, gave rise to NGOs as a haven for leftist activists.¹³ The subsequent 'NGO-isation' entailed the distortion of Palestinian political pluralism through the PA's exclusion of non-Fatah political activists, who instead formed a growing professional class in new NGOs.¹⁴ Sheila Carapico points to the inverse relationship between the extent Palestinian NGOs succeeded in cultivating ties with external donors and the depth of their links with grassroots concerns.¹⁵ Benoit Challand notes that international donors were mostly unaware of the historical links between Palestinian factions and specific NGOs, much less a particular political vision. Instead, the donor community sought interlocutors with attributes of professionalism that matched external standards but did not indicate any local legitimacy.¹⁶

From another perspective, a significant body of work exists on the internal dimensions of Palestinian politics since the onset of the 'peace process.' As'ad Ghanem charts the tensions that fraught Fatah after Arafat's death, and the party's attempts to retain political hegemony despite the inconsistencies of its mission after the Second Intifada. Tariq Dana, meanwhile, explains that as the PA's ruling party, Fatah paradoxically maintains the language of liberation while gesturing to its audience of foreign patrons.¹⁷

A growing body of contemporary political scholarship also addresses the internal Palestinian political split between Hamas and Fatah, and the physical division of the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 2007. In addition to the work of scholars like Khaled Hroub and Beverley Milton-Edwards about Hamas's development historically, Björn Brenner charts Hamas's rise in Palestinian politics. He highlights obstacles to the Islamists' governance imposed by the US-led international community that struggled to accept the liberal democratic elements of the Islamists' ascent.¹⁸ Tareq Baconi, on the other hand, emphasizes the politics of resistance Hamas upheld

¹³ Rema Hammami, "Palestinian NGOs Since Oslo: From NGO Politics to Social Movements?" Middle East Report 214 (2000): 17.

¹⁴ Rema Hammami, "Palestinian NGOs Since Oslo," 16-18.

¹⁵ Sheila Carapico, *Political Aid and Arab Activism: Democracy Promotion, Justice, and Representation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 163-66.

¹⁶ Benoit Challand, *Palestinian Civil Society: Foreign Donors and the Power to Promote and Exclude*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 184.

¹⁷ Tariq Dana, "The Prolonged Decay of the Palestinian National Movement," *National Identities* (2017): 7; As'ad Ghanem, *Palestinian Politics after Arafat: A Failed National Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.)

¹⁸ Björn Brenner, *Gaza Under Hamas: From Islamic Democracy to Islamist Governance* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 23-26; Beverley Milton-Edwards, "Elusive Ingredient: Hamas and the Peace Process," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, 4 (2004): 39-52.

even as the international community constrained the movement's place in the Palestinian polity.¹⁹

Aid to the PA's Police and Security Forces

At the intersection of these fields of study, my dissertation is an important contribution because of the relative dearth of scholarship on the security side of assistance to the Palestinians. It is all the more important because the issue of international assistance to the PA's security forces is at the heart of the division between Hamas and Fatah, and in many ways the fragmentation of the Palestinian political scene since the 1970s. The tension between the two parties' visions of resistance accelerated during the 1990s, and the conditioned intervention of outside supporters is central to the division to this day.²⁰

A number of development experts and political scientists provide critical background information on international assistance to the Palestinian police and security forces during the 1990s. Brynjar Lia documents the problematic development of the Palestinian police and security forces out of a Fatah militia, the Fatah Hawks, beginning in Jericho and Gaza in 1994. The Oslo era was characterized by conflicting, uncoordinated agendas from the myriad states and organizations that donated to the 'peace process.' Further, the Palestinian Authority first created an executive branch, and only later established judicial and legislative branches, ensuring there would be little oversight by independent courts.²¹

Alaa Tartir has historicized the development of the Palestinian security forces through the Oslo era, the breakdown of the Second Intifada, and fortification in 2007 and 2008 under Salam Fayyad's technocratic PA with international assistance.²² Tartir draws on the insights provided by Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. They document the evolution of international assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Friedrich and Luethold's detailed account of security sector reform as a tool of intervention in Palestine reveals how Washington's commanding role in the peace process ensured that international assistance to the PA was subservient to the

¹⁹ Baconi, *Hamas Contained*.

²⁰ Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 35-39.

²¹ Brynjar Lia, *Building Arafat's Police: The Politics of International Police Assistance in the Palestinian Territories After the Oslo Agreement* (London: Garnet Publishing, 1999.); Brynjar Lia, "The Establishment of a Palestinian Police Force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip," *International Peacekeeping* 6, 4 (1999): 159-160.

²² Alaa Tartir, "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013," *Stability: International Journey of Security and Development* 4, 1 (2015): 1-20.

political prerogatives Israel conveyed to the US.²³ As Mushtaq Khan notes, it is the preeminence of Israel's expansive objective of ensuring 'security first' that has been most incompatible with a two-state compromise. As Khan puts it, Israel's most strategically expedient policy is a "long-term management strategy that is *not intended* to lead to a sovereign Palestinian state but only to pockets of Palestinian self-government subject to Israeli re-occupation."²⁴

It is critical to read the 'war on terror' period of American involvement with the 'peace process' against the underlying Israeli strategy of managing the Palestinians. While each of these authors speaks to the importance of international intervention in Palestinian affairs, none systematically addresses America's leading role in constraining Palestinian political life. I show how Washington's influence has driven the tendency to subsume all other policy elements into the purpose of creating security. In the context of the 'global war on terror,' the security priority took on new vigor, and consumed the US management strategy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel, America, and the 'War on Terror'

A number of scholars have mapped out significant areas of strategic exchange between the US and Israel in the context of the 'global war on terror.' Remi Brulin, for example, traces the historical genesis of American discourse around 'terror' through interaction with Israel. In the 1970s, Palestine remained a site of colonization in a rapidly decolonizing world. Israel attempted to mainstream among its allies its selective definition of 'terrorism' wielded against the PLO to delegitimize the Palestinian national struggle. Brulin demonstrates the ideological purposes that garnered the label of 'terror,' serving to "depoliticize, dehumanize and delegitimize the "enemy of the day."²⁵ Deepa Kumar emphasizes the significance of direct contact between right-wing Israeli political leaders, particularly from the Likud, and American neoconservatives in the 1970s and 1980s. These interactions were critical to mainstream Israeli political

²³ Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold, *Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform* (Geneva and Ramallah: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2007).

²⁴ Mushtaq H. Khan, "Security First" and Its Implications for a Viable Palestinian State" in Michael Keating, Anne Le More and Robert Lowe (eds.) *Aid, Diplomacy, and Facts on the Ground: The Case of Palestine* (London: Chatham House, 2005), 1.

²⁵ Remi Brulin, "Compartmentalization, Contexts of Speech, and the Israeli Origins of the American Discourse on "Terrorism,"" *Dialectical Anthropology* 39 (2015): 72, 112; Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented 'Terrorism'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.)

perspectives in Washington's conversations about political violence, particularly among the neoconservatives who decades later would direct Bush Junior's administration.²⁶

Other scholars, meanwhile, highlight the impact of specific historical moments on American appreciation of Israel's political imperatives and their security justifications. In the 1970s, Lisa Stampnitzky argues, Washington's discourse on political violence after the war on Vietnam underwent a shift from focus on insurgency and counterinsurgency to pathologize terror under a moral lens. The 1972 Israeli hostage crisis at the Munich Olympics was a critical turning point in the American conception of terror. In the process, 'terrorists' were stripped of any rational political agency, cast instead as a fundamental evil.²⁷

Nonetheless, it was not until the Reagan Administration that the concept of 'terrorism' "became an organizing principle at the heart of US foreign policy decisions and actions."²⁸ As Brulin points out, Reagan initially applied the term vaguely to Cold War enemies. He decried a Moscow-directed "international terrorist network" that encompassed Washington's enemies in Cuba, El Salvador, and Nicaragua but did not acknowledge the violence of US-backed militias like the Contras. However, the October 1983 truck bombing of the barracks of US Marines stationed in Beirut, a purely military target, drew Reagan's rhetoric into line with Israel. The attack on the Marines wed the US to Israel in common cause, and Reagan retroactively justified Israel's invasion of Lebanon to root out the PLO as a righteous campaign to defeat "the terrorists" residing there.²⁹

A central contention of this dissertation is that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 marked another critical moment in the Israeli-American relationship, giving unprecedented weight to the Israeli security narrative in Washington. Several scholars have explored the shared policy language that Israel and Washington have increasingly shared since 2001. Laleh Khalili and Lisa Hajjar demonstrate how the 'global war on terror' has driven the US to replicate the ways in which Israel confronts international humanitarian law. In particular, Hajjar reveals the Israeli-American "strategic convergence" in designating targets as 'unlawful combatants,' as well as the use of torture as 'stress and duress,' called 'moderate physical pressure' by Israel.³⁰

²⁶ Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (Chicago: Haymarket Press, 2012), 75; 119-122.

²⁷ Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror*, 51-53; Brulin, "Compartmentalization, Contexts of Speech, and the Israeli Origins of the American Discourse on "Terrorism,"" 73.

²⁸ Brulin, "Compartmentalization, Contexts of Speech, and the Israeli Origins of the American Discourse on "Terrorism,"" 101.

²⁹ Brulin, "Compartmentalization, Contexts of Speech, and the Israeli Origins of the American Discourse on "Terrorism,"" 102.

³⁰ Lisa Hajjar, *Courting Conflict: the Israeli Military Court System in the West Bank and Gaza*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 244; Laleh Khalili, "The Location of Palestine in Global Counterinsurgencies," *International Journal of*

Other scholars link Israeli and American reliance on drone technology. Ian Shaw and Grégoire Chamayou, for example, examine the emergence of ‘liquidation’ as an Israeli tool in the October 1973 war. The Bush Administration initially criticized Israeli ‘collateral damage’ during the Second Intifada. However, after 9/11, the US effectively green-lighted the use of unmanned, targeted assassinations against Palestinians by using the same tactics in Afghanistan and beyond.³¹

Other authors have focused on the counterinsurgency element of the US-Israeli strategic partnership. This relationship has both a historical element rooted in the Cold War, and contemporary manifestations that link Israel to the neoconservatives groomed under Reagan who drove Bush’s foreign policy. Appreciating Israeli weapons as battle-tested, a number of conservative Latin American regimes sought arms from Israel in the 1980s. Purchases from Israel allowed them to align with Washington without directly breaching the congressional ban on sales to counterrevolutionaries and police in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras.³²

The exchanges in personnel and know-how that Israel offered counterinsurgent groups during the Cold War reemerged in the context of the ‘global war on terror.’ Neocons like Deputy Secretary of State Elliot Abrams intimately involved in Reagan’s counterinsurgency policies reemerged from Washington’s think tanks to the halls of power under George W. Bush. They provided direct links between the counterinsurgency doctrines developed for the ‘global war on terror’ and the counterinsurgency methods under Reagan that relied on Israeli participation. Joe Bryan reveals the ways in which the Iran-Contra counterinsurgency episode was explicitly invoked in planning for Iraq in what he calls a “discursive economy,” that included high-level secretive meetings between officials like Abrams who circulated back to the White House under Bush.³³ These exchanges have integrated Israeli methods and technologies of control into security systems globally. The focus on counterterrorism internationally since 9/11 has provided both a legitimating discourse and remarkable profits for the Israeli security sector.

Middle East Studies 42, 3 (2010): 413-433; Lisa Hajjar, “International Humanitarian Law and “Wars on Terror”: A Comparative Analysis of Israeli and American Doctrines and Policies,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36, 1 (2006): 21-42.

³¹ Shaw, *Predator Empire*, 122; Ronen Bergman, *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel’s Targeted Assassinations* (New York: Random House, 2018), 514; Grégoire Chamayou, *Drone Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 27-28.

³² Milton Jamail and Margo Gutierrez, “Israel in Central America: Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica,” *Middle East Report* 140, 16 (1986).

³³ Joe Bryan, “Trust Us: Nicaragua, Iran-Contra, and the Discursive Economy of Empire,” in Carole McGranahan and John F. Collins, eds. *Ethnographies of U.S. Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 356-358; See also Jeremy Kuzmarov, “Modernizing Repression: Police Training, Political Violence, and Nation Building in the “American Century.”” *Diplomatic History* 33, 2 (2009): 191-192.

Several political economists have explored Israel's attempts to position itself as a hub of homeland security expertise after 9/11. Rhys Machold demonstrates the marketing that Israel uses to appeal to leaders concerned with controlling populations.³⁴ In order to sell Israeli military techniques throughout the world, Machold argues that Israel explicitly conflates its local political agenda with Washington's 'war on terror.'³⁵ Jeff Halper focuses on the specific technologies of surveillance Israel hones in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for export internationally, theorizing what he labels a "securocratic warfare."³⁶ Shir Hever, meanwhile, emphasizes the inextricability of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from the country's wider economy. The expanding Israeli arms export industry matched the rapid privatization of the Pentagon under the Bush Administration, and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2003. DHS's budget increased nearly 13% annually in the decade after its establishment. Israeli exporters of surveillance and security technology capitalized as a result.³⁷

These scholars provide critical insight into the ways in which Israel commodifies the occupation, incentivizing its sustainment. Building on their work, I show the ease with which Washington has actually taken responsibility for key elements of the occupation in the West Bank. Whereas existing scholarship speaks to a clear theoretical convergence that links the Israeli tactics toward the Palestinians with the 'global war on terror,' I show a compatibility rooted in material, everyday practices between the US and Israel.

Perhaps most perniciously, the notion that Israel has lessons to offer Washington about counterterrorism have been cemented into law. Close links between Israel and the bodies concerned with national security in the US have multiplied since 9/11. For example, in 2002, the Homeland Security Act named Israel as a critical partner in improving US preparedness against terror threats. In 2014 and 2016, Congress passed legislation for joint research and exchanges between the Department of Homeland Security and Israel specifically focused on learning from Israel's cybersecurity and counterterrorism expertise.³⁸ The Pentagon, meanwhile, surpasses the realm of

³⁴ Rhys Machold, "Mobility and the Model: Policy Mobility and the Becoming of Israel Homeland Security Dominance," *Environment and Planning A* 47 (2015): 820; Rhys Machold, "Learning from Israel? '26/11' and the Anti-Politics of Urban Security Governance," *Security Dialogue* 47, 4 (2016): 275-291.

³⁵ Machold, "Mobility and the Model," 823.

³⁶ Jeff Halper, *War Against the People: Israel, the Palestinians, and Global Pacification* (London: Pluto Press, 2015.)

³⁷ Shir Hever, *The Privatisation of Israeli Security* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 153-155.

³⁸ United States House of Representatives, "United States-Israel Advanced Research Partnership Act of 2016" (Washington, DC: 114th Congress, 2nd Session, 15 November 2016.)

educational exchange with Israeli partners. US military leaders conduct joint trainings, install Israeli weapons systems, and ensure "interoperability" and "seamless integration" with the IDF.³⁹

The Pentagon often points to Israel's expertise in combating 'terrorism' internationally, suggesting "the security challenges of Israel are the security challenges of the United States writ small."⁴⁰ In exposing the process by which the US has taken charge of implementing key aspects of Israel's security agenda toward the Palestinians, my dissertation analyzes the depth of the American-Israeli convergence in the context of the 'global war on terror.'

Sources and Methodology

In writing a contemporary history of American policy in Israel-Palestine, I necessarily faced a number of barriers to collect sources for this project. American diplomatic and security files on intervention in the 'peace process' remain classified, and the ongoing nature of key developments made many of my research questions politically sensitive both in Palestine and the United States. Nonetheless, this dissertation is firmly grounded in primary sources issued from the US government in order to tell the story of Washington's policies in Palestine in the context of the 'global war on terror.'

To begin, I drew from open-sourced US government documents – Congressional Research Service reports, minutes of Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings, and reports from the Inspector General at the Department of State. As mentioned previously, the memoirs of American political insiders also served as important primary sources, providing insight into the genesis of decision-making. In spite of the traditional shortcomings of autobiographies and memoirs as sources, they reveal the ideological agendas in Washington that drove policies seemingly at odd with the US's official stance.

³⁹ Lisa Fernandino, "Upcoming Joint U.S.-Israeli Exercise Aims to Improve Interoperability," U.S. Department of Defense, 26 February 2018. <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1450989/upcoming-joint-us-israeli-exercise-aims-to-improve-interoperability/>

⁴⁰ "This Was Forced on Us – a War of Terror: Full Text of Ariel Sharon's Speech to the Israeli People," The Guardian 3 December 2006; Thomas H. Henriksen, "The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States" (Joint Special Operations University Report 07-3, 2007), v, 2.

In order to better understand the reception of American interventions in Palestine, I pored over the press archive located in the West Bank city of Nablus, housed in the local municipal library. I selected coverage from *Al-Quds*, *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda*, and *Al-Ayyām* so as to include a range of Palestinian perspectives. *Al-Quds* and *Al-Ayyām* are both widely-read, mainstream daily publications based in Jerusalem, whereas *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda* is considered a mouthpiece of the Palestinian Authority.

Palestine Papers and WikiLeaks

The narrative basis of this dissertation is drawn from a close reading of leaked documents from the Palestinian leadership and American diplomatic missions engaged with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In particular, I used the Palestine Papers and WikiLeaks to trace the interface between American changes at the policy level and the implementation of those changes on the ground, by technical experts, career diplomats, mid-level officials, and aid professionals.

The Palestine Papers became available to *Al Jazeera* and the *Guardian* in January 2011. While the nearly 1,600 Arabic- and English-language documents are all accessible to any reader online, only a few studies have used this rich archive. The Palestine Papers provide considerable insight into both internal Palestinian politics and the myriad international actors involved in the reform of the Palestinian Authority in the period between 2000 and 2010.

The Palestine Papers sparked a media storm upon their initial release because they revealed the acquiescence of the PLO negotiators to positions deemed to sell out the Palestinian national struggle. In particular, the Papers exposed veteran negotiators Saeb Erekat, Ahmed Qurei, and Nabil Sha'ath to considerable scorn. For example, the PLO offered Israel the biggest *Yerushalayim*, or Hebrew Jerusalem, in history, and accepted only a symbolic return for Palestinian refugees. In response, Israel refused to even discuss Jerusalem, much less reciprocate the PLO's historic offer.⁴¹

The Palestine Paper's revelations in 2011 touched a nerve: they coincided with the 'Arab Spring' protests that swept from Tunisia to Syria, as well as the Occupy Wall Street movement that sought justice outside the halls of power. Moreover, the Papers were explosive in the incendiary climate surrounding the Goldstone Report to the UN. After a brief meeting with the

⁴¹ Gregg Carlstrom, "The Biggest Yerushalayim," *Al Jazeera* 23 January 2011; Clayton Swisher, "Erekat's Solution for the Haram," *Al Jazeera* 22 January 2011.

American Consul General in September 2009, President Abbas retracted the PLO's support for the incriminating account of Israeli crimes in the Gaza during its 2009 bombardment that left over 1,400 Palestinians dead, including at least 300 children, as well as 13 Israelis.⁴² Instead of international condemnation against Israeli violence, Abbas opted for the American promise of swift progress toward negotiations.⁴³

Indeed, the whistleblower who claimed responsibility for the Palestine Papers – a young French-Palestinian lawyer named Ziyad Clot – cited the destruction Israel wrought in Gaza during Operation Cast Lead as central to his dismay at the PLO's position on the Goldstone Report. Clot began advising the PLO's Negotiations Affairs Department's refugee portfolio in May 2008 in the context of the negotiations that began at the Annapolis Conference (November 2007.) Within less than a year, he penned a strongly-worded letter of resignation and left Ramallah. Clot had quickly come to understand the PLO to be structurally incapable of representing the majority of Palestinians. In 2010, he published a memoir entitled *Il n'y aura pas d'état palestinien (There Will Not Be a Palestinian State)*. Clot recounted the disillusionment he felt at the power imbalance that defined the negotiations, as the US and EU imposed Israeli-designed terms on the Palestinians.⁴⁴

It is important to contextualize Clot's perspective. As another former PLO-NAD member mentioned in an interview, Clot's revelations were perhaps most powerful to those like him. He was a member of the diaspora, returned to Palestine on an idealistic mission and likely unaware of the full scale of the false promises of the 'peace process.' For many Palestinians, the Palestine Papers aired dirty laundry that many knew to exist, if not its full dimensions⁴⁵ Clot, meanwhile, was disturbed to learn of the PLO and PA's failures, and of the disenchantment of Palestine's most capable minds with the negotiations.⁴⁶

WikiLeaks, meanwhile, was established in December 2006. It sprang to fame in 2010 with the release of the "Collateral Murder" video depicting brutal Pentagon crimes in Iraq, as well as over 250,000 diplomatic cables. These leaks brought the site into conflict with the US government and led to the arrest of Chelsea Manning. WikiLeaks represents an "aggressive quest

⁴² For a detailed account of Israel's 2009 offensive against the Hamas-held Gaza Strip, see Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 155-165.

⁴³ Rory McCarthy, "Mahmoud Abbas Tries to Save Reputation with the U-Turn on Gaza," *The Guardian* 12 October 2009.

Amira Hass, "Mahmoud Abbas's Chronic Submissiveness," *Haaretz* 5 October 2009.

⁴⁴ Ziyad Clot, *Il n'y aura pas d'état palestinien* (Paris: Max Mara, 2010.); See also Clayton E. Swisher, *The Palestine Papers: The End of the Road?* (Chatham, UK: Hesperus, 2011.)

⁴⁵ Interview, former PLO-NAD member, Ramallah, July 2017.

⁴⁶ Gilles Paris, "'Il n'y aura pas d'état Palestinien' de Ziyad Clot: négociateur par accident," *Le Monde* 29 September 2009.

for radical press freedom,” alongside activist hackers like Anonymous and Edward Snowden. Together, their leaks critically informed the major social revolutions of 2011.⁴⁷

As Gabriella Coleman argues, WikiLeaks confronts the idea that the existing, legally protected forums suffice as spaces of effective dissent against US state abuses.⁴⁸ By exposing the mundane, minute details of the daily assertions of US power through embassies and military bases across the globe, the full scale of American imperial power becomes visible. The leaks deconstruct the state’s narrative about its actions abroad.⁴⁹ A powerful result of whistleblower vigilantism is the ability for those in institutions of power to see the forest for the trees, connecting their roles to wider structures.⁵⁰ The sources I have used most heavily for this dissertation were leaked without the consent of the US or Palestinian governments. However, their holdings are vital to understand the full scale of US involvement in Palestine, and the impact of that intervention on the Palestinian political leadership.

Taken together, the Palestine Papers and WikiLeaks present powerful tools for questioning state power. The cables and documents I analyzed form an archive of the ongoing history of US interventions internationally. In setting out to understand the wealth of primary source material they contained, I let the documents guide my focus. I initially proposed this dissertation to study broadly the ‘peace process’ between 2000 and 2011. However, in reading the Papers and WikiLeaks I soon realized that I faced a number of challenges. First, the topic was simply too broad: so many developments and changes occurred, between so many actors, that a history of the entire conflict for a decade was impossible.

Further, my primary sources were not distributed evenly between the conflict or negotiations’ recurrent topics. Instead, they most clearly offered a portrait of the security portfolio: daily coordination, intensive American efforts to reform the Palestinian security forces, and the security side of the 2007-2008 Annapolis negotiations. I let these topics shape my research questions: how did the regional security climate affect the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

⁴⁷ Gabriella Coleman, “From Internet Farming to Weapons of the Geek,” *Current Anthropology* 58, 15 (2017): 97; Ibrahim Saleh, “WikiLeaks and the Arab Spring: The Twists and Turns of Media, Culture, and Power,” in Benedetta Brevini, Arne Hintz, and Patrick McCurdy (eds.) *Beyond WikiLeaks: Implications for the Future of Communications, Journalism, and Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 236-242.

⁴⁸ Coleman, “From Internet Farming to Weapons of the Geek,” 99.

⁴⁹ Giorel Curran and Morgan Gibson, “WikiLeaks, Anarchism and Technologies of Dissent,” *Antipode* 45, 2 (2013): 294-314.

⁵⁰ Chris Elliot, “WikiLeaks and the Public Interest Dilemma,” in Benedetta Brevini, Arne Hintz, and Patrick McCurdy (eds.) *Beyond WikiLeaks: Implications for the Future of Communications, Journalism, and Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 81.

under the Bush Administration? How did the ‘war on terror,’ specifically, shape American interventions? What were the consequences, for Palestine?

First, I read each of the approximately 1,600 documents that make up the Palestine Papers. I arranged the documents chronologically while recording key thematic developments in order to piece them together. Because of WikiLeaks’ scale, I searched for significant figures within the archive in order to locate the diplomatic cables relevant to my project. I used this trove of archival material to create a narrative based in empirical events, tracing the daily interventions of US military and diplomatic corps in Palestine. The WikiLeaks I most analyzed – the Diplomatic Cables dumped in 2010 and 2011 – spoke directly to the Palestine-specific revelations Clot leaked. The minutes of policy and security meetings between the American diplomats in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and their Israeli and Palestinian counterparts, transformed into conversations when read against the Palestine Papers. Together, the American and Palestinian leaks show how closely Palestinian internal decisions were calibrated with decisions articulated in American diplomatic bodies in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Original Interviews

Moreover, the leaked documents I analyzed took on new dimensions when analyzed alongside the testimonies of American and Palestinian security and diplomatic personnel that I interviewed. In several instances, I made choices about who to interview from reading WikiLeaks: I discovered the name of an individual through a leaked document, contacted them, and in conversation the individual referred to WikiLeaks to confirm their role in Palestine.

In preparation for my field research, I underwent two rounds of applications for approval by McGill University’s Research Ethics Board (REB). The project was approved in August 2016 and has been renewed twice. Each participant interviewed for this project provided informed consent in line with the REB process.⁵¹ In Washington, Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Nablus – as well as remotely – I interviewed over fifteen individuals formerly or currently affiliated specifically with the USSC, either as members of the mission itself or as subcontractors to the USSC’s many translating, training, and construction projects. I protected the identities of all

⁵¹ The McGill University Research Ethics Board file for this project is REB #491-0516.

interviewed to the greatest extent possible by anonymizing their voices and removing descriptive characteristics.

Personal Papers

In the course of conducting this research, interviewees also gave me access to their personal records. As a result, I had at hand a new archive of the personal papers of former security personnel stationed at the American diplomatic mission in Jerusalem between 2006 and 2010. I have removed all identifying indicators from my analysis in drawing upon these sources. While the papers were passed to me with full consent and knowledge of my project, in many cases they contained un-redacted information that identified individuals still employed by the US government, or who might suffer were their names to be published.

The personal papers were congruent with the Palestine Papers, and my methodology in analyzing them took a similar form. These documents, about 60 in total, consisted of informal minutes from meetings with Israeli security officials, Excel spreadsheets of projects underway, PowerPoint presentations to stakeholders, and drafts of internal, classified reports. Perhaps most revealing were emails passed between US government officials working in Palestine under the State Department, USAID, and Pentagon. Their correspondences consist of daily updates and internal commentary on the daily work of defense, diplomatic, and aid personnel on the ground in Palestine, sharing snide remarks and critical opinions. Many of the documents related to the 2008 Jenin Initiative. My methodology consisted of piecing the communications together against the insights I gathered from WikiLeaks and my interviews, drawing out a narrative of the Initiative's execution. The archive of personal papers crucially lays bare the apprehensions of those enacting American policy about the securitization agenda passed down from Washington.

Organization

The Historical Background that follows this Introduction traces the emergence of US policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1948. It demonstrates both the strategic and ideological elements of Washington's growing affinity for Israel in the context of the Cold War, and the intensification of these elements in the post-9/11 moment. In Chapter 1, I show specifically how the onset of the 'global war on terror' led Washington to embrace Israeli

unilateralism, including the adoption of Israeli political aims. I examine how this support of Israeli political aims was exercised through reforms imposed on the Palestinian Authority.

Building upon that, in Chapter 2, I focus on the ‘freedom agenda’ that the US implemented against Iraq, and how the same agenda was used in Palestine to push for new Palestinian leadership. Chapter 3 shows the efforts Washington deployed to facilitate Palestinian democratization, and then the processes through which the US backtracked on that support to undermine the fairly elected Hamas-affiliated Palestinian Authority. Chapter 4 traces the turn to securitization of the West Bank under the US Security Coordinator, and how security sector reform in Palestine dovetailed with American defense policy globally in the context of the ‘global war on terror.’

The fifth and final chapter is a case study of the Jenin Initiative, a 2008 intensive campaign led by the USSC to pacify Jenin, which was known as a center of armed resistance. This close description of the Jenin Initiative is important for understanding exactly how US security interventions transformed the Palestinian Authority into a compliant proxy to support Israeli political aims. Through these interventions, Washington constructed a security regime for Palestinian self-policing in the West Bank that endures today, even as the possibility of a Palestinian state brokered by the US has disappeared.

The research presented here is the product of three years of travel and living in Nablus and Ramallah while conducting fieldwork. It is, therefore, an attempt to make sense of the political reality I see around me. As I write this introduction, a protest movement calling for President Abbas to step down and to end sanctions against Palestinian Authority employees in Gaza has been brutally repressed in Ramallah by the US- and European-funded and trained Palestinian Authority security forces. Peaceful protesters’ cameras are seized, plainclothes officers surveil protesters, and security forces wait outside the Ramallah hospital to arrest protesters. Crowds of young men sporting Fatah hats wade into the mêlée, beating protesters and provoking commentators to call them “Abbas’s *shabiḥa*.”⁵²

At the same time, President Trump’s envoys arrive in Israel, but he will not meet with any Palestinian leaders as he imposes his ‘deal of the century,’ which portends a dismembered Palestinian non-state and an array of humanitarian aid fixes.⁵³ In spite of the impossibility of a

⁵² Shabiḥa, or ghosts, alludes to the thuggish young men Bashar al-Assad deploys to support his rule in Syria. “B-awāmir min ‘Abbās,” Amad 14 June 2018. <https://www.amad.ps/ar/Details/241199>

⁵³ Achcar, “‘Şafqat al-qarn’ wa istikmāl al-nakba.”

Palestinian state – and indeed, its removal from the American and Israeli agendas – the EU and the US carry on intervening in the daily functions of the Palestinian Authority under the premise of ‘reforming’ the Palestinian security forces to “set the security conditions for a lasting comprehensive peace agreement.”⁵⁴

In this climate, the names of the American military personnel responsible for the creation of the repressive security regime in the West Bank bubble to the surface on Palestinian social media. Ann Stoler speaks of “the ways in which U.S. interventions in other polities have shaped the destitutions of our times.”⁵⁵ Existing scholarship shows the profound implications of Israeli-American convergence in the ‘global war on terror’ at the level of political discourse. I show exactly how American interventions have enforced Israeli wishes on the ground in Palestine and precluded the possibility of a just outcome to this conflict.

Historical Background

It is commonplace today to hear of the ‘special relationship’ between the United States and Israel. President Woodrow Wilson was an early supporter, albeit privately, of the British Balfour Declaration that formalized support for the creation of a Jewish national home in Mandate Palestine in November 1917.⁵⁶ At that time, evangelical Christian notions of Biblical redemption swayed some Americans, who saw religious prophecy in Jewish immigration to Palestine.⁵⁷ The focus on agricultural settlement that motivated the Zionist colonial effort stirred the imagination of other Americans moved by the ideals of pioneering, millennialism, and manifest destiny.⁵⁸ As Osamah Khalil notes, orientalist ‘othering’ was intrinsic to the American

⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State, “West Bank.” <https://www.state.gov/j/inl/regions/africamiddleeast/219007.htm>; EU External Action, “Common Security and Defence Policy: EUPOL COPPS Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories,” October 2017. http://eupolcopps.eu/sites/default/files/newsletters/20170717%20EUPOL%20COPPS_en.pdf

⁵⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 41.

⁵⁶ Osamah Khalil, “Pax Americana: The United States, the Palestinians, and the Peace Process, 1948-2008,” *The New Centennial Review* 8, 2 (2008): 4.

⁵⁷ Usama Makdisi traces the historical pattern of American interaction with Palestine, and the importance of millennialism in American attention to the region stretching back to the turn of the 19th century. Usama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010), 20-22, 48; Olivia Sohns, “The Future Foretold: Lyndon Baine Johnson’s Congressional Support for Israel,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 28, 1 (2017): 57-84.

⁵⁸ Sara Hirschhorn, *City on a Hill: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017.)

understanding of the Middle East, casting the American colonies as “a second Promised Land, an American Israel,” long before the Zionist state’s establishment.⁵⁹

Today, devotion to Israel’s safety is a central element of any viable American presidential campaign.⁶⁰ As Edward Said wrote in 2003, “In America, Palestine and Israel are regarded as local, not foreign policy matters.”⁶¹ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a comprehensive history of the conflict. However, this historical background presents an overview of the evolution of Washington’s policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, focusing on the American role as broker of the ‘peace process.’ This background is important to understand the radical way in which American policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict changed after 9/11.

Balancing Cold War Imperatives

In the shadow of World War II, the American relationship to Zionism was fraught with conflicting imperatives. On the one hand, as Douglas Little points out, the scale of Nazi atrocities against European Jewry during the Holocaust, and the Allies’ failure to prevent the genocide, gave rise to a high level of support for the Zionist cause both among American voters and key political leaders. For example, in June 1945, President Harry Truman sent an envoy to Europe to assess the needs of Holocaust survivors. Truman’s representative was horrified by the conditions of Holocaust survivors and supported opening a path for their immigration to Palestine. This stance placed Washington at odds with official British policy. British mandatory officials had limited Jewish immigration to Palestine in 1939 as a result of the previous two decades of political unrest and intermittent violent revolt that plagued their attempt to reconcile the Balfour Declaration with governing the indigenous Palestinian Arab population.⁶²

⁵⁹ Edward Said’s groundbreaking *Orientalism* documented in full Europe the historical reification and othering of colonial subjects, particularly from the area imagined as the ‘Middle East.’ Edward Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2003. Osamah Khalil has detailed the influence of orientalism on the emergence of American expertise about the Middle East, both in area studies and the field of national security. Osamah Khalil, *America’s Dream Palace: Middle East Expertise and the Rise of the National Security State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 5.

⁶⁰ Mark Landler and Maggie Haberman, “Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump Vow to protect Israel but Differ on Means,” *The New York Times* 21 March 2016.

⁶¹ Edward Said, “The Imperial Bluster of Tom Delay,” *Counterpunch* 20 August 2003.

⁶² In 1929, rural pauperization caused by imbalanced investment in Palestine due to immigration from Europe contributed to the outbreak of Palestinian Arab riots. The British issued a White Paper (1939) that limited Jewish immigration to Palestine following the Palestinian revolts that began in 1936. Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 78-80; Sahar Taghdisi-Rad, “The Economic Strategies of Occupation: Confining Development and Buying-off Peace,” in Mandy Turner and O. Shweiki, *Decolonizing Palestinian Political Economy: De-Development and Beyond* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 15.

In 1946, the joint Anglo-American Committee investigation of the Palestine issue balanced the moral imperative of a solution to the crises facing European Jews with Palestinian opposition to the economic and political disenfranchisement they experienced as a result of Jewish immigration.⁶³ The Committee backed a binational state with Arab and Jewish provinces administered by the British. However, domestic pressure soon swayed Truman. "I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism [...] I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs in my constituents," he noted. The US endorsed the immigration of 100,000 Jewish refugees to Palestine, provoking ire in London and the Arab world.⁶⁴

With the emergence of tensions with the Soviet Union by mid-1946, the Cold War soon became the predominant lens through which Washington viewed the Middle East. The US tempered its support for Zionism against the priority of stemming Moscow's sphere of influence, in an approach that would endure for multiple administrations.⁶⁵ The US was wary of Israel's Labour Party governments and eager to distinguish itself from colonial legacies that made identification with the Soviet Union among oppressed peoples a threat to Washington's interests. Further, the imperative of maintaining access to the oil-rich Persian Gulf compelled the US to exhibit impartiality toward the Zionist cause. Access to Arab resources was critical to each of Washington's post-war policies and between 1946 and 1950, the US increased its investment in foreign petroleum by 143%.⁶⁶

With the United Nations' decision to partition Palestine in November 1947, the Truman Administration attempted to balance its interests and forestall Soviet influence in the Middle East by imposing an arms embargo on both the Arab and Jewish populations in Palestine.⁶⁷ As Irene Gendzier notes, the State Department and Pentagon diverged in their views on the problem of

⁶³ For further reading on Arab-Jewish relations in Mandate Palestine and the accelerating economic and political marginalization that engendered the Great Revolt (1936-1939) see: Mahmoud Yazbak, "From Poverty to Revolt: Economic Factors in the Outbreak of the 1936 Rebellion in Palestine," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, 3 (2000): 93-113; Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.); Naomi Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand: British Rule in Palestine, 1917-1948* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000.); May Seikaly, *Haifa: Transformation of an Arab Society 1918-1939* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002.)

⁶⁴ Little, *American Orientalism*, 81.

⁶⁵ Little, *American Orientalism*, 81-82; William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967* (Washington, DC and Berkeley: Brookings Institution and University of California Press), 11.

⁶⁶ For example, the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine, and NSC-68, which mandated significant US troops and personnel around the globe. Irene Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 20-22.

⁶⁷ Michael J. Cohen, *Truman and Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 175.

Palestine, but were united in the fear that an unresolved conflict would provide an opening for Soviet influence and jeopardize access to Arab oil.⁶⁸

The genesis of the US's fervent support for Israel's military is firmly situated against the backdrop of Cold War anxieties. The US rejected the notion that any leftward political shift in decolonizing states – manifested as land reform, resource nationalization, labor organizing, or inadequately pro-American discourse – could be indigenous, and not USSR-directed. The rise of pan-Arab nationalism under the charismatic Egyptian leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, was perceived as dangerous fanaticism, spreading Soviet-led radicalism.⁶⁹ In October 1956, the US reined in Israeli, French, and British ambitions to seize the recently-nationalized Suez Canal Company.⁷⁰ Eisenhower operated not out of sympathy toward the Egyptian cause, but from the perspective that acceptance of the former colonists' aggression, alongside Israel, would only compound Arab support for Nasserism. Eisenhower quickly retaliated against Britain and France, and threatened to impose sanctions against Israel should it not withdraw fully from the Egyptian land it occupied.⁷¹

The imperative of preventing the spread of Nasserism similarly drove Eisenhower to send Marines to the aid of Lebanon's conservative Maronite President Camille Chamoun. Chamoun feared being swept away by a wave of Arab nationalism after Syria and Egypt formed the (short-lived) United Arab Republic in 1958.⁷² While the show of force on Beirut's beaches restored calm temporarily, it did not dampen the popularity of Nasser's ideology. Nasser focused on eradicating British colonial influence and enabling economic development, drawing on Moscow's support when necessary. However, he sought to avoid entanglement in the Cold War, a vision incompatible with the Manichean American outlook.⁷³

⁶⁸ Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 36; Michael H. Hunt, *American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 217-219; Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.)

⁶⁹ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 167.

⁷⁰ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 143-185.

⁷¹ Diane B. Kunz, *Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 121-130; Little, *American Orientalism*, 91; Sohns, "The Future Foretold," 60.

⁷² Alasdair Soussi, "50 Years Later, U.S. Marines Remember the 1958 U.S. "Intervention" in Lebanon," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 27, 5 (2008): 28; Richard J. Alexander, "Couscous Mussolini: US Perceptions of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the 1958 Intervention in Lebanon and the Origins of the US-Israeli Special Relationship," *Cold War History* 11, 3 (2011): 364-365; Little, *American Orientalism*, 95.

⁷³ Hunt, *American Ascendancy*, 217-219; Guy Laron, "The Cold War in the Arab World," in Lorenz M. Lüthi (ed.) *The Regional Cold Wars in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East: Crucial Periods and Turning Points* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 170-171.

By the late 1950s, Washington realized that its support for its conservative allies in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Iran, and Jordan was not an impenetrable bulwark against the rise of radical nationalism. As Salim Yaqub argues, the US consequently began to reassess its understanding of Israel's potential as a strategic partner. President Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, understood Israel's strength as a tool to constrain the United Arab Republic, and its growing Soviet-supplied arsenal.⁷⁴ Further, domestic political lobbying contributed to the post-Suez Crisis thaw in American-Israeli relations, convincing Eisenhower to accede to Israeli arms and credit requests. In 1959, the newly-established American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) began pressuring Congress for assistance to Israel. Lyndon Johnson, then Senate majority leader, proposed accepting Israel into the Mutual Security Program, freeing up millions in military assistance credits.⁷⁵

Despite Eisenhower's reluctance to anger Arab allies by becoming "an arsenal for Israel," in 1959 the US provided a two-year, \$100 million military and technical assistance package. The next year, the US sold Israel \$10 million worth of radar equipment.⁷⁶ However, these appeasements failed to prevent Israel from developing a nuclear facility at Dimona. President Kennedy, who saw Israel as a "bright light now shining in the Middle East," acceded to Israel's ostensibly non-military nuclear program, and deployed economic aid to promote Israel's rapprochement with Egypt.⁷⁷ The American shift toward endorsement of Israel's military supremacy over its neighbors had begun, with little consideration for how Israel chose to wield that power.

The Occupation Begins

In June 1967, six days dramatically reshaped the regional landscape. Israel seized the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, the Syrian Golan Heights, and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula. Nasser's Egypt suffered a humiliating defeat, and proved itself incapable of championing the Palestinian cause. In its place quickly rose the alternative of Palestinian guerrilla warfare, led by the umbrella Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Established in 1964 by the Arab League to contain Palestinian activism, under the

⁷⁴ Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 263-4; Abraham Ben Zvi, *Decade of Transition: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Origins of the American-Israeli Alliance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 68-69.

⁷⁵ Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 263-4.

⁷⁶ Little, *American Orientalism*, 94.

⁷⁷ Little, *American Orientalism*, 95.

leadership of Yasser Arafat's Fatah party since 1969, the PLO soon monopolized the Palestinian cause and advocated armed struggle.⁷⁸

In the aftermath of the Six Day War, the US's stated priority was to achieve a lasting regional peace. However, this period accelerated Washington's policy of privileging Israel. In the process, the US focused on enhancing Israel's military strength, a mechanism intended to contain Soviet influence, check Arab attacks, and restrain Israel from taking unilateral action.⁷⁹ In 1967, the Johnson Administration reevaluated the Arab-Israeli conflict. Johnson held that the American response to the Suez Crisis had been myopic, prioritizing the preservation of America's image as a fair player at the expense of a lasting peace in exchange for Israeli territorial withdrawal.⁸⁰ Instead, the Johnson Administration opted to buy time until the Arab states sought negotiations. However, by August 1967, the Arab states had united around a position forbidding political agreements with Israel, based on the premise of "no recognition, no negotiations, no peace agreement, and no abandonment of Palestinian rights."⁸¹

As a result of Israeli lobbying, the US position put forth in the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) about the 1967 war was decidedly ambiguous. While the US initially supported a complete Israeli withdrawal to the pre-June 1967 borders, Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban lobbied Washington heavily. Eban persuaded the US to back an intentionally vague call for "withdrawal of armed forces from occupied territories," leaving the specific territories undefined. The term was enshrined in UNSCR 242 in November 1967, where it became the basis of the 'land for peace' formula.⁸²

In the years between 1967 and the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, Washington initially attempted to deploy its existing diplomatic tools to resolve Israel's ongoing conflict with its neighbors. Nixon believed an even-handed approach was necessary to prevent Soviet influence from gaining traction in the Arab world. As a result, Washington introduced the 1969 Rogers Plan for a full Israeli withdrawal in exchange for peace. The Plan drew on the prevailing Cold War strategy of linkage. It called for a package settlement, rather than a sequenced Israeli

⁷⁸ Fatah is a reverse acronym derived from the group's Arabic name, which translates to "Palestinian National Liberation Movement." Osamah F. Khalil, "The Radical Crescent: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Lebanese Civil War, 1973-1978," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 27, 3 (2016): 498-99; Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries: A People's History* (London: Zed Press, 1979.)

⁷⁹ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 28-32; Rashid Khalidi, *Under Siege: PLO Decisionmaking During the 1982 War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 20-23.

⁸⁰ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 44.

⁸¹ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 46.

⁸² Quandt, *Peace Process*, 46.

withdrawal followed by an end to belligerence. However, the Plan failed as it was vehemently rejected by Israel and the Soviet Union alike. The Palestinians, meanwhile, were not consulted.⁸³

For the Nixon Administration, the 1970 Black September crisis in Jordan marked a turning point. In the Hashemite kingdom, King Hussein faced a population overwhelmingly composed of Palestinian refugees, as well as guerrillas backed by the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'athist states who conducted raids into Israel. The US overestimated the Soviet influence in the crisis, and Nixon pivoted to view Israel as a strategic asset to protect the conservative Jordanian government. Nixon's appreciation of Israel increased with support for his domestic positions and views on the war in Vietnam, cementing the view that Israel was a trusted ally.⁸⁴

After its expulsion from Jordan in 1971, the PLO established a base in Beirut. Initially, some Lebanese welcomed the Palestinians, many saw common cause with the PLO's fight against Israel. However, the Lebanese state's conservative power base, particularly its Maronite leadership, perceived the PLO's leftist factions as an existential threat to the fragile confessional system that ensured their political hegemony. The fact that Lebanon's politically and economically disenfranchised – Shia, Druze, and leftists – found common cause with the PLO only exacerbated the tension.⁸⁵

As the PLO established a para-state within Lebanon, Israeli recrimination increasingly put Lebanese civilians in the crosshairs, and solidarity with the PLO decreased. In the same period, the Arab states recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, filling the PLO's bank accounts with Arab donations. These funds translated into vital services for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and beyond, but also into corruption and a gradual transformation of the organization's revolutionaries into bureaucrats.⁸⁶

The 1973 Yom Kippur War was an affront to Nixon's celebrated policy of détente in the Middle East. The surprise attack led by Egypt and Syria drove Israel to embrace the conservative and neoconservative Americans opposed to détente.⁸⁷ From this moment, a critical strand of Israeli convergence with the American right emerged. The protégés of the nascent neoconservative movement saw common cause with Israel in their steadfast opposition to any

⁸³ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 67-69.

⁸⁴ Noam Kochavi, "Joining the Conservative Brotherhood: Israel, President Nixon, and the Political Consolidation of the 'Special Relationship,' 1969-73," *Cold War History* 8, 4 (2008): 452, 459-464.

⁸⁵ Khalidi, *Under Siege*, 20-24.

⁸⁶ Khalidi, *Under Siege*, 29-33.

⁸⁷ Kochavi "Joining the Conservative Brotherhood," 468.

concessions by Israel. Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, Elliott Abrams, and Frank Gaffney, among others, formed an entourage around Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson. Many of these figures resurfaced with the presidency of George W. Bush decades later, where their devotion to Israel rivaled their predilection to see new post-USSR enemies looming in the Middle East.⁸⁸

Maintaining that a leading role in the Middle East was critical to balance Soviet power, Washington positioned itself as the only viable broker of peace between Israel and its neighbors. National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was key figure in this process.⁸⁹ Unlike the prevailing Cold War paradigm, Kissinger believed that an unbiased approach toward the Arab-Israeli conflict was a fruitless strategy. Instead, Kissinger preferred impressing upon the Arabs the futility of alliance with the Soviets by amplifying American support to Israel. Kissinger believed that a strong Israel would compel a regional pivot toward Washington.⁹⁰

Kissinger conflated the PLO’s nationalism with the Soviet specter. As Paul Chamberlin notes, from its inception, the PLO actively cultivated relationships with leftist movements from Hanoi and Beijing to Havana and Algiers, casting the *fidā’īyīn*, or Palestinian guerillas, as anti-colonial liberation fighters. Through relationships with other revolutionaries globally, the PLO received military training and arms, and prominence in international forums like the Conference of Non-Aligned States.⁹¹ As Osamah Khalil notes, Kissinger’s fears of a “radical crescent” from Lebanon to Iraq under the sway of the PLO and Moscow led him to impose solutions that emulated “previous apocalyptic Cold War scenarios from the “bandwagon theory” to the “domino theory.”⁹² Despite his attempts to isolate the PLO, Kissinger was unable to prevent first the Arab League and then the UN from recognizing the PLO as the ‘sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people’ in 1974.⁹³

Pragmatism for Naught

⁸⁸ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Boston: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2010), 9-11.

⁸⁹ Kissinger headed the revitalized National Security Council before becoming Secretary of State under President Nixon, a role he retained into the Ford Administration after Nixon’s resignation. Quandt, *Peace Process*, 65-173.

⁹⁰ Kochavi, “Joining the Conservative Brotherhood,” 467.

⁹¹ Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.); Paul Thomas Chamberlin, “The Struggle Against Oppression Everywhere: The Global Politics of Palestinian Liberation,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, 7 (2011): 26.

⁹² Khalil, “The Radical Crescent,” 497; 513-4.

⁹³ Khalil, “Pax Americana,” 12.

Despite these international gestures toward the PLO, the key question in the aftermath of the 1973 war was whether or not the PLO would have a place in a lasting peace settlement between Israel and the Arabs to be orchestrated by the competing superpowers. This post-1973 moment was key to fracturing the Palestinian national movement. As Osamah Khalil has shown, certain factions within the PLO – namely Fatah – had already begun to shift their tactics away from the call to liberate all of historic Palestine. In what they considered a pragmatic move, these leaders pursued relations with the US, understanding American pressure on Israel as the determining factor in a peace agreement that respected the Palestinians. However, their purpose was also to maintain hegemony over the nationalist movement, and the shift in tactics mirrored tightening of the PLO decision-making structure around Arafat. In covert and public forums, Arafat broke with the PLO doctrine of ‘revolution until victory’ to hint at a willingness to accept a Palestinian entity in the West Bank and Gaza. American diplomatic interlocutors understood this pragmatism as conditioned on the possibility of personal privileges for the PLO leadership.⁹⁴

However, Arafat’s attempts at cozying up to Washington were insufficient to win the PLO a seat at the short-lived December 1973 Geneva Conference. Reorienting the conflict in significant ways, the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 coincided with Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy to negotiate an Israeli-Egyptian disengagement in the Sinai. These two events proved fateful to the Palestinian cause: in Lebanon, the PLO was quickly drawn into the civil war, allying with the leftist Lebanese National Movement. At the diplomatic level, Kissinger’s tactic acted on the Cold War lens, attempting to wrest the Arab-Israeli conflict from the international arena and anchor it solidly in the American court by dismantling the Arab bloc.⁹⁵

In keeping with the Kissinger’s strategy of ensuring Israel’s strength as a tool to push the Arabs to compromise, one outcome of Kissinger’s efforts was a secret Memorandum of Understanding with Israel. The Memorandum forbade any negotiations between Washington and the PLO before the Palestinians recognized Israel and accepted UNSCR-242. It also ensured Washington would “seek to prevent efforts by others to bring about consideration of proposals

⁹⁴ Osamah Khalil, “Oslo’s Roots: Kissinger, the PLO, and the Peace Process,” Al Shabaka 3 September 2013 <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/oslos-roots-kissinger-plo-and-peace-process/>

⁹⁵ The full complexity of the Lebanese Civil War is beyond the scope of this study. A number of valuable analyses can be found in the following sources: Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies: the Palestinian Experience in Lebanon* (London: Zed Books, 1994.)

Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: People, Power, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.)

which it and Israel agree are detrimental to the interest of Israel.”⁹⁶ As such it solidified Washington’s preferential relationship with Israel, even as Arafat continued to convey the PLO’s willingness to make significant concessions before being invited to the negotiating table.⁹⁷

As the PLO’s revolutionary vision eroded from within, it also faced narrowing prospects due to external factors. Critically, the formal strengthening of the Israeli-American relationship occurred alongside a watershed moment in Israel’s domestic political history. In 1977, the right seized the majority in the Israeli parliament, called the Knesset, under the leadership of Menachem Begin and the Likud party he co-founded. Called the *mahapah*, or “upheaval,” Begin’s election upended the Labor movement’s driving role in Israeli politics since the early days of Zionist colonialism. The Likud issues from the teachings of Ze’ev Jabotinsky and his revisionist ideology, which hold that force is both inevitable and necessary to carry out the Zionist project from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. Revisionism staunchly rejects the principle of division of the land with its indigenous Arab population.⁹⁸

Though not originally or uniformly religious, the neo-revisionist movement that Begin ushered to power provided an opening for groups like Gush Emunim, the “bloc of the believers,” who saw the 1967 war as divine intervention in the redemption of the Land of Israel.⁹⁹ Gush Emunim had rushed to establish small settlements in the West Bank following the Six Day War, while the Israeli political and security establishment pondered how to leverage the occupied territories in negotiations.¹⁰⁰ With Begin’s election, however, the paradigm around the West Bank and Gaza Strip changed overnight, giving Zionism’s most maximalist land claims unprecedented voice in the mainstream. Begin’s ascent similarly marked a dramatic departure in Israeli foreign policy as it manifested the most radical version of Israeli nationalism once in power. His tenure saw Israel act defiantly and unilaterally on the sense of religious prophesy and nationalist exceptionalism that the revisionist worldview sanctioned.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Khalil, “The Radical Crescent,” 504.

⁹⁷ Khalil, “Oslo’s Roots.”

⁹⁸ Ilan Peleg and Paul Scham, “Israeli Neo-Revisionism and American Neoconservatism: The Unexpected Parallels,” *Middle East Journal* 61, 1 (2007): 74.

⁹⁹ Raffaella A. Del Sarto, *Israel Under Siege: The Politics of Insecurity and the Rise of the Israeli Neo-Revisionist Right* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 163.

¹⁰⁰ Following Israel’s seizure in the 1967 Six Day War, Yigal Allon proposed a plan for a negotiated end of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian population of the West Bank that would retain Jerusalem as well as a corridor between Hebron and the length of the Jordan River. The purpose was to preserve a Jewish majority in a democratic state while responding to pressures from the inchoate settler movement. Elisha Efrat, *Geography and Politics in Israel Since 1967* (London: F. Cass, 1988), 50-52.

¹⁰¹ In addition to the settlement policy and the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, Israel’s 1980 annexation and declaration of Jerusalem as its ‘eternal, undivided’ capital and 1981 bombing of Iraq Osirak nuclear facility are clear indicators of this policy.

The Camp David Accords that began in 1978 between Egypt and Israel solidified the American role as the dominant broker in the Arab-Israeli conflict and definitively conscripted the largest Arab state to Washington's sphere of influence. Seth Anziska has critically intervened in the history of this period to deconstruct the accepted reading of President Jimmy Carter's unprecedented calls for "genuine Palestinian self-determination" as sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. Anziska instead reveals how the Camp David Accords were a turning point in the disenfranchisement of the Palestinians, as the call for Palestinian autonomy "became the ground upon which Israel cemented indefinite control over the Occupied Territories without any expiry date or formal annexation."¹⁰² Despite his rhetoric, Carter and his negotiating team internalized the Israeli push for individual rights for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while rejecting Palestinians' collective political or territorial rights. Begin's government promised Palestinians cultural and economic rights while ensuring full Israeli control over the territory, even as his hawkish Minister of Agriculture, Ariel Sharon, promised to settle one million Jews in 'Judea and Samaria.' In their personal lobbying of the Americans, Begin and Sharon appealed to liberal values and presented Arabs and Jews as peacefully coexisting in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Following the conclusion of the Israeli-Egyptian accords in 1979, talks continued about the Palestinian issue under the guidance of two American administrations. First, with the support of the Carter's pro-Israel envoy to the Middle East, Robert Strauss, the Israeli team embedded its hegemonic vision of Palestinian autonomy into the negotiations, explicitly precluding statehood or sovereignty while maintaining the exclusion of the PLO from any discussions. "The PLO is beyond the pale of human civilization," the Israeli negotiator argued to Strauss, stressing the security risk that Israel saw in any Palestinian sovereignty. While Strauss accepted Israeli security claims at face value, the American team also increasingly excluded Egypt from talks about the Palestinians. In the process, Washington accepted Israel's treatment of the Palestinians as a subsidiary issue, making space for Israel's strategy of ambiguity, or "a decision not to decide," that secured Israeli control while forestalling any political agreement.¹⁰³

At the same time, Sharon designed and rapidly implemented a "skeleton" of Jewish settlements in the West Bank that, in his words, "does not allow and will not enable in the future

¹⁰² Seth Anziska, "Autonomy as State Prevention: The Palestinian Question after Camp David, 1979-1982," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 8, 2 (2017): 288-289.

¹⁰³ Avi Raz quoted in Anziska, "Autonomy as State Prevention," 288.

any territorial compromise.”¹⁰⁴ Carter faced scorn at home for his rhetorical support for Palestinian self-determination, in concert with the foreign policy missteps that derailed his 1980 reelection campaign. However, in substance, the Camp David Accords laid the groundwork for the perpetual ‘management’ of the Palestinians.

The Special Relationship and the PLO Cornered

The American-Israeli ‘special relationship’ took on new proportions under President Ronald Reagan. Driven by his Christian faith and tendency toward a rigid anti-Soviet worldview that cast Israel as a cultural sibling to the US, Reagan elevated support of Israel to a moral pillar of the American presidency. Reagan breathed new life into the Cold War notion that Israel was a strategic asset against the Soviet Union, a “bastion of liberal democracy” against the radicalism – both Islamic and Kremlin-directed – he perceived throughout the Middle East.¹⁰⁵ In November 1981, the US and Israel established a Memorandum of Understanding for mutual national security consultation and cooperation.¹⁰⁶

Reagan and his Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, viewed the Palestinians as Soviet pawns who did not deserve self-determination, and acceded to Begin’s view that any form of PLO-led Palestinian rule would quickly become a Soviet satellite harboring radicals throughout the region. At a final meeting of the Camp David process in January 1982, Haig did not object as Sharon detailed his settlement plans for the West Bank, and Begin was pleased Carter’s departure meant the end of his unequivocal condemnation of the settlements. “Mr. Ronald Reagan put an end to that debate. He said the settlements are not illegal,” Begin gloated as Haig listened silently. Indeed, the five thousand Israeli settlers living in the West Bank when Begin took office grew to over 80,000 within a decade.¹⁰⁷

In keeping with the Reagan Administration’s support for Israel, Washington gave Israel a green light for its June 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, aiming to eliminate the PLO presence there. The invasion also ended the negotiations for Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The subsequent devastation of Beirut resulted in American intervention to broker an

¹⁰⁴ Anziska, “Autonomy as State Prevention,” 296; 298. Seth Anziska, *Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 162-164.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Thomas, *American Policy Toward Israel: The Power and Limits of Beliefs* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 56-59; Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 164.

¹⁰⁶ United States Congressional Research Service – Jim Zanotti, “Israel: Background and U.S. Relations” (Washington, DC: October 2016), 19.

¹⁰⁷ Anziska, “Autonomy as State Prevention,” 300; Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 167.

end to Israel's siege of Beirut led by Sharon, by then Minister of Defense. Like Israel, the Americans called for the full expulsion of the PLO.¹⁰⁸

The US failed to uphold guarantees of safety for the refugee population who remained in Lebanon. American envoy Philip Habib negotiated the ceasefire that called for Israel to withdraw from Beirut and the PLO to evacuate to Tunis.¹⁰⁹ Massacres ensued in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps by right-wing Christian Lebanese militias armed and trained by Israel. The American failure to protect the Palestinians was prominent in the minds of the militant groups that emerged in conflict with the French and American troops who waded into the Lebanese conflict as supposed peacekeepers after the Israeli withdrawal. According to Rashid Khalidi, attacks on US military and diplomatic installations in 1983 and 1984, and the rise of Hezbollah in the same period, were the direct result of the real and perceived collusion between Israel and the United States.¹¹⁰ As Paul Chamberlin notes, the Reagan Administration seemed mystified by the perception that the US Marines stationed in Beirut were not neutral, despite the reality the US had thrown its troops into supporting the Lebanese government in the civil war. Instead, Reagan blamed the bombing of the Marines' barracks in October 1983 on Lebanese religious fanaticism.¹¹¹

Anti-American resentments emanated from tangible policy developments that solidified Washington's allegiance to Israel. In 1983, Israel and the US established a Joint Political Military Group and joint air and sea exercises commenced. The same year, the US began constructing facilities to stockpile military equipment in Israel. In 1986, the Reagan Administration signed a secret agreement for Israeli participation in the Strategic Defense Initiative ('Star Wars') to co-develop ballistic missile defense systems. The next year, Washington designated Israel as a "major non-NATO ally."¹¹²

Toward a Negotiated Peace: The Palestinians Divided

¹⁰⁸ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 523.

¹⁰⁹ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for a State*, 537.

¹¹⁰ Rashid Khalidi, "The United States Was Responsible for the 1982 Massacre of Palestinians in Beirut," *The Nation*, 14 September 2017. For a history of the Lebanese Shia Islamist socio-political and militant organization Hezbollah, or Party of God, and its origins during the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, see: Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.)

¹¹¹ Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Cold War's Killing Fields: Rethinking the Long Peace* (New York: Harper, 2018), 721-722 (eBook).

¹¹² Zanotti, "Israel," 19.

Against the insurmountable military challenge a US-backed Israel constituted, the PLO's successive military defeats catalyzed debate within the Palestinian national movement in the 1970s and 1980s.¹¹³ Already after the Yom Kippur War, the PLO's centrist, majority party – Yasser Arafat's Fatah – made its priority the establishment of a state in just the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This shift was particularly aimed at staking a political claim at the December 1973 Geneva Conference that the US and USSR convened to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹¹⁴ Partially in hopes of being included in future negotiations sponsored by the US, in 1974 the Fatah-dominated Palestine National Council (PNC), the parliament-in-exile, convened and reoriented its strategy. The PNC resolved to use diplomatic tools to create a “national authority” in any part of Palestine liberated by armed struggle.¹¹⁵

The move toward political compromise provoked the dissent of factions that became known as the PLO's rejectionists. In return for inching toward recognition of Israel, the PLO was granted intermittent, indirect contact with Washington, attempting to maneuver its political weight in the Arab world to ensure its inclusion in a regional peace agreement.¹¹⁶ However, the comprehensive peace negotiations that began with the December 1973 Geneva Conference soon collapsed, overtaken by Kissinger's bilateral talks that dismantled the Arab states' consensus of support for the Palestinians.¹¹⁷ Israel's entrenched refusal to deal with the PLO, and the strong support this position found in the US Congress, made flexibility that Kissinger expressed privately impossible. The talks between President Reagan's Secretary of State, George Schultz, and the PLO that commenced during this period did not shake Washington's “opposition to Palestinian self-determination and the creation of an independent Palestinian state.”¹¹⁸ By 1987, the PLO was, as Yezid Sayigh puts, it “completely adrift, its presence almost completely overlooked” by regional and international diplomatic actors.¹¹⁹

The outbreak of non-violent mass protest in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the first *intifada*, or shaking-off, in 1987 made a new PLO vision critical. In November 1988, the PNC

¹¹³ Khalidi, *Under Siege*, 2.

¹¹⁴ James R. Stocker, “A Historical Inevitability? Kissinger and US Contacts with the Palestinians (1973-76).” *The International History Review* 39, 2 (2016): 322.

¹¹⁵ Husam Mohamad, “The PLO's Search for a Peace Strategy,” *Peace Review* 2 (1998): 173-177.

¹¹⁶ Mohamad, “The PLO's Search for a Peace Strategy,” 173-177.

¹¹⁷ The 1975 Sinai II Agreement in particular sidelined the Palestinians, through Egyptian president Anwar Sadat later claimed that Kissinger had promised to contact Arafat and consider the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. Helena Cobban, “The Dilemma of the PLO,” *MERIP Reports* 119 (1983): 4-5; Stocker, “A Historical Inevitability?” 329-330.

¹¹⁸ Khalidi, *Iron Cage*, 156.

¹¹⁹ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for a State*, 547.

issued its Declaration of Independence, calling for an independent state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem to exist alongside Israel.¹²⁰ In December 1988, Arafat addressed the UN General Assembly and renounced terrorism. The shift away from the original aim of eliminating the state of Israel seemed to many a fair compromise. The ostensible dawn of progress toward a two-state solution marked the initiation of dialogue between the US and PLO. However, as Rashid Khalidi notes, Palestinian relinquishment of the right to armed struggle and recognition of Israel failed to tilt the balance of power towards the Palestinians. Expelled to Tunis and distanced from its base geographically, the PLO struggled to reassert its political relevance in the early 1990s. Its fortunes diminished further as it lost international support due to its support for Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War (1990-1991) and with the demise of the Soviet Union.¹²¹

At the same time as its fortunes waned diplomatically, the PLO also feared competition from within the Palestinian national movement. The PLO's dwindling coffers undermined its influence over the First Intifada. Decision-making by the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) occurred at the grassroots in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, elevating a new generation of local activists who operated autonomously of the PLO in Tunis. In financial crisis, PLO support to the West Bank and Gaza Strip dropped from \$120 million in 1989 to only \$45 million in 1992, leading to cuts in welfare, health, and education services at the height of the uprising. At the same time, up to 400,000 Palestinians were expelled from Kuwait after Arafat supported Saddam Hussein's invasion of that state, depriving the Occupied Territories of remittances that were a pillar of the economy.¹²²

While America's actions in the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s were subservient to its anxieties as a superpower, the end of the Cold War brought new opportunities for Washington to impose a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹²³ The only remaining superpower, Washington's strategic aim was to link its Middle Eastern allies in a single, free market-oriented economic space.¹²⁴ Israel at peace with its neighbors would be a central partner.

¹²⁰ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for a State*, 548.

¹²¹ In 1969 the Charter was revised to demand the creation of a secular democratic state in Palestine. Rashid Khalidi, *Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), 154-156.

¹²² Sergio Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas: Dilemmas of a Conventional Army* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 98. The PLO supported Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's attempt to tie his withdrawal from Kuwait with an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip; Taghdisi-Rad, "The Economic Strategies of Occupation," 20.

¹²³ Khalil, "The Radical Crescent," 513-514.

¹²⁴ Chamberlin, *The Cold War's Killing Fields*, 559-562.

Tensions in the US-Israeli relationship played a key role in creating American pressure for negotiations. With its decisive victory in the Gulf War and absent the fog of the Cold War, the White House was increasingly aware that Israel's strategic military value had been exaggerated. Further, the ascent of revisionist Zionism once more under Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of the Likud Party – holding that the West Bank and Gaza were central to biblical Greater Israel – made evident that Israel would not be restrained by unchecked military might. President George H.W. Bush repeatedly clashed with Shamir over his staunch support of the settlement enterprise in the West Bank and Gaza, which Bush recognized “emptied UNSCR-242 of meaning.”¹²⁵ The US dragged Israel to Madrid for a landmark conference on regional peace in October 1991, despite strong opposition from Shamir.¹²⁶ However, the PLO's exclusion from the talks and Israel's intransigence soon led to stalemate.

Finally, 1987 saw the birth of Hamas, an Islamic alternative to the PLO's secular resistance. The Islamic resistance's rise during the costly uprising made coordination with the more moderate PLO appealing to centrist Israelis. In addition to the images of Palestinians under attack plastered across the international media, the intifada also negatively impacted the Israeli economy, until then significantly reliant on Palestinian labor. The need for a new approach to the Palestinians inspired younger Israeli Labor politicians who saw common cause with Washington's economic vision. In Israel, a period of market neo-liberalization after economic crisis in the mid-1980s made normalized relations with the Arab states increasingly appealing for trade and foreign investment purposes. These Labor figures spearheaded secretive talks with PLO contacts in Norway.¹²⁷

In 1992, Yitzhak Rabin, a Labor candidate, campaigned on a platform of peace.¹²⁸ After decades of Israeli rejection of the PLO's legitimacy and decrying its actions as terrorism, Rabin's government endorsed the secret channel of communications established in Norway.¹²⁹ Isolated

¹²⁵ Thomas, *American Policy Toward Israel*, 140-46.

¹²⁶ Adam Hanieh, *Lineages of Revolt: Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013), 84-86. Continued confrontations with Shamir's government over plans to settle arriving Soviet immigrants led President Bush to deny \$10 billion to Israel in loan guarantees in May 1992. Thomas, *American Policy Toward Israel*, 140.

¹²⁷ Joel Beinin, “The Oslo Process and the Limits of Pax Americana,” in Joel Beinin and Rebecca L. Stein, eds. *The Struggle for Sovereignty: Palestine and Israel 1993-2005* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 24.

¹²⁸ Taghdisi-Rad, “The Economic Strategies of Occupation,” 19-20.

¹²⁹ Hanieh, *Lineages of Revolt*, 86. Beinin and Stein, *The Struggle for Sovereignty*, 6. For a discussion of shifting American views of the occupation during the First Intifada, see: Naseer Aruri, “The United States and Palestine: Reagan's Legacy to Bush,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, 3 (1989): 11-14.

and with its political hegemony under threat from the grassroots intifada leadership, the PLO in Tunis returned to the West Bank and Gaza through the terms of the 1993 Oslo Accords.¹³⁰

The ‘Peace Process’: Key Aspects of the Oslo Accords

It is beyond the scope of this study to analyze the entire Oslo process. However, a brief sketch of the Oslo Accords’ recurrent problems that led to the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000 is critical for understanding the subsequent US interventions that constitute the focus of this thesis. As Rashid Khalidi notes, the PLO negotiators at Oslo were remarkably unqualified and deliberately ignored the advice of the Palestinian negotiators who worked on the Madrid talks, preserving their own political primacy at the expense of expertise. With the assistance of the Norwegian hosts, the Israeli delegation “out-negotiated the PLO team at every turn,” formally enshrining the existing power imbalance between the occupied Palestinians and the Israeli occupiers.¹³¹

The result was the Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles, signed amidst great fanfare on the White House lawn in September 1993. Though the Clinton Administration was at first taken aback by the secret track, an American team of negotiators soon entered the process, resuming the mantle of chief broker.¹³² The subsequent agreements mandated a gradual, conditional transfer of authority to the newly-established Palestinian Authority (PA) during the interim period, as well as a series of economic and security protocols. These arrangements reinforced the existing balance of power in the conflict, most importantly Israel’s overwhelming military superiority in the region and its unshakeable alliance with the United States, the last remaining global superpower.¹³³ As Edward Said wrote at the time, “Israel has conceded nothing [...] except, blandly, the existence of ‘the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.’”¹³⁴

Permanent resolution of the complex ‘final status’ issues – the division of Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugee question, the Jewish settlements and settlers, the borders, and security – were

¹³⁰ Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement), founded in Gaza in 1988 in response to the First Intifada, is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. For more on Hamas’s emergence, see: Khaled Hroub, *Hamas* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000.); Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.); Beinun, “The Oslo Process and the Limits of Pax Americana,” 22.

¹³¹ Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, 161.

¹³² Khalil, “Pax Americana,” 23.

¹³³ Beinun, “The Oslo Process and the Limits of Pax Americana” 22; Baruch Kimmerling, *Politicide: Ariel Sharon’s War Against the Palestinians* (London: Verso, 2003), 108.

¹³⁴ Edward Said, “The Morning After,” *London Review of Books* 15, 20 (1993).

reserved for later negotiation, and were to be unaltered during the five-year timeline set for their resolution.¹³⁵ Oslo II (28 September 1995) divided the West Bank and Gaza Strip into non-contiguous areas of differing degrees of self-rule. In Area A, or the Palestinian urban centers, the PA took security and administrative responsibility. Area B fell under PA administrative jurisdiction, but the Israeli military maintained security. Area C, over 60% of the land, fell under full Israeli control.¹³⁶ At the same time, Oslo preserved the territorial contiguity of large Israeli settlement blocs. Israeli PM Rabin applauded this move, as it ensured an Israeli role in the Palestinian territories for the foreseeable future.

In effect, the Oslo Accords transformed the occupation from an Israeli responsibility into a partnership with Palestinian consent.¹³⁷ The economic stipulations institutionalized Palestinian dependence on Israeli political will and economic control. Critically, the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations (1994) formalized the *de facto* partial integration of the two economies that had existed since 1967 without redressing any of its imbalances. The Oslo Accords mandated a customs union under Israeli regulatory control without equal market access for Palestinians.¹³⁸ Further, as Adam Hanieh argues, Oslo encouraged regional normalization while obfuscating Israel's continued colonization under the auspices of an agreement that would end in peace.

However, the prospects of Palestinian statehood quickly faded. Benjamin Netanyahu's first tenure as prime minister, from 1996 until 1999 marked a considerable acceleration of the settlement enterprise in the West Bank and Gaza. Openly hostile to the 'land for peace' formula which his government was theoretically charged with implementing, Netanyahu's rise rapidly pushed Palestinian public opinion to realize that Israel had no intention of granting Palestinians full rights or ending the occupation.¹³⁹ The incoherence of the Oslo process "meant that by the end of the 1990s the economy of the (occupied Palestinian territories) was suffering from high levels of unemployment and poverty, and there was little policy space for the PA to effect change."¹⁴⁰ Operating under constant duress, the much-lauded international aid to the

¹³⁵ Beinun and Stein, *The Struggle for Sovereignty*, 6.

¹³⁶ Kerem Navot, "Israel's Settler Agriculture as a Means of Land Takeover in the West Bank" (August 2013), 16.

¹³⁷ Peter Ezra Weinberger, *Co-opting the PLO: A Critical Reconstruction of the Oslo Accords, 1993-1995* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), 99-100.

¹³⁸ Taghdisi-Rad, "The Economic Strategies of Occupation," 22.

¹³⁹ For example, Israel consequently signed a peace agreement normalizing relations with Jordan, the Wadi Araba Treaty (July 1994.) Hanieh, *Lineages of Revolt*, 86; Ron Pundak, an architect of the Oslo process, emphasizes the structural problems that beset the negotiations; Ron Pundak, "From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong," *Survival* 43, 3 (2001): 31-34.

¹⁴⁰ Taghdisi-Rad, "The Economic Strategies of Occupation," 25.

Palestinians covered the PA's recurrent budget crisis as sustainable economic development went by the wayside.

Moreover, the Oslo process diverted the movement for Palestinian national liberation away from the popular struggle seen in the First Intifada. In the place of grassroots resistance, the Oslo Accords legitimized increasing bureaucratization under the PA, where self-rule was presented as a path to eventual sovereignty. As Khalidi notes, "as time went on, the "interim phase" laid down by the Oslo Accords, and which according to the PLO's own rhetoric was an antechamber to statehood, appeared to be more and more of a dead end."¹⁴¹

Security During the Oslo Years

The creation of a robust security sector was among the few clear mandates that the Oslo Accords prescribed for the PA. Prior to the Cairo Agreement (May 1994), which transferred the Gaza Strip and the city of Jericho to PA control, clandestine security arrangements took place. In January 1994, Mohammed Dahlan and Jibril Rajoub, representing the PLO, met in Rome with Ya'acov Peri, head of Israel's General Security Service, and Amnon Shahak, IDF Deputy Chief of staff. Dahlan, previously head of the Fatah youth movement in Gaza prior to being expelled by Israel in 1986, and Rajoub – who had spent 16 years in Israeli jail and was a commanding figure during the First Intifada – typified the sort of street credibility Israel aspired to coopt into its new enforcers.¹⁴² Security was the Palestinians' strongest bargaining chip, "the one commodity Israel craves which the Palestinians [could] withhold."¹⁴³ Rabin explicitly envisioned Oslo in such terms, stating in September 1993:

The Palestinians will be better at it than we were because they will allow no appeals to the Supreme Court and will prevent the Israeli Association of Civil Rights from criticizing the conditions there by denying it access to the area. They will rule by their own methods, freeing, and this is most important, the Israeli army soldiers from having to do what they will do.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, 158

¹⁴² Graham Usher, "The Politics of Internal Security: The Palestinian Authority's New Security Services," in George Giacaman and Dag Jørund Lønning, *After Oslo: New Realities, Old Problems*. London and Chicago, Pluto Press: 1998: 152.

¹⁴³ Jeroen Gunning, "Peace with Hamas? The Transforming Potential of Political Participation," *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-) 80, 2 *Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (2004): 243.

¹⁴⁴ Yediot Aharonot, 7 September 1993; Beinun, "The Oslo Process and the Limits of Pax Americana," 29. The international community pledged approximately \$2.4 billion to the Palestinian Authority during the interim period, though the sum was neither received in full nor efficiently spent. For further discussion of the role of foreign aid in the Oslo process, see: Ann Le More, *International Assistance to the Palestinians After Oslo: Political Guilt, Wasted Money* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008) Rex Brynen, *A Very Political Economy: Peacebuilding and Foreign Aid in the West Bank and Gaza Strip* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 2000.)

Multiple components of the returning PLO's political logic are legible in the Oslo security agreements. First, the Oslo process transformed the PLO from the face of Palestinian resistance into enactors of what Nigel Parsons terms "indigenized disciplinarity," a proxy force for containing resistance to Israeli colonization.¹⁴⁵ According to the Cairo Agreement, the PA would recruit a police force of 9,000. In 1995, Oslo II expanded this figure to 12,000 under four operational divisions – civil, public security, emergency, and intelligence. Men to fill these divisions were recruited in significant numbers from the former Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA).¹⁴⁶ However, the need to maintain the allegiance of supporters and stem growing unemployment led to bloated hiring practices: by 1995, for example, there were nine intelligence services alone operating in the West Bank and Gaza. These amorphous bodies had no clear mandate and reported directly to Arafat. In 1994, Dahlan defined his Gaza force tautologically as "an organ of the PA which deals with preventative security issues pertaining to the PA."¹⁴⁷

To an extent, the PA's authoritarian tendencies emerged from the constraints imposed through Oslo as the international community and Israel charged Arafat with preventing dissent to the Accords. Between October 1994 and February 1995, the PA undertook five mass arrest sweeps of Islamist and leftist groups opposed to the Oslo Accords. 1995 also saw the establishment of special state security courts with secret evidence, no judicial oversight, and no appeal procedures.¹⁴⁸ As Nigel Parsons notes, the security services were distinctly political: the PA was explicitly instructed to prevent hostile acts against the occupation, protecting the settlements and Israeli military installations. New bodies were created to achieve these goals, most importantly a Joint IDF-PA Security Committee and District Coordination Offices (DCO) throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At the height of their coordination, Israeli and Palestinian forces would travel together in small convoys through places like Nablus, working closely in partnership.¹⁴⁹

The highly inefficient multiplication of security services, meanwhile, served Arafat's purposes of consolidating allegiances. The forces reflected the factionalism and patrimonialism central to Arafat's reconstitution of the PLO within the PA, proliferating dependent forces

¹⁴⁵ Parsons, Nigel. "Israeli Biopolitics, Palestinian Policing: Order and Resistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories" in Laleh Khalili, *Policing and Prisons in the Middle East: Formations of Coercion* (London: Hurst, 2010), 63.

¹⁴⁶ Baruch Kimmerling, *Politicide: Ariel Sharon's War Against the Palestinians* (London: Verso, 2003), 111; Usher, "The Politics of Internal Security," 147.

¹⁴⁷ Cited in Usher, "The Politics of Internal Security," 148-149.

¹⁴⁸ Usher, "The Politics of Internal Security," p. 158.

¹⁴⁹ Parsons, "Israeli Biopolitics, Palestinian Policing," 61; Interview, PA official, Nablus: 21 August 2018.

horizontally in order to maintain his position of resource-allocator. This *zabā'iniyya*, or clientelism, pervaded the PA but was particularly acute in the security forces.¹⁵⁰ This is evident in the recruitment of former PLA fighters from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan, and Yemen.¹⁵¹ The incorporation of myriad former PLO functions into the PA cemented loyalty to Arafat's leadership, undermining opposition and staving off a major schism over Oslo. However, at an estimated cost of \$500 million a year, the PA could not fund its security apparatus through locally generated revenues.

Perhaps more importantly, as Graham Usher contends, the PA simply did not require a force of 40,000 to manage economic, social, and political development among a population of 2.6 million. Instead, a force this size would, in Usher's words, "keep the lid on a people in the absence of such development."¹⁵² The formation of the PA, and its security obligations, created an "irresolvable contradiction," as the national movement at once continued to seek sovereignty and suspended this quest indefinitely to carry out the occupation's policing function.¹⁵³

Rejectionism: The Peace Process Under Threat

While many Palestinians were both weary from the repression of the First Intifada and hopeful about the Oslo Accords, these attitudes did not extend to all political actors.¹⁵⁴ Some of the PLO's leftist fronts, and the Islamic factions that fell outside it, maintained their historical resistance to the 'land for peace' formula and denounced the Accords. Their criticisms centered on the fact the 'peace process' failed to protect Palestinians' minimal rights, and was a pro-Israel plot led by the US. Palestinian rejection of the Accords found concert with the expansionist Israeli right's claims to all of Judea and Samaria for Zionist settlement. In this context, the February 1994 massacre of Palestinian worshippers in Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque, sacred to Judaism as well, sparked a spiral of violence that devastated the fragile peace process.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Jamil Hilal, *Al-nizām al siyāsī al filastīnī ba'd Oslo: dirāsa taḥlīliyya naqḍiyya* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies 2006), 205-207.

¹⁵¹ The installation of former PLO Western Sector leaders as the heads of the PA's self-declared governates served a comparable purpose. Upon the return of the "outside" PLO upper echelons with Oslo, the more youthful, grassroots leadership in the West Bank and Gaza were variously co-opted into the PA's new security forces, or marginalized. Those co-opted were critical for the Oslo process function, often facing significant local opposition. Usher, "The Politics of Internal Security," 155.

¹⁵² The PA also employed a civil bureaucracy 27,000-strong by 1995. Usher, "The Politics of Internal Security," 157.

¹⁵³ Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 45.

¹⁵⁴ Nasser Abufarha, *The Making of a Human Bomb: An Ethnography of Palestinian Resistance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 67.

¹⁵⁵ The Ibrahimi Mosque is known as the Cave of the Patriarchs in the Jewish tradition. It is the resting place of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, and Leah. Tareq Baconi, "The Demise of Oslo and Hamas's Political Engagement," *Conflict, Security & Development* 15, 5 (2015): 506.

In response to the Hebron massacre, Hamas initiated suicide bombings inside Israel with the overt political goal of collapsing the ‘peace process.’ The Islamist resistance movement and its supporters did this by diminishing Israeli support for the negotiations and Rabin’s coalition through spectacular violence. At the same time, rejectionists of the ‘land for peace’ formula from within Israel threatened the ‘peace process’: Colin Schindler points out that the composition of these forces, primarily religious Zionist hardliners, mirrored those in Palestinian society. Rabin’s assassination in November 1995 by a religious Israeli vehemently opposed to the Oslo Accords marked the culmination of a frenzy of demonization of the Israeli ‘peace camp’ and strident incitement to delegitimize the concept of territorial compromise with the Palestinians.¹⁵⁶

At the same time, the installation of the PA aggravated tensions between the Palestinian factions within the national liberation movement. The historical origins of this friction – over the move toward a negotiated settlement of the conflict – date back to the 1970s, but they solidified with the establishment of the PA. The PA, as Tariq Dana explains, was a Fatah outfit: its ruling elite, policing cadres, sprawling public sector, and security apparatuses were drawn heavily from the party’s followers.¹⁵⁷ Those Palestinians who rejected the national autonomy project in which Fatah embedded itself bore the brunt of its internationally-endorsed policing mandate. In November 1994, for example, Fatah’s allegiance to the PA project was tested when rejectionists denounced Arafat as a traitor in Gaza City and detonated a suicide bombing in Netzarim settlement. Rabin summoned Arafat to warn him that the IDF would act against Palestinians in Gaza if the Palestinian police would not. In response, the PA security apparatus deployed against the largely-Hamas crowd outside Gaza City’s Palestine Mosque, killing thirteen demonstrators.¹⁵⁸

The fading rewards promised by the Oslo Accords also fomented dissent within Fatah, where the slow progress of negotiations brought calls for reform to overlapping PLO and party leadership. Top negotiators Ahmed Qurei, Sa’eb Erekat, and Nabil Sha’ath were key targets of these reforms. Younger activists within the party pushed, for example, for Arafat to convene the Fatah General Council, dormant since 1989, in the late 1990s. They called for renewed national dialogue in recognition of the Oslo Accords’ shortcomings, as well as greater representation for

¹⁵⁶ Schindler, *The Rise of the Israeli Right*, 338-339; John Kifner, “A Son of Israel: Rabin’s Killer – A Special Report,” *New York Times* 19 November 1995; Abufarha, *The Making of a Human Bomb*, 68.

¹⁵⁷ Tariq Dana, “The Prolonged Decay of the Palestinian National Movement,” *National Identities* (2017): 7.

¹⁵⁸ Nigel Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority: From Oslo to al-Aqsa* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 142.

the refugee population and grassroots activists sidelined by the pivot toward self-governance that the PA embodied.¹⁵⁹

The interest of the international community in sustaining the Oslo Accords even as the agreement came under increasing criticism from Palestinians heightened the factional tensions between Fatah's leadership and the rejectionists. A series of Hamas and Islamic Jihad suicide bombings in Israel in early 1996 led the Clinton Administration to initiate a systematic program of assistance to the PA for 'counterterror' purposes, to control resistance from rejectionist groups. At the same time, the attacks resulted in a massive PA crackdown led by Mohammed Dahlan's Preventive Security Forces on Hamas supporters in Gaza. Torturing and killing many of the Islamists, the 1996 Gaza crackdown ensured enmity for years to come, especially between Dahlan and Hamas's base in Gaza.¹⁶⁰

As Brynjar Lia notes, in each instance that the CIA increased its support of the PA intelligence and policing apparatus, diplomatic pressure for Palestinian concessions grew in parallel. In late 1996, as a result of the so-called *intifadat an-nafaq*, or 'tunnel intifada,' the CIA began equipping the PA's intelligence services. During that uprising, Palestinian security personnel from the National Security Forces broke rank with the 'peace process' to join protests against Israeli construction of tunnels under the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The CIA support was an inducement to the PA to control its security forces more effectively.¹⁶¹ In 1997, similarly, CIA offers of equipment upgrades to the PA intelligence services appeased outcry about Israeli settlement on Jabal Abu Ghunaym/Har Homa. After the October 1998 Wye River Agreement, the CIA stepped in with daily training courses for the West Bank intelligence apparatus. George Tenet, then director of the CIA, developed a bond with Arafat that evaded many White House officials, and President Clinton relied on Tenet to contact Arafat and assert pressure at times. Tenet was reluctant in this role, fearing it would complicate the CIA's covert intelligence mission.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Graham Usher, "Fatah's Tanzim," *Middle East Report* 217, 30 (2000): 7; Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, 132.

¹⁶⁰ Thomas W. Hill, "From the Small Zinzana to the Bigger Zinzana: Israeli Prisons, Palestinian Prisons," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 43, 3 (2016): 18.

¹⁶¹ Khaled Ibrahim Abu 'Arfa, *Al-muqāwimma al-filastīniyya lil-iḥtilāl al-isrā'īlī fī bayt al-muqadas* (Beirut: Markaz al-Zaytouneh lil-Darasāt wa al-Istishārāt, 2017), 91-92.

¹⁶² Lia, *Building Arafat's Police*, 291-292; Elaine Sciolino, "Violence Thwarts C.I.A. Director's Unusual Diplomatic Role in Middle Eastern Peacemaking," *The New York Times* 13 November 2000.

Increasing external, and specifically American, support for the PA security forces produced a number of tensions during the Oslo years. On the one hand, the fact that outside support was used to convince the PLO leadership of deeply unpopular political concessions only made the PA more reliant on outside support for coercive force. During the Second Intifada, this support would prove inadequate to control the ‘Palestinian street,’ as defense experts often described it. On the other hand, Washington’s support for the PA security apparatus during the Oslo years provoked Israeli concern that the equipment and capabilities passed to the Palestinians would be used against Israel – seen as an inevitable by those skeptical of the ‘peace process.’

At the same time, the Israeli settlement enterprise within the West Bank and Gaza accelerated, contradicting the very substance of the negotiations. Between 1992 and 2001, under the care of both Labor and Likud governments, the settler population doubled to nearly 400,000. By dividing the West Bank and Gaza into Areas A, B, and C, the Oslo Accords enabled the creation of hundreds of kilometers of Jewish-only bypass roads that fragmented Palestinian land into discontinuous enclaves. By 1998, Israel had seized over 115,000 dunums of Palestinian land, and built over 15,000 new housing units in the West Bank, in violation both of the Oslo Accords and international law.¹⁶³

These islands were all the more easily controlled by Israel’s closure policy, which cost the Palestinian economy approximately \$2.8 billion between 1993 and 1996. This figure was equivalent to nearly 70% of the Gross National Product (GNP), and double the aid funds disbursed to the Palestinians during the same period. At the same time, the Palestinian economy remained heavily dependent on Israel for access to markets and labor: 96% of Palestinian exports were destined for Israel in 1999, and unemployment levels correlated closely with the ability of day laborers to work in Israel. In the first three years of the Oslo process, Palestinian

¹⁶³ Under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, it is illegal for an occupying power to transfer its population to the occupied territory. Israel is a signatory of the Convention but refutes its applicability to the territories it occupied in 1967 (the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, West Bank, and Gaza Strip.) A whole body of literature on settlement growth during the Oslo years from anti-occupation activist organizations as well as academic publications exists. See, for example: Leila Farsakh, “Independence, Cantons, or Bantustans: Whither the Palestinian State?” *Middle East Journal* 59, 2 (2005): 230-245; LAW, *Apartheid, Bantustans, and Cantons: The ABC of the Oslo Accords* (Jerusalem, 1998.); Dean Andromidas, “Israeli ‘Peace Now’ Reveals Settlements Grew Since Oslo,” *EIR International* 27, 49 (2000): 52-54; Kerem Navot, “Israel’s Settler Agriculture as a Means of Land Takeover in the West Bank.”

unemployment rates skyrocketed from less than 7% to 25% in the West Bank and 38% in the Gaza Strip.¹⁶⁴

With American mediation, through the Wye River Agreement in 1998, the PA adopted strong language against ‘terrorism’ from rejectionists. The PA promised to uphold security cooperation with Israel regardless of political developments, but the collapse of the ‘peace process’ at Camp David in July 2000 made this fragile bargain all the more untenable.¹⁶⁵ The tensions of the PLO’s pivot to the two-state solution were too many for the PA to manage. By 2000, the reality that the Oslo Accords had failed to deliver a lasting final status agreement that met Palestinian minimal demands, coupled with the dissent of many Palestinians and Israelis to the concept of ‘land for peace,’ endangered the PA’s monopoly of force. However, the US became heavily invested in upholding the PA during the Oslo years. As this thesis makes clear, Washington was all too willing to use that investment to shape the Palestinian political reality to its preferences.

Conclusion

This thesis explores the manner in which the US and Israel together closed ranks around the Palestinian national movement in the context of the ‘global war on terror’ from 2000 until 2008. While far from exhaustive, the historical background presented here has sketched out how Washington has approached the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since its origins under the British Mandate. For decades, Cold War strategic concerns as well as growing ideological affiliation led American presidents to prioritize Israel’s military security. However, American support failed to prevent Israel from using its military prowess for its own purposes, calling into question the benefits to the US of its support for Israel. It was these apprehensions, in part, that generated the Oslo Accords and forced a US vision of compromise on the conflict that obscured the wide gaps that impeded negotiations.

Alongside the historiographical section of the introduction that preceded it, this historical background highlights the importance of American interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on its course. At each stage of American engagement to resolve the conflict, Washington’s policies

¹⁶⁴ Leila Farsakh, “The Palestinian Economy and the Oslo “Peace Process,” Trans Arab Research Institute; George Abed, *The Palestinian Economy: Studies in Development Under Prolonged Occupation*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1988.); Beinun, “The Oslo Process and the Limits of a Pax Americana,” 29; Hanieh, *Lineages of Revolt*, 87-88.

¹⁶⁵ Lia, *Building Arafat’s Police*, 296-297.

have operated as part of a broader global strategy that treats American intervention in the conflict as a tool to assert power. The Cold War shaped the first fifty years of Washington's policies toward the Israelis and Palestinians, and the collapse of the USSR cemented the role of the last remaining superpower as broker of the conflict. This thesis reveals the ways in which the counterterror priority that drove Washington after the attacks of September 11 revolutionized American policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The 'global war on terror' recast Palestine as a front to be managed by American hegemony, lending new credence to Israeli political aims and imperiling a path forward for the Palestinian national struggle.

Chapter 1: A Time of Unilateralism: The Second Intifada and the Global War on Terror

Introduction

This chapter addresses changes in American-led interventions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the Second Intifada. It examines how the onset of the ‘global war on terror’ (GWOT) following the attacks of 11 September 2001 altered US policy toward the intifada. The chapter argues that while Israeli security had long been a driving premise of the ‘peace process,’ a paradigmatic shift occurred between 2000 and 2004. The coincidence of the Palestinian uprising with the advent of the GWOT led the Bush Administration to conflate its policies in these two disparate arenas. Washington’s counter-terrorism vision was conscripted in service of Israel’s agenda. A key consequence was the US’s adoption, with new vigor, of Israel’s internal security logic, and the introduction of principles of democratization borrowed from the wider GWOT.

The chapter draws on primary source material from the Bush Administration, including speeches, policy documents, and internal communications from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Negotiations Support Unit (NSU).¹⁶⁶ It explores the frameworks imposed on the Palestinian Authority (PA) during the intifada, informed by Israeli political prerogatives. Projected as both moral imperatives and security requirements, Israel capitalized on the justifications for the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 for its own purposes, swaying the American perspective on the Palestinian uprising. This altered vision in turn had clear repercussions for the reconstruction of the destroyed PA under American and European direction as the intifada ended. In effect, this period demonstrates that Israeli unilateralism, with US backing, supplanted the premises of reciprocity and mutuality that had underpinned US strategy for engagement with the region since the Madrid Conference in 1991.

Chapter Outline

It is beyond the scope of this study to address the course of the Second Intifada in its entirety, or the full history of the GWOT in all its dimensions. This chapter instead outlines the areas of interaction between the two. Covering the period from 2000 until 2004, this chapter first traces the series of American-led efforts to mediate the intifada, beginning with the Mitchell

¹⁶⁶ In later years, the “Negotiations Affairs Department” adopted the title “Negotiations Support Unit”; in the interest of continuity, “NSU” is used throughout this study.

Report (April 2001), and culminating in the Roadmap for Middle East Peace (April 2003). The chapter then concludes by describing the full upending of Oslo norms with Bush's absorption of Israel's vision of unilateral separation in April 2004. The chapter shows how these US interventions are influenced by the GWOT, redirecting the nature of US engagement as Washington replaced the Palestinians as Israel's negotiating partner.

Ending the Intifada: US-Led Interventions

The Outbreak of the Second Intifada

Faltering permanent status negotiations under the Oslo timeline collapsed abruptly in July 2000 at Camp David.¹⁶⁷ In September 2000, the Oslo Accords' five-year interim period expired, and the Clinton Administration blamed the demise of the 'peace process' on Yasser Arafat's unwillingness to make peace.¹⁶⁸ In this climate of despair, the Second Intifada was triggered by Likud opposition leader Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to Jerusalem's Haram al-Sharif on September 28. Sharon arrived with scores of police, sparking protests that spread quickly among Palestinians enraged at his claims that the site would forever remain in Israel's hands.¹⁶⁹ By the end of September 2001, fifteen Palestinians had been killed. In less than a week as the intifada began, the IDF shot over one million bullets at unarmed Palestinians.¹⁷⁰

At the time of the intifada's outbreak, both Ehud Barak's government and American President Bill Clinton's second term were in their final months. With the intifada steadily escalating, bilateral negotiations shuddered to a halt in January 2001 at Taba, where both sides lacked any mandate in the context of elections. Whereas Arafat initially hoped to leverage Barak

¹⁶⁷ For extensive discussion of the course and collapse of Camp David, as well as the recriminations that followed, see: Akram Haniya, "The Camp David Papers," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30, 2 (2001): 75-97; Malley and Agha, "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors"; Pressman, "Visions in Collision," 5-43; Clayton E. Swisher, *The Truth about Camp David: The Untold Story about the Collapse of the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Nation Books, 2004.); Ari Shavit, "End of a Journey," *Haaretz* 13 September 2001.

¹⁶⁸ Nigel Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority: from Oslo to al-Aqsa* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 279.; Salim Tamari and Rima Hammami, "Intifādāt al aqṣā: al khalfiyya wa al tashkhīṣ," *Majallāt al dirāsāt al filāṣṭīniyya* 45 (2001): 9.

¹⁶⁹ This was part of a larger Israeli political battle that pitted Sharon, as head of the opposition, against Ehud Barak (the Labor Party Prime Minister). Barak was reviled on the Israeli right for his infamous, historic, and generous offer at Camp David to divide Jerusalem, though the accuracy of these descriptions is heavily disputed. Sharon's incitement also aimed to undercut Benjamin Netanyahu, Sharon's rival for leadership of the Likud party. The Haram al-Sharif is Islam's third holiest site and a major sticking point in negotiations due to its religious significance to Muslims as well as Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount. Suzanne Goldenberg, "Rioting as Sharon Visits Islam Holy Site," *The Guardian* 29 September 2000.

¹⁷⁰ Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, 64; Yoav Peled, "From Zionism to Capitalism: The Political Economy of the Neoliberal Warfare State in Israel," in Joel Beinin and Rebecca Stein, *The Struggle for Sovereignty: Palestine and Israel 1993-2005* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 49.

into concessions through the ongoing uprising, the PLO Chairman awoke suddenly to the threat that Sharon's continuing rise in Israeli politics would mark a hard shift to the right. In January 2001, Arafat called on Palestinian citizens of Israel to vote for Barak in order to save the possibility of future negotiations.¹⁷¹ Nonetheless, in early February, Sharon triumphed in the Israeli elections, forming a fragile coalition. The Palestinian public's longstanding enmity toward Sharon is noteworthy, given his active aggression toward Palestinian aspirations ranging from his role in routing the PLO from Beirut in 1982 to his avid support of the settler movement.¹⁷²

During the intifada, Arafat became cornered between irreconcilable pressures. Israel and the international community demanded that the PA crack down on militant groups, both those that theoretically accepted Arafat's authority, and others that rejected the PA's legitimacy. Yet Israel repeatedly attacked the very PA structures that carried out this suppression. For decades, Arafat had struggled to generate a consensus on partition of historic Palestine, distancing the PLO from its original goals and popular opinion in swathes of Palestinian society. The intifada exposed the reality that the 'land for peace' exchange had fully convinced neither the Israeli nor Palestinian publics, who held little faith in the Oslo Accords resolving the conflict.¹⁷³ As a result, Arafat proved unable to monopolize force and fulfill Israel's security demands.

The Mitchell Report

In light of ongoing Palestinian attacks and Israeli reprisals, President Clinton commissioned a fact-finding committee of American, Turkish, Norwegian, and European Union representatives about the Second Intifada. The commission travelled twice to Israel and Palestine in early 2001 and constituted the first significant American-led intervention to end the violence. Former Democratic senator George Mitchell headed the effort.¹⁷⁴

Clinton's vision at the outbreak of the intifada was clear: Washington prioritized a return to the Oslo framework of bilateral negotiations to resolve the unfolding crisis. In a parting bid, Clinton compelled the Mitchell mission "to end the current violence so [we] can begin again to

¹⁷¹ Yezid Sayigh, "The Anatomy of a Revolt," *Survival* 43, 3 (2001): 50.

¹⁷² Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, 228; Kimmerling's *Politicide* documents the history of this hostility.

¹⁷³ Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority* 273; Tamari and Hammami, "Intifādāt al aqṣā: al khalfiyya wa al tashkhīṣ," 10-11.

¹⁷⁴ The Mitchell team complemented the failed October 2000 Sharm al-Sheikh Summit, at which Israeli and Palestinian leadership convened to reduce tensions and resume security coordination. 30 April 2001. "Mitchell Report: Sharm el Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee Report."; 29 December 2000. Annex A-1: General Situation (PLO): 2.

resume our efforts towards peace.”¹⁷⁵ Clinton was unequivocal, calling for a “pathway back to negotiations” to reach a permanent solution based on UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338 in order to eliminate the “underlying roots” of the violence.¹⁷⁶

The Palestinian leadership welcomed the Mitchell team’s efforts. Under hostile scrutiny from all sides, the PLO vowed to accept the future report’s contents.¹⁷⁷ PLO spokesman Yasser Abed Rabbo accompanied his colleague Ghaith al-Omari to meet with Yossi Beilin and Ron Pundak, representing the Israeli Labor Party. Minutes from their encounter show that Rabbo hoped that Mitchell’s team would produce “a report by the US president with his full weight behind it.”¹⁷⁸ His optimism in his dealings with the Mitchell team hinted at the degree of trust the Palestinian leadership felt among for Clinton’s commitment to the Oslo process.

The so-called “Mitchell Report,” issued in April 2001, offered a strikingly balanced view of the deteriorating situation after the collapse of Camp David. Most importantly, it prescribed a combination of parallel security and political measures to end the violence. In fact, the Report contradicted the media storm and previous statements from the Clinton administration that pointed to Arafat’s intransigence as the cause of Camp David’s failure. Rather, the Report eschewed placing blame for the intifada’s outbreak in either camp. The team noted the lack of evidence to definitively conclude that Sharon’s Haram al-Sharif visit triggered the protests, or that the PA had planned the subsequent uprising.¹⁷⁹

In order to reopen the political process, the report called both on the Palestinians to cease violence, and Israelis to end the use of lethal force against protesters, noting that neither side had made “consistent effort” in these regards.¹⁸⁰ The Mitchell Report concurred with the assessments circulated by the PLO at the time, which noted the escalation of the conflict in November 2000. This period also saw Israel mobilize its assassination policy, using remote pinpoint operations to target militants. Fatah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and Hamas promised revenge for their activists’ deaths, multiplying the violence.¹⁸¹ These practices, though coupled with a decrease in

¹⁷⁵ 17 October 2000. Annex B-1: Sharm el Sheikh Understanding (PLO):1.

¹⁷⁶ 17 October 2000. Annex B-1: Sharm el Sheikh Understanding (PLO):2.

¹⁷⁷ Rabbo represented the Palestinian Democratic Union, a leftist party within the PLO. He later participated in authoring the Geneva Initiative with several Israeli civil society actors; November 2000 Meeting Minutes: Yasser Abed Rabbo and Yossi Beilin (PLO): 3.

¹⁷⁸ November 2000. Meeting Minutes: Yasser Abed Rabbo and Yossi Beilin (PLO): 3.

¹⁷⁹ Hillel Frisch, “Debating Palestinian Strategy in the al-Aqsa Intifada,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, 2 (2003): 64.

¹⁸⁰ “Mitchell Report,” 8.

¹⁸¹ 29 December 2000. Annex A-1: General Situation (PLO): 1.

large-scale protests, led to higher fatalities and an overall militarization of the conflict in a way that broke with the experience of the previous intifada.¹⁸²

Mitchell and his team gave unique weight to the notion that Palestinian political grievances were the cause of the violence.¹⁸³ The team's approach placed the hostilities within the context of frustration at the failures of Oslo, and the Palestinian perception that Israel was manipulating events simply to expand and consolidate the occupation. Mu'in Rabbani summarized the Israeli negotiating style in the following way: "Israel first refuses to implement its own commitments, seeks and obtains their dilution in a new agreement, subsequently engages in systematic prevarication, and finally demands additional negotiations, leading to yet a further diluted agreement."¹⁸⁴ This pattern was not lost on the Palestinian population, who were deeply aware of their rights under international law. In a rare admission of the depth of Palestinian cynicism about the Oslo 'interim' period, the Mitchell Report included these voices as well as the comments of the Israeli anti-occupation organization B'Tselem.¹⁸⁵

The Report also paid attention to the pernicious impact of Jewish settlements. In an internal memo, the NSU praised the Report as it "rightly recognized Israel's on-going colonization of the Occupied Territories as the primary source of instability in the region."¹⁸⁶ This daily affront to prospects of Palestinian sovereignty and to the legitimacy of the Oslo Accords harshly affected the PA's credibility as the negotiations faltered in the late 1990s.¹⁸⁷ At the same time, as Yezid Sayigh points out, the PLO's old guard failed to appreciate the settlements' role in instigating both intifadas; the returnees from Tunis were removed from the daily humiliations that inspired public support for the uprisings.¹⁸⁸ However, settlers' daily assaults on Palestinians were well documented by the NSU, particularly as they heightened during the intifada. Settlers set fire to olive groves near Salfit, unilaterally closed the road from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea to Palestinian traffic, and burnt Palestinian farmland. Daily, they

¹⁸² 29 December 2000. Annex A-1: General Situation (PLO): 1-2; Beshara Doumani, "Scenes from Daily Life: The View from Nablus," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, 1 (2004): 43-46.

¹⁸³ Lori Allen, "Determining Emotions and the Burden of Proof in Investigative Commissions to Palestine," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59, 2 (2017): 411.

¹⁸⁴ Rabbani quoted in Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, 253.

¹⁸⁵ Mitchell Report, 15; 25-28.

¹⁸⁶ 7 October 2001. NSU: Strategy Memo on Proposing a U.S. Policy Towards Ending the Current Crisis and Concluding Permanent Status Negotiations (PLO): 2.

¹⁸⁷ By April 2003, Sharon had permitted the establishment of over one hundred "outpost" settlements. Beinun, "The Oslo Process and the Limits of a Pax Americana," 29; Hanieh, *Lineages of Revolt*, 87-88.

¹⁸⁸ Sayigh, "Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt," 48.

attacked villages with bulldozers and weapons, and established new outposts composed of caravans on hilltops.¹⁸⁹

More importantly, the Report criticized the official Israeli characterization of the uprising as “an armed conflict short of war,” a newly-invented classification enabled the IDF to ignore rules of warfare. For instance, because of this interpretation, Israeli forces suspended normally mandated IDF investigations into Palestinian deaths in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at the hands of an IDF soldier. Similarly, the Report questioned the disproportionate force used against protesters, quoting the IDF’s Ethical Code to highlight Israeli abuses. Israel adopted a legal model described as a ‘war of terror,’ which allowed Palestinian bystander deaths to be categorized as ‘collateral damage.’ At the same time, Israel justified its actions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as law enforcement. In criticizing these practices, the Mitchell Report contrasted sharply with later US interventions that fell after the US’s own ‘war on terror’ began.¹⁹⁰

The disjuncture between the PLO upper echelons and the situation on the ground was also apparent in Arafat’s misplaced reaction to the Mitchell Report. Rather than capitalizing on the document’s condemnation of the settlement enterprise, Arafat emphasized the need for international observers, one of the Report’s recommendations.¹⁹¹ This provoked a long-winded discussion among the NSU about the possibility of a UN peacekeeping mission in Palestine, which was eventually abandoned.¹⁹² While the idea of an international force appealed, the NSU was cognizant of the shortcomings of a UN mission. Observers would have only defensive capacities, inevitably disappointing civilians who would expect protection from Israeli aggression. Given Israel’s longstanding perception that the UN was biased toward the Palestinians, Arafat’s push to internationalize the conflict contributed to the fact that the Mitchell Report’s recommendations were never realized.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ July 2001. NSU: Israeli Violations of Tenet Ceasefire Plan (PLO): 1-2.

¹⁹⁰ Mitchell Report, 15; Amos Barshad, “Extraordinary Measures,” *The Intercept* 7 October 2018.

¹⁹¹ February 2001. NSU Mitchell Proposal – International Peace Maintenance Mission (PLO):1-7.

¹⁹² November 2000. *Intishār dawli fawri: mulakhaṣ tanfidī* (PLO): 1. (Immediate International Deployment: Executive Summary) This report by Dr. Jarat Chopra (Director-General, International Transition Assistance Group) outlined roles for observers and peacekeeping troops to deploy in buffer zones. The report’s distance from the political reality – in which Israel had the US’s backing in its resounding opposition to a non-Israeli security presence in the oPt – is evident when it states that the PLO would “decide on whether” the intervention force would be a UN or non-UN mission (2).

June 2001. UN Tasks: Military Planning Service and Force Generation Service (PLO): 3; Sayigh, “The Anatomy of a Revolt,” 52.

¹⁹³ 10 December 2000. NSU Draft Memo re: International Intervention (PLO): 3; November 2000. *Intishār dawli fawri: mulakhaṣ tanfidī* (PLO): 2; Frisch, “Debating Palestinian Strategy in the al-Aqsa Intifada,” 65.

It is also important to note that despite its relative balance, the Report lacked a timetable for Israeli withdrawals from areas reoccupied since the intifada. However, it detailed precise measures for the PA to take to stop violence. Indeed, as Lori Allen contends, Mitchell's team was most affected by what she describes as the burden of emotional proof evidenced in encounters with ordinary Palestinians. The reams of legalistic arguments proffered in the official Palestinian submissions to the investigation were less impactful. Mitchell's team instead privileged the "authentic" opinions of non-professional, non-politician civilians.¹⁹⁴

The Report's attention to emotion in the place of legal arguments paradoxically delegitimized Palestinian responses to Israeli assassinations and incursions. Israeli actions included the extensive employment of snipers, helicopter gunships, drones, and remote-detonated bombs under an increasingly permissive rubric of strategic necessity.¹⁹⁵ The Report's loose recommendations enabled Israel to define the length of the ceasefire that should precede any political measures, without decreasing IDF presence in areas under PA jurisdiction. Consequently, the Report characterized any Palestinian violence as an obstacle to renewed negotiations.¹⁹⁶

The incoming Bush administration's interest in the Report was ambiguous. In May 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell sent his assistant, William Burns, to secure an unconditional ceasefire. However, in an early indication of the move away from an active role in promoting a return to the Oslo process, Burns lacked a strong backing from Washington. His trip coincided with warnings that Bush did not seek to involve the US politically by formulating a peace plan, presaging the deference to Israeli initiatives that would characterize the coming years.¹⁹⁷

The Tenet Work Plan and a Changing American Vision

In June 2001, President Bush responded to flaring violence between Israelis and Palestinians by sending Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director George Tenet to the region

¹⁹⁴ Allen, "Determining Emotions and the Burden of Proof in Investigative Commissions to Palestine," 410.

¹⁹⁵ During the years 2000-2004, approximately half of assassination fatalities were Hamas operatives, 31% from Fatah-affiliated organizations, 17% from Islamic Jihad, and the rest from various other groups. Simon Frankel Pratt, "Anyone Who Hurts Us": How the Logic of Israel's "Assassination Policy" Developed During the Aqsa Intifada," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25 (2013): 224-225; 228. As Gunning notes, Israel does not distinguish between the Islamist rejectionist groups' political and military wings, seeing both the resistance work and welfare services as instrumental to a 'terrorist infrastructure.' Gunning, "Peace with Hamas?" 234.

¹⁹⁶ Camille Mansour, "The Impact of 11 September on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 31, 2 (2002): 7-8.

¹⁹⁷ Kurtzer, *Peace Puzzle*, 159-60.

to broker a ceasefire. In the previous decade, the CIA and Tenet himself had become involved in the ‘peace process’ by ensuring security coordination between the PA and the IDF. At Wye River in October 1998 and Sharm al-Sheikh in September 1999, the CIA chief was an active mediator. He attempted to reconcile Israeli security demands that precluded concessions mandated by Oslo, and the Palestinians’ ambitions for full implementation of Israel’s Oslo obligations before negotiating any further.¹⁹⁸ Thus the CIA was a familiar face on the Israeli-Palestinian scene.

Prior to the onset of the intifada, the CIA’s activities were part of a larger political process. Instead, Tenet’s intervention in June 2001 marked a shift in US policy toward a purely security-based approach, foreshadowing changes to come with the GWOT. Tenet sought to stabilize the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through direct security coordination between American, Israeli, and PA personnel.¹⁹⁹ By exclusively focusing on security, Tenet’s mission broke with Clinton’s bilateral approach, which key figures in Bush’s inner circle saw as diplomatic overreach. As Maria Ryan argues, the younger Bush saw tilting the balance more openly in Israel’s favor as necessary to right the previous decade’s pressure on America’s ally. This perspective saw the chaos of the intifada and the collapse of the negotiations, as well as Rabin’s assassination, as the outcome of Clinton’s political miscalculations.²⁰⁰

New ideologies animated the Bush administration, shaping the changes in strategy between the Mitchell and Tenet initiatives. Bush, a born-again Christian, was influenced by a powerful evangelical lobby, and he was widely acknowledged to have a minimal understanding of Middle Eastern political realities.²⁰¹ He was also guided by the neoconservative (neocon) wing of the Republican Party, championed by ideologues like Paul Wolfowitz, Elliott Abrams, Richard Perle, William Kristol, and Robert Kagan. The neoconservative worldview is based on a

¹⁹⁸ Parsons, “Israeli Biopolitics, Palestinian Policing,” 61-62. For more on the clash between Israeli preference for incremental approach and the insecurity this inspired in their Palestinian counterparts during the late 1990s, see Malley and Agha, “Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors.”

¹⁹⁹ The CIA had played role in ensuring effective security mechanisms between the Israelis and PA during the Oslo years. Most recently, the agency had codified implementation of the trilateral security model between the CIA, Shin Bet, and PA mukhabarat (General Intelligence Service) through the Wye River Memorandum in October 1998. Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, 225.

²⁰⁰ 23 December 2000. Meeting Minutes: Saeb Erekat and President Clinton. Already in February 2001, the White House had renounced the so-called “Clinton Parameters,” a final statement by the departing President 23 December 2000 to his Israeli and Palestinian negotiating partners, led by Shlomo Ben Ami and Gilad Sher, and Saeb Erekat and Mohammad Dahlan respectively. Clinton articulated his vision of necessary compromises and principles to resolve the conflict, addressing each of the ‘final status’ issues. The Parameters were put forth as a benchmark for future negotiations summarizing the US’s position but had no enforceable weight. Kurtzer, *The Peace Puzzle*, p. 157

²⁰¹ Julian Borger, “How Born-Again George Became a Man on a Mission,” *The Guardian* 7 October 2005.

belief in American exceptionalism and a Wilsonian drive to spread ‘democracy,’ individualism, and free market capitalism, with military power at the center of foreign policy. The neocons concurred with evangelical Christian thinking in their antipathy toward Israeli territorial concessions.²⁰² Motivated in part by personal religious and ethnic ties, the neocons put Israeli interests – particularly those of the Israeli right – on par with American priorities.²⁰³

The neocons were simultaneously obsessed by regime change in Iraq. After President George H.W. Bush’s failure to end Saddam Hussein’s rule during the Gulf War, his removal from power became an animating cause for the neocons working in Washington think tanks during the Clinton Administration. Two key documents from this period demonstrate how the neocon vision of Israel was closely tied to the aim of regime change in Iraq. The first, a policy paper called “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm” was prepared for Benjamin Netanyahu as he became Prime Minister of Israel in June 1996 by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies. Its recommendations subverted typical neoconservative preferences for American unilateralism, urging Netanyahu to forge a joint US-Israeli campaign to unseat Saddam Hussein. The paper’s signatories included key players in the second Bush Administration like Elliott Abrams, Donald Rumsfeld, John Bolton, Richard Perle, and Paul Wolfowitz.²⁰⁴ In their January 1998 “Open Letter to President Clinton – Remove Saddam Hussein From Power,” through the Project for the New American Century, many of these same actors pressured Clinton for regime change in Iraq. They framed potential Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Hussein’s rule more generally, as a hazard to “the safety of American troops in the region, our friends and allies like Israel, [...] and a significant portion of the world’s supply of oil.”²⁰⁵

²⁰² Briefly put, so-called Christian Zionists believe that a Jewish return to the biblical land of Israel must precede the Second Coming of Christ; they thus firmly support a Jewish state and demonize Palestinian claims. In this crusading dynamic, the demise of the Soviet Union left an ideological vacuum; the specter of global communism was replaced with a new existential battle against ‘Islamofascism’ Islam at large after 9/11. Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*, 182-183; Nick Ritchie and Paul Rogers, *The Political Road to War with Iraq: Bush, 9/11 and the Drive to Overthrow Saddam* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 137-140; Gary J. Dorrien, *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 168.

²⁰³ Key pro-Israel lobbying bodies were replete with neoconservatives while in the opposition under Clinton; for instance, the board of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA) included Dick Cheney, John Bolton, and Douglas Feith, among others, all of whom would play pivotal roles in the Bush administrations. See: Maria Ryan, *Neoconservatism and the New American Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 32-36; Kathleen Christison and Bill Christison, “A Rose by any Other Name: The Bush Administration’s Dual Loyalties,” *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 22, 2 (2003): 14-18; Jason Vest, “The Men from JINSA and CSP,” *The Nation* 15 August 2002.

²⁰⁴ John Davis, “The Ideology of War: The Neoconservatives and the Hijacking of US Policy in Iraq” in John Davis, *Presidential Policies and the Road to the Second Iraq War: From Forty-One to Forty-Three* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 44-45.

²⁰⁵ Project for the New American Century. “An Open Letter to President Clinton: Remove Saddam from Power” in Micah L Sifry and Christopher Cerf (eds.), *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions* (New York: Touchstone, 2003) 199-201.

However, the neocon commitment to Israel was also colored by a post-Cold War vision that prioritized maintaining American credibility through upholding unflinching support for existing alliances.²⁰⁶ The president's inner cadre of neocons had been openly disdainful of the Oslo process and prospects of Palestinian statehood for years. Their views aligned closely with Israel's Likud party's aims to separate from the Palestinians while retaining so-called Judea and Samaria. From the Madrid Conference in 1991 on, these voices complained that the Palestinians would never truly accept an end-of-conflict agreement. Israelis opposed to the 'peace process' believed that the talks gave an impression of mutuality and forced an Israeli retreat, which the Arab world would use as a springboard to destroy Israel.²⁰⁷

The rise of the neocons in the Bush administration in the Department of Defense and executive branch compounded their historic friction with the State Department. Secretary of State Powell represented a more traditional orientation toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, seeking to continue the previous decades' negotiations attempts that centered American leadership. However, Bush's own predisposition not to engage, combined with the strong influence of his coterie of neocon advisors, created significant openings for the neocons.²⁰⁸ The Tenet plan, which deferred to Israeli security concerns rather than pushing for mutual responsibility, marked the rise of neoconservative pressure within the White House.

The Tenet Work Plan (TWP) forbade Israel from targeting the PA's *ra'is* (executive) structures and security, intelligence, and police organizations. Tenet also condemned proactive Israeli security actions. Instead, he ordered the PA to act immediately and provide quantifiable evidence of efforts to apprehend terrorists. The TWP prescribed a *tahdi'a*, or cooling-off period, of eight weeks before political confidence building measures such as settlement freezes and prisoner releases would precede resumed negotiations.²⁰⁹

The key difference between the Mitchell and Tenet documents lay in the sequencing of events they prescribed. Where the Mitchell Report called for simultaneity, albeit unenforceable, the TWP introduced three stages to be implemented. First, the "present stage" called for "differential continuation of the easing of restrictions," namely checkpoints and internal closures

²⁰⁶ Kumar, Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire, 177, 182-183; Kurtzer, The Peace Puzzle, 155.

²⁰⁷ The neocons' critiques, as articulated by Feith and Gaffney among others, "stuck to a narrative of intransigent Arab rejectionism" that viewed the occupation as either non-existent or immaterial to the real cause of violence: the Arab world's "principled rejection of Zionism." Ryan, Neoconservatism and the New American Century, 34.

²⁰⁸ Kurtzer, The Peace Puzzle, 156; Miller, The Too Much Promised Land, 321; Davis, "The Ideology of War," 50.

²⁰⁹ 20 June 2001. Work Plan for the Restoration of the Situation on the Ground as it Existed Prior to the Crisis (PLO): 2.

within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, these changes were dependent on Israeli discretion about the security situation. Stage A then called for the “full lifting of internal closures in the West Bank,” opening roads and removing checkpoints installed since September 2000, and evacuating of IDF positions in area A.²¹⁰ Israel would then permit increased movement of goods and individuals within and between the West Bank and Gaza Strip through a partial opening of a safe passage between the two, and limited usage of the Gaza airport and checkpoints.²¹¹ Stage B envisioned a full IDF redeployment, complete removal of closures and new checkpoints, and the resumption of Joint Patrols between Israeli and PA security forces. On the civilian side, Stage B called for expanded entry of foreign goods, vehicles to Israel, and increased family visitation rights.²¹² Tenet’s intervention thus critically distanced immediate security measures from their political context and placed the full onus for change on the Palestinian leadership. The four-week timeframe made moving from the “present stage” to Stages A and B contingent on a continuous ceasefire and the PA’s successful arrest of militants.²¹³

The PA’s internal security communications in the summer of 2001 show clearly that PA members understood how Israeli actions guaranteed the PA’s inability to fulfill its obligations. Colonel Abu Osama, of the Preventative Security Forces, urged his colleagues on July 6 to compile records of Israeli violations of the TWP to refute how Israel argued to Washington that the PA was shirking its responsibilities. Abu Osama complained that Israel had unilaterally interpreted the TWP as “requiring 100% results.” “We’ll know it when we see it,” the Americans said.²¹⁴

In implementing the TWP, the US adopted the Israeli interpretation of the document. Where the TWP officially called for seven cumulative days of quiet before the *tahdi’a* began, the US ascribed to the Israeli call for seven consecutive days. In an internal memo, Abu Osama lamented that this development had occurred despite acknowledgment from an array of US diplomats that Israel consistently violated the TWP, and conducted incursions into Area A on the basis of reports of Palestinian aggression that the US knew were unsubstantiated. The US was

²¹⁰ 20 June 2001. Work Plan for the Restoration of the Situation on the Ground as it Existed Prior to the Crisis (PLO): 2-3.

²¹¹ 20 June 2001. Work Plan for the Restoration of the Situation on the Ground as it Existed Prior to the Crisis (PLO): 3.

²¹² 20 June 2001. Work Plan for the Restoration of the Situation on the Ground as it Existed Prior to the Crisis (PLO): 4-5.

²¹³ 20 June 2001. Work Plan for the Restoration of the Situation on the Ground as it Existed Prior to the Crisis (PLO): 1.

²¹⁴ 6 July 2001. NSU Memo: Palestinian and Israeli Compliance with Ceasefire (PLO): 1

also aware that Israel refused to coordinate security with the PA, preventing the PA from capturing militants who fled Area A.²¹⁵

In essence, the TWP decontextualized the uprising's violence from its political causes, as Tenet urged the PA to clamp down on protests without addressing Palestinian grievances. On June 17, Israeli and PA security forces conducted their first joint patrol in months, in line with the Tenet plan. However, the same day, the IDF breached the ceasefire on six different occasions, set fire to approximately 100 olive trees in Salfit, and arrested Lieutenant Mahmoud Al-Barghouti and Sergeant Yussef Al-Rimawi, both members of the Military Liaison (with Israel) at a Ramallah checkpoint.²¹⁶ The enduring fragility of the security coordination in spite of the TWP is thus apparent. The plan placed Israeli perspectives at the fore and paved the way for the nearly impossible position in which the Palestinian leadership was to find itself in the ensuing months.

Trouble Within: The Peace Camp and the PA

The Mitchell Report and Tenet Work Plan reordered American priorities to privilege prospects of ending the uprising on Israeli terms, rather than returning to the pre-Camp David status quo. However, both interventions implied red lines toward which Israel had inched dangerously close before stopping short.²¹⁷ Still clinging to the notion of a return to negotiations with Arafat at the Palestinian helm, the Bush Administration and its European allies could not stomach Arafat's complete overthrow. This view extended to center-left elements within Sharon's shaky governing coalition, which included the Labor party that had overseen the Oslo Accords. Anxiety at the potential collapse of the PA made promises of eventual political negotiation expedient in order to compel the PA to meet Israeli security coordination demands: upholding a lasting ceasefire.²¹⁸

However, the rift between rhetoric and actions soon shifted toward the Israeli security-first framework. The monitoring mechanisms that set out to marry the Mitchell Report's recommendations to the TWP in the summer of 2001, in the form of a "Political Implementation Workplan [sic]," failed to cohere. As a result, political measures were increasingly sidelined by

²¹⁵ 6 July 2001. NSU Memo: re Israeli non-Compliance with Ceasefire (PLO): 2.

²¹⁶ July 2001. NSU: Israeli Violations of Tenet Ceasefire Plan (PLO): 5.

²¹⁷ Mansour, "The Impact of 11 September on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," 7.

²¹⁸ Mansour, "The Impact of 11 September on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," 12.

the security approach the Tenet plan offered. In the Workplan two-tier approach, a Political Steering Committee operated alongside the security coordination efforts. However, the Political Steering Committee failed to generate the political will necessary to enact all aspects of the Mitchell Report.²¹⁹ For example, the subcommittee on settlements had an ambiguous mandate with no enforcement mechanisms. Efforts to enforce a settlement freeze faltered and were overshadowed by the security team.²²⁰ The NSU was transparent in its condemnation of the TWP, which Palestinian leadership realized functioned to “divorce security provisions from political provisions, thereby delaying political provisions endlessly.”²²¹ Some advances were made, for instance allowing greater internationalization of the monitors, but their ability to actually curtail political incitement or the violence it inspired remained limited.²²²

While the international community’s efforts fell short, the will to implement both security and political efforts were challenged from within as well. Opposing the pro-Oslo members of the Israeli government were the more hawkish elements of Sharon’s cabinet, as well as the Prime Minister himself and an increasingly bellicose Israeli public. Moreover, Sharon succeeded in convincing Bush that Israel would not negotiate under fire. In the context of escalating militant attacks, the Israeli public reverted to its worst assumptions about Palestinian intentions.²²³

These fears beset the Zionist center-left (in particular, the Labor party mainstream) and even avowed peaceniks. The minutes of a meeting between Yasser Abed Rabbo and Ghaith al-Omari and Israeli negotiators Yossi Beilin and Ron Pundak reveals the distrustful distance between the Israeli and Palestinian political leadership. The Palestinians complained of an Israeli media blackout that prevented any nuance in Israeli coverage of the unrest. The Israelis explained that their ‘peace camp’ was “grasping for answers” to dispel the view that “Barak went a long way in his proposals, and that the Palestinians started the Intifada.”²²⁴ Beilin described the intifada as a heart attack that had irreversibly harmed the potential for a permanent agreement, already endangered by the collapse of Camp David.²²⁵ Discouraged by what they saw as Arafat’s

²¹⁹ November 2001. Mitchell Report Monitoring Mechanism (PLO): 2-3.

²²⁰ November 2001. Mitchell Report Monitoring Mechanism (PLO): 4.

²²¹ 28 August 2001. NSU Memo re: Summary of Ideas on Proposal for Arafat-Peres Meeting (PLO): 2.

²²² 25 July 2001. NSU Memo: “Internationalizing” the US Monitoring Mechanism (PLO).

²²³ Nahum Barea and Ariel Kastner, *Back Channel: Bush, Sharon, and the Uses of Unilateralism* (Washington, DC: Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, 2006), 16-17.

²²⁴ November 2000. Meeting Minutes: Yasser Abed Rabbo and Yossi Beilin (PLO): 1-2.

²²⁵ November 2000. Meeting Minutes: Yasser Abed Rabbo and Yossi Beilin (PLO): 1. Beilin and Pundak were prominent in the younger wing of the Labor Party and were involved in the Oslo secret talks from their onset.

inability to accept Barak's offer, Israelis increasingly believed "there is no distinction between the good guys and the bad guys on the Palestinian side."²²⁶

The disillusionment of the Israeli 'peace camp' blurred the distinction between the Israeli center-left and the ascendant nationalist right. Sharon stood at the forefront of the Israeli right's backlash against the 'peace process,' and one of his key talking points was that the power given to the PA through the Oslo Accords was a strategic blunder. Sharon's instinct was to roll back the Oslo framework and dismantle the PA.²²⁷ In the November meeting, Beilin himself articulated what would soon become Sharon's primary tactic, for decades inimical to the right's 'Greater Israel' ambitions: unilateral separation.²²⁸ As an architect of the Oslo Accords, Beilin's distrust was a powerful signal of the demise of the 'peace camp' as the Israeli mainstream and media reacted in horror to the Palestinian violence, detached from its political causes.²²⁹

Following the Mitchell Plan, the PA consistently condemned suicide attacks and violence against civilians, and refrained from referring to Israel as the enemy. The NSU's internal communications during this period demonstrate the Palestinians' will to refocus on the political nature of the spiraling conflict, as opposed to the Israeli preference for security management.²³⁰ However, the political ramifications of Palestinian violence in Israel were enormous and instantaneous. Attacks gave fodder to the Israeli right's persistent vilification of the Oslo Accords. The fact that Ehud Barak – whose claim of a historic offer to the Palestinians at Camp David was accepted at face value – was joined by the security elite as he pushed the narrative that Arafat had personally orchestrated the uprising only fueled popular disillusionment with a return to negotiations or a Palestinian explanation of the violence.²³¹

At the same time as it tried to push for a return to a political horizon alongside the security agenda, the PA contradictorily tried to maintain popular legitimacy by reiterating its

²²⁶ November 2000. Meeting Minutes: Yasser Abed Rabbo and Yossi Beilin (PLO): 1.

²²⁷ Sayigh, "Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt," 53.

²²⁸ November 2000. Meeting Minutes: Yasser Abed Rabbo and Yossi Beilin (PLO): 2.

²²⁹ Del Sarto, *Israel Under Siege*, 173; Claude Berrebi and Esteban F. Klor, "On Terrorism and Electoral Outcomes: Theory and Evidence from the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, 6 (2006): 920-922; Yoram Meital, *Peace in Tatters: Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006.); Daniel Dor, *Intifada Hits the Headlines: How the Israeli Press Misreported the Outbreak of the Second Palestinian Uprising* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.)

²³⁰ A July 2001 proposal by US Envoy David Satterfield (Principal Deputy Secretary for Near East Affairs, Department of State) purported to ensure the fulfillment of all aspects of the Mitchell Report. While promising swift implementation by skipping the seven days of quiet that Sharon wanted, the Satterfield monitoring proposal lacked experts to manage the settlement freeze and Palestinian revenue transfer presented as political confidence building measures. Similarly, while it left open the possibility of involving additional international partners, such as the EU, this was dependent on US officials as the monitoring mission was firmly in American hands. 24 July 2001. NSU Memo re: Satterfield Monitoring Proposal— additional details (PLO): 1-3

²³¹ Del Sarto, *Israel Under Siege*, 174-176.

right to legitimate defense in Area A.²³² A nervous incoherence pervaded the PA's outlook on the intifada, able neither to end nor to heighten the revolt, and political commentators offered a number of explanations. As Joel Beinin and Rebecca Stein argue, a more overt policy of controlling the uprising would have been political suicide for Arafat. Had the PA successfully repressed the intifada to the level of absolute calm Israel demanded, its role as a proxy police force would have been entirely evident.²³³ Jamil Hilal explains that Arafat's strategy was to attempt to harness the organic political momentum from the intifada to extract better terms of negotiation than were available at Camp David.²³⁴ Salim Tamari and Rima Hammami characterize Arafat's tactic as "playing a waiting game," hoping to capitalize on the intifada's uncertainty.²³⁵

Yezid Sayigh, in contrast, attributes the intifada's escalations to the gaping absence of any strategy on Arafat's part, and in key moments to his significant misjudgments. This assessment refutes the Israeli view that Arafat had for years planned to initiate military hostilities against Israel in order to negate the outcome of permanent status negotiations.²³⁶ The accusation of premeditation absolved Israel of responsibility for the escalating violence, while ignoring the dilemma in which Arafat found himself. After the Sharon's election and Bush's inauguration, Arafat's energies went in large part toward saving his personal position as the chief Palestinian interlocutor, cognizant of his diminished stature as Clinton and Barak left the scene. He attempted to escape this predicament by allowing the continuation of crisis conditions, diffusing culpability. Sayigh argues that Arafat's tactic of *al-hurub ilā al-amām* ("escape forwards") was characteristic of his leadership.²³⁷

Hoping to force a return to negotiations and imbue PA enforcement of Israeli demands with some popular credibility, in late July 2001 the PA appealed to European supporters at the G-8 Summit. There, Ahmed Qurei reached an agreement with EU representative Javier Solana

²³² Without a clear timeframe to end the incursions, assassinations, and restrictions on movement that collectively punished Palestinians people, the PA was faced with only suicidal options. It could act decisively by openly engaging in a civil war, ensuring complete annihilation by the IDF, or hopelessly try to direct civil disobedience in concert with the existing armed revolt. Consequently, the PA adopted what Camille Mansour calls an "overseer" role characterized by vague and inconsistent leadership that allowed it some cover of ambiguity. Mansour, "The Impact of 11 September on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," 11.

²³³ Beinin and Stein, *The Struggle for Sovereignty*, 9.

²³⁴ Hilal, "Intifādāt al aqṣā: al ādāf al mubāshira wa muqawwimāt al istmrār," 17-19.

²³⁵ Tamari and Hammami, "Intifādāt al aqṣā: al khalfiyya wa al tashkhīs," 19.

²³⁶ Sayigh, "Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt," 48.

²³⁷ A similar tactic can be seen in Arafat's conduct during the War of the Camps in Lebanon and during the First Intifada. By balancing conflicting interests without taking decisive control in both situations, Arafat leveraged his position vis-à-vis the Syrian-oriented PLO factions and the grassroots of PLO activists respectively. Sayigh, "Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt," 48.

that counterbalanced shifting US language to an extent. A record of their meeting states that, “the decision of the Mitchell Committee *in its entirety* is the only way forward to break the deadlock and to stop the escalation and resume the political process.”²³⁸ In August, Solana was on the ground trying to broker a ceasefire in the Beit Jala - Gilo area, where Palestinian mortar fire continued against settler homes. This escalation occurred after the most prominent Israeli extrajudicial killing yet, the assassination of Mustafa Zibri, Secretary-General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).²³⁹

Despite endorsement by key players in the international community, the Mitchell Report was still unfulfilled in August 2001, four months after its publication. At that time, PLO insiders in internal memos pointed to the “deteriorating political situation symbolized by the unwillingness of even traditional Palestinian allies to condemn, in any meaningful way, Israel’s assassination policy, use of warplanes and helicopters, and incursions into Areas A.”²⁴⁰ At the same time, the PA faced a crisis of domestic legitimacy and the emergence of highly militarized activism outside its direct control, appearing more and more as armed battle rather than popular protest. Combined, these factors severely limited the PA’s ability to protect Palestinians.²⁴¹

It is in this atmosphere of escalating violence, as the PA struggled to maintain its position with prospects of political negotiations fading, that the terrorist attacks of September 11th occurred. The Israeli discourse, which presented the violence of the intifada as the orchestrated result of Arafat’s rejection of peace and Palestinian refusal to compromise, was already the privileged narrative in the Western media.²⁴² This view would only gain traction after the attacks in New York and Washington.

The Post-9/11 Era

In the immediate chaotic aftermath of the attacks of 11 September 2001, Sharon saw an opportunity to accomplish his longstanding aim of de-legitimizing Arafat. Equating Arafat with

²³⁸ Qurei, also known as Abu `Ala, of Fatah’s Central Committee was a key PLO old guard member and chief negotiator during the Oslo years. 30 July 2001. Ahmed Qurei notes re: Meeting with Solana at G8 (PLO): 2

²³⁹ The assassination in Al-Bireh sparked protests in Nablus, Jenin, Gaza City, and Tulkarem. “Chronology,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, 2 (2002): 171.

²⁴⁰ August 2001. Monitoring Options for Tenet Cease-Fire and Mitchell Committee Report (PLO): 3; July 2001. NSU: Israeli Violations of Tenet Ceasefire Plan (PLO): 1-20; 14 August 2001. Talking Points: Mahmoud Abbas with David Satterfield (PLO): 3; 28 August 2001. NSU Memo re: Summary of Ideas for Arafat-Peres Meeting (PLO): 1.

²⁴¹ Rashid Khalidi, “Toward a Clear Palestinian Strategy,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, 4 (2002): 7.

²⁴² Jacob Shamir and Khalil Shikaki, *Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion: The Public Imperative in the Second Intifada* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 66-73.

Osama bin Laden, Sharon repeatedly tried to package IDF actions such that the elimination of the Taliban and the elimination of the PA were equivalent.²⁴³ At the same time, “We are all Israelis now” became a rallying cry from the US media, compatible with the panicked political abstraction that “freedom itself” was somehow under attack by terrorists after 9/11. Mainstream media sources after 9/11 pressed an almost unanimous vision of the world on American audiences, one that resonated strongly with pro-Israel perspectives. The central messages of this outpouring were that Islam and Arabs are inherently prone toward terror, a reality Israel purported to face since 1948.²⁴⁴

However, in the weeks following the attacks, American officials read Sharon’s endless efforts to equate Palestinian violence with that of Al Qaeda as untimely self-promotion. It would require a number of fatal missteps to fully mainstream the Israeli demonization of the PA in Washington. As Derek Gregory posits, throughout September and October 2001, Sharon defied American demands to retreat from Area A.²⁴⁵ This aggression jeopardized American ambitions to build a multinational coalition for its invasion of Afghanistan, where the al Qaeda leadership was allegedly harbored. The White House pressured Sharon to acquiesce in order to gain Arab and Muslim states’ acceptance of the coming assault on Afghanistan.²⁴⁶

In the week following the 9/11, Sharon ignored American directives to meet with Arafat. The US encouraged this meeting to offset the image of Israeli belligerence as enjoying a *carte blanche* from Washington. Sharon refused to comply with the American request and crassly compared Bush’s attempts to garner Arab support for his ‘global war on terror’ as equivalent to Neville Chamberlain’s appeasement of Hitler. He warned the US, “Do not try to placate the Arabs at Israel’s expense. We are not Czechoslovakia.”²⁴⁷ The White House swiftly rebuked both Sharon’s cynical exploitation of the attacks, and the damage it inflicted on Washington’s

²⁴³ For a few examples of such coverage, see: Julia Angwin, “Aftermath of Terror: After the Cataclysm, Americans Grope for the Words to Describe It,” *Wall Street Journal* 3 October 2001; Adam Brodsky, “Fear Forever? That’s What We Face Unless We Aim for Total Victory,” *New York Post* 8 October 2001; Herb Keinon, “Bush Names 22 Most-Wanted: Israel Gratified that US Terrorist List ‘Widens the Net,’” *Jerusalem Post* 11 October 2001; John McCarron, “Better to Defeat Terror than to Learn to Live with It,” *Chicago Tribune* 21 September 2001; “No Exceptions for Arafat,” *New York Post* 20 November 2001; Kimmerling, *Politicide*, 204; Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 109; Barnea and Kastner, *Back Channel*, 16-17.

²⁴⁴ See, for example: “Israel’s 9/11,” *Wall Street Journal* 3 December 2001; “The Price of Terror,” *New York Post* 4 December 2001; Edward Said, “Collective Passion,” in *From Oslo to Iraq and the Roadmap* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 109; Said, “Suicidal Ignorance,” 133.

²⁴⁵ Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 109-110.

²⁴⁶ Miller, *The Too Much Promised Land*, 336.

²⁴⁷ Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 108; Barnea and Kastner, *Back Channel*, 20; “Chronology,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, 2 (2001): 176.

coalition-building efforts.²⁴⁸ At a conference on 5 October, White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischman refuted any connection between the attacks and perceived Arab or Muslim frustration with US policy in Israel and Palestine. He further insisted that the attacks had not altered US views on Middle East peace, and that US policy would remain “identical” to previous norms.²⁴⁹

These developments took place against the backdrop of Arafat’s reinvigorated efforts to control Palestinian violence. Internal PLO documents from this period suggest the Palestinian leadership was apprehensive of the raised stakes in the post-9/11 era, and understood the need to position itself alongside the US in the emerging GWOT. One PLO strategy document suggested attributing the Middle East’s “endemic instability” to Israel’s “occupation of Arab lands,” claiming that the attacks in Washington and New York “emphasized the importance of a united front directed against the sources of terrorism.”²⁵⁰ Hoping to pull the US back into a more active mediation role, an internal NSU memo from 7 October linked the attacks of 9/11 to the intifada from a different angle. The PLO argued “the current Palestinian-Israeli crisis is so destabilizing that it threatens to undermine the international community’s efforts to fight terrorism.” On this basis, the PLO urged the US to intervene for a lasting peace.²⁵¹

In the same vein, PA security forces repressed thousands protesting in Gaza City against the onset of US bombing in Afghanistan in October 2001. Secretary Powell praised the PA’s control of the demonstrations, illustrating the utility the PA still held for its American backers.²⁵² Days later, President Bush for the first time explicitly declared the US’s support for the creation of a Palestinian state respectful of Israel’s security and right to exist.²⁵³ The NSU was abuzz with prospects of a major initiative ‘peace initiative’ in mid-October. PLO envoys traveled to Europe and the US to discuss the President’s vision of a “viable” state for the Palestinians.²⁵⁴

Converging US-Israeli Tactics

²⁴⁸ Mansour, “The Impact of 11 September on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” 14.

²⁴⁹ Barnea and Kastner, *Back Channel*, 21.

²⁵⁰ 7 October 2001 NSU: Strategy Memo on Proposing a U.S. Policy Towards Ending the Current Crisis and Concluding Permanent Status Negotiations (PLO): 1.

²⁵¹ 7 October 2001 NSU: Strategy Memo on Proposing a U.S. Policy Towards Ending the Current Crisis and Concluding Permanent Status Negotiations (PLO): 1-2.

²⁵² “Chronology,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, 2 (2001): 182.

²⁵³ “Chronology,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, 2 (2001): 180.

²⁵⁴ 16 October 2001. NSU: Minutes of EU-US Trip Meeting (PLO): 1-3.

In mid-November, Powell reaffirmed the White House's commitment to stabilizing the region at a speech in Louisville. In light of a significant re-escalation of violence in the preceding weeks, Powell focused not on a large-scale peace initiative but rather pledged to send an emissary, General Anthony Zinni.²⁵⁵ Zinni's purpose was to achieve a ceasefire on the basis of the Tenet and Mitchell directives.

However, Powell's framing of the endeavor demonstrated the US's rapidly transforming understanding of the intifada. The address was titled "the United States Position on Terrorists and Peace in the Middle East," folding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into the larger GWOT.²⁵⁶ Powell firmly articulated Israel's security-first approach.²⁵⁷ In a turn of speech that neatly matched Bush's 'axis of evil' slogan that would soon flood televisions around the world, the Secretary described a "culture of hatred that can only produce a culture of violence" in Palestinian society.²⁵⁸ This characterization strikingly presaged the cultural arguments that would soon flourish as the White House justified its mission to transform the Middle East. Powell's words, and his adoption of Sharon's conflation of Palestinian resistance with international terrorism, foreshadowed the developments of the coming weeks.

As Zinni toured the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the days following Powell's speech, Israeli incursions intensified once more. On 23 November, Israel assassinated Mahmoud Abu Hanoud, a senior member of Hamas's military wing, the Izzedin al-Qassam Brigades, near Nablus. The consequences of this extrajudicial killing are emblematic of the impossible Catch-22 in which the PA found itself. In response to Hamas mortars fired against Kefar Darom (a settlement in Gaza), the IDF retaliated by destroying PA security forces and Fatah offices in multiple Gaza locations. At the same time as the IDF attacked Arafat's forces, Israel decried Arafat's inaction. Later that week Sharon again demanded seven days of quiet before activating the Tenet plan.²⁵⁹

Powell's speech cast Palestinian political violence as indistinguishable from the perpetrators of 9/11. Similarly, the US's growing silence around Israel's targeted assassination policy signaled a new threat to the Palestinian leadership with the onset of the 'global war on

²⁵⁵ 29 December 2000. Annex A-1: General Situation (PLO): 2-3. Miller, *The Too Much Promised Land*, 338-339.

²⁵⁶ Colin Powell, "United States Position on Terrorists and Peace in the Middle East," 19 November 2001 (Louisville: Remarks at the McConnell Center for Political Leadership.)

²⁵⁷ Powell, "United States Position on Terrorists and Peace in the Middle East."

²⁵⁸ Powell, "United States Position on Terrorists and Peace in the Middle East."

²⁵⁹ "Chronology," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, 3 (2002): 173.

terror' in Afghanistan. When the Second Intifada started, the Bush Administration initially condemned Israeli 'targeted killings' for their tendency to 'eliminate' untold numbers of nearby children and innocents. In the UN, complaints were frequent. Ronen Bergman notes that Sharon and his adviser, Dov Weisglass, understood the need for American support for the policy. In the summer of 2001, Weisglass negotiated an agreement with Condoleezza Rice, then US National Security Adviser, and Stephen Hadley, the President's Assistant Secretary for National Security. The agreement between Rice, Hadley, and Weisglass held that Israel would limit its settlement construction in exchange for American support for Israel's targeted assassinations. With the agreement, "there was perfect disproportion," Weisglass recalled. Attacks on Palestinian targets received scant notice from Washington, while every settlement announcement by Sharon's most right-wing supporters elicited an angry call from Rice.²⁶⁰

After 9/11, however, the US-Israeli security relationship transformed. As Bergman notes, "decades of Israel trying to explain its drastic measures to the rest of the world were suddenly made unnecessary."²⁶¹ A stream of senior international defense personnel arrived in Tel Aviv. On the basis of his close relationship with Bush, Sharon compelled the Israeli defense and intelligence institutions to share everything with the US. The Americans were specifically interested in the integration between the Israeli intelligence bodies, and how that integration allowed Israel to conduct multiple operations at once - specifically, targeted assassinations carried out remotely. For Israel, the 'global war on terror' was a radical break in its relationship with Washington. As Yuval Diskin, then deputy director of the Shin Bet, stated: "The attacks of 9/11 gave our own war absolute international legitimacy [...] We were able to completely untie the ropes that had bound us."²⁶²

Indeed, the US quickly began adopting the same tactics Israel deployed against the Palestinians in its 'global war on terror.' The complexity of the targeted assassinations - which drew upon an armada of drones, air and ground forces, and constant surveillance - showcased Israel's military innovations and did not go unnoticed in Washington.²⁶³ As the US turned to unmanned aerial warfare in the 'global war on terror,' its attempts to square these tactics with legal norms echoed Israel once more. In particular, the US replicated the Israeli argument that

²⁶⁰ Ronen Bergman, *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations*, 1263-64 (eBook).

²⁶¹ Bergman, *Rise and Kill First*, 1265-66 (eBook).

²⁶² Bergman, *Rise and Kill First*, 1267-68 (eBook.)

²⁶³ Paul Gaston Aaron, "The Idolatry of Force: How Israel Targeted Killings," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, 4 (2017): 83.

targeted assassinations were justified because they were so-called ‘ticking time bombs.’ The logic of pre-emption was used to justify both extrajudicial killings and indefinite detention and torture of Muslims within the US and abroad. The IDF’s International Law Department developed the legal concept of waging an armed conflict against a ‘non-state actor’ during the intifada, and Washington explicitly adopted its thinking in the US’s drone warfare campaigns.²⁶⁴

However, the ‘liquidations’ Israel carried out far surpassed any security logic, even pre-emption. Israeli investment in targeted assassination technology and operational planning meant that they took on a life of their own. Sharon was an excited supporter of the policy, and his government’s confidence meant that the names of those to be killed were sometimes published in advance for the Israeli public, where they received avid backing. In fact, the targeted assassinations directly prevented the political measures that could have protected Israelis: time and time again, Israel collapsed ceasefires by assassinating the political leadership of the Palestinian factions, at times even scuttling diplomatic efforts.²⁶⁵ However, the growing tactical convergence between the US and Israel afforded Washington little ground to criticize the Israeli practices it emulated.

Arafat’s Crumbling Authority

As internal PA data suggests, Arafat’s ability to control the situation was quickly deteriorating due to the repeated targeting of PA security infrastructure by Israel. In an internal report dated 30 November 2001, the PA’s Ministry of the Interior documented this destruction, listing reconstruction of the police headquarters in Ramallah, the police and officer training facility in Jericho, and the police Directorates of Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqiliya, and Hebron as urgent needs projected to cost \$4.6 million.²⁶⁶ Meanwhile, the PA headquarters in Gaza City were unusable, as were directorate facilities in Rafah, Khan Younes, and Gaza’s Mid Camps area. The PA’s security forces lacked basic equipment like bullets and radios; the Ministry of the Interior asked for 5000 AK-47s, 3000 pistols, and 2.5 million bullets.²⁶⁷ This catalogue

²⁶⁴ Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror*, 168-169; Oliver Kessler and Wouter Werner, “Extrajudicial Killing as Risk Management,” *Security Dialogue* 39, 2-3 (2008): 289-291; Barshad, “Extraordinary Measures.”

²⁶⁵ Prominent targets included the quadriplegic, wheelchair bound spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who was killed with nine bystanders, and Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, his successor, as well as the General Secretary of the PFLP, Abu Ali Mustapha.

Eyal Weizman, “Thanatotactics,” in Adi Ophir, Sari Hanafi, and Michal Givoni (eds.) *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (Boston: MIT Press/Zone Books, 2009), 335-337.

²⁶⁶ 30 November 2001. *As-Sulṭa al waṭāniyya al filasṭīniyya (Wizārat al dākhliyya)* (PLO): 1-3.

²⁶⁷ 30 November 2001. *As-Sulṭa al waṭāniyya al filasṭīniyya (Wizārat al dākhliyya)* (PLO): 6-7.

underlines the paradoxical situation in which the PA found itself by late 2001, at once unable to end the intifada and to prevent Israeli onslaught against Palestinian civilians and militants.

The expanding political violence in December 2001 compounded the PA's predicament while decisively tipping the American position on the conflict towards the Israeli demonization of Arafat's regime. In the first week of December, a series of Hamas suicide attacks in Jerusalem and Haifa occurred in retaliation for the assassination of commander Abu Hanoud. Sharon declared he could not count on Arafat to crack down on the militants, and Bush no longer demanded restraint from the Israeli PM as he visited Washington. Upon his return to Israel, Sharon's security cabinet labeled the PA "an entity that supports terrorism" and classified the Fatah *tanzim* and Force 17 (under Arafat's supervision) as terrorist groups for the first time.²⁶⁸ By targeting these central Fatah forces, Israel emphasized that the Oslo paradigm had come to an end. While it had been politically expedient to expand Arafat's security apparatus under Oslo, the outbreak of the intifada and hostilities from these forces toward Israel meant the bargain was no more.

Given their significant role in the intifada, it is worth briefly detailing the origins and motivations of the *tanzim*. During the Oslo years, the *tanzim* emerged as a populist force within the Fatah rank and file, encompassing members of the PA security forces, with members drawn from First Intifada activists in Fatah strongholds. *Tanzim* members were central to the PLO's "inside" leadership – located in the West Bank and Gaza Strip – who formed the basis of youth, and armed organizations in the first uprising, and were coopted into the PA after 1993.²⁶⁹

The *tanzim* exposed the limits of Arafat's power, as a key military and political base that should have been under PA became the leading force behind the intifada. Indeed, the *tanzim* constituted Fatah's most "loyal – and yet potentially most seditious – opposition."²⁷⁰ The PA had "ruthlessly absorbed Israel's internal security logic" in creating its security forces, and the Second Intifada made clear that Oslo's failure to deliver on its lofty promises endangered the very bases of even Fatah's most stalwart support.²⁷¹ During the intifada, Marwan Barghouti, who Israel claimed answered to Arafat, loosely directed the *tanzim*. A former Fatah student leader, Barghouti rose to prominence in the vacuum created by Arafat's ineffectuality in the

²⁶⁸ Parsons, "Israeli Biopolitics, Palestinian Policing," 60; "Chronology" (2002): 177.

²⁶⁹ Membership in Fatah's youth movement, Shabiba, and the PA's General Intelligence Service overlapped significantly. Usher, "Fatah's Tanzim," 7; Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, 261.

²⁷⁰ Usher, "Fatah's Tanzim," 6.

²⁷¹ Usher, "The Politics of Internal Security," 159.

negotiations.²⁷² Barghouti had long favored Fatah reforms to unseat Arafat's inner circle of pro-American, pro-Oslo forces, and better represent the younger activist generation.²⁷³

Barghouti's voice contrasted sharply with official PA statements during the uprising. He rejected the goals of a return to negotiations and renewed joint security patrols with the IDF. This clearly undermined Arafat's ability to quell the uprising, which was further exacerbated by the *tanzim*'s decentralized nature. The formation of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (AMB), partially in response to Fatah activists' sense that Hamas had commandeered militant resistance to the occupation, further complicated direction of the resistance. The Brigades were a new adaptation, a "wholly local, fully decentralized, and militant response that drew on the overtly religious themes of the second intifada."²⁷⁴ The AMB emerged in Balata and Jenin refugee camps and members were often refugees. They were frustrated by the PLO's longstanding marginalization of refugee demands and the minimal benefits from membership in Fatah and the PASF, and thus Arafat's patronage.²⁷⁵ Most prominent in the northern West Bank, the AMB exemplified the acute fragmentation of Palestinian political authority during the intifada.²⁷⁶

This fragmentation was reinforced by the militants' diffuse political message. In December 2000, an internal NSU report noted the confusion between the different actors. Centrist organizations limited their resistance to within the 1967 lines. However, from the PLO's perspective at least, "extremist Palestinian organizations clearly want to bring the confrontation to Israel proper," claiming responsibility for attacks in Jerusalem and Hadera in late 2000. The NSU feared the Israeli reprisals these actions caused, referring to them as acts of "terror" intended to "derail the political process."²⁷⁷ After April 2001, the Fatah-affiliated groups attempted to match their rhetoric to their militancy, concentrating attacks on Israeli soldiers and settlers. However, they stopped short of condemning of Hamas and Islamic Jihad bombings on civilians within the Green Line, offsetting any validity that might have been gained in Israeli or

²⁷² Banished by Israel for his role in the First Intifada, Barghouti returned to the oPt in 1994, whereupon he became Fatah Secretary General in the West Bank. In the late 1990s, growing popular Palestinian dissatisfaction with the direction of the 'peace process' and concern within Fatah about the decision to abandon armed struggle in light of Oslo's failures led to increasing *tanzim* autonomy. Toufic Haddad, "The Tantheem Wild Card" in *Between the Lines: Israel, the Palestinians, and the U.S. War on Terror*, Tikva Honig-Parnass and Toufic Haddad, eds. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2007), 61-64.

²⁷³ Usher, "Fatah's *Tanzim*," 7; Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, 132.

²⁷⁴ Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, 267.

²⁷⁵ Islah Jad, "Riwayyat filastīniyya: al waq'a al filastīnī mā ba'd al ijti'āh al isrā'īlī wa istisharāf al āfāq al mustabal," *Majallāt al dirāsāt al filastīniyya* 15, 51 (2002): 5-6; Sayigh, "The Anatomy of a Revolt," 53.

²⁷⁶ Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, 269.

²⁷⁷ 29 December 2000. Annex A-1: General Situation (PLO): 2.

international eyes.²⁷⁸ Islah Jad attributed this to a lack of strategic vision on the groups' part. According to Jad, the Palestinians' legitimate grievances were obscured by violence against civilians that violated the same international laws that the PLO demanded Israel uphold in Palestine.²⁷⁹

Father of Terrorism

In the post 9/11 moment, Sharon's reclassification of the *tanzim* and Force 17 as terrorist groups was part of a larger effort to undo the Oslo Accords and unseat Arafat. Already on 23 October, the Jerusalem Magistrate Court had issued a "request" that the PA extradite Barghouti for trial in Israel, negating the PA's nominal jurisdiction.²⁸⁰ The campaign against Barghouti – for Israel, the essential link between Arafat and violent attacks – would culminate months later with his arrest in March 2002. However, the condemnation of the *tanzim* in December 2001 inched closer to Sharon's goal of tying Arafat to terrorist activity. On December 16, Arafat renewed his calls for an end to violent attacks in a televised address. The US State Department issued a statement in response, deeming Arafat's words inadequate and urging more stringent efforts to dismantle "all of the terrorist networks," ignoring the PA leader's physical confinement to Ramallah and his dwindling capacities to control the spiraling situation.²⁸¹

The case of Ahmad Sa'dat, who assumed leadership of the PFLP following Mustafa Zibri's assassination by Israel, is emblematic of the PA's feeble control. Sa'dat was imprisoned in a Jericho jail under US and British supervision for his purported role in the October 2001 murder of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi of the ultra-nationalist Moledet party. Upon the PA High Court's ruling that there were no grounds to detain Sa'dat, the IDF sent tanks toward Jericho and declared the city a closed military zone, threatening to kill the PFLP leader if he were released.²⁸²

Matters worsened for Arafat early in the new year upon the IDF capture of the vessel Karine A, loaded with arms from Iran headed to Gaza. Sharon accused Arafat of personally ordering the shipment and insisted on a wave of arrests before re-engaging.²⁸³ Like the attacks in

²⁷⁸ Sayigh, "The Anatomy of a Revolt," 53; Khalidi, "Toward a Clear Palestinian Strategy," 9-10.

²⁷⁹ Jad, "Riwayyat filastīniyya," 6.

²⁸⁰ Lisa Hajjar, "The Making of a Political Trial: the Marwan Barghouti Case," Middle East Report 225 (2002): 32-33.

²⁸¹ US Department of State, "Chairman Arafat's Address" (Washington, DC, 16 December 2001.)

²⁸² Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, 304.

²⁸³ "Chronology," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, 3 (2002): 183-184.

Jerusalem and Haifa, the Karine A affair was a second turning point in Bush and his inner circle's personal views of Arafat. Allegations of Arafat's direct knowledge of the weapons shipment were adeptly manipulated by Sharon, who cast him as the "father of terrorism." Bush's suspicions were replaced with outright hostility and distrust toward Arafat.²⁸⁴ For Vice President Dick Cheney, the Karine A affair tied everything together: Arafat was part of a "global terrorist network," connected to Iran, Hezbollah, and Syria, and would endanger American interests as the head of a Palestinian state.²⁸⁵ As Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice later remembered, the President's inner circle added Arafat to their list of "committed terrorists" after the Karine A incident.²⁸⁶

The Palestinian position in Washington significantly deteriorated in the months following the terror attacks of September 11. Cognizant of the need to bring Middle Eastern and Muslim governments into the fold of its coalition to invade Afghanistan, the Bush administration at first condemned Sharon's attempts to capitalize on the post-9/11 moment to expand his incursions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, Arafat's prospects diminished that winter, as the PA was increasingly cast as supporting violence against Israel, rather than repressing militants as expected under the Oslo agreements. While the embryo of this view was planted with the Karine A affair, the following section will demonstrate its adoption within the US's GWOT paradigm.

The Rise of the Global War on Terror Framework

In early 2002, American policy underwent a further dramatic change to Arafat's detriment as the Bush administration firmly articulated that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was part and parcel of the larger 'war on terror.' On 29 January 2002, President Bush delivered his 'axis of evil' State of the Union address, explicitly referencing Palestinian armed groups alongside the likes of Al Qaeda as part of a global "terrorist underworld."²⁸⁷ CIA Director Tenet further consolidated this view in his February testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, entitled "Worldwide Threat – Converging Dangers in a Post 9/11 World." Tenet alluded to 9/11 and the intifada in the same breath, arguing that, "the terrorist threat goes well

²⁸⁴ Kurtzer, *The Peace Puzzle*, 164-165.

²⁸⁵ Miller, *The Too Much Promised Land*, 340.

²⁸⁶ Rice was Bush's second-term Secretary of State and then-National Security Council (NSC) advisor. Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011), 135.

²⁸⁷ George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address to the 107th Congress," 29 January 2002.

beyond al-Qa'ida [sic]. The situation in the Middle East continues to fuel terrorism and anti-US sentiment worldwide.” Tenet then identified Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the PFLP as potential direct threats to American interests.²⁸⁸

The American embrace of Israel’s political aims was evident once more in Zinni’s articulation of the US’s “Joint Goals,” the third major US diplomatic intervention in the intifada in March 2002. As the US moved toward Israeli demands, Washington placed responsibility solely on the PA, rejecting the mutual obligations articulated in the Tenet Workplan. For instance, with regards to cracking down on violence, Zinni proposed unconditional language demanding the PA “cease” activities, whereas the Israelis were only asked to “commit to cease.” This placed the PA under a higher and more immediate burden than Israel.²⁸⁹ Moreover, the Joint Goals muddled Tenet’s timeline, which amounted to acquiescence to Sharon. The NSU pointed out that ambiguity would inevitably embolden Israel, and the first week of quiet would pass squabbling over whether a full ceasefire had in fact been reached.²⁹⁰

Operation Defensive Shield: The PA Dismantled

The Joint Goals were issued in the context of perhaps the most fateful turning point of the intifada at the end of March 2002. Following a particularly gruesome suicide bombing at a Passover *seder* in Netanya on March 27, the IDF launched Operation Defensive Shield on March 29. The Operation entailed extensive reoccupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as Israel laid siege to Nablus, Bethlehem, Jenin, Ramallah, Hebron, and Arafat’s *muqāṭa‘a* (compound). The IDF assault was met with armed resistance by independent militant groups as well as hostility from members of the PA security forces. In response, Israeli forces openly targeted civilian and administrative PA structures.²⁹¹

Without delving into the daily details of the Operation, it is important to note that it decisively marked the end of Arafat’s control. In the aftermath of the Operation, the PA ceased to exist with any comparable degree of autonomy, as US-orchestrated interventions rose to the

²⁸⁸ George Tenet, “Worldwide Threat – Converging Dangers in a Post 9/11 World: Testimony of Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet Before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence,” Washington, DC, 6 February 2002.

²⁸⁹ It is worth noting that as an emissary of the State Department, rather than the White House, Zinni’s power was limited throughout his efforts and illustrated Bush’s minimal interest in the conflict. 26 March 2002. NSU Internal Memorandum: Palestinian Comments on the Second US ‘Joint Goals’ (PLO): 4.

²⁹⁰ 26 March 2002 NSU Internal Memorandum: Palestinian Comments on the Second US ‘Joint Goals’ (PLO): 10-11, 16.

²⁹¹ For an account of the destruction the Operation wrought in Nablus, for example, see: Mohammed Bahees and Fuad Mohammed Abeer, *Majzarat Nāblis* (Jerusalem: Dirāsāt Tawthiqiyya, 2004.)

fore. In his memoir, Bush was opaque about how the Netanya bombing influenced his thinking. He stated that in the shadow of 9/11, his views “came into sharper focus,” and he “refused to accept the moral equivalence between Palestinian suicide attacks on innocent civilians and Israeli military actions intended to protect their people. [...] If the United States had the right to defend itself and prevent future attacks, other democracies had those rights, too.”²⁹²

As Talal Asad argues, Bush’s views reflected a larger post-9/11 revulsion at suicidal terror missions, and non-state violence more broadly, as uniquely illegitimate and evil forms of violence.²⁹³ According to former negotiator and advisor Aaron David Miller, while Bush bristled at Sharon’s rejection of his advice, policy differences between the two mattered less against the backdrop of the GWOT. As Miller puts it, “when it came to fighting terror, seeking peace, and promoting democracy, Israel was on the right side of the line.”²⁹⁴ As Operation Defensive Shield raged, Bush decried the impact of Palestinian militants’ attacks. He argued that “suicide bombing missions could well blow up the best and only hope for a Palestinian state,” and was disinclined to reprimand Israel for its aggression during Operation Defensive Shield.²⁹⁵

Moreover, the spectacular violence and frightening unpredictability of suicide bombings propelled the Israeli public into the arms of the right-wing government and its military solutions. Following a month of recurrent suicide attacks on Israeli targets, 90% of Israel’s Jewish population supported Operation Defensive Shield and the reoccupation of Area A.²⁹⁶ Similarly, over 60% of Israelis supported the IDF’s targeted assassinations, even when they caused significant civilian casualties.²⁹⁷ Within Palestinian society, debate emerged about the utility of attacks on Israeli civilians that caused devastating repercussions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Several voices in this discussion merit attention. Rashid Khalidi, for one, argued that the targeting of Israeli civilians was nihilistic. He identified Israel as the colonial *métropole*, where a clear-headed Palestinian strategy would seek allies and sympathy rather than foster enmity.²⁹⁸

Similarly, in December 2001 intellectuals and prominent civil society actors like Salim Tamari, Sari Nusseibeh, and Rema Hammami published an open letter in *Al Quds* newspaper

²⁹² George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), 400.

²⁹³ Talal Asad speaks to this phenomenon in *On Suicide Bombing*, 29, 35, 65.

²⁹⁴ Miller, *The Too Much Promised Land*, 335.

²⁹⁵ George W. Bush, “President to Send Secretary Powell to the Middle East,” 4 April 2002.; Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, 41.

²⁹⁶ Shamir and Shikaki, *Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion*, 79.

²⁹⁷ Shamir and Shikaki, *Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion*, 79. For example, figures remained approximately the same in support of the killing of Hamas leader Salah Shehade in Gaza in July 2002; a one-ton bomb was dropped on his home, killing 14 bystanders, mostly children.

²⁹⁸ Khalidi, “Toward a Clear Palestinian Strategy,” 8.

contending that suicide operations were an ineffective form of “resistance communication.”²⁹⁹ These same Palestinian intellectuals doubled down in their appeals for an end to suicide missions following Operation Defensive Shield. However, their pleas were countered with a sharp class-based protest. Supporters of the ‘martyrs’ argued that suicide missions spoke to the despair and frustrations of the downtrodden poor, especially refugees. Hamas, in particular, accused these elite critics of “sitting behind their desks” and benefitting from the occupation status quo, unable to understand the martyrs’ plight.³⁰⁰

Beyond this debate, it is undeniable that the suicide bombings presented a serious security threat for Israel. As Khalidi argued, Palestinian violence transformed “the entire Israeli domestic debate from being over settlement and occupation to primordial issues of self-preservation.”³⁰¹ Suicide attacks heightened Israeli resolve, while the consequent Israeli incursions in turn amplified the messages of martyrdom and victimization that pervaded Palestinian society.³⁰² As Islah Jad argued, the militarization of the conflict excluded the grassroots base that drove the First Intifada, while elevating more conservative, religious, and male-dominated aspects of Palestinian society.³⁰³ The cumulative result was the creation of two “belligerent publics,” as both sides saw violence produce dividends that negotiations failed to elicit.³⁰⁴

In addition to this belligerence, it is difficult to understate the destruction wrought by Operation Defensive Shield, the most extensive in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967. The operation saw sustained bombardment of refugee camps, a massacre in Jenin refugee camp, and a 39-day siege on the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, where militants took refuge alongside several hundred monks.³⁰⁵ In late March 2002, Israel for the first time used F-16s

²⁹⁹ Lori Allen, “Palestinians Debate “Polite” Resistance to Occupation,” *Middle East Report* 225 (2002): 39.

³⁰⁰ Allen, “Palestinians Debate “Polite” Resistance to Occupation,” 39.

³⁰¹ Khalidi, “Toward a Clear Palestinian Strategy,” 9.

³⁰² Lori Allen, “Martyr Bodies in the Media: Human Rights, Aesthetics, and the Politics of Immediation in the Palestinian Intifada,” *American Ethnologist* 36, 1 (2009): 162.

³⁰³ Jad, “Riwayyat filastīniyya,” 6.

³⁰⁴ Shamir and Shikaki, *Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion*, 73.

³⁰⁵ Palestinian charges of a massacre during Operation Defensive Shield were heavily disputed. Over 50 Palestinians were killed in Jenin refugee camp after Israeli troops attacked on 3 April, losing at least 23 of IDF soldiers. The high levels of casualties prompted international outcry and allegations of a massacre. Israel and the US blocked an in-depth UN fact-finding mission, and the contested UN report in August 2002 concluded that at least half the Palestinians had been combatants. The level of destruction in the densely populated camp, however, was colossal, and Palestinians still refute the casualty tallies upon which the UN based its judgment. Ramzy Baroud, *Searching Jenin: Eyewitness Accounts of the Israeli Invasion 2002* (Seattle: Cune Press, 2003.); Daniel Dor, *Suppression of Guilt: The Israeli Media and the Reoccupation of the West Bank* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 62-70; Yitzhak Laor, “After Jenin,” *London Review of Books* 24, 9 (2002): 18; Ian Black, “Israel Faces Rage Over ‘Massacre,’” *The Guardian* 17 April 2002; “UN says no massacre in Jenin,” *BBC News* 1 August 2002.

against targets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and in April the IDF discharged more munitions than it used during the entire preceding decade. The same month, the US Department of Defense received an emergency appeal from Israel to acquire more “essential” firepower to fight terror.³⁰⁶

Crucially, Israeli forces targeted PA infrastructure, ranging from the Legislative Council’s offices to the Ministries of Education, Finance, and Agriculture, to directorate and municipality offices and chambers of commerce.³⁰⁷ Sharon inched closer to Arafat as members of Arafat’s inner circle came into the Israeli crosshairs; this included intelligence chief Tawfiq Tirawi and the PA security forces’ second-in-command in Gaza, Rashid Abu Shabak, as well as *tanzim* leader Marwan Barghouti.³⁰⁸ In mid-June, the IDF launched Operation Determined Path, focused on the northern West Bank activities of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. In addition to the physical damage wrought by these operations, they wreaked havoc on Palestinian society. By 2004, 47% of the population was living in poverty as curfews, checkpoints, and raids collectively punished industry, trade, and basic movement.³⁰⁹ The extensive reoccupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip symbolized Israel’s decisive move to re-seize sole responsibility for its own security.

Arafat’s Shrinking Political Horizon

Israel’s head-on affront against the PA set the stage for the joint US-Israeli transformation of the PA, and Arafat was the target. In the midst of ongoing attacks in Israel, Sharon and Bush met in early May to discuss PA reforms. They prioritized the need to bring an end to Palestinian violence and unify the PA security services under a new leader.³¹⁰

The policy transformation was clear by June 2002, when President Bush fully articulated American backing of Sharon’s ambitions to remove Arafat. On June 24, Bush delivered his “call for new Palestinian leadership,” the most significant statement on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict of his presidency. The speech eschewed any mention of Israel’s military escalations or Sharon’s explicit policy of invading PA-controlled land in retaliation for violence at Palestinian hands.³¹¹

³⁰⁶ Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 107-108.

³⁰⁷ Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 113.

³⁰⁸ “Chronology,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, 4 (2002): 211.

³⁰⁹ Jeremy Pressman, “Israeli Unilateralism and Israeli-Palestinian Relations, 2001-2006,” *International Studies Perspectives* 7 (2006): 262.

³¹⁰ “Chronology,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, 4 (2002): 219.

³¹¹ Kurtzer, *The Peace Puzzle*, 172.

Bush demanded new Palestinian leadership “not compromised by terror” through elections, voicing the same call for regime change his Administration would soon use in Iraq.³¹²

The speech conformed with Bush’s reductionist worldview, stating, “Nations are either with us or against us in the war on terror [...] Every nation actually committed to peace will stop the flow of money, equipment and recruits to terrorist groups seeking the destruction of Israel.”³¹³ Israel’s central place in the President’s ‘war on terror’ was evident, as was his full-scale adoption of Sharon’s narrative.³¹⁴ Bush relieved Israel of the responsibility to negotiate in this process with the Palestinians by making Palestinian reform the principal diplomatic goal and reducing a peace strategy to a secondary agenda.³¹⁵ As the US turned its focus solely toward ensuring changes within the Palestinian realm, it distinctly shifted away from tactics in the immediate post-9/11 moment by shying away from restraining Israeli actions.

The speech presaged the full-scale US-directed reconstruction of the Palestinian Authority to meet Israeli standards. In addition to new leadership, the speech called for economic reforms and development to be imposed through the World Bank and IMF. An “externally supervised effort to rebuild and reform the Palestinian security services,” perhaps most importantly, would be created to oversee the creation of a disciplined Palestinian self-policing body.³¹⁶

Arafat’s response to Bush’s speech was to attempt to sidestep his removal. He immediately shuffled ministerial positions without endorsing the call for new leadership. Arafat pledged to hold presidential and parliamentary elections by January 2003 so long as Israel withdrew so that Palestinians could freely vote.³¹⁷ Less than ten days after Bush’s speech, he ratified the Basic Law, a long-delayed but theoretically significant step toward democratizing the PA. On June 23, just prior to President Bush’s explicit call for Arafat’s removal, Arafat presented the US his 100 Day Plan for PA reform. The plan listed initiatives to separate power in the PA in preparation for multi-level elections, reducing Arafat’s personal authority. Perhaps of most interest to the international donor community, the plan moved to relocate the Preventative

³¹² George W. Bush, “President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership,” 24 June 2002. Washington, DC.

³¹³ Bush, “President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership.”

³¹⁴ Nicholas Veliotes, “The Bush “Vision” for Palestine: Realistic or Apocalyptic,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 13, 4 (2002): 14.

³¹⁵ Kurtzer, *The Peace Puzzle*, 173.

³¹⁶ Bush, “President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership.”

³¹⁷ Veliotes, “The Bush “Vision” for Palestine,” 12; “Chronology,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, 4 (2002): 171.

Security Organization, police, and civil defense to the Ministry of the Interior's direction, diluting Arafat's control of them.³¹⁸

The promise of judiciary, security, and financial reforms proved insufficient to save Arafat, by then *persona non-grata* in Washington. Arafat's role as a useful interlocutor for the Israeli security establishment and international donor community had run its course, and his fate was sealed.³¹⁹ Here, Sharon's decades-old goal of unseating Arafat triumphed, molding the conditions for a more submissive Palestinian leadership. With the US's support, Israel could "reestablish the infinite conditionality of the Oslo Accords," thereby dismantling the Palestinian national movement and continuing to colonize Palestinian land.³²⁰ As Camille Mansour argued at the time, a "virulent unilateralism appear[ed] to have gained the upper hand" in Washington and Tel Aviv alike.³²¹ Bush embraced Sharon as a partner in the GWOT, and Arafat's political future was sharply limited as the two conspired to reform the Palestinian Authority.³²²

Bush's speech acted explicitly on Israel's political objectives, endorsing a plan to remove Arafat drawn up by the Israeli security establishment. Former Mossad chief Efraim Halevy and Sharon's military secretary, Gen. Moshe Kaplinsky, were in charge of drawing up the plan to shift Palestinian power away from Arafat. The plan was warmly welcomed by the Israeli leadership and quickly given American, British, Jordanian, and Egyptian approval. Halevy and Kaplinsky outlined a plan to install a prime minister in the PA and transfer security responsibilities to him, transforming the PA from a presidential toward a parliamentary model.³²³ As Halevy later recalled, the Bush Administration never questioned the validity of Israel unilaterally unseating the head of the Palestinian national movement with Washington's support. Halevy noted:

As I look back upon those days, I cannot avoid remembering that no discussion took place on the principle involved in pursuing such a policy. No one asked if it was legitimate for us to openly sponsor steps and policies of this nature ... within less than a week, a major policy step had been presented, approved and put into action.³²⁴

³¹⁸ "Chronology," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, 4 (2002): 174.

³¹⁹ Honig-Parnass and Haddad, *Between the Lines*, 165.

³²⁰ Honig-Parnass and Haddad, *Between the Lines*, 155.

³²¹ Mansour, "The Impact of 11 September on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," 18.

³²² Beinun and Stein, *The Struggle for Sovereignty*, 11.

³²³ Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "And They Came in and Took Possession of Reforms: Ownership and Palestinian SSR," in Timothy Donais (ed.) *Local Ownership and Security Sector Reform* (LIT Verlag Münster and Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), 2008), 197-198.

³²⁴ Efraim Halevy, *Man in the Shadows: Inside the Middle East Crisis with a Man Who Led the Mossad* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006), 212-215.

The minutes of an early meeting of the Palestinian Reform Task Force are further revealing in this regard. Drawing together American, EU, Russian, Japanese, and Norwegian representatives as well as spokespersons for the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and UN Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East Peace Process, the group assembled in London in July 2002 without any Palestinians present. Aware of the interventionist nature of their work, the meeting minutes stated: “Palestinian ownership needs to be secured – in this respect, the Task Force and donor efforts more generally, should be low-key, providing support and guidance but not giving directives.”³²⁵ The minutes note that security reforms, on the other hand, would be addressed by the US bilaterally with Israel. This admission marks a key shift in policy, signaling that Palestinian security performance was to become an Israeli-US directed domain.

The Rise of the Democratization Agenda

September 2002 saw the publication of another key policy from Washington tying the GWOT to the intifada. The National Security Strategy (NSS), the Bush Administration’s assessment of risks to American interests worldwide, firmly linked Israeli and American prerogatives. The text was central to the articulation of the so-called ‘Bush Doctrine,’ a policy novel in its “rejection of the traditional military posture of defense and deterrence in favor of a policy of preventative intervention.”³²⁶ The strategy used 9/11 as a legitimating device to allow Washington new liberties to ensure American global hegemony, typified by the neologism of “preemptive defense.”³²⁷

To justify the upcoming invasion of Iraq, the 2002 NSS also took a distinctly moralistic tone. It postured that “the great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom – and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.”³²⁸ As Deepa Kumar points out, the “clash of civilization” thesis became a central framing mechanism among

³²⁵ 10 July 2002. Meeting Minutes: Palestinian Reform Task Force (PLO): 1-4.

³²⁶ Robert K. Brigham, ed., *The United States and Iraq since 1990: A Brief History with Documents* (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 100-109; Patricia L. Dunmire, “‘9/11 Changed Everything’: An Intertextual Analysis of the Bush Doctrine,” *Discourse & Society* 20, 2 (2009): 196.

³²⁷ Dunmire, “‘9/11 changed everything,’” 199; Khalil, *America’s Dream Palace*, 262-263.

³²⁸ United States. “The National Security Strategy of the United States.” Washington, DC: Department of State, 2002: 2; For more on the evolution of democracy promotion as a post-Cold War American foreign policy principle, see Eric Patterson and Jonathan Amaral, “Presidential Leadership and Democracy Promotion,” *Public Integrity* 11, 4 (2009): 327-346

neoconservative policy makers after 9/11.³²⁹ This narrative was revitalized in the buildup to the invasion of Iraq, and prominent conservative experts on the Middle East like Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami had intimate access to Bush policymakers, especially Vice President Dick Cheney. They were also given press platforms to promote the invasion. For example, Lewis participated in an October 2002 conference at the American Enterprise Institute entitled “The Day After: Planning for a Post-Saddam Iraq,” where he shared the podium with other key proponents of regime change like Ahmed Chalabi and Richard Perle.³³⁰

There were a number of underlying reasons for the so-called “freedom agenda” that became the centerpiece of Bush’s Middle East vision. The notion that democracies do not fight each other has been a precept of American international relations for decades. Clinton shared this view with conservative and neoconservative thinkers like William Kristol and Charles Krauthammer.³³¹ However, the push for democratization was particularly prevalent among neoconservatives, who believed that elections, alongside free market capitalism and Western humanitarian assistance, would inevitably create pro-US governments.³³²

Crucially, the NSS singled out the Palestinians as in need of democratization. The Strategy articulated a new formulation that predicated any consideration of Palestinian concerns on extensive PA reforms. It stated, “if Palestinians embrace democracy, and the rule of law, confront corruption, and firmly reject terror, they can count on American support for the creation

³²⁹ Deepa Kumar, “Framing Islam: The Resurgence of Orientalism During the Bush II Era,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34, 3 (2010): 262; Miller, *The Too Much Promised Land*, 325; Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, 10-15 is a good overview of the fallacy of this theory; Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-Terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 10-16; 46-51; see also Douglas Little, *Us Vs. Them: The United States, Radical Islam, and the Rise of the Green Threat* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.)

³³⁰ Chalabi was the London-based leader of the Iraq National Congress, a diaspora platform for regime change brought into the spotlight by neo-conservative groups and Bush’s inner circle in the buildup to invasion. He was a favorite of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, the neoconservative head of the Pentagon’s Defense Policy Board. Peter Waldman, “Bernard Lewis’s Blueprint: Sowing Arab Democracy,” *Wall Street Journal* 3 February 2004; Fouad Ajami, “Two Faces, One Terror,” *Wall Street Journal* 11 November 2002; Bernard Lewis, “Time for Toppling,” *Wall Street Journal* 27 September 2002. Robert Kagan and William Kristol, “What to Do About Iraq,” *Weekly Standard* 21 January 2002; Daniel Pipes, “America: Be Ambitious After Iraq,” *Jerusalem Post* 12 February 2003; Khalil, *America’s Dream Palace*, 264-265; R. Dreyfuss, “Tinker, Banker, NeoCon, Spy,” *The American Prospect*, 13 (2002): 28-32; Piki Ish-Shalom, *The Democratic-Peace Thesis in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Uses and Abuses* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 2005), 47-50. Bush’s neoconservative advisors such William Kristol and Robert Kagan also interacted closely with conservative academics in think tank venues like the Project for a New American Century, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

³³¹ Piki Ish-Shalom, “The Rhetorical Capital of Theories: The Democratic Peace and the Road to the Roadmap,” *International Political Science Review* 29, 3 (2008): 285.

³³² “The National Security Strategy of the United States.” 9. The democratization agenda gained ideological traction during Bush’s second term as the Iraq war ground on, as evidenced by the Bush’s so-called Freedom Agenda, articulated in 2005 during his second inaugural address, and Congress’s Advance Democracy Act (2007.) Patterson and Amaral, “Presidential Leadership and Democracy Promotion,” 331-332.

of a Palestinian state.”³³³ In doing so, the NSS tied regime change in Iraq to Arafat’s removal, and both prospects with a benevolent vision of American global leadership.

However, in fact, PA democratization had long been a right-wing Israeli demand. Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud) for example, had expounded on the inherently peaceful nature of democracies since the mid-1990s during his first term as prime minister. Netanyahu joined the furor for ‘freedom’ in Iraq that pushed to unseat that country’s ruler. During an October 2002 speech to the US Senate in favor of Hussein’s ouster, Netanyahu posited that, “the open debate and plurality of ideas that buttress all genuine democracies [...] are a permanent antidote to the poison that the sponsors of terror seek to inject into the minds of their recruits.”³³⁴

Natan Sharansky was another vocal proponent of the democratization agenda. A former Soviet dissident and Likud member of Knesset, Sharansky’s views emanated from his experience under totalitarian rule. However, like Netanyahu, he was also deeply averse to territorial compromise with the Palestinians, trenchantly opposed to every initiative or Israeli withdrawal.³³⁵ Sharansky delivered a notable address before the right-wing American Enterprise Institute just days before Bush’s called for Arafat’s removal; he later conferred with neocons Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney about the Roadmap. Sweeping from the USSR and Stalin to Arafat and the PA, to Iraq and Afghanistan, Sharansky handily drew together America’s past and present dangers, “its self-perceived mission in the world, and Israel’s current threats.” He painted a portrait of an eternal struggle between a democratic “us” and despotic “them,” binding together Israel and the US.³³⁶

The Road to Baghdad (via Jerusalem)

In the autumn of 2002, Washington’s redlines for Palestinian and Iraqi compliance to the American ‘freedom agenda’ crystallized. In early September, Arafat reopened the Palestinian Legislative Council for its first session in five months. He reiterated his renunciation of all types of terror by state or individual actors. American and Israeli officials once more denounced Arafat’s statements as insufficient. On September 12, President Bush delivered a landmark speech at the UN General Assembly in New York in which he laid out American red lines for

³³³ “The National Security Strategy of the United States.”10.

³³⁴ Ish-Shalom, “The Rhetorical Capital of Theories,” 290.

³³⁵ Ish-Shalom, *The Democratic-Peace Thesis in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 29-51.

³³⁶ Brigham, *The United States and Iraq since 1990*, 97-100; Ish-Shalom, *The Democratic-Peace Thesis in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 49.

Iraqi reform. These included unconditional acceptance of international Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) inspectors and disarmament, at the risk of unilateral US action.³³⁷

American ambitions to unseat Arafat and alter the PA order were also explicitly connected to the coming ouster of Saddam Hussein, both framed in an orientalist, moralizing tone. In his UN speech, Bush stated that Iraqis would soon be able to “shake off their captivity [with] a democratic Afghanistan and a democratic Palestine, inspiring reforms throughout the Muslim world. These nations can show by their example that honest government, and respect for women, and the great Islamic tradition of learning can triumph in the Middle East and beyond.”³³⁸ Weaving the regime change in Iraq to the democratization in the PA, Bush transformed US engagement with the Palestinians into a front in his rapidly expanding ‘war on terror.’

At the same time, the autumn saw renewed violence as Israel responded to a Hamas suicide bombing in Tel Aviv on 19 September. The IDF re-imposed twenty-four hour curfews throughout the West Bank’s urban centers, destroyed the PA Ministry of the Interior, and demanded the immediate extradition of the heads of Force 17 and the PA *mukhābarāt*. The Israeli army laid siege to Arafat’s compound in Ramallah in an operation named ‘Matter of Time,’ alluding to Arafat’s impending removal. However, Israeli actions were once more restricted by the GWOT priorities of its primary ally. As September drew to a close and the US legislature deliberated unilateral action against Iraq in early October, US Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer instructed Sharon to lift his siege on Arafat. As in the run-up to the invasion of Afghanistan, the US saw gestures to the Palestinians as useful to build a coalition against Saddam Hussein.³³⁹

Meanwhile, prominent Israeli political figures dove into the pre-invasion media coverage, arguing that regime change in Iraq would improve Israel’s security and weaken Palestinian adversaries. Major General Amos Gilad, for example, argued that, “Arafat is in decline as a result of economic, social, and political elements and this will be increased after a war against Iraq; there is no alternative to replacing Arafat.”³⁴⁰ Moreover, the internal Israeli public-relations

³³⁷ George W. Bush, “Statement by President Bush, United Nations General Assembly,” (New York: 12 September 2002.)

³³⁸ Bush, “Statement by President Bush, United Nations General Assembly.”

³³⁹ “Chronology,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, 2 (2003): 179-180; Edward Said, “An Unacceptable Helplessness,” in Sifry and Cerf, *The Iraq War Reader*, 445-449.

³⁴⁰ Gilad at the time served as Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, and would later go on to play a key role in the security portfolio at Annapolis. “Amos Gilad, “Saddam’s Fall Will Lead to Arafat’s as Well,” *Jerusalem Post* 17 October 2002.

machine went into overdrive in the buildup to the invasion of Iraq.³⁴¹ Israeli spokespersons were advised to invoke Saddam Hussein's name as much as possible for at least a year in pro-Israel communications. In American contexts, a consulting firm that worked with Sharon's government suggested constant references to security, and describing the settlements as a security buffer to Israel, given that with 9/11 security had become the "key fundamental principle for all Americans."³⁴² Perhaps most cynically, one report called for a female spokesperson to discuss Arab misogyny, and for language that linked Iraqi liberation with the Palestinian plight, who deserved new democratically elected leadership.³⁴³

In mid-October, Sharon traveled to Washington to discuss Iraq and the Palestinians, and received pledges of American protection in the event of an Iraqi reprisal against Israel following an invasion.³⁴⁴ After a suicide bombing October 16 killed 14 in Pardes Hanna, Israeli Interior Minister Eli Yishai confirmed that US interests in attacking Iraq delayed Israel's retaliation against Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Yishai stated that a US-led strike would serve Israeli interests, and that the fragile international environment as Washington sought "moderate Arab support" for its offensive figured into the Israeli response.³⁴⁵ Similarly, Israeli leaders were compelled to restrain themselves in the event of an Iraqi counterattack against Israel. In exchange, the White House extended promises to protect Israel, including against potential chemical warfare, prior to the US invasion in March 2003.³⁴⁶

Some voices of dissent among the Israeli leadership were also audible, concerned at the US's simplistic, unrealistic plans to "free" Iraq. Israeli security analysts and experts were more hesitant than the political discourse toward the ill-conceived American plan.³⁴⁷ They took into account the hostility toward Israel kept at bay by Arab strongmen, and in particular the threat of populist Islamist parties in upsetting the regional status quo. Others expressed concern at how the removal of Saddam Hussein would affect Iran, seeing US aims directed at the wrong regional threat.³⁴⁸ While the neoconservative architects of Saddam Hussein's removal were concerned

³⁴¹ April 2003. Wexner Analysis (Luntz Research Companies): Israeli Communication Priorities, 2003 (PLO): 1.

³⁴² April 2003. Wexner Analysis (Luntz Research Companies): Israeli Communication Priorities, 2003 (PLO): 1-3.

³⁴³ April 2003. Wexner Analysis (Luntz Research Companies): Israeli Communication Priorities, 2003 (PLO): 4-6, 9-10.

³⁴⁴ Uri Dan, "Sharon Visiting Bush for War Summit," New York Post 16 October 2002.

³⁴⁵ Karin Laub, "US War on Terror Forces Israelis to Delay Retaliation for Latest Suicide Bombing," The Advertiser 17 October 2016.

³⁴⁶ Alexander G. Nikolaev and Ernest A. Hakanen, *Leading to the 2003 Iraq War: The Global Media Debate* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 168, 183.

³⁴⁷ Dov Waxman, "From Jerusalem to Baghdad? Israel and the War in Iraq," *International Studies Perspectives* 10 (2009): 10-12.

³⁴⁸ Waxman, "From Jerusalem to Baghdad," 12.

with promoting Israel's interests, their worldview remained fundamentally US-centric, based on a moralistic belief in America's global mission.³⁴⁹ The same worldview returned with the Roadmap as the Bush Administration seized upon the symbolic capital captured by reviving the 'peace process' for its own political dividends.

The Roadmap for Peace

The third winter of the intifada also saw the preparation of the Roadmap for Middle East Peace, developed after Bush's June 24th speech. The Roadmap represents a distinct redirection from the Oslo process, reflecting both the GWOT context and the ascendance of Israeli unilateralism. The Roadmap was sponsored by a combination of the US, the EU, Russia, and the United Nations, together called the Quartet. As the US pushed for action against Iraq at the UN Security Council in late 2002 and built its coalition to invade, the Roadmap began circulating in draft form. The document was written primarily by David Satterfield, Secretary Rice's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs, and Terje Rød-Larsen, a Norwegian diplomat intimately involved in the Oslo process since the early 1990s.³⁵⁰

Improving the War on Terror's Image

Before analyzing the Roadmap's plans in full, it is important to understand the situation on the ground as the plan was developed. The timing of the US's reassertion of its leading role in brokering an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as plans to invade Iraq brewed was not a coincidence. Rather, Bush paraded the Roadmap as a way to soften the invasion of Iraq in the international community's eyes, easing critiques of brash American imperialism with a more humane, peace-seeking face. In part, it also sought to alleviate pressure against British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who faced massive popular anger at his willingness to accede to Bush's invasion plans. In March 2003, Secretary Rice sought explicit Israeli assurance that Israel would accept the Roadmap in order to weaken outrage against Blair within the British Labour Party.³⁵¹

Indeed, declassified CIA files illustrate the degree to which the Israeli-Palestinian context colored planning for the invasion of Iraq. A January 2003 report by the National Intelligence

³⁴⁹ Waxman, "From Jerusalem to Baghdad," 6-7; Brigham, *The United States and Iraq since 1990*, 91-92.

³⁵⁰ Kurtzer, *The Peace Puzzle*, 175.

³⁵¹ Barnea and Kastner, *Back Channel*, 30.

Council (NIC) explained cultural impediments to spreading democracy in Iraq, citing “a lack of ingrained democratic traditions, innate distrust of other groups, and the tendency to substitute tribal, ethnic, or sectarian loyalties.”³⁵² The report also highlighted infrastructure and economic challenges, but expected oil export revenues to reach up to \$37 billion annually within two years of the lifting of UN sanctions. With regards to regional geopolitical concerns, the intelligence community underlined the risks of post-Saddam Iraqi foreign policy “voicing strong support for Palestinian statehood and criticism of Israeli actions against the Palestinians.”³⁵³ Security guarantees would assuage these tensions, fortified by a long-term foreign military presence and economic integration. These measures would mollify popular dissent at the US’s leading role in the new regime in concert with strongly supporting Israel.

A second CIA report, entitled “Regional Consequences of Regime Change in Iraq,” noted that increased Iraqi funding for Palestinian militant groups had had a minimal effect during the intifada; Iran, Iraq’s rival, instead backed the most significant of these groups, Hamas.³⁵⁴ However, the analysts warned of “the effects that a US-led war in Iraq would have on support for extremist causes,” which would surely resonate with the Palestinians. The report argued that anti-Israeli sentiment could be limited by preventing Tel Aviv’s explicit influence in Iraqi regime change. However, the NIC concluded that many in the Arab world would “expect the United States to build on its victory over Iraq by taking a more active role in the Israeli-Palestinian impasse,” encouraging Arab regimes to cooperate with Washington.³⁵⁵

These CIA insights proved telling in the geopolitical backdrop that drove the Roadmap’s formulation. The White House emphasized that the removal of Saddam Hussein would transform the region, and inevitably foster peaceful relations among Israel and its neighbors. Much like his father following the Gulf War, Bush Junior saw the political imperative of using his newfound leverage to push, at least rhetorically, for a monumental effort in the Israeli-Palestinian context.³⁵⁶ The Roadmap was issued only weeks after the invasion of Iraq began (March 19) and weeks before Bush delivered his infamous “Mission Accomplished” speech (May 1),

³⁵² January 2003. “Principal Challenges in Post-Saddam Iraq.” National Intelligence Council. (CIA): 13-15.

³⁵³ January 2003. “Principal Challenges in Post-Saddam Iraq.” National Intelligence Council. (CIA): 34-35.

³⁵⁴ January 2003. “Regional Consequences of Regime Change in Iraq.” National Intelligence Council - Intelligence Community Assessment. (CIA): 25-26.

³⁵⁵ January 2003. “Regional Consequences of Regime Change in Iraq.” National Intelligence Council - Intelligence Community Assessment. (CIA): 25-26.

³⁵⁶ Kurtzer, *The Peace Puzzle*, 175; Robert E. Hunter and Seth G. Jones, “An Independent Palestine: The Security Dimension,” *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944 -) 80, 2, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (2004): 211.

proclaiming the end of major combat operations in Iraq.³⁵⁷ The Roadmap was thus embedded within a wider effort to project a self-confident image of successful transformation in the Middle East.

The Roadmap and the Shifting PA

Stepping back, it is critical to note that while the Roadmap represented a major policy intervention, the momentum for the changes it enshrined was well underway. Internal NSU documents from the winter of 2002 demonstrate the prominence of security considerations in the Roadmap's drafting. At the moment of the Roadmap's articulation in April 2003, significant reforms had already transformed the PA. Under the Israeli-designed plan, the international community had pressured Arafat to appoint Mahmoud Abbas, a Fatah insider, to the newly created position of Prime Minister. Abbas had long presented a conciliatory standpoint within the PLO, instigating secret talks with Israelis as early as 1977. He was at once a more flexible alternative to Arafat and subservient to the Chairman. Abbas was charged with executing the reform regime imposed by the international community, but frustration with pushback from Arafat led him to resign in September 2003.³⁵⁸

Obstacles to Palestinian-directed reform occurred particularly in the security sector, where contemporary efforts encountered resistance from multiple sides. The PA appointed a Minister of the Interior, Abdelrazzek Yahya, empowered to direct the PASF. The 17 branches of the security forces were then consolidated into three branches and removed from Arafat's direct supervision. However, Yahya complained that though Arafat had approved of the streamlining efforts, he encountered strong resistance from individual heads of the various PASF, illustrating the patrimonial linkages that pervaded the PA.³⁵⁹

In the months prior to the Roadmap's installation, the PA scrambled to improve its security performance under Quartet scrutiny. However, Israel's unabated physical targeting of the PASF threatened to disable the forces' effectiveness permanently. This aggression was coupled with a consistent refusal to coordinate security. In January 2003, the Ministry of the Interior attested that it was unfeasible to build Palestinian governance capacities in isolation from

³⁵⁷ Scott A. Bonn, *Mass Deception: Moral Panic and the U.S. War on Iraq*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 16.

³⁵⁸ Edward Said, "The Archaeology of the Road Map," in *From Oslo to Iraq and the Roadmap* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 283-5.

³⁵⁹ 12 December 2002. Draft: Security Reform Efforts (PLO): 1-2.

wider security demands, which could not be carried out due to Israel's unwillingness to coordinate with the PASF.³⁶⁰ The Ministry of the Interior was vocal about its weaknesses, compounded by the international community's hesitance to rebuild structures and forces that continued to fall under intermittent Israeli fire. PA ambitions to demilitarize groups like the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades were similarly blocked by continued Israeli targeting, which paradoxically validated the Brigades' actions as defense in Palestinian eyes.³⁶¹ Ultimately, however, the Palestinian reformers said they could not act without the promise of political progress on the Israeli side. In an internal memo, the NSU warned that it was "impossible to proceed even with the collection of illegal weapons, let alone meaningful reforms" without the promise of political concessions in the future.³⁶²

Against this backdrop of several months of internally-directed reform, the Roadmap was officially issued 30 April 2003. Its contents cemented the shift in US policy from mutuality between the Israeli and Palestinian sides toward the Israeli security-first perspectives. At the heart of the Roadmap was an effort to condition all future political negotiations on Palestinian performance, in pursuit of a PA that would re-enter security coordination with Israel and accept Israeli-imposed terms in final status negotiations.³⁶³ The Quartet's performance-based vision fully privileged Israel's preference for Palestinian responsibility.³⁶⁴

As in the case of previous interventions, a great deal of energy went toward the creation of methods to ensure the Roadmap's implementation. Already in October 2002, drafts of Roadmap monitoring mechanisms emerged, laying out plans for a four-layer verification regime that would respond ultimately to the UN Security Council. Through a set of committees, commissions, and envoys, the Quartet would liaise on a political level between the Israelis and Palestinians to ensure the timely implementation of Roadmap obligations, to be checked monthly.³⁶⁵ Specific tactical committees would operate locally to address reforms, security, economic and civil affairs, statehood, and settlements. Despite this attention, the ambiguous language floated early on for monitoring an Israeli settlement freeze speaks to the Roadmap's shortcomings. The document states that the "Settlements Committee will set up the appropriate

³⁶⁰ 11 January 2003. Report: Wizārat al dākhliyya - al iṣlāh fī majāl al āmn (PLO): 1-2.

³⁶¹ 12 December 2002. Draft: Security Reform Efforts (PLO): 2-3.

³⁶² 12 December 2002. Draft: Security Reform Efforts (PLO): 3.

³⁶³ Parsons, "Israeli Biopolitics, Palestinian Policing," 68.

³⁶⁴ Karma Nabulsi, "The Peace Process and the Palestinians: A Road Map to Mars," *International Affairs* 80, 2 (2004): 22.

³⁶⁵ October 2002 Monitoring and Verification Mechanism for Quartet Roadmap (PLO): 4.

capacity and capability for gathering and analyzing information to monitor and ensure compliance with the settlement freeze,” without detailing any manner by which the Quartet could effectively pressure Israel or override US deference to Israeli demands.³⁶⁶

Several key assumptions related to the GWOT underpinned the Roadmap. First, as Sara Roy argues, the adoption of the Israeli sequencing vision privileged the notion that terrorism caused Israel to maintain the occupation, rather than that the occupation itself engendered violent and non-violent resistance.³⁶⁷ Moreover, the Roadmap anchored the Israeli-Palestinian conflict firmly in the GWOT. To the extent that Israel’s actions against the Palestinians were cast as a ‘war on terrorism,’ the Roadmap saw negotiating with the Palestinians as a form of moral compromise.³⁶⁸ Such a concession was anathema to the Bush Administration, coinciding with Sharon’s political goal of unilaterally dismantling the PA.

A close reading of the Roadmap bears out the notion that the GWOT dramatically changed US-led interventions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Roadmap did break diplomatic ground in explicitly calling for the eventual creation of a Palestinian state and an end to the occupation as its final goal. However, it was inflected throughout with clear references to the GWOT context and to the Bush administration’s policy of regime change. The document opened with a declaration that a two-state solution would “only be achieved through an end to violence and terrorism, when the Palestinian people have a leadership acting decisively against terror and willing and able to build a practicing democracy [...] and through Israel’s readiness to do what is necessary for a democratic Palestinian state to be established.”³⁶⁹ The potential creation of a future state was thus fully contingent on Palestinian counterterrorism performance.

This is further demonstrable in the three phases designed by the Roadmap. The first step called for an immediate, unconditional Palestinian cessation of violence, and resumption of security coordination per the Tenet Work Plan. In exchange for Israeli reiteration of its commitment to a two-state solution, the Palestinians were called on to unequivocally restate Israel’s right to exist “in peace and security” and end “armed activity and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere,” civilian and military alike.³⁷⁰ Most critically, the Roadmap compelled

³⁶⁶ October 2002 Monitoring and Verification Mechanism for Quartet Roadmap (PLO): 6.

³⁶⁷ Sara Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*. London and Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2007: 229-230.

³⁶⁸ Roy, *Failing Peace*, 230.

³⁶⁹ United Nations, “A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.” (New York, 2003), 1.

³⁷⁰ United Nations, “A Performance-Based Roadmap,” 2.

the PA to undertake “visible efforts” to prevent attacks on Israelis, while a “rebuilt and refocused” security apparatus would begin “sustained, targeted, and effective operations aimed at confronting all those engaged in terror and dismantlement of terrorist capabilities and infrastructure.”³⁷¹ The NSU attributed this formulation to a broader climate in Washington that saw military solutions to political problems.³⁷²

In perhaps the clearest manifestation of the way Israeli security demands served to implement political objectives, Arafat’s personal preeminence was directly targeted by the Roadmap. The Quartet stipulated the appointment of an interim prime minister or cabinet with heightened executive authority to undercut the President; this had already occurred with Abbas’s instatement.³⁷³ The Palestinians were to prepare to hold elections at the soonest possible date. Israel, meanwhile, was compelled to dismantle settlement outposts established since March 2001, and to freeze all settlement activity (including natural growth), though the definition of this was left open to interpretation.³⁷⁴

The second phase of the Roadmap outlined efforts to create “an independent Palestinian state with provisional borders and attributes of sovereignty” as a temporary arrangement before a permanent status agreement.³⁷⁵ The phase would begin with Palestinian elections and a new Palestinian constitution, and would proceed to an international conference to launch economic recovery. Israel would dismantle the 60 remaining illegal outposts established since March 2001, but no concrete arrangements were outlined for the remaining 400,000 settlers.³⁷⁶ Based on consensus among the Quartet regarding security and reform performance, Palestinian provisional statehood would then be promoted in international institutions prior to the launch of Phase III. This would result in the creation of a Palestinian state with “provisional” borders. A state with “provisional” borders was a new turn of phrase coined by Douglas Feith, the neocon Undersecretary of Defense who soon thereafter designed the de-Ba’athification of Iraq’s army.³⁷⁷

Phase III aimed to consolidate reform and stabilization of Palestinian institutions, and achieve sustained, effective Palestinian security performance prior to a final status agreement.

³⁷¹ “United Nations, “A Performance-Based Roadmap,” 2.

³⁷² 24 June 2003. NSU Memo Re: Israeli Diplomatic Messaging in Washington and Arab Perceptions (PLO): 2. The same NSU report noted with thinly veiled irritation that 25% of Americans believed Iraq used chemical weapons against the US in the Gulf War, suggesting a basic deficit of rationality in the American public and its representatives.

³⁷³ 24 June 2003. NSU Memo Re: Israeli Diplomatic Messaging in Washington and Arab Perceptions (PLO): 2.

³⁷⁴ United Nations, “A Performance-Based Roadmap,” 3-5.

³⁷⁵ United Nations, “A Performance-Based Roadmap,” 5.

³⁷⁶ Said, “Archaeology of the Roadmap,” 280-282.

³⁷⁷ 20 June 2003. Bannerman & Associates, Inc. Report: Evolution of the Road Map – an Insider’s Account (PLO): 2.

By, 2005 Israeli-Palestinian permanent status negotiations would convene to end the conflict on the basis of UNSCR-242, 338, and 1397. The document also stated the goal of ending the occupation that began in 1967, an “agreed, just, fair, and realistic solution to the refugee issue, and a negotiated resolution on the status of Jerusalem” that considered all religious concerns involved.³⁷⁸ This formulation fell short of acknowledging the Palestinians’ basic rights according to UN General Assembly Resolution 194, instead calling for a ‘realistic’ solution to the refugee problem. As Edward Said described, the Palestinians were to continue “coming up with the goods in rapid succession” to appease Israeli security demands, all while the occupation remained in place and Palestinians’ rights went unfulfilled.³⁷⁹

Without alternatives and in financial ruin, the PA accepted the Roadmap without reservations. Several weeks later Sharon’s cabinet agreed on the basis of 14 reservations.³⁸⁰ Israel was particularly apprehensive about the leadership assumed by Mahmoud Abbas as a more palatable Palestinian face of the Roadmap. In a set of briefs intercepted by the PLO, consultants at Luntz Research Companies undertook an assessment of Israeli communication priorities in April 2003. They averred that Abbas’s rise occurred at “exactly the wrong time. His ascent to power seems legitimate. He is a fresh face, a clean-shaven one at that. He speaks well and dresses in Western garb. He may even genuinely want peace.”³⁸¹ The consultants suggested reserving explicit condemnation of Abbas, a Quartet favorite. These concerns all played into Sharon’s response to the Roadmap, accepting the first phase of the plan. Upon receipt of the Israeli reservations, the Quartet acknowledged Israel’s stipulations but did not alter the document. This effectively ensured Israeli non-compliance.³⁸²

The Roadmap officially commenced 4 June 2003 after a summit in Aqaba attended by Sharon and Abbas and officiated by President Bush. Like its predecessors, the new American-led initiative did not hold up under scrutiny, failing perhaps most predictably in its monitoring mechanisms. NSU was immediately apprehensive of the intentions and capacities of the new US Coordinating and Monitoring Mission, headed by Chief Monitor John S. Wolf and composed of

³⁷⁸ United Nations, “A Performance-Based Roadmap,” 6-7.

³⁷⁹ Said, *Archaeology of the Roadmap*, 280.

³⁸⁰ Ish-Shalom, “The Rhetorical Capital of Theories,” 291; Roy, *Failing Peace*, 230.

³⁸¹ April 2003. Wexner Analysis (Luntz Research Companies); Israeli Communication Priorities, 2003 (PLO): 13, 15; Are Hovdenak, “Middle East: More Need for Traffic Police than Road Maps,” *Security Dialogue* 34, 4 (2003): 503-506.

³⁸² Kurtzer, *The Peace Puzzle*, 176-171.

advisors about policing as well as economic and humanitarian affairs.³⁸³ This nucleus of personnel arrived in July 2003 to complement the existing security contingent run by the CIA.

The Mission's shortcomings were transparent even to its own members. Lisa Johnson, a member of the team, reported to the NSU that she understood her team would only be able to "oversee the broad-brush strokes of the political situation" rather than parsing through "the nitty-gritty details of incidents" due to the shortage of manpower. This understaffing was exacerbated as Wolf was only briefly and sporadically in-theater, dislocating the political effort from events on the ground. With a small team, the monitors would not independently gather information, relying on outside sources with their inevitable biases.³⁸⁴

The NSU foresaw that the seemingly comprehensive Roadmap would quickly be simplified into a one-tier structure, fusing political and technical elements. This meant that the political objectives of the Roadmap were consistently delayed in response to ever-altering security performance thresholds. The NSU conjectured the situation would worsen as the Mission functioned in a "US chain-of-command up to the President, without any Quartet or international accountability."³⁸⁵ In sum, where the Roadmap nominally advanced the Palestinian cause by reinserting political measures into the center of US interventions, its implementation promised to turn the clock back toward security predominating all other concerns. Internally, the NSU bemoaned the lack of institutional memory that made the Roadmap monitoring mechanisms indistinguishable from Tenet Work Plan discussions two summers prior.³⁸⁶

On 15 October, three American private security contractors employed by DynCorp were killed in Gaza. In response, the White House's stance strengthened once more in Israel's favor.³⁸⁷ Chief Roadmap Monitor Wolf rearticulated the US's commitment to a two-state solution on the basis of peace and security. However, he harshly reiterated the US's priority: "President Bush was crystal clear [...] when he said the Palestinian Authority must act now to confront and crackdown on those whose use of violence and terror is an attack on our shared goal of a Palestinian state."³⁸⁸

³⁸³ 15 July 2003. NSU Memo re: US Coordinating and Monitoring Mission (PLO): 1

³⁸⁴ 15 July 2003. NSU Memo re: US Coordinating and Monitoring Mission (PLO): 2-3.

³⁸⁵ 15 July 2003. NSU Memo re: US Coordinating and Monitoring Mission (PLO): 3.

³⁸⁶ 15 July 2003. NSU Memo re: US Coordinating and Monitoring Mission (PLO): 3.

³⁸⁷ John F. Burns, "3 Americans Slain in Blast in Gaza Strip," *New York Times* 16 October 2003.

³⁸⁸ 17 October 2003. US Department of State: Letter from John S. Wolf to Dr. Saeb Erekat (PLO).

Sharon praised the Roadmap's acquiescence to his vision security-first vision in reshaping the PA into a compliant proxy. Speaking on 18 December 2003, Sharon stated: "Only security will lead to peace. And in that sequence. [...] The opposite perception, according to which the very signing of a peace agreement will produce security out of thin air, has already been tried in the past and failed miserably."³⁸⁹ He further stressed the need to coordinate all aspects with the US, and that the Palestinians must implement democratic reforms and "abandon the path of terror and let us together stop the bloodshed."³⁹⁰ Regarding negotiations, Sharon argued that the Israeli people could not be held hostage to appease Palestinian political needs. In contrast, just one day prior the PLO criticized the Israeli closure regime, which held the population under siege-like conditions and caused economic and humanitarian crises. The NSU urged US pressure on Israel to ease its restrictions on movement of Palestinian persons and goods, which the NSU argued only fostered insecurity.³⁹¹

In effect, the Roadmap replaced the Palestinians with Washington as Israel's interlocutor. As Edward Said noted with dismay, the Roadmap arose from the Israel's inability to make the Palestinians accept their status as a defeated people. The resistance of the Second Intifada rendered this fact inescapable even to hawkish Sharon. Thus, the Roadmap emerged as a plan for pacification, emphasizing how Palestinians were expected to perform as a political and social community. This took place even as assaults continued against Palestinians.³⁹² Despite this asymmetry of action, the Roadmap placed the onus of responsibility, reform, and constraint fully in the Palestinian camp. As Said stated, this paradigm allowed "No violence, no protest, more democracy, better leaders and institutions, [as though the] underlying problem has been the ferocity of Palestinian resistance rather than the occupation that has given rise to it."³⁹³

Unilateralism Prevails

³⁸⁹ Ariel Sharon, "Address by PM Ariel Sharon at the Fourth Herzliya Conference," 18 December 2003.

³⁹⁰ Sharon, "Address by PM Ariel Sharon at the Fourth Herzliya Conference."

³⁹¹ 17 December 2003. NSU/NAD: Letter from Saeb Erekat to David Satterfield (PLO).

³⁹² 13 August 2003. Qiādat al āmn al wiqā'ī: Al i'tidā'āt al isra'iliyya fi al ḡafa al gharbiyya - al mulakhaṣ [PA Preventative Security HQ: summary of IDF assaults in West Bank] (PLO).

³⁹³ Said, "Archaeology of the Roadmap," 282.

Following the Roadmap's installation in the summer of 2003 as the primary forum for international engagement with the Second Intifada, several developments transpired that demonstrate the US's decisive pivot toward the Israeli security agenda. The closing section of this chapter will address three interlocking manifestations of this dynamic. First, analysis turns to the so-called "separation wall," or *jidar al-faṣl al-'unṣurī* ("apartheid wall") which the Israeli government first introduced in June 2002. Second, the Gaza withdrawal plan is examined, which unilaterally removed Israeli settlements and IDF presence from the Strip. Finally, this section focuses on the exchange between Bush and Sharon in April 2004, in which the President explicitly endorsed the real political goals of the Gaza withdrawal. These exchanges rewrote the very premise of American engagement with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, elevating unilateral Israeli political demands even further.

The Separation Wall

Responding to massive public outcry for an end to violent attacks in Israel, construction on the first section of a wall separating Israel from the West Bank began in June 2002. The barrier was, per the Prime Minister's cabinet's decision, intended to reduce the passage of "terrorists from Judea and Samaria to carry out terror attacks in Israel."³⁹⁴ By October 2003, when Stages 3 and 4 of the wall were approved, the government's language had shifted, calling it merely a "security means to prevent terror attacks," in effect acknowledging its inability to actually prevent entry of determined militants from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.³⁹⁵ Embedding the logic of separation that arose in the security framework during the intifada, the wall further functioned as an act of Israeli sovereignty. In snaking its path, the wall grew to more than double the length of the Green Line. Only about 15% of the wall was ultimately constructed on the 1967 border, and at times it jutted up to 18 kilometers into the West Bank.³⁹⁶

The separation wall contravened both the Oslo Accords and the Roadmap as its construction prejudiced the outcome of any final status negotiations by creating a new *fait accompli* on the ground. As a result of the wall, population centers and resources were *de facto* annexed to Israel, while others were excluded. The separation wall functioned as a response to

³⁹⁴ Yehezkel Leil and Alon Cohen-Lifshitz, *Under the Guise of Security: Routing the Separation Barrier to Enable the Expansion of Israeli Settlements in the West Bank* (Jerusalem: B'tselem, 2005), 7.

³⁹⁵ Leil and Cohen-Lifshitz, *Under the Guise of Security*, 7.

³⁹⁶ Rachel Busbridge, "Performing Colonial Sovereignty and the Israeli Separation Wall," *Social Identities* 19 (5): 655-656.

Israel's historic "native problem," displacing part of the "demographic threat" that would otherwise upset the Jewish ethnic majority in Israel.³⁹⁷

The political, rather than security, nature of the wall's convoluted course was perhaps most evident in Jerusalem. Around the city, the wall allocated 1,600 West Bank residents of adjacent villages and suburbs to the Israeli side of the wall along with the Palestinian Jerusalemite population of 250,000 (2011). Meanwhile, some 55,000 Palestinians with Jerusalem identification were relegated to the West Bank side of the barrier. In one striking example of the political nature of its construction, the wall cut through Jerusalem's own self-drawn municipal boundaries, including the Palestinian suburb of Shu'afāt on the Israeli side and excluding Shu'afāt refugee camp, though both belonged to the municipality.³⁹⁸ The wall separated 60 settlements from the surrounding Palestinian territory. The barrier preserved territorial contiguity between these settlements and Israel, and set aside space for future development in the blocs.³⁹⁹

While it is beyond the scope of this section to analyze in full the myriad negative impacts of the wall on the Palestinian population, its political import in Washington merits further discussion. As the Palestinian negotiating team attested repeatedly to their American counterparts, the wall was a provocation, a daily assault on the Palestinians' dignity.⁴⁰⁰ In April 2004, senior negotiators Ahmed Qurei, Nabil Sha'ath, Salam Fayyad, and Sa'eb Erekat conveyed this message to State Department officials William Burns and Steven Hadley. The PLO voiced specific grievances. For instance, in the village of Barta'a (on the Green Line near Haifa), Israel had promised to move the wall, but residents remained cut off from 60% of their agricultural land. However, the PLO argued the issue was not, in fact, a matter of changing the route of the wall incrementally "here or there."⁴⁰¹ Rather, the entire edifice was an affront. As Qurei contended, "every centimeter of this wall on Palestinian land destroys hope in peace, catalyzing violence."⁴⁰²

³⁹⁷ Abdelrahman A. Tamimi, "Socioeconomic and Environmental Impacts of the Israeli Separation Wall," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 68 (4): 557-564; Graham Usher, "The Wall and the Dismemberment of Palestine," *Race and Class* 47, 3 (2016): 20; Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London, New York: Verso Books, 2007.)

³⁹⁸ Busbridge, "Performing Colonial Sovereignty and the Israeli Separation Wall," 656-658.

³⁹⁹ Leil and Cohen-Lifshitz, *Under the Guise of Security*, 12.

⁴⁰⁰ 1 April 2004. Al sulṭa al waṭaniyya al filasṭīniyya: maḥḍar al ijtimā'a al filasṭīnī al amrikī [PA Minutes of the American-Palestinian Meeting] (PLO): 2.

⁴⁰¹ 1 April 2004. Al sulṭa al waṭaniyya al filasṭīniyya: maḥḍar al ijtimā'a al filasṭīnī al amrikī [PA Minutes of the American-Palestinian Meeting] (PLO): 4.

⁴⁰² 1 April 2004. Al sulṭa al waṭaniyya al filasṭīniyya: maḥḍar al ijtimā'a al filasṭīnī al amrikī (PLO): 4.

In a telling display of the new dynamics benefitting Israeli unilateralism, Palestinian concerns about the separation wall fell on deaf ears. The International Court of Justice deemed the barrier illegal in 2004. Its construction met criticism from the Bush administration, and Israel's own Shin Bet admitted it did not cause the decline in attacks. Nonetheless, the US and the Roadmap framework failed to prevent its construction. In fact, when PLO negotiators complained, State Department spokesman Steven Hadley argued that the wall was not within the US's purview.⁴⁰³ At a meeting 1 April 2004, Hadley clarified that the Americans were "not negotiating about the route of the wall with the Israeli side," asking instead that the Palestinians submit a report for him to pass on to the Israelis.⁴⁰⁴

Despite the barrier's clear breach of the Roadmap and Oslo parameters, the US – the chief broker of those same agreements – allowed its construction unfettered. This transgression evinces the rise of Israeli unilateralism, as the language of security obscured the wall's aims of creating new, lasting facts on the ground. However, perhaps the US had little grounds on which to criticize the wall: as in the case of target assassinations, American adoption of Israeli tactics in its own 'war on terror' implied an acceptance of Israeli political objectives passed off as security requirements. The same month as Hadley's conversation with the PLO about the Israeli wall, US troops carried out Operation Vigilant Resolve in the Iraqi city of Fallujah. In Fallujah, the US encircled the remaining population with five exit gates, where residents' biometric information was verified and sent to Virginia, classifying Iraqis before they could enter or leave their city.⁴⁰⁵ Though the US-built wall was not permanent, the coincidence of these events demonstrates Washington was at ease with Israeli methods of control.

The Gaza Withdrawal & American Guarantees

In another act of US-backed unilateralism, in April 2004 Sharon unveiled a strategy to withdraw Israeli troops and settlers from the Gaza Strip. Like the construction of the separation wall, the Gaza withdrawal was a clear violation of Palestinian territorial unity. While Sharon

⁴⁰³ International Court of Justice, "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories" (The Hague: July 2004.); Amos Harel, "Shin Bet: Palestinian Truce Main Cause for Reduced Terror," Haaretz 2 January 2006. In June 2004, the same month as the international ruling, the Israeli High Court of Justice found the wall necessary given the security threats to the state, and thus warranted by its proportionality, though a small section was rerouted because of the undue burden it caused Palestinian civilians. Hajjar, "International Humanitarian Law and "Wars on Terror,"" 29.

⁴⁰⁴ 1 April 2004: Al sulṭa al waṭaniyya al filastīniyya: maḥḍar al ijtimā'a al filastīnī al amrikī [PA Minutes of the American-Palestinian Meeting] (PLO): 12.

⁴⁰⁵ Polly Pallister-Wilkins, "How Walls Do Work: Security Barriers as Devices of Interruption and Data Capture," Security Dialogue 47, 2 (2016): 158-162.

presented the Gaza withdrawal in security terms, the decision functioned like the separation wall to cement his strategic political purpose.

In April 2004, the Sharon government issued a “general outline” for the Gaza withdrawal. It stated that in the absence of a reliable Palestinian partner for bilateral talks, and in light of the harmful nature of the contemporary stalemate, the removal of Israeli communities from Gaza would reduce friction with Palestinians and improve the security situation.⁴⁰⁶ With the decision to leave Gaza, Sharon decisively stemmed the flow of popular dissent rising in the Israeli public.⁴⁰⁷ Dov Weissglass, a close Sharon aid, reveals that the Prime Minister sought to seize the initiative in the context of the Geneva Accords (a civil-society response to the negotiators’ failures) and the highly-publicized refusal of a set of esteemed Israeli Air Force pilots to fly missions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. By removing settlers and troops from Gaza, Sharon argued there would be “no basis for claiming that the Gaza Strip is occupied territory,” though Israel would continue to control Gaza’s land perimeter, Gaza air space, and access to the sea off its coast. While the Palestinians would be “demilitarized and [...] devoid of weaponry,” Israel retained both preventative and reactive self-defense, including the use of force against Gaza.⁴⁰⁸

From the outset, the Palestinian leadership saw the pitfalls of this plan. Insiders realized that US energies would focus on executing Sharon’s initiative, making the transition as smooth as possible. During a US election year, the White House could scarcely afford friction with Israel.⁴⁰⁹ One PLO consultant posited that Sharon had “brilliantly changed the game from negotiations with Palestinians over their future to negotiations with the United States on a deal that could largely sideline the Palestinians.”⁴¹⁰ Indeed, Sharon wrote to Bush presenting his disengagement plan, simultaneously announcing his unilateral move and stating that a settlement between Israel and the Palestinians “must be anchored exclusively in the roadmap and we will oppose any other plan.”⁴¹¹ This blaring contradiction was cushioned with tributes to the prospects of “real democracy and liberty” through Palestinian reforms, made possible by Bush’s

⁴⁰⁶ 15 April 2004. Prime Minister’s Office: Disengagement Plan – General Outline (PLO): 1.

⁴⁰⁷ Ari Shavit, “The Big Freeze,” Haaretz 7 October 2004; Conal Urquhart, “Israeli Pilots Refuse to Fly Assassination Missions,” The Guardian 25 September 2003; Barnea and Kastner, Back Channel, 33-34.

⁴⁰⁸ 15 April 2004. Prime Minister’s Office: Disengagement Plan – General Outline (PLO): 3-4.

⁴⁰⁹ 6 April 2004. Bannerman & Associates, Inc. Report: Implications of Sharon’s Disengagement Initiative (PLO): 2.

⁴¹⁰ 6 April 2004. Bannerman & Associates, Inc. Report: Implications of Sharon’s Disengagement Initiative (PLO): 2.

⁴¹¹ 14 April 2004. Office of the Prime Minister: Ariel Sharon’s Letter to President George W. Bush (PLO): 2.

“courageous leadership in the war against global terror, [and his] important initiative to revitalize the Middle East as a more fitting home for its people.”⁴¹²

In their conversations with American officials, the PLO negotiators voiced both practical fears – that the destroyed airport and port, and unpredictable Rafah crossing to Egypt, would trap Gazans – but also the larger suspicion that Gaza would be Israel’s first and last substantial withdrawal. US officials repeatedly failed to clarify how the unilateral disengagement plan fit into the larger Roadmap.⁴¹³ In spite of Sharon’s omission of a larger linkage with plans for a West Bank withdrawal, the State Department encouraged the Palestinians to view the Gaza disengagement as an opportunity. Washington claimed it was “something that can be built upon” with adequate Palestinian reform, democratization, and security performance.⁴¹⁴

In a heated conversation with the American Roadmap monitoring team, the PLO negotiators brought up rumors swirling in the Arab press that Sharon’s disengagement plan would be accompanied by promises from Bush, enshrining Israeli priorities about the final status issues of borders and refugees.⁴¹⁵ Indeed, these guarantees came in a letter dated 14 April 2004 from Bush to Sharon, in which the President applauded the Gaza disengagement and the risks Sharon had taken in setting forth the plan.⁴¹⁶ The President admired assertive leadership, and later attested to his appreciation of the toll the withdrawal took on Sharon, not least in the division of his own party (Likud) and the creation of the Kadima party due to right-wing alienation from the withdrawal.⁴¹⁷ Bush rewarded his Israeli counterpart with two statements:

The United States is strongly committed to Israel’s security and well-being as a Jewish State. It seems clear that an agreed, just, fair, and realistic framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue as part of any final status agreement will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than in Israel.

As part of a final peace settlement, Israel must have secure and recognized borders, which should emerge from negotiations between the parties in accordance with UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338. In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers,

⁴¹² 14 April 2004. Office of the Prime Minister: Ariel Sharon’s Letter to President George W. Bush (PLO): 1-2.

⁴¹³ 6 April 2004. Bannerman & Associates, Inc. Report: Implications of Sharon’s Disengagement Initiative (PLO): 4.

⁴¹⁴ 1 April 2004. Al sulṭa al waṭaniyya al filasṭiniyya: maḥḍar al ijtimā‘a al filasṭinī al amrikī [PA Minutes of the American-Palestinian Meeting] (PLO): 8.

⁴¹⁵ 1 April 2004. Al sulṭa al waṭaniyya al filasṭiniyya: maḥḍar al ijtimā‘a al filasṭinī al amrikī [PA Minutes of the American-Palestinian Meeting] (PLO): 9.

⁴¹⁶ George W. Bush, “Letter from President Bush to Prime Minister Sharon” (Washington, DC: 14 April 2004.)

⁴¹⁷ Kurtzer, *The Peace Puzzle*, 180. For more on the schism in the Likud that the Gaza disengagement designs caused, see Barnea and Kastner, *Back Channel*, 13.

it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949, and all previous efforts to negotiate a two-state solution have reached the same conclusion. It is realistic to expect that any final status agreement will only be achieved on the basis of mutually agreed changes that reflect these realities.

The Palestinian opprobrium toward these statements was immediate. Erekat implored his American counterparts not to contradict decades of American policy and international law with such a measure. At a meeting with State Department officials April 1, Erekat warned the Americans not to give up Palestinian rights, which could only be conceded through negotiation between Israelis and Palestinians. Erekat condemned the forthcoming American enshrinement of the settlement blocs and denial of the 1967 lines; just as Palestinians would not negotiate about Texas and California for the White House, Bush had no right to renounce these Palestinian rights, Erekat argued.⁴¹⁸ Writing to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan the day after Bush's exchange with Sharon, Erekat condemned the complete overruling of Palestinian rights and self-determination as the US imposed Israel's vision. Erekat appealed to the UN, as a member of the Quartet charged with ensuring the Roadmap's implementation, to oppose the American move. The PLO spokesman pointed out that Bush's guarantees explicitly contravened international law, as a third party cannot singlehandedly erase the claims of another party in a conflict.⁴¹⁹

Sharon's inner circle, meanwhile, was exultant. Dov Weisglass, a top aide, later explained that in the Gaza disengagement, Israel had disposed of policing the Strip, an area of no national interest in comparison to the West Bank, and in exchange received the first-ever American statement that the large settlement blocs will forever be part of Israel.⁴²⁰ According to Weisglass, the democratization agenda served as "formaldehyde," freezing the negotiations until the Palestinians began behaving "as Finns." He gloated that "in years to come, perhaps decades, when negotiations will be held between Israel and the Palestinians, the master of the world will pound on the table and say: We stated already ten years ago that the large blocs are part of Israel."⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸ 1 April 2004. Al sulṭa al waṭaniyya al filasṭīniyya: maḥḍar al ijtimā'a al filasṭīnī al amrikī [PA Minutes of the American-Palestinian Meeting] (PLO): 9.

⁴¹⁹ 15 April 2004. Office of the Prime Minister: Letter from Ahmed Quereh to Kofi Annan (PLO): 1-2.

⁴²⁰ Shavit, "The Big Freeze"; Miller, *The Too Much Promised Land*, 351-352.

⁴²¹ Shavit, "The Big Freeze."

This exchange of letters thus formalized the US's adoption of Israel's agenda, protecting the political imperatives of maximum land with minimum Palestinians under the guise of security. Legitimate Palestinian rights under international law were swept aside by the democratization and counterterrorism logic of the 'global war on terror.'

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the shift in US-led interventions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict between 2000 and 2004, demonstrating exactly how the US's GWOT agenda came together with its initiatives to end the Second Intifada. While the US first sought a return to negotiations in the vein of the Oslo process, this vision was overthrown as the US absorbed Israel's internal security logic, which was to maintain territorial control through separation. This transformation accelerated with the onset of the GWOT, in which Arafat was recast as a member of a larger worldwide threat, and his removal became part of Bush's emerging 'freedom agenda' for the wider Middle East.

As this analysis has shown, the shift in US policy converged with Sharon's political purposes. The apex of the American reorientation came in April 2004 with Bush's assurance to Sharon that the US not only accepted Israel's unilateral disengagement from Gaza, in contravention of previous negotiations, but was also committed to preserving Israeli political demands regarding the settlement blocs and refugee question. Reconfigured against the global war on terror, US hegemony in intervention in the Palestinian context reached new heights as it ultimately foreclosed the possibility of a truly negotiated end to the conflict.

Chapter 2: The Roadmap and the ‘Freedom Agenda’ in Palestine

Introduction

This chapter examines American policy in Israel-Palestine as the Second Intifada ended between 2004 and 2005, tracing US interventions that focused on reviving the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a ‘partner for peace’ in the negotiations Washington intended to broker at the end of the Roadmap. Washington embraced the Israeli goal of deposing Arafat in the framework of the ‘freedom agenda’ leveraged against Saddam Hussein nearly simultaneously. The will to replace Arafat – bolstered since the Oslo Accords as the only Palestinian leader capable of making peace – originally functioned as part of a larger embrace of Israeli unilateralism in Washington. However, in 2004 and 2005, the US focus turned to two key points: promoting institutional reform and democratization within the PA, in keeping with the Roadmap explored in the previous chapter.

This chapter shows how, in the aftermath of the intifada, Washington first prioritized a process of democratization in the Palestinian Authority, before turning toward securitization in rejection of democracy. Washington was at the forefront of the efforts to reconstitute the financially and physically destroyed Palestinian Authority. In doing so, reform – particularly in the security sector – came to serve as an element in what Jeff Halper describes as a “matrix of control” over Palestinian life.⁴²² Since 2004, this transformation has been born out of intervention framed as technical, apolitical service delivery.⁴²³ A close reading of diplomatic communications exposed by WikiLeaks and interviews with a number of security and aid personnel active on the ground inform this chapter’s narrative.

Chapter Outline

This chapter first charts the Palestinian Authority’s reforms at the international community’s behest, monitored by the Quartet. It documents how these reforms were in fact

⁴²² Jeff Halper, “The 94 Percent Solution: A Matrix of Control,” *Middle East Report* 216 (2000): 15.

⁴²³ Tahani Mustafa, “Insecurity through Security Sector Reform,” *Ethnopolitics Papers* 36 (2015): 12; Markus Kienscherf, “A Programme of Global Pacification: US Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Biopolitics of Human (In)Security,” *Security Dialogue* 42, 6 (2011): 517-535.

shaped by Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in August 2005. The need to simultaneously facilitate the withdrawal significantly undermined the priorities originally laid out in the PA reform agenda. The international community, led by the US as the dominating power in the Quartet, acquiesced to Israel's unilateral reorientation of the Roadmap and reordered the reform priorities to suit Israeli prerogatives. At the same time, the Quartet neglected to hold Israel to its Phase I Roadmap obligations – a settlement freeze and dismantling of illegal outposts.

The second part of the chapter then turns to the Gaza disengagement. Rather than confront Israel following its decision to usurp the Roadmap, the international community instead became a partner in Israel's violations of its agreements. During the Gaza disengagement, the Quartet devoted extensive finances and manpower to accommodate Israel's constantly shifting security logic and its attendant limitations on Palestinian movement. In place of political intervention, the US assisted the reform and institution rebuilding process in the PA in 2004 and 2005. These reforms are thoroughly scrutinized in this chapter, revealing how US policy in Palestine created striking parallels with contemporary US intervention in Iraq. Through a close reading of the Palestinian context, this analysis demonstrates inextricable links Washington enacted in its policies in Palestine and other sites of the GWOT, all the while embracing Israeli demands.⁴²⁴

The Gaza Disengagement: Facilitating Violation

As seen previously, in April 2004, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced his intent to withdraw Israeli settlements and military installations from the Gaza Strip. As will be demonstrated in this section, the unilateral Israeli moves in Gaza that directly contravened existing agreements disrupted the coherence of the Roadmap, and particularly its calls for Palestinian democratization. In fact, the smooth execution of the Gaza withdrawal preoccupied the international actors involved on the ground to such an extent that political agreements were once more sidelined. The result was a growing chasm between the aims of Washington's 'freedom agenda' and feasible Palestinian electoral outcomes.

Reform Under Ongoing Pressure: 2004 and 2005

⁴²⁴ Khalili, "The Location of Palestine in Global Counterinsurgencies," 416.

Sharon's announcement in April 2004 of his intention to withdraw from Gaza invigorated the American team in Israel-Palestine. Washington seized upon Israeli unilateralism as a "courageous" step forward.⁴²⁵ Dennis Ross, President Clinton's right-hand man in Israel-Palestine throughout the 1990s, exemplified the dominant thinking in Washington. Ross described the Israeli withdrawal as "a small glimmer of hope" while "the world remains riveted on Iraq." He explained that Palestinian leadership agreed with this characterization to an extent, but were worried that they could "no longer blame failings on the Israelis."⁴²⁶ From the American perspective, the withdrawal would force the PA to assume full responsibility in Gaza.

Sharon's withdrawal decision recast the aging military hero and father of the settlement movement as a compromising man of peace. His announcement broke the impasse in the Roadmap, which had stalled with Abbas's stormy departure and replacement by Ahmed Qurei on 3 October 2003. Abbas's resignation came amidst breached ceasefires that saw regular Israeli liquidations of Palestinian militants and political leaders, and significant pushback at his attempts to reign in the Palestinian Authority security forces (PASF) from their factionalized leadership during the uprising. Sharon's plan allowed Israel to set the international agenda back into motion, while delaying a return to the Roadmap in earnest.⁴²⁷ Tanya Reinhart called it a "spectacular *fuite en avance*," earning Sharon the accolades of the international community while entirely bypassing Israel's obligations.⁴²⁸

Contrary to Dennis Ross's characterization, Palestinian concerns centered on the danger that the disengagement would end further territorial concessions. The PLO's Negotiations Support Unit (NSU) warned that the "withdrawal must not be seen as a tradeoff between Gaza and strengthening the occupation in the West Bank."⁴²⁹ Popular expectations that the withdrawal would improve daily life were high, but the Gaza withdrawal offered little hope to the Palestinian negotiating position.

Moreover, the Palestinian political leadership had fragmented during the intifada, and the PA stood to suffer from a bumpy transfer of authority in Gaza. Another danger lay in the

⁴²⁵ United States Senate, "Statement by United States Security Coordinator Lieutenant General Keith W. Dayton" (Washington, DC: Foreign Relations Committee, 15 March 2006.)

⁴²⁶ United States Senate, "Ambassador Dennis Ross – Testimony: Taking Advantage of a Middle Eastern Moment: The Need for an Active American Role" (Washington, DC: Foreign Relations Committee, 20 July 2004.)

⁴²⁷ De Soto, Alvaro. End of Mission Report, May 2007. <https://palestina-komitee.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/64-DeSoto-Report-EU-May-2007A.pdf>

⁴²⁸ Tanya Reinhart, *The Road Map to Nowhere: Israel/Palestine Since 2003* (London: Verso, 2006), 27; 30-35.

⁴²⁹ 29 February 2004. NSU Email: Gaza Withdrawal Plan (PLO): 2.

possibility that Sharon's unilateralism would send Palestinians the message that the Israeli withdrawal rewarded violent resistance in Gaza, particularly by rejectionist groups, during the uprising.⁴³⁰ The NSU worried about the potential of a chaotic withdrawal, which would play into Hamas's hands. The Islamist movement had been at the forefront of armed resistance in the Strip during the uprising, and the Israeli departure seemed to say that Hamas had won the battle – further minimizing Fatah's leadership. While Palestinians were eager for any withdrawal of Israeli troops, it was evident that disengagement would divert attention from the Roadmap and present significant challenges to the PA and its largely destroyed infrastructure.

Further, the NSU worried that Israel would simply operate its methods of control remotely after withdrawing from Gaza. Concerns mounted in particular about the mobility of Gaza's population. In an internal NSU briefing dated 19 April 2004, the Palestinians noted that the disengagement's wording preserved Israel's capacity to conduct incursions in Gaza.⁴³¹ It would be vital to connect the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The disengagement plan called for an international role in administering the crossing between Gaza and Egypt at Rafah, which the PLO called on Israel to relinquish.⁴³² As such, the withdrawal inserted a new set of pressing economic, political, and security priorities into the existing Roadmap arrangements.

Perhaps most concerning, there was a clear contradiction between Sharon's stipulations that the Gaza Strip would be "demilitarized," and the call for security coordination during the withdrawal.⁴³³ The NSU noted challenges such as the lack of unity in the PA security forces (PASF), the confiscation *en masse* of their arms by Israel since 2000, and the urgent need still in the spring of 2004 to implement a *hudna* or *tahdi'a* between the factions, particularly in Gaza.⁴³⁴ This latter issue of a ceasefire was a particular point of contention with Israel. The first phase of the Roadmap called upon Abbas to actively, visibly dismantle Palestinian resistance organizations. To Israel, this demand precluded reconciliation and ceasefires between Palestinian factions and with Israel, but rather called for the PA to confront Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other

⁴³⁰ 29 February 2004. NSU Email: Gaza Withdrawal Plan (PLO): 1.

⁴³¹ 19 April 2004. NSU Internal Briefing: Assessment of Sharon's Withdrawal Plan – Security File (PLO): 1.

⁴³² 19 April 2004. NSU Internal Briefing: Assessment of Sharon's Withdrawal Plan – Security File (PLO): 6-7; 31 May 2004. NSU Negotiation Brief: Land Corridor Between West Bank and Gaza – Recommendations (PLO); 13 June 2004. NSU Email Re: Summary of Territorial Link (PLO); 15 June 2004. NSU Decidable Issues for Borders: Territorial Link Between West Bank and Gaza Strip (PLO).

⁴³³ April 2004 NSU Internal Briefing – Assessment of Sharon's Withdrawal Plan, p. 3-4.

⁴³⁴ May 2004 Email Re: Rajoub Meeting with UNSCO and Israeli 3rd Party Interest.

rejectionist groups head-on. Certain to provoke intra-factional violence, the Israeli demand became a guiding principle as the PA grappled with the disengagement and reform.⁴³⁵

In response to this precarious situation, the PLO quickly formulated responses to Sharon's withdrawal ambitions. The NSU advocated for a comprehensive Israeli withdrawal to the positions of 28 September 2000, with bilaterally negotiated security arrangements. Resumed security responsibilities with Israeli assent would enable the PA to assert ownership over the Israeli withdrawal process by improving daily life for Palestinians. The NSU issued a detailed, five-week plan in late February 2004. In the plan, Israeli direct control in the West Bank and Gaza would cease, allowing improved freedom of movement, an end to the closure policy, and lifting the siege on Arafat in his Ramallah compound.⁴³⁶ According to the NSU, only a clear timeline connecting the withdrawal to permanent status negotiations would prevent the Gaza withdrawal from endangering the PA.

International Assistance to the Gaza Withdrawal

The international response to the disengagement plan, spearheaded by American officials who dominated the Quartet, corresponded roughly with the concerns outlined by the NSU.⁴³⁷ Three distinct aspects of the disengagement guided these efforts. First, the Quartet devoted resources and energies to economic development and the transfer of settlement assets to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The intifada and Israeli incursions had wrought widespread destruction in Gaza, necessitating immediate aid.⁴³⁸ Second, international pressure on the PA accelerated the reforms to its security forces, with direct American and European supervision. Third, the PA prepared for presidential, municipal, and legislative council elections.

The first stage of these efforts, in the summer and autumn of 2004, occurred alongside continued violence, particularly from armed factions in Gaza. As David Satterfield, principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee 20 July 2004, suicide attacks by rejectionist groups constituted the primary transgression from the

⁴³⁵ Reinhart, *The Road Map to Nowhere*, 70-75.

⁴³⁶ 28 February 2004. NSU Withdrawal Plan from the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Resumption of PA Control (PLO).

⁴³⁷ De Soto, *End of Mission Report*, 5-6.

⁴³⁸ February 2004. NSU Memo to Erekat re: Gaza Withdrawal (PLO), 3; World Bank and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Al-Filasṭīniyyiūn akthar fuqrān fī ḡal al-azma al-iqtisādiyya," (Washington, DC and Ramallah: October 2004), 7, 10-11.

Roadmap in US eyes.⁴³⁹ In response, repeated IDF incursions in the Gaza Strip destroyed property, restricted movement, and segmented the Strip into heavily patrolled spheres. Israel massively expanded the Philadelphi Road, a monitored corridor along Gaza's border with Egypt, through the demolition of homes in the adjacent Rafah refugee camp.⁴⁴⁰ Simultaneously, laborers' access to the Erez Industrial Estate and permits for day laborers in Israel plummeted, and 8,000 jobs were lost in Gaza in 2004.⁴⁴¹ Ongoing violence limited humanitarian aid, and private enterprise suffered from heightened and unpredictable transaction costs and restrictions on transportation. Gaza's agricultural sector was particularly susceptible to high losses, as fruits, vegetables, and flowers spoiled at checkpoints.⁴⁴² In the summer of 2004, displacement, economic ruin, and limited mobility were daily realities throughout much of Gaza and the West Bank.

In order to regain international backing for institutions and services incapacitated in the course of the intifada, the Palestinian Authority set out to fulfill its reform obligations. The Roadmap built upon steps laid out in the early 2002 "100 Day Reform Plan." The entire reform structure was closely coordinated through the Quartet's International Task Force on Palestinian Reform, which included representatives from major donors Japan, Canada, and Norway, as well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF).⁴⁴³

In June 2004, the Ministry of Finance adopted a Wage Bill Containment Plan. The plan aimed to manage the effects of the 2003 increases in public sector salaries that saw expenditures rise nearly 17%. Hiring had spiraled out of control particularly in the security sector, absorbing the employment losses that resulted from private sector collapse under the closure regime. Like in the security sector, civil servant hiring also functioned as an efficient form of patronage.⁴⁴⁴ In the face of reluctant donor support, the PA was encouraged to streamline its bureaucracy, targeting hiring levels and what the World Bank described as unsustainable public-sector pension schemes.⁴⁴⁵ The World Bank stepped into the role of primary contact between the donors. The

⁴³⁹ United States Senate, "Statement by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs David M. Satterfield" (Washington, DC: Foreign Relations Committee, 20 July 2004), 4.

⁴⁴⁰ Reinhart, *The Road Map to Nowhere*, 52-60.

⁴⁴¹ World Bank, "Stagnation or Revival? Israeli Disengagement and Palestinian Economic Prospects" (Washington, DC, December 2004), 6.

⁴⁴² World Bank, "Stagnation or Revival?" 8.

⁴⁴³ In early 2002, the Task Force established working groups on financial accountability, civil society, local government, elections, judicial reform, administrative reform, and the market economy. Nathalie Tocci, "The Middle East Quartet and (in)Effective Multilateralism," *The Middle East Journal* 67, 1 (2013): 32.

⁴⁴⁴ Khan, "Evaluating the Emerging Palestinian State," 39.

⁴⁴⁵ World Bank, "Stagnation or Revival?" 20-21.

World Bank oversaw the Palestinian reform process in the year prior to the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. USAID, Washington's international development agency, was another important partner in these efforts, as were the European equivalents.⁴⁴⁶

In taking the lead on Palestinian reform, the World Bank and USAID fell into a pattern of prioritizing quickly implemented relief projects designed to provide employment and prevent Palestinian upheaval. For example, industrial estates in acutely impacted areas like Erez, Tarkoumia, Qalqilya, and Tulkarem were supposed to offer immediate employment opportunities for Palestinians.⁴⁴⁷ This framework provoked the ire of the NSU, who reported that meetings between the PA's Ministry of National Economy, the NSU, the World Bank, and USAID failed to sufficiently address concerns about Israeli closures.

Further, the NSU posited that USAID and Israeli positions in these meetings were indistinguishable. A memo from an August meeting noted conflicting opinions from the World Bank and USAID; the NSU reported that the USAID team "presented their and Israel's position," while the World Bank was more objective in its positions.⁴⁴⁸ Toufic Haddad has demonstrated USAID's historic aversion to upsetting Israeli priorities, all the while forwarding an aid program that consistently adhered to the principle of maximizing American interests. USAID frequently inserted Israeli political prerogatives into the technical reform agenda, creating tension with the World Bank-directed effort.⁴⁴⁹

The World Bank, on the other hand, gained NSU appreciation for its attempts to address Palestinian needs. The Palestinians noted that the Bank promised not to force a political compromise through the aid implementation mechanisms around Gaza's borders. In both cases, however, the donors presented "unclear," "problematic" proposals to contend with the Israeli closure regime.⁴⁵⁰ Further, American-Israeli proximity proved a consistent obstacle in the technical discussions, which this early exchange presages.

Washington's Vision in Palestinian Hands

⁴⁴⁶ Interview, Nigel Roberts, April 2017.

⁴⁴⁷ Kanafani, Nu'man and David Cobham. "The Economic Record of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in the West Bank and Gaza: An Assessment." *Palestinian Economy: Forty Years of Occupation ... Forty Years of Arrested Development*. Ramallah and Jerusalem: Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute, 2007: 33-35.

⁴⁴⁸ 26 August 2004. NSU Memo Re: Update on Meetings with World Bank (PLO): 1.

⁴⁴⁹ During the early Oslo era, this included engaging in game theory to speculate about the 'winners' and 'losers' of state-building investment, demonstrating a striking indifference to the Palestinian recipients of donations. Toufic Haddad, *Palestine Ltd.: Neoliberalism and Nationalism in the Occupied Territory* (London: I.B. Tauris and Centre for Palestine Studies, London Middle East Institute, 2016), 220-228. (eBook)

⁴⁵⁰ 26 August 2004. NSU Memo Re: Update on Meetings with World Bank (PLO): 1.

At the political level, the summer of 2004 saw renewed diplomatic contacts between Israel and the PA. Abbas and Sharon convened on 12 June 2004 for the first time since February 2003 for what proved to be an unsuccessful discussion, despite American, Egyptian, and European backing. In early September 2004, Palestinian, Israeli, and Egyptian leaders gathered again with representatives of international financial institutions in Sharm al-Sheikh to work through priorities for the disengagement. Salam Fayyad, a former World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) official who became PA Minister of Finance in June 2002, directed the Palestinian side of these talks. Fayyad's ministry recognized the need to take "immediate, practical action [...] to shape and maximize the new openings provided by disengagement."⁴⁵¹ With Fayyad's vision in mind, on 27 September 2004 the PA cabinet adopted a One-Year Reform Action Plan.

The aims of the plan exemplified the values imposed by international donors on the wreckage of Arafat's PA. It is worth dwelling for a moment on the broader trends behind the PA's painstaking efforts to regain international donors' confidence, and the links between Washington's economic priorities and the Bush Administration's vision of Middle Eastern democratization. Building on the modernization school of economics, US policy grounded itself rhetorically in the notion that the free market forces democracies to function as citizens demand the rule of law to protect their assets.⁴⁵²

Contemporary parallels with the Iraqi context were striking, as the reformed PA enshrined strict free market principles also imposed by the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld outlined his "core principles for a free Iraq" on 27 May 2003, calling for "a single country, which does not support terrorists" and privileges "market systems, not Stalinist command systems."⁴⁵³ The same month, USAID and the US Treasury Department drafted a document called "Moving the Iraqi Government from Recovery to Sustainable Growth," a six-point plan for privatization of state entities, capacity building, and regulation reform designed to invigorate private investment.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ 10 April 2004. Working Paper #2 – Disengagement and the Road Map: Getting from Here to There: 1-2.

⁴⁵² Lars Berger, "The Missing Link? US Policy and the International Dimensions of Failed Democratic Transitions in the Arab World," *Political Studies* 59 (2011): 40.

⁴⁵³ Donald H. Rumsfeld, "Core Principles for a Free Iraq," *Wall Street Journal* 27 May 2003.

⁴⁵⁴ Robert Looney, "The Neoliberal Model's Planned Role in Iraq's Economic Transition." *Middle East Journal* 57, 4 (2003): 570, 576-577.

The language and post-conflict framework of the US agenda in Iraq mirrored the April 2003 Roadmap. The Roadmap urged reconstruction in Palestine and the creation of a “practicing democracy based on liberty and tolerance” through free market benchmarks and reform.⁴⁵⁵ Beyond the ‘freedom’ discourse leveraged in both contexts, it is evident that the US had a similar vision for the transformation of Palestine and Iraq. Under what Khalid Medani calls a process of “state-building in reverse,” the early American officials occupying Iraq slimmed down the state bureaucracy, rapidly liberalized the economy, and outlawed key social welfare provisions.⁴⁵⁶

Though framed as a turn toward the apolitical self-regulation of the market system, the dismantling of the Iraqi state along a Washington-designed blueprint was decidedly political.⁴⁵⁷ The Coalition doled out contracts and appointments with the purpose of excluding swathes of the population and favoring the interests of American capital. At the same time, the Coalition created short-term employment in infrastructure reconstruction to diffuse anti-occupation sentiment, at the expense of long-term stability. The second phase of Iraq’s neoliberal ‘shock therapy’ was a heavily supervised democratization process undertaken across Iraqi municipalities and villages, primarily at the hands of contractors hired by USAID.⁴⁵⁸

American democratization and state-building initiatives in post-invasion Iraq mirrored patterns of exclusion enacted in Palestine.⁴⁵⁹ The amended May 2003 PA Basic Law bent to the pressure of the international donor community’s preferences. Article 21.1 stated “the economic system in Palestine shall be based on the principles of a free market economy,” a formulation that met outcry from civil society advocates of vulnerable Palestinians.⁴⁶⁰ As in Iraq, two problems remained unresolved by the free market economic vision. First, the effort to privatize state functions ignored the fact that many Palestinians relied on the PA for public employment,

⁴⁵⁵ United Nations. “A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.” New York (April 2003): 1.

⁴⁵⁶ Khalid Mustafa Medani, “State Building in Reverse: The Neo-Liberal “Reconstruction” of Iraq,” *Middle East Report* 232 (2004): 29-30; Samer Abboud, “Failures (and Successes?) of Neoliberal Economic Policy in Iraq,” *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 2, 3 (2009): 430-431.

⁴⁵⁷ Toby Dodge, “Intervention and Dreams of Exogenous Statebuilding: The Application of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq,” *Review of International Studies* 39 (2013): 1192.

⁴⁵⁸ Medani, “Statebuilding in Reverse,” 31; Richard H. Brown, “Reconstruction of Infrastructure in Iraq: End to a Means or Means to an End?” *Third World Quarterly* 26, 4-5 (2005): 759-775; Looney, “Neoliberalism In a Conflict State: The Viability of Economic Shock Therapy in Iraq,” *Strategic Insights* (Center for Contemporary conflict, Naval Postgraduate School) 3, 6 (2004): 3-4; Justin Alexander, “The Paris Club, the Washington Consensus and the Baghdad Cake,” *Middle East Report* 232 (2004): 32-35. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

⁴⁵⁹ Aboud, “Failures (and Successes?) of Neoliberal Economic Policy in Iraq,” 435-437. See also Eric Herring and Glen Rangwala, *Iraq in Fragments: The Occupation and Its Legacy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 60-70, 81-95.

⁴⁶⁰ Palestinian National Authority, “Amended Basic Law,” 18 March 2003. <http://www.palestinianbasiclaw.org/basic-law/2003-amended-basic-law>; Haddad, *Palestine Ltd.*, 529-534 (eBook).

like in Iraq. Second, the post-conflict push for private investment disregarded the ongoing, often violent instability that rendered such investment unlikely.⁴⁶¹

The PA's adherence to the neoliberal orthodoxies preferred by the World Bank and its partners failed to mask the contradictions wrought by the occupation and the PA's limited authority. The centrality of neo-patrimonial allegiance to the PA's viability is well-documented, and the Israeli closure regime has been the overwhelming determinant of the West Bank and Gaza's economic climate since 1967. As such, the World Bank and IMF's recommendations for fiscal discipline in the public wage bill and promotion of favorable conditions for private investment were particularly unrealistic, duplicating advice to other developing countries while effectively ignoring the Israeli occupation.⁴⁶²

Nonetheless, the PA's One-Year Reform Plan embodied the international community's priorities.⁴⁶³ First, it sought to improve financial accountability and transparency within the governing bodies, fighting corruption with strengthened monitoring mechanisms. The plan promoted a free market economy through improved regulatory frameworks and revitalization of the private sector. The PA set out to survey the size of the civil service and its ministries before downsizing and freezing hires. In keeping with the diffusion of presidential power imposed on Arafat through the creation of the role of prime minister, the One-Year Reform Action Plan also fortified governance through changes to the judiciary and legal systems. The Plan demonstrates the PA's moves toward the international donor community's demands.

However, the advent of these reforms targeting neo-patrimonial governance did little to alleviate the conditions that inspired them as violence spiked sharply once more. In response to rocket fire from Hamas militants, Israel launched Operation Days of Penitence on 29 September. The campaign lasted three weeks and employed aerial drones and attack helicopters, punishing Gazans and pushing them to pressure al-Qassam teams to stop mortar attacks from in Beit Hanoun, Jabaliyya, and Beit Lahiyya. The operation was a harbinger of Israel's coming post-disengagement shift, policing and punishing the Gaza Strip primarily through airpower. Over 130 Palestinians in Gaza were killed during the month of October. This intensification coincided

⁴⁶¹ Looney, "Neoliberalism in a Conflict State: The Viability of Economic Shock Therapy in Iraq," 6.

⁴⁶² Toufic Haddad, "Political Economy of Neoliberal Approaches to Conflict Resolution and Statebuilding in the Occupied Palestinian Territories 1993 to 2013," *Bulletin for the Council for British Research in the Levant* 8, 1 (2013): 33; Kanafani and Cobham, "The Economic Record of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the West Bank and Gaza," 34, 74-76; Haddad, *Palestine Ltd.*, 220-228. (eBook)

⁴⁶³ Sept 2004 PNA Prime Minister's Office – Reform Coordination & Technical Support Unit: *One Year Reform Action Plan*, September 2004-September 2005 (PLO).

with an acceleration of what Sara Roy has described as the long-term policy of “de-development” in Gaza. Israel began dismantling the Erez industrial zone in the northern Strip that served as the primary source of income for over 50,000 Gazans. The state reimbursed Israeli investors while Palestinian laborers were left unemployed, in a pattern of deteriorating economic opportunities that dominated the Strip. The PA’s adoption in earnest of the international community’s reform directives was insufficient to deter Israeli actions.⁴⁶⁴

In November 2004, Arafat passed away under mysterious circumstances at a Paris hospital, airlifted from his besieged Ramallah compound. At the helm of the Palestinian nationalist movement for nearly five decades, his death created a leadership vacuum that exacerbated the existing schisms in his Fatah party.⁴⁶⁵ In the context of the Gaza disengagement and Hamas’s ascendance during the intifada, strongest in Gaza, his passing compounded the polarization of the Palestinian political field at a crucial moment.

Concurrently, Sharon faced massive public debate in Israel regarding his decision to remove settlers from Gaza. Sharon insisted that the disengagement would constitute an end to the occupation of the Gaza Strip, a notion firmly rejected by the Palestinians.⁴⁶⁶ His decision, after decades of encouraging settlement, sparked vitriol in the Israeli public. Concerns about Sharon’s decision compounded due to smuggling and ongoing rocket fire from the closed Strip.⁴⁶⁷ Likud, the party he co-founded in 1973, began to splinter from within at the decision. Its right wing, led by Sharon’s rival Benjamin Netanyahu, came to the settlers’ defense. Netanyahu projected himself as the rightful leader of the Greater Israel movement.

Sharon’s political calculus had yet to be proven in the months following his April 2004 announcement.⁴⁶⁸ Mired in Iraq by the end of 2004, Washington became more attuned to international pressure. The Bush Administration was pleased Arafat had left the Palestinian scene, believing him responsible for orchestrating terrorism. Seeking an opening in the Israeli-

⁴⁶⁴ Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 75. Darryl Li, “The Gaza Strip as Laboratory: Notes in the Wake of Disengagement.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, 2 (2006): 49; Sara Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-Development* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995.)

⁴⁶⁵ Jamil Hilal, “The Polarization of the Palestinian Political Field,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36, 3 (2010): 26; George Giacaman, “Mustaqbal a-nizām a-sīyyāsī al-filastīnī b’ad ‘Arafāt,” *Majallat al dirāsāt al filastīniyya* 16, 62 (2005): 51-52. International Crisis Group, “Palestine: Salvaging Fatah.” *Middle East Report* 91, 12 November 2009: 3; Jacob Høiglit, “Fatah from Below: The Clash of Generations in Palestine,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43, 4 (2016): 459-460.

⁴⁶⁶ De Soto, *End of Mission Report*, 7-8. Some, like Tanya Reinhart, have argued that Sharon’s announcement of the disengagement announcement was directed at the Bush administration and that he had no firm intentions to carry it out. Instead, he hoped for a pressure-free eighteen-month period from the Road Map, in which he would find a way to renege on his commitment. Reinhart, *The Road Map to Nowhere*, 44-45.

⁴⁶⁷ Uri Dan. *Ariel Sharon: An Intimate Portrait*. (Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 268.

⁴⁶⁸ Dan, *Sharon*, 272-275.

Palestinian conflict to improve the image of the ‘freedom agenda,’ the White House held Sharon to his promise to leave Gaza.⁴⁶⁹

However, Arafat’s death did not immediately improve Israeli relations with the PA, even as the PA attempted to improve security coordination for a smooth Palestinian Presidential election to replace him. For example, on 16 December 2004, Palestinian General Security Forces head Isma‘il Abu Jibr convened with his Israeli counterparts at the Beit El settlement to design plans for presidential elections to replace Arafat, slated for 9 January 2005. They hoped to ease the checkpoints and allow Palestinians to move freely to vote. At this stage, however, security coordination remained very incremental – at the December 16 meeting, it was decided to convene again the next week in order to clarify coordination for Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem. Further, Israel allowed the Palestinian security forces only to wear uniforms in Area C, and to carry arms only when transporting ballot boxes at pre-arranged times.⁴⁷⁰

Despite this distrust, the election proceeded smoothly. Hamas maintained its boycott of the election, and Mahmoud Abbas was elected Palestinian president, securing 60% of the electorate. Abbas enjoyed support from the White House, where he was seen as a pragmatic, peace-loving moderate. At the time, Abbas’s success was interpreted as a sign of Fatah’s strong prospects in future legislative elections, mandated by the Roadmap and intended to bolster the PA in the context of the Gaza disengagement.⁴⁷¹

In order for the PA to continue fulfilling its democratization obligations, however, Abbas would need to address the factions that continued to reject his authority and the PA structure. The biggest challenge to Abbas remained the militant actions of those rejecting his vision of an end to armed resistance. An Islamic Jihad suicide bombing in Tel Aviv 25 February 2005 killed five Israelis and injured fifty more, making the talks Abbas planned to convene with the factions to reach a ceasefire all the more urgent.⁴⁷²

The Push for Palestinian Political Pluralism

The Cairo Agreement

⁴⁶⁹ Reinhart, *The Road Map to Nowhere*, 15, 45.

⁴⁷⁰ 16 December 2004. A-Sulṭa al-filasṭīniyya: al-āmn al-‘ām wa al-shurṭa - al-lijna al-āmnīyya al-iqlīmiyya - makhḍar ijtimā‘ mushtarik (PLO): 2-3.

⁴⁷¹ Hilal, “The Polarization of the Palestinian Political Field,” 35; International Crisis Group, “Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration,” *Middle East Report* 49, 18 January 2006: 7-8.

⁴⁷² 28 February 2005, Fatah – Internal Divisions Threaten Reform Efforts, [WikiLeaks]1-2.

After his installation as PA President, Abbas set his sights on preparing for elections in line with the Roadmap in order to return to final status negotiations. Abbas's aim was to "remove the Palestinian portfolio from the domain of 'terrorism' in which it had been placed by Israel and the United States."⁴⁷³ In doing so, his process was twofold. First, he endeavored to end the violence, particularly in Gaza, that incited Israeli incursions and ruined prospects for a peaceful democratic process. Second, Abbas sought to secure international support for Palestinian reform and reconstruction in the form of donor aid.

One month after his election, Abbas and his team convened with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Sharm al-Sheikh, renewing dialogue following Arafat's passing. Though the Palestinian attendees complained of the difficulty even reaching the meeting due to the separation wall, the meeting laid the groundwork for renewed security coordination. Sharon congratulated Abbas on his electoral success and agreed on the urgent need to renew security coordination through joint regional committees reporting to the Palestinian and Israeli cabinets. Abbas emphasized that his reform agenda prioritized consolidating the security forces and increasing their capacity to ensure law and order.⁴⁷⁴ At several points, Sharon repeated his demand that the Palestinians act to curtail violence and incitement, arguing there would be no path forward without dismantling the "terrorist infrastructure." He alluded to the political complications of the withdrawal in Israeli politics, stating, "you have a problem establishing a government, and I have a problem within the government."⁴⁷⁵ It is on the basis of these priorities that Abbas proceeded.

In March 2005, Abbas struck two important agreements to advance his overall vision. First, in Cairo he brokered a three-part *hudna* with the twelve largest Palestinian factions. The document reaffirmed the basic tenets of the nationalist movement, including the right to resist the occupation and refugees' rights to return and to their property.⁴⁷⁶ In exchange for a lull in attacks against Israel for one year, the first legislative elections in nine years were planned for July 2005. Hamas agreed to take part in the elections for the first time. The PLO also avowed to undertake

⁴⁷³ Giacaman, "Mustaqbal a-niẓām a-sīyyāsī al-filasṭīnī b'ad 'Arafāt," 5.

⁴⁷⁴ 8 February 2005. Makhḍar ijtimā' filasṭīnī- isr' ālī (PLO): 2, 5.

⁴⁷⁵ 8 February 2005. Makhḍar ijtimā' filasṭīnī- isr' ālī (PLO): 4.

⁴⁷⁶ "A-ra'īs istaqbala fī ghaza wafdān min al-ḥarakat ḥamās tatakhidh qarārān mabd'iyyan b'al-inḍmam ilā munzamat a-taḥrīr," Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda 22 March 2005; Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within* (Boston: Olive Branch Press, 2007), 212.

reforms of its outdated structures, including democratizing the Central Committee monopolized by an old guard debilitated by age, infighting and death.⁴⁷⁷

It is important to note that reform proponents issued from a wide variety of Palestinian perspectives. American encouragement harnessed this momentum and infused it with a new source of funding, but Washington's enthusiasm did not align with the interest of most Palestinian democratization advocates. These reformers included independent intellectuals, members of marginalized PA institutions jockeying for more influence, underrepresented Gazans, and Fatah Central Committee leaders who perceived reform as essential to renew their own legitimacy within the PLO. Crucially, some of these voices called for a complete dismantling of the PA and a reorientation of the national project in line with popular demands. As Osamah Khalil has pointed out, the PLO remained anachronistically rooted in its emergence as a Cold War-era national liberation movement. Its structure was designed to amass popular energy from across Palestinian society under tight leadership, giving little platform to voices outside that leadership until eventual victory. Personalized concentration of power and budgetary controls under the Executive Committee, as well as the sidelining of non-Fatah factions, had gradually made the PLO indistinguishable in all but name from Fatah. These same impulses shut down the PLO's ostensible democratic organs, the National Council and the PLO's Central Committee.⁴⁷⁸

An awareness of these frustrations was entirely absent from American interest in Palestinian reform during the initial Roadmap phase. Washington's purpose was to empower a more amenable Palestinian partner, and this aim anchored the Quartet's drive for PA reform. The constant concern about Fatah reform from the State Department, however, made evident the limits to who this new partner should be.⁴⁷⁹

In arriving at the Cairo Agreement, Mahmoud Abbas, or Abu Mazen, opted to co-opt the Islamist resistance into the PA system, rather than continuing to suppress opponents of the Oslo structure. Abbas succeeded in this regard where Arafat had fallen short. Arafat had long attempted to induce Oslo's rejectionists into the political structure, and he negotiated with Hamas to join the first Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections in 1996. However, after intense

⁴⁷⁷ International Crisis Group, "Salvaging Fatah," 3; De Soto, End of Mission Report, 14.

⁴⁷⁸ Osamah Khalil, "'Who Are You?' The PLO and the Limits of Representation," Al-Shabaka 18 March 2013. <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/who-are-you-plo-and-limits-representation/>

⁴⁷⁹ International Crisis Group, "The Meanings of Palestinian Reform," Middle East Briefing 12 November 2002: 7-8.

deliberation, Hamas's *shura* council ultimately refused to sanction the Oslo Accords that underpinned the legislative process. Their boycott rejected the two-state solution, rather than opposition to democratic procedure itself.⁴⁸⁰ The six-point Cairo Agreement met some Palestinian reform demands to pluralize the PA. The Agreement introduced a mixed electoral system, drawing 50% of seats from national lists and 50% from district representation. By restructuring the voting methods, the Cairo Agreement appeared poised to weaken Fatah's grasp over the PLO's decision-making processes.⁴⁸¹

Abbas viewed inclusive elections as crucial to reviving the legitimacy of the PA after Arafat's death, and valued the benefits of bringing his strongest opponents into dialogue.⁴⁸² From Abu Mazen's perspective, Hamas's continued rejectionism would only undermine any future potential to reach a final status agreement with Israel. In the Gaza Strip in particular the prominence of the various *tanzim* as well as Hamas and Islamic Jihad *fasha'il* had duplicated authority to an unsustainable level, causing everyday security to deteriorate.⁴⁸³

Abbas's concessions to encourage Hamas participation rested on the assumption that by including the Islamists in the political structure, the PA would be able to curtail Hamas's armed activities. In exchange, the Islamists would benefit from a greater influence over the national project. PA spokespersons saw Hamas participation as a move toward "pluralism, with one authority."⁴⁸⁴ By bringing Hamas into the realm of legitimate political actors, Abbas believed the group would "have to reject either the logic of political incorporation or the logic of military independence; it could not indefinitely embrace both."⁴⁸⁵ Cautious integration was the logical step forward to co-opt all the major factions into allegiance to the PA.

Abbas's move garnered some notable steps toward unity following the intifada, yet its basic premises were shaky. The Cairo Agreement significantly reduced the *falatān amnī*, or security anarchy, of the intifada years, particularly in Gaza.⁴⁸⁶ However, Abbas's conciliatory

⁴⁸⁰ Tareq Baconi, "The Demise of Oslo and Hamas's Political Engagement," *Conflict, Security and Development* 15, 5 (2015): 507-508.

⁴⁸¹ "Qurei: al-iṣṣlah al-āmnī yushakil a-taḥadī al-ākbar b'il-nsibat lanā," *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda* 29 March 2005; "Qurei: Al-Ḥukuma aqarat barnāmij 'amal ṭamūhān lil-iṣṣlah mudathi 'ām wāḥid," *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda* 29 March 2005.

⁴⁸² George Giacaman, "Ḥamās wa fatah: ṣirā' barāmij ām ṣirā' alā a-sulṭa," *Majallat al dirāsāt al filastīniyya* 17, 68 (2006): 1; Giacaman, "Mustaqbal a-niẓām a-sīyyāsī al-filasṭīnī b'ad 'Arafāt," 4.

⁴⁸³ Jamil Hilal, "Ās'ilat mā b'ad al-insiḥab al-isrā'īlī min ghaza," *Majallat al dirāsāt al filastīniyya* 16, 63 (2005): 13.

⁴⁸⁴ De Soto, *End of Mission Report*, 14; April 2005 Meeting Minutes Condoleezza Rice and Salam Fayyad (PLO): 2.

⁴⁸⁵ International Crisis Group, "Enter Hamas," 4.

⁴⁸⁶ Giacaman, "Ḥamās wa fatah," 1.

path was an affront to the Israeli interpretation of the Road Map, in which Hamas figured as a key offender in the “terrorist infrastructure” targeted for eradication. From Israel’s perspective, Abbas should have completely dismantled Hamas, including its political wing and social welfare organizations. Sharon specifically included this demand in his conditional acceptance of the Roadmap.⁴⁸⁷ As a result, Israel wasted no time in rejecting the Cairo Agreement, and continued incursions as the PA struggled to prevent a Palestinian response.⁴⁸⁸

Moreover, the Agreement failed to establish a clear path forward for the national movement beyond the fact of elections. The decision to join the PA political structure reflected an ongoing debate within the Islamic resistance movement rather than its clear resolution. Beginning in 2003, with its political leadership under constant threat of assassination, Hamas had begun a vigorous debate about new strategies in light of the impossibility of forcing Israel to concessions using armed struggle alone. Proponents of participating in electoral politics included Hamas’s West Bank and Gaza leadership as well as leading exile figures like Khaled Meshal, head of the politburo.⁴⁸⁹

Hamas’s Vision of PA Democratization

While critical of what they termed “American reform,” some within Hamas decided to engage strategically with the Bush Administration’s vision of Palestinian democratization. Many Hamas representatives affirmed their support for structural changes to the PLO rather than the superficial personnel switches that were the norm. They aimed to create a more representative body with renewed legitimacy to represent the national movement, including in the diaspora abandoned by the Oslo framework.⁴⁹⁰ Their perspective gained approval from the Muslim Brotherhood’s *majlis shura* (Consultative Council) and Hamas leaders within Israeli prisons.

Critically, Hamas framed its participation as a new phase in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Hamas claimed the terms of the Oslo Accords no longer applied because the five-year interim

⁴⁸⁷ The Palestinian reservation was a rejection of the principle of parallelism, allowing Israel to shirk its obligations to dismantle settlements concurrent with Palestinian obligations in Phase I. Reinhart, *The Road Map to Nowhere*, 15-16; “Sharon yutālib b-qama’ ḥamās, ‘Abbās: al-filastīniyyūn lā yurīdūn ḥarbān ahiliyya,” *Al-Quds*, 14 September 2005; De Soto, *End of Mission Report*, 14.

⁴⁸⁸ “Bush: iṣlah al-mu’assasāt al-filastīniyya ibdā’ b-takfīf al-munzamat al-irhābiyya.” *Al-ḥayāt al-jaḍīda*, 6 March 2005.

⁴⁸⁹ Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 68-70.

⁴⁹⁰ Baconi, “The Demise of Oslo and Hamas’s Political Engagement,” 512.

period had lapsed, and Sharon had explicitly abrogated the agreements in 2002.⁴⁹¹ In addition, the Islamists' continued to insist on the right to armed struggle, suggesting the incompatibility of the Cairo Agreement and the PA's Roadmap obligations. Hamas remained formally committed to Israel's destruction through its founding Charter. Further, Hamas framed its participation in the PLC elections as a "natural right" due to its fighters' sacrifices during the uprising. At a meeting in Cairo in the summer of 2004, Meshal recounted his reasoning: "in the case where the enemy withdraws from Gaza or any other Palestinian land, that is considered an achievement for the path of resistance, not negotiations [...] we have raised the banner of *shuraka fī al dam, shuraka fī a-qarrār*" [partnership in blood, partnership in decision-making].⁴⁹² The US's simultaneous embrace of Israeli breaches of negotiations and rejection of Hamas as an interlocutor was profoundly paradoxical in light of Meshal's statement.

Abbas's gamble converged with Hamas's interests. Their popularity bolstered during the intifada, the Islamists saw participation in the PA as an opportunity to expand their institutional power and earn respite from Israeli military assaults. Israel's targeted assassination policy against Hamas's leadership had failed, instead increasing the Islamists' image of steadfastness and the sense the Islamists deserved a stake in the political process.⁴⁹³ Some noted that Hamas's tactics emulated those of Hezbollah in Lebanon, negotiating its way into the political mainstream while maintaining the use of force. Like Hezbollah, Hamas clearly conceived of parliamentary participation as a channel to greater international legitimacy and dialogue. By the summer of 2005, a variety of European diplomats were in conversation with Hamas officials.⁴⁹⁴

Hamas translated this legitimacy into an election campaign that spoke directly to Palestinians' priorities. The party highlighted the "goal of serving the people" and "establishing a strong government that fights corruption." In a thinly veiled indictment of Fatah, Hamas argued it was not interested in "cars or salaries."⁴⁹⁵ However, it is important to note that Hamas's consistent aspiration was to participate in the national project, rather than take charge of it

⁴⁹¹ Are Hovdenak, "Hamas in Transition: The Failure of Sanctions." *Democratization* 16, 1 (2009): 68; Baconi, "The Demise of Oslo and Hamas's Political Engagement," 504-507; Bansidhar Pradhan, "Palestinian Politics in the Post-Arafat Period," *International Studies* 45, 4 (2008): 308-309.

⁴⁹² Baconi, "The Demise of Oslo and Hamas's Political Engagement," 514-515.

⁴⁹³ Beverley Milton-Edwards and Alastair Crooke, "Waving, Not Drowning: Strategic Dimensions of Ceasefires and Islamic Movements," *Security Dialogue* 35, 3 (2004): 309; Khaled Hroub, "Khayārāt harakat hamās fī zul a-taswīyya al-muqbila," *Majallat al dirāsāt al filastīniyya* 11, 42 (2000): 31-48; Giacaman, "Mustaqbal a-nizām a-sīyyāsī al-filastīnī b'ad 'Arafāt," 3.

⁴⁹⁴ Malka, "Forcing Choices: Testing the Transformation of Hamas," 45.

⁴⁹⁵ "Fayyād: 27% ziyādāt irādāt a-sulṭa 'ām 2004 natījat mukāfaḥat al-fassād wa muḥārabat a-tahrīb." *Al-ḥayāt al-ja'dīda*, 22 March 2005. For more on Hamas's intifada-era moderation, see Beverley Milton-Edwards and Alastair Crooke, "Waving, Not Drowning."

entirely. The Islamists' willingness to work alongside Fatah was evident in Hamas's demands for inclusive reforms to the national leadership.⁴⁹⁶

Sharon was unequivocal in denouncing Hamas as an unrepentant terrorist organization, refuting the validity of their participation in elections. Many Israelis were concerned that Hamas had no intention of maintaining quiet following the elections, from which it could emerge replenished and with its cadres in sensitive positions in the PA's security services and education sector.⁴⁹⁷ The American brokers, for their part, continued to publically call for reform of Palestinian institutions "beginning with dismantling the terrorist organizations."⁴⁹⁸ However, these proclamations were vague, and Washington consistently foregrounded the push for elections central to its 'freedom agenda.'

The Cairo Agreement was in fact a "single sheet of paper" and committed the factions only to a ceasefire while the PA conducted local and legislative elections.⁴⁹⁹ PA Minister of Finance Salam Fayyad described the Agreement as embodying "the expectation" that Hamas would not "have a rejectionist or completely different policy than the rest of the PA if elected. We cannot have a political process if they are armed."⁵⁰⁰

Washington Faces Hamas's Election Prospects

The official American reception of the Cairo Agreement was largely critical, highlighting that the accord benefitted Hamas as much as Abbas. American diplomats pressured Abbas to use his leverage to extract explicit endorsement of the PLO's 1988 Algiers Declaration validating PLO engagement with Israel. This would amount to a revolution in Hamas, tacitly backing a two-state solution. Further, American officials were dismayed that the Cairo Agreement failed to insist on a specific disarmament agenda or renounce attacks within Israel.⁵⁰¹

Speaking with Secretary of State Rice, Salam Fayyad compared the process of integrating the Oslo rejectionists into the governing structures with the Zionist pattern of consolidating the

⁴⁹⁶ Milton-Edwards and Crooke, "Elusive Ingredient," 47-48.

⁴⁹⁷ International Crisis Group, "Enter Hamas," 6; Haim Malka, "Forcing Choices: Testing the Transformation of Hamas," *The Washington Quarterly* 28, 4 (2005): 37.

⁴⁹⁸ "Bush: iṣlah al-mu'ssāsāt al-filasṭīniyya ibdā' b-takfīf al-munẓamat al-irhābiyya." *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda*, 6 March 2005.

⁴⁹⁹ International Crisis Group, "Enter Hamas," 4.

⁵⁰⁰ 22 September 2005. Notes from PA-US Bilateral Meetings - Condoleezza Rice, Salam Fayyad, David Welch, Robert Zoellick (PLO): 1; "Fayyād: 27% ziyādāt irādāt a-sulṭa 'ām 2004 naṭījat mukāfaḥat al-fassād wa muḥārabat a-tahrīb," *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda* 22 March 2005; "PLO May Invite Hamas, Islamic Jihad to Executive Committee Meetings," *BBC Monitoring Middle East* 13 August 2005.

⁵⁰¹ International Crisis Group, "Enter Hamas," I; 3 March 2005 Tel Aviv: WB/G SitRep; IDF Raids WB Qassam Rocket Workshop, No Injuries Reported from 3 West Bank Explosions [WikiLeaks], 2.

disparate *yishuv* militias into the Israeli state after 1948. He argued, “We are doing what Israel did in 1948. Confront the organizations but give them a choice: either in or out [...] we want a domestic pluralistic democratic political process. Once they join the political mainstream, they will drop their weapons. This is positive.” Echoing Abbas, Fayyad warned that compelling Hamas to fully disarm in order to participate in the PLC elections would backfire and “push things out of control.” Acknowledging these tensions, Rice admitted that Hamas could not immediately be demobilized, but demanded more “visible” security action and reform on the ground.⁵⁰²

The Americans accepted Abbas’s calculations, hoping to “tie [Hamas’s] hands” after the fact, forcing any elected members to agree to conditions of nonviolence.⁵⁰³ Hamas members were aware of Washington’s intentions, but could not foresee the extent to which the US would backtrack on its tolerance toward Hamas’s participation in the PA elections.⁵⁰⁴ From Hamas’s perspective, the American insistence on PLC elections could not be divorced from the Islamists’ inclusion in renewing the PA. As Ayman Daraghmeḥ, a Hamas-affiliated legislator noted in an interview, through the Cairo Agreement, Hamas accepted the peace process as a tool for the national cause, endorsing Abbas’s unconditional engagement with the US brokers. From Daraghmeḥ’s perspective, Washington needed Hamas’s participation in the elections to lend the Roadmap a veneer of legitimacy. The Americans simply were not prepared for the results.⁵⁰⁵

Securitization of Aid

The same month as the decision to bring Hamas into the PA fold, Abbas went to London, where he struck his second key deal. At a donor conference, the international community offered aid in the fields of governance, security, and economic development specifically designed to support the PA politically as it regained control through the Cairo Agreement.⁵⁰⁶ Totalling \$1.2 billion, Washington promised \$350 million, the Europeans \$330 million, Japan \$60 million, and Britain \$30 million to the PA. The remaining funds were drawn primarily from the Gulf States.

⁵⁰² April 2005 Meeting Minutes Condoleezza Rice and Salam Fayyad (PLO): 4.

⁵⁰³ United States Senate, “Staff Trip Reports: Israel’s Disengagement from Gaza and Several West Bank Settlements,” 8; “Bush: amṛikā satusa ‘id faḡaṡ al-fa’izīn al-mu’idīn lil-salām fī al-intakhābāt al-filasṭīniyya,” *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda* 26 October 2006.

⁵⁰⁴ Abdelrahman Zeidan [Change and Reform list MP, Tulkarem district] Tulkarem: 24 September 2017.

⁵⁰⁵ Ayman Daraghmeḥ [Change and Reform list MP, Tubas district] Ramallah: 27 August 2017.

⁵⁰⁶ 1 March 2005. *Istintājāt liqā’ London ḥowwl d’am a-sulṭa al-filasṭīniyya* (PLO): 2.

Abu Mazen emphasized that heightened international support would “allow the return to the Roadmap” and to political negotiations.⁵⁰⁷ The PA applauded the “opportunity to show our political vision,” building on the Cairo Agreement to create a pluralist nationalist leadership prepared to negotiate a lasting solution with Israel.⁵⁰⁸ Detractors like Raja Khalidi, however, described the London conference as a turning point in the growing international micromanagement of PA affairs. He pointed to the high degree of conditionality and intimate oversight tied to the aid offered in London, through trust funds, auditing mechanisms, technical assistance projects, and built-in budget controls. According to Khalidi, the aid’s implementation amounted to an “international financial trusteeship in all but name.”⁵⁰⁹

In London, the World Bank outlined plans in coordination with the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC).⁵¹⁰ The international financial institutions’ preference for private sector-led growth is evident throughout their work; one report circulated by the NSU noted the need to increase “international private sector investment and hold a private business/investment event in order to facilitate this.”⁵¹¹ The AHLC also promised to hold the PA to its budget, reducing public sector salary spending to sustainable levels. The conference earmarked funds to stimulate private sector growth by improving conditions for investment by strengthening infrastructure.

The donors connected security threats to the ongoing economic decline in Palestine, where violence justified the Israeli closure regime that impeded Palestinian movement.⁵¹² All efforts were framed within the need to respond to the conditions created by the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and the new mobility challenges it promised.⁵¹³ Particular attention was given to security sector reform, which was formulated as essential to reconstitute the PA, including a new legal framework and restructured leadership. The Palestinians focused on the need to prevent violence and maintain the principle of “one authority, one gun.”⁵¹⁴

⁵⁰⁷ “Mu’atmr London yu’aqd al-yom fī zal āmāl filastīniyya b-d’am māli wa sīyyasī,” *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda* 1 March 2005.

⁵⁰⁸ “Mu’atmr London: itifāq ‘alā thelātha ūsus lil-iṣlahāt al-filastīniyya wa al-āmn wa al-tanmīyya,” *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda* 2 March 2005.

⁵⁰⁹ Raja Khalidi, “Reshaping Palestinian Economic Discourse: Putting the Development Horse before the Governance Cart,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34, 2 (2005): 79.

⁵¹⁰ “Qurei: Al-Ḥukuma aqarat barnāmij ‘amal ṭamūhān lil-iṣlah mudathi ‘ām wāhid,” *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda*, 29 March 2005.

⁵¹¹ 2 February 2005. NSU Emails and Draft Re: London Reform Conference Outcomes Paper (PLO): 11.

⁵¹² 1 March 2005. *Istintājāt liqā’ London ḥowwl d’am a-sulṭa al-filastīniyya* (PLO): 1-2.

⁵¹³ 1 March 2005. *Istintājāt liqā’ London ḥowwl d’am a-sulṭa al-filastīniyya* (PLO): 6-7.

“Al-Itihād al-urubī: sanufrij ‘an āmwāl li-mus’a’ida al-filastīniyyīn ‘alā taḥsīn zurūf m’aīshathim,” *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda* 1 March 2005; “Mu’atmr London: itifāq ‘alā thelātha ūsus lil-iṣlahāt al-filastīniyya wa al-āmn wa al-tanmīyya,” *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda* 2 March 2005.

⁵¹⁴ 1 March 2005. *Istintājāt liqā’ London ḥowwl d’am a-sulṭa al-filastīniyya* (PLO): 6-7.

The March 2005 conference accelerated security reform efforts central to the Roadmap. Following Arafat's death and Abbas's election, the Bush Administration concentrated with renewed vigor on the need to reconfigure the financing and personnel of the PASF. The overarching aim was to recompose the PASF, eliminating the elements that had joined the resistance and broken the coordination with the IDF. This task was distinctly complicated by Abbas's moves to co-opt the rejectionist opposition.⁵¹⁵

Already in January 2004 'Abd al-Zarāq al-Yahya of the High Committee on Security presented a "Project Work Plan to Return Security Sovereignty to the Palestinian Territory." Echoing the Mitchell Report and the Tenet Workplan, the document attested to the need to create internal stability as a means to "end the pretext that Israel takes advantage of, and exit the box of 'terrorism' in which Palestinians have been placed on the international level." As such, Zarāq's plan detailed immediate measures to reduce *istishādiyyāt* (suicide bombings), Qassam rockets and mortar shells, as well as incidents of opening fire at Israeli targets, and the production and smuggling of arms and ammunition. Through discipline and unity of force, the plan aimed to increase popular confidence as it returned the rule of law.⁵¹⁶

The Advent of the US Security Coordinator

In March 2005, Secretary Rice appointed Lieutenant General William "Kip" Ward to head the newly created US Security Coordinator (USSC) office and oversee the Palestinian security sector reform. With a "tri-signed" mission mandated by the CIA, Department of Defense, and State Department, the USSC signaled renewed American commitment to the Israeli-Palestinian issue in the context of the Gaza withdrawal.⁵¹⁷

PJ Dermer, an American colonel who was involved with the USSC in 2005, later noted that the mission was framed ambiguously from the outset. Ward's entire team numbered only sixteen members at its inception and lacked funding.⁵¹⁸ Due to State Department employee travel

⁵¹⁵ United States Congressional Research Service - Jim Zanotti, "U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority" (Washington, DC: January 2010), 7.

⁵¹⁶ January 2004. 'Abd al-Rizāq al-Yahyiyā- Mashrū'a khaṭat al-'aml l-i'ādat a-sayṭara al-āmniyya fī al-mināṭiq al-filastīniyya - muqadīm ilā al-majlis al-āmn al-filastīnī (PLO): 2.

⁵¹⁷ Interview, Colonel Susan Bryant [former USSC Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Programs, and Assessments] Washington, DC: 12 April 2017; November 2005. Attachment A: USAID West Bank and Gaza Democracy and Governance – Security Sector Reform/Community Policing Program – Statement of Work (PLO): 3; Andy Clarno, *Neoliberal Apartheid: Palestine/Israel and South Africa after 1994* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 158-160.

⁵¹⁸ Colonel Philip J. Dermer, "Special Document: Trip Notes on a Return to Israel and the West Bank: Reflections on U.S. Peacemaking, the Security Mission, and What Should be Done," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, 3 (2010): 76.

restrictions, the team could not visit Gaza, and most of its members did not speak Arabic. Instead, a Canadian second-in-command represented the USSC in Gaza.⁵¹⁹ Nonetheless, among the Quartet, Secretary Rice asserted that Ward's mission was the only acceptable conduit for security reform efforts. Ward oversaw two parallel efforts in 2005: first, the transformation of the PASF, and second, facilitation of Palestinian movement between Gaza and the outside world.

To bypass their logistical obstacles, the USSC hired a Washington-based firm called Strategic Assessments Initiative to conduct an initial evaluation of the PASF. The subcontractor was under-equipped for the job; though many of its members had experience in Palestine, they lacked security sector expertise. A second, London-based company called Control Risks was brought in to provide security sector expertise. Together they established the International Transition Assistance Group (ITAG), headed by Canadian Jarat Chopra with a team of European officials. The ITAG in turn created the Transitional Security Planning Team (TSPT), led by Ward in consultation with Minister of the Interior and National Security, Gen. Nasser Yousef.

The TSPT met about ten times in the spring and summer of 2005 regarding PASF capacity to take over the Gaza Strip and West Bank areas from which Israel planned to withdraw. Consultants visited the PA's National Security Forces in Jenin and Gaza to assess their readiness, and on two occasions liaised with the donor community. However, the SAI issued an untimely report on PASF reform progress that was particularly unflattering toward Gen. Youssef. The friction the report created between the USSC's subcontractors and local partners brought the team's work to an abrupt halt in July 2005.⁵²⁰

The same period saw the European Union create its Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories, called EUPOL-COPPS. The Mission's mandate was to professionalize and increase the competence of the Palestinian civil police through a range of technical assistance programs led by European police experts. The focus of the program initially centered on human resources and basic capacity reorganization, before expanding to support reform of the PA's judicial and prosecutorial processes.⁵²¹ Similarly, in the winter of 2005, USAID launched its "community-

Colonel Philip J. Dermer and Steven White, "The Palestinian National Security Services" (Tel Aviv: Israel Policy Forum, December 2012.); United States Senate, "Staff Trip Reports: Israel's Disengagement from Gaza and Several West Bank Settlements" (Washington, DC: Foreign Relations Committee, October 2005), 4.

⁵¹⁹ Interview, Michael Pearson, February 2018; Interview, Jill Sinclair January 2018.

⁵²⁰ Ahmad Hussein, "Reconstructing the PNA Security Organisations," in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold, eds. *Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2008), 41-43.

⁵²¹ Interview, EUPOLL-COPPS officials, Ramallah: 24 August 2017.

based police assistance program” to end the lawlessness engendered by the rise of faction-based violence during the intifada. The program sought to enhance effectiveness and accountability.⁵²²

As several scholars note, the advent of the USSC, EUPOLL-COPPS, and USAID programs echo the wider pattern of international interventions in the Palestinian security sector reform arena. Their frameworks include only passing reference to Palestinian governance challenges imposed by the Israeli occupation. This avoidance reflects a clear tendency to elevate managerial strategies in the place of a genuine political resolution to the conflict. Such interventions also regularly insert agendas like “gender” and “human rights” in the place of political rights.⁵²³ Emblematic of this approach, the USAID plan sought to hire a private contractor to administer its initiatives, and create a “task force to conduct and oversee national threat assessments.” In doing so, USAID ignored the fact that the largest threat to Palestinians was purposely outside the project’s purview. Through its interventions, Washington reconfigured which Palestinian security issues were cause for concern, and the biggest cause of Palestinian security - Israel’s occupation - was deemed illegitimate.

Indeed, an awareness of this reality was evident in interviews with European and American security reform personnel at EUPOLL-COPPS and the USSC. Nervous laughs and sideward glances accompanied confirmation that their supervision was technical, not political. As Benoît Challand put it, the prevalence of “technical discursive legitimacy” in foreign-funded Palestinian projects inevitably necessitates proximity with donors in place of local representativeness.

The fragmentation of responsibility inherent in the USSC, EUPOLL-COPPS, and USAID plans hints at the manner in which the security sector reform project quickly alienated the PASF from the Palestinian population.⁵²⁴ In a 2006 poll, only 16% of respondents in Gaza trusted security sector reform advice from the US and Canada, and only 31% from the EU. This related directly to respondents’ continued support for the armed factions: 79% of Gazans trusted Hamas’s al-Qassam Brigades, 78% Islamic Jihad’s Al-Quds Brigades, and 76% the Al-Aqsa

⁵²² November 2005. Attachment A: USAID West Bank and Gaza Democracy and Governance – Security Sector Reform/Community Policing Program – Statement of Work (PLO): 4; “Thelātha shuhadā’ baynahum dābiṭ wa nahū 50 jarīhān fī ishtabākāt bayna ḥamās wa al-shurṭa b-ghaza,” Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda 3 October 2005.

⁵²³ See for example Lori Allen, *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights: Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.); November 2005. Attachment A: USAID West Bank and Gaza Democracy and Governance – Security Sector Reform/Community Policing Program – Statement of Work (PLO): 6.

⁵²⁴ Asem Khalil and Raffaella A. Del Sarto. “The Legal Fragmentation of Palestine-Israel and European Union Policies Promoting the Rule of Law” in Raffaella A. Del Sarto (ed.) *Fragmented Borders, Interdependence and External Relations: The Israel-Palestine-European Union Triangle* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 129-154.

Martyrs Brigades linked to Fatah.⁵²⁵ These preferences belie the disconnect between the language of accountability in the technocratic sense, focused on central commands and rationalized hierarchies answerable to the donor community – and the accountability Palestinians experienced in their daily lives.

Limiting actions that provided Israel a “justification for aggression” drove the reform plans formulated as Ward arrived at the USSC.⁵²⁶ The *ṭakhṭīṭ al-āminī*, or PA Institutional Security Plan, was the umbrella framework for these reforms. It laid out phased, short-term changes prior to the disengagement. Coordinated through the ITAG, the plan’s first phase sought to pacify areas not yet under stable PA control.⁵²⁷ The Ministry banned independent foreign donations to separate branches of the PASF to curb patronage networks, while the introduction of tender requirements further minimized kickbacks.⁵²⁸ The *ṭakhṭīṭ al-āminī* also tackled the PASF’s sprawling and unsustainable size: by 2005, the PASF had ballooned to over 57,000. Through the *ṭakhṭīṭ al-āminī*, the PASF unified into three units: internal security, encompassing the Civil Defense, Police, and Preventative Security; the National Security Forces; and the intelligence services.⁵²⁹ Hiring was curtailed, and the Ministry of the Interior opened an Oversight and Inspection Department charged with budgeting. The establishment of this office facilitated an overhaul of procurement standards, which were centralized under the Ministry.⁵³⁰ The PA also clarified the legal framework and command structures of the PASF through the creation of a National Security Council.⁵³¹

These reforms occurred alongside bi- and trilateral negotiations to resume security coordination prior to Israeli redeployment from Area A and the Gaza Strip. As the NSU noted in a memo to Abbas, these conversations were constrained by the PASF’s limited capacities and political considerations on both sides. Israel stipulated its continued need for incursions in the case of “ticking time bombs” within areas under PA control. The PA preferred to act jointly in such cases. Prisoner releases also caused friction: Israel agreed to release five hundred prisoners

⁵²⁵ Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces and Palestinian Council on Foreign Relations. “Government Change and Security Sector Governance: Palestinian Public Perceptions” (Gaza City, 7 December 2006.)

⁵²⁶ Al-āfkār howwl taqayyīm āwḍā’ wa ‘aml wa idā’ al-ajhaza al-āmniyya al-filasṭīniyya wa-imbkāniyyat taṭwīr al-qaṭā’ al-āmnī (PLO): 2; January 2005. A-Takhṭīṭ al- āmnī (PLO).

⁵²⁷ January 2005. A-Takhṭīṭ al- āmnī (PLO): 1.

⁵²⁸ Hussein, “Reconstructing the PNA Security Organisations,” 36.

⁵²⁹ 1 March 2005. Istintājāt liqā’ London howwl d’am a-sulṭa al-filasṭīniyya (PLO): 6-7; Nov 2004 Qiyyādat al-āmn al-wiqā’i: muswada (PLO): 2.

⁵³⁰ November 2005. Attachment A: USAID West Bank and Gaza Democracy and Governance – Security Sector Reform/Community Policing Program – Statement of Work (PLO): 6.

⁵³¹ 2 February 2005. NSU Emails and Draft Re: London Reform Conference Outcomes Paper (PLO): 9.

over a period of ten days in early February 2005, and then a further four hundred, but intended that none should have “hands stained by blood.” The PLO negotiators, led by Saeb Erekat and Minister for Civil Affairs Mohammed Dahlan, called for nine hundred to be released, and for distinctions to be made between those involved in acts of violence before Oslo existed and those detained in the course of the Second Intifada.⁵³²

In a heated exchange that presaged key issues that would arise in the course of American intervention in Palestinian security sector reform, Dahlan and Dov Weisglass, Sharon’s chief advisor, articulated conflicting visions of the Palestinian security forces. Dahlan contended that the PASF should reflect popular demands. He derided the Israeli formulation in which Israeli domestic political considerations dictated which prisoners to release, and outsourced capturing Palestinian fugitives to the PASF. Dahlan argued this was political suicide for the PA. He described the Israeli mindset as outdated. “You decide, you release, and we come here like a pupil to hear a lecture.” Dahlan concluded, “You are killing Abu Mazen.”⁵³³

Perhaps most tellingly, Dahlan hinted at the tenuous nature of PA cohesion, and particularly his own ambitions for autonomy. Dahlan argued that even if Abu Mazen should agree to the Israeli conditions, he would, “come out against this and against Abu Mazen and Abu Ala’a [Saeb Erekat].”⁵³⁴ Weisglass and his colleagues, meanwhile, articulated specific requirements for the composition of the Palestinian security forces, arguing that long-term Fatah insiders Tawfik Tirawi (former head of the General Intelligence Services) and Rasheed Abu Shbak (Preventative Security) could travel freely, but could not “head a security organization dealing with Israel.”⁵³⁵ Weisglass’s demand underscores the profound distrust engendered during the intifada and the continued prominence of political personalities within the PASF.

Reasserting Palestinian Authority Control

Despite these tensions, with their international advisors, the parties began to gradually transfer parts of Area A back to PA security control, returning to the status quo prior to the intifada’s outbreak. On March 22, the PASF re-established control of the northwestern West

⁵³² 4 February 2005. Niqāt al-‘alāqiyya (PLO): 3-4.

⁵³³ 4 February 2005. Niqāt al-‘alāqiyya (PLO): 7.

⁵³⁴ 4 February 2005. Niqāt al-‘alāqiyya (PLO): 7. Tamimi, Hamas, 203. Abbas’s rivalry with Arafat grew once instated as PM through international pressure, particularly after he delivered a speech 4 June 2003 rejecting armed resistance and was recast as an American and Israeli puppet installed to undermine Arafat. Graham Usher, “The Democratic Resistance: Hamas, Fatah, and the Palestinian Elections,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, 3 (2006): 25-29.

⁵³⁵ 4 February 2005. Niqāt al-‘alāqiyya (PLO): 5; 15 June 2005. Meeting Minutes: Erekat – Weisglass (PLO): 5.

Bank city of Tulkarem, coordinating with the IDF to ensure freedom of movement between the urban center and outlying villages and cracking down on firearms carried by individuals.⁵³⁶ The Israelis were clear, warning “there will be no withdrawal under open fire.”⁵³⁷ In June and July, agreements were drawn up for IDF redeployment from Ramallah, Qalqilya, Tulkarem, Jericho, and Bethlehem in preparation for the Gaza disengagement August 15.⁵³⁸ The Palestinian leadership was frank, describing its capacity as “very low” in relation to Israel’s conditions. For instance, in preparation for the Israeli redeployment from Tulkarem, the NSU noted that Israeli demands on the PASF to tackle illicit weapons and financial transfers to militant groups were beyond the PASF’s means.⁵³⁹

Recurrent violence and disarray further beset the PASF in the run-up to Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza, particularly within the Strip. For example, in keeping with the budget guidelines drawn up by the World Bank, the PA instated a forced retirement of a large contingent of older security forces members in April. On June 4, dozens of these disgruntled former employees attacked the PA headquarters in Gaza City, blocking roads. The next day, armed members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades occupied the PA Interior Ministry in Nablus, protesting the PA’s failure to meet their demands for protection and salaries.⁵⁴⁰

The disintegration of Fatah, as elements aligned themselves with regional patrons, made the PASF increasingly incompetent militarily and politically.⁵⁴¹ Another key dynamic was the personalization of power around Dahlan, the PA’s Civil Affairs Minister who ran Gaza “like his fiefdom,” as a former USSC member recollected.⁵⁴² The Fatah strongman was reluctant to divest negotiating power over the border crossings to the PA’s technical teams backed by the USSC. Paradoxically, Dahlan continued to enjoy close support from the White House and the CIA, who were loath to see their valuable source reformed by the well-meaning State Department-run USSC. Indeed, Washington applauded Dahlan’s appointment as Coordinator for the Gaza Disengagement Plan.⁵⁴³ As one former USSC official recalled in an interview, the dynamic was

⁵³⁶ “A-Sulṭa tatasalam ṭulkarem.” *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda*, 22 March 2005.

⁵³⁷ 15 June 2005. *Fariq a-takhṭīṭ al-āmnī al-intiqālī - protocoles al-ijtimā’ a-sādis* (PLO): 2.

⁵³⁸ *Fariq a-takhṭīṭ al-āmnī al-intiqālī - protocoles al-ijtimā’ a-sādis* (PLO): 2; 15 June 2005. Meeting Minutes: Erekat – Weisglass (PLO): 1-2.

⁵³⁹ 20 February 2005. NSU Email Re: Tulkarem – Withdrawal (PLO): 1-2.

⁵⁴⁰ Michele K. Esposito, “Quarterly Update on Conflict and Diplomacy,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, 1 (2005): 240.

⁵⁴¹ “Al-Wazīr a-dākhiliyya ya ‘tezem damaj ‘kitā’ib shuhadā’ al-aqsā’ fi ajhaza al-āmn wa ye ‘tahid b-ḥimāyathum wa tadrībhum,” *Al-Quds* 24 October 2005; Hussein, “Reconstructing the PNA Security Organisations,” 47; 15 June 2005. *Jāhiz a-difā’ al-madanī - Al-muḥāfaẓa ‘alā a-salāma al-arūāḥ wa al-mamtalikāt min akḥṭar al-ḥarfiq* (PLO).

⁵⁴² Interview, former USSC member, February 2018.

⁵⁴³ 28 February 2005, Fatah – Internal Divisions Threaten Reform Efforts [WikiLeaks].

uncomfortable and the USSC gave Dahlan space.⁵⁴⁴ US dependence on Dahlan would trouble the security sector reform agenda repeatedly in the coming months.

As the PASF attempted to regain control, arrests, incursions, and low-intensity clashes between Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and the IDF continued unabated in Area A through June and July, despite the Cairo Agreement. On June 22, Israel announced the resumption of its preemptive targeted assassination policy against Islamic Jihad operatives. In meeting with Weisglass the same week, Erekat vowed to reiterate the *tahdi'a*. The Israelis countered that both sides' leadership would "make a fool of ourselves [...] there is no quiet or ceasefire and we will recommit to something we did not deliver, neither one of us."⁵⁴⁵ In order to improve the situation, the Israelis declared the importance of the movement of people and goods after the disengagement, but noted the effort needed to translate this into reality. A week later, the IDF proclaimed the Gaza settlements closed military zones in preparation for their evacuation.⁵⁴⁶

In this climate of limited control prior to the disengagement, PASF commanders addressed their concerns to US Security Coordinator Ward. The PASF informed Ward of the "acute shortages from which our forces suffer" and implored him to convey this message to the international donor community.⁵⁴⁷ However, Ward's mission was weakened by its lack of funding and clear mandate. Further, due to the privatization of security sector reform through subcontractors, Ward had little direct influence over the process. Ward himself expressed frustration with the limitations of his mission.⁵⁴⁸ As Ghaith al-Omari, a former advisor to the PA, noted in an interview, Ward's mission lacked support from the White House, and he was reduced to advising the PASF leadership.⁵⁴⁹ *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda* reported on 24 March 2005 that Ward proclaimed, "shame upon the United States and the Israeli and Palestinian leaders if we do not succeed in the mission of imposing security and achieving a better future for further generations."⁵⁵⁰ Such declarations did little to ameliorate the instability surrounding the Gaza disengagement.

⁵⁴⁴ 7 June 2005 Politics and Bureaucracy Slow Disengagement Planning with GoI and PA [WikiLeaks].

⁵⁴⁵ 15 June 2005. Meeting Minutes: Erekat – Weisglass (PLO): 2.

⁵⁴⁶ Esposito, "Quarterly Update on Conflict and Diplomacy," 165.

⁵⁴⁷ January 2005. A-Takhṭīṭ al- āmnī (PLO): 2.

⁵⁴⁸ Zanotti, "U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority," 7.

⁵⁴⁹ Interview, Ghaith al-Omari [former advisor to PA] Washington, DC: 13 April 2017.

⁵⁵⁰ "Al-Jenrāl Ward: 'ār 'alā al-amrikiyyīn wa al-isrā'īliyyīn wa al-filasṭīniyyīn idhan lam yanjahū fi san' a mustaqbal āfḍal," *Al-ḥayāt al-jadīda* 24 March 2005; Hussein, "Reconstructing the PNA Security Organisations," 49.

Israeli concerns persisted with continued Qassam rocket fire. Israeli security concerns responded foremost to domestic Israeli public opinion, often over the legitimacy of a threat. Dov Weisglass contended that the PASF remained incapable of preventing violent unrest, justifying Israeli distrust and refusal to coordinate “sensitive security” matters.⁵⁵¹ On the other hand, Abbas’s hesitance to undo the Cairo Agreement prevented him from fully repressing Hamas, which Sharon demanded as a precondition for any resumption of security coordination.⁵⁵² On the security front, it is thus evident that the PA held only very tenuous control as the disengagement neared.

Despite international efforts to facilitate Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from Gaza by holding the PA to a strict reform program, the two purposes were at odds. The considerable disruption to the reform process triggered by the physical isolation of Gaza made the reforms’ success all the more unlikely. Throughout, the US placed the onus of responsibility on the Palestinians to ensure calm. In a leaked diplomatic cable from a pre-withdrawal meeting with the PASF chiefs, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch clarified this pressure. Welch told the gathered Palestinians that “while most of the world is looking at what the Government of Israel is doing, we are looking at what [the Palestinians] are doing to prepare for the day after.”⁵⁵³ Welch signaled to the Palestinians that “security is everything.” USSC Ward echoed the US line, urging the PASF to show unity and enforce calm for Israel’s disengagement.

Movement, Access, and Disengagement

Enhancing functions at the border crossings between Gaza and the outside world was critical as the disengagement approached. Smooth, predictable movement through the three points of access between Gaza and Israel (Erez and Karni) and Egypt (Rafah) was vital to stabilize Gaza’s economy. The PASF required new technology and monitoring systems, such as scanners and coolers, to safeguard perishable products. These tools would accelerate the inspection process and lessen tensions between IDF soldiers and Palestinians in transit.⁵⁵⁴

In and Out of Gaza, with International Help

⁵⁵¹ 15 June 2005. Meeting Minutes: Erekat – Weisglass (PLO): 4.

⁵⁵² “Sharon yuṭālib b-qama’ ḥamās, ‘Abbās: al-filastīniyyiūn lā yurīdūn ḥarbān ahiliyya,” Al-Quds 14 September 2005.

⁵⁵³ 18 August 2005 A/S Welch Discusses Disengagement and Gaza Crossings with MoD Mofaz [WikiLeaks].

⁵⁵⁴ Interview, Nigel Roberts, April 2017; World Bank, “Stagnation or Revival?” 10-13.

The Quartet appointed James Wolfensohn, former head of the World Bank, as Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement in May 2005. Following Washington's cues, the Quartet endorsed the Israeli disengagement plan on May 9.⁵⁵⁵ On 20 June 2005, Wolfensohn outlined his agenda to Abbas and Sharon. He sought Palestinian movement through accessible border crossings and trade corridors, a link between Gaza and the West Bank, internal mobility in the West Bank, and revival of the Rafah crossing and the Gaza air and seaports.⁵⁵⁶ As Nigel Roberts, the World Bank's representative in West Bank and Gaza during the disengagement recalled in an interview, Wolfensohn had a nuanced understanding of the issue.

More importantly, the 2004 and 2005 plans for the disengagement were drawn up by the World Bank per Israel's request and formed the blueprint for Wolfensohn's mission upon his instatement as Quartet Special Envoy.⁵⁵⁷ The December 2004 report was sanguine in its assessment of the extent to which increased aid could forestall economic chaos in Palestine. It warned of "the potential disintegration of the Palestinian economy under the sustained pressures of conflict and Israeli closure policies," arguing that during the intifada Palestinian society "lost all economic dynamism and experienced a recession of historic proportions."⁵⁵⁸ Without improved mobility and access for Palestinian goods and persons, donor assistance could achieve little: as seen in the previous four years, the lack of political leadership negated the efforts of aid increases to nearly \$1 billion per year, as Palestinian real personal incomes dropped 40% between 2000 and 2004. Armed with World Bank reports that explicitly named the Israeli closure regime as "the proximate cause of Palestinian economic distress," Wolfensohn honed in on ameliorating movement within and between the West Bank and Gaza.⁵⁵⁹

Upon his appointment, Wolfensohn concentrated on negotiations with the Israelis and Palestinians. For example, Israel wanted to relocate the entire Rafah border crossing facility to within its borders in order to monitor it, while Egypt hoped to pass control to the PA. The European Union offered to administer the Rafah crossing, but the mission was stalled for several months.⁵⁶⁰ Wolfensohn consulted with both sides, growing frustrated with acts of violence after

⁵⁵⁵ De Soto, End of Mission Report, 6; Tocci, "The Middle East Quartet and (in)Effective Multilateralism," 34.

⁵⁵⁶ World Bank, "The Palestinian Economy and the Prospects for its Recovery" (Washington, DC: Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, December 2005), 10.

⁵⁵⁷ Interview, Nigel Roberts, 19 April 2017.

⁵⁵⁸ World Bank, "Stagnation or Revival?" 1.

⁵⁵⁹ World Bank, "Stagnation or Revival?" 2.

⁵⁶⁰ Hilal, "Ās'ilat mā b'ad al-insiḥab al-isrā'īlī min ghaza," 8.

which Israel would seal off movement to and from Gaza. These closures caused trade losses estimated at \$600,000 per day to the agricultural sector alone.⁵⁶¹ Wolfensohn argued that the primary cause of delays at the crossings was the “absolutely transparently corrupt system,” rather than legitimate security concerns. This corruption took several forms. In a 2007 interview, he lamented “I saw it with my own eyes: Israelis and Palestinians, arm in arm, walking off together and clearly pricing how you could get your truck to the top of the line [...] it was a disgrace.”⁵⁶²

However, Wolfensohn also blamed Israeli excuses and political pressure for the failure to establish a link between the West Bank and Gaza.⁵⁶³ In early May, the PA orally presented Wolfensohn’s team with a 70-point checklist of outstanding issues to be resolved prior to the withdrawal. Central to these issues were a link connecting Gaza to the outside world – possibly via rail – and the construction of a functioning seaport in Gaza. Many items on the checklist touched on final status issues, and their careful consideration caused significant slowdown in joint PA-Israeli technical coordination meetings.⁵⁶⁴

A leaked cable from the US Consulate in Jerusalem to Washington on June 7 reported that bureaucratic infighting on the Israeli side was the biggest obstacle to progress. Pre-election Likud party politics had clashed with the Ministry of Defense’s ownership over the disengagement, according to National Security Council advisor Gaby Blum. The conflict had brought the Israeli government’s preparations with the PA to a standstill.⁵⁶⁵ These dynamics continued through August. Only days shy of the withdrawal, Israeli Ministry of Defense Director General Amos Yaron met with Wolfensohn and acknowledged the political, rather than security, concerns that drove Israeli intransigence around the border crossings. Yaron admitted that, “it does not matter what kind of checks the Palestinians perform on their side of the border, we cannot rely on them.”⁵⁶⁶ With an election approaching, the Likud was remorse to appear trusting of the PA, or to allow the disengagement to fail. With the withdrawal looming, Wolfensohn’s team composed a draft agreement between the Palestinian movement needs and Israeli security demands. The purpose of this document was to lay the ground for Secretary of State

⁵⁶¹ “Technical Team Report: An Update on Palestinian Movement, Access and Trade in the West Bank and Gaza” (Washington, DC: 15 August 2006), 6.

⁵⁶² Shahar Smooha, “All the Dreams We Had Are Now Gone,” Haaretz 19 July 2007.

⁵⁶³ “Wolfensohn: isrā’īl tālabat waqf dirāsa ḥowwl rabṭ bayna ghaza wa a-dafā,” Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda 30 October 2005.

⁵⁶⁴ 16 May 2005 Peres Advisor and NSC Advisor Cite “Slowdown” in Disengagement Talks with PA [WikiLeaks]: 1-2.

⁵⁶⁵ 7 June 2005 Politics and Democracy Slow Disengagement Planning with GoI and Israel [WikiLeaks]: 2.

⁵⁶⁶ 19 August 2005 NEA A/S Welch’s August 16, 2005 Meeting with Israeli MoD DG Amos Yaron Reviews Post-Disengagement Issues [WikiLeaks]: 3.

Condoleezza Rice, who would then use her political weight to push through a formal arrangement.⁵⁶⁷

At the same time, Wolfensohn's team also devoted attention to garnering funds and short-term economic revitalization projects to stave off economic collapse in Gaza. He worked closely on the prospect of transferring Israeli settlers' greenhouses in Gaza to the Palestinian Authority, offering a new source of income and saving the jobs of the 3,500 Palestinians that were employed in the Gush Katif settlement. Under their Israeli owners, the fruits, vegetables, flowers, and spices produced in Gaza earned about \$75 million annually in exports and sales in Israel. Wolfensohn's team persuaded private American donors to contribute nearly \$14 million to the project, and he personally donated \$500,000.⁵⁶⁸

With the disengagement fast approaching, Israel preliminarily approved Wolfensohn's plan for regular convoys of buses and trucks commuting to the West Bank. The stability of the checkpoints remained an outstanding issue, and Israel refused Wolfensohn's requests for permission to reconstruct the Gaza seaport and airport.⁵⁶⁹

Disengagement and Its Consequences

On August 15, the scheduled disengagement began. Over a year of debate had united a majority of Israelis behind the withdrawal.⁵⁷⁰ Politicians ostensibly distant from Sharon ideologically expounded on the promises of the plan. The disengagement was framed as preserving the Jewish nature of the state, excising a highly populated Palestinian space with little strategic value. Further, Sharon and his backers in claimed that the disengagement changed Gaza's legal status and ended the occupation there, a notion fervently denied by the Palestinian leadership. The removal of four small settlements from the northern West Bank near Jenin did not detract from Sharon's larger purpose in withdrawing from Gaza. Through the veneer of concessions to the Palestinians, the Gaza disengagement allowed Israel to double down on its

⁵⁶⁷ Interview, Nick Krafft, April 2017.

⁵⁶⁸ G. Myre, "U.S. Donors to Pay Departing Jews for Gaza Greenhouses," New York Times 13 August 2005; "Al-Wakāla al-amrikiyya lil-tanmiyya tuṣādiq 'alā istithmār miliyyīn a-dollārāt l-tashīl 'aml al-m'ābr bayna isrā'īl wa ghaza," Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda 1 October 2005.

⁵⁶⁹ "Palestinian PM, Quartet Envoy Discuss Gaza Pullout," BBC Monitoring Middle East 1 August 2005.

⁵⁷⁰ For a discussion of the Gaza withdrawal debate and its continuity with wider patterns of Israeli colonization, see: Joyce Dalsheim, *Unsettling Gaza: Secular Liberalism, Radical Religion, and the Israeli Settlement Project* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.); Sara Yael Hirschhorn, "The Origins of the Redemption in Occupied Suburbia? The Jewish-American Making of the West Bank Settlement of Efrat, 1973-1987," *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, 2 (2015): 269-284.

colonization of the Palestinian land it valued, preserving the West Bank settlement blocs, Judaizing Jerusalem, and unilaterally redrawing borders with the separation wall.⁵⁷¹

A leaked diplomatic cable from the US diplomatic mission in Tel Aviv of a meeting with Vice PM Shimon Peres advisor Einat Wolf exemplifies the manner in which the Gaza disengagement related to domestic Israeli political exigencies, rather than security concerns. Wolf explained that the Israeli government would not seek international recognition of the assertion that the withdrawal from Gaza connoted the end of the occupation in the Strip. However, Wolf noted that “PM Sharon will continue to state publicly that Israel will not be responsible for what happens in Gaza post-disengagement.”⁵⁷² The fact that the international community jumped to aid this spectacle that answered to Israeli voters alone demonstrates once more the manner in which the peace process answered to Israeli unilateralism under Washington’s leadership.

The Palestinian cabinet issued a position paper a week prior to the Gaza disengagement. The ministers pointed out that Israel’s obligations per the 1907 Hague Regulations and 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention still stood, and Israel could not relinquish responsibility for the population’s humanitarian needs. The statement also posited that the withdrawal violated Palestinian territorial integrity ensured in the Oslo Accords and implicit in the Roadmap. Short of an agreement on full Palestinian sovereignty, including control of its borders, the Palestinians rejected any claim that the withdrawal signaled an end of the occupation.⁵⁷³ As Darryl Li argues, the disengagement was “an ongoing process of controlled abandonment,” as Israel severed ties with Gaza “without allowing any viable alternatives to emerge, all while leaving the international donor community to subsidize what remains.”⁵⁷⁴ Israel’s internal discourse, meanwhile, exemplifies a growing tendency to pathologize Gaza. The discourse employs security pretexts to enable unprecedented unilateralism with international backing, securitizing Gaza behind the ultimate closure regime.

⁵⁷¹ Hilal, “Ās’ilat mā b’ad al-insiḥab al-isrā’īlī min ghaza,” 5-8.

⁵⁷² 16 May 2005 Peres Advisor and NSC Advisor Cite “Slowdown” in Disengagement Talks with PA [WikiLeaks].

⁵⁷³ Isaac Herzog, “Comment & Analysis: No, We Are Not Behaving like Nazis: Israel’s Disengagement is the Best Hope for Lasting Peace in Decades,” *The Guardian* 2 August 2005; “Palestinians Reject Israel Claim of Change in Gaza Legal Status,” *BBC Monitoring Middle East* 9 August 2005; For more on the internal Israeli debate surrounding the disengagement, see: Saqer Jabali, “The Ruling Israeli Elite and the Unilateral Withdrawal Place from Gaza,” *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 12 (2013): 570-589.

⁵⁷⁴ Darryl Li, “Disengagement and the Frontiers of Zionism.” *Middle East Research and Information Project* 16 February 2008.

Most settlers left peacefully, but a small contingent of hardliners remained to protest the evacuation. In Kfar Darom, settlers lit fires and destroying property to prevent it falling into Palestinian hands.⁵⁷⁵ On the Palestinian side, celebrations of the disengagement were fraught with factional tensions that precipitated issues that would surface during the Palestinian Legislative elections, delayed until January 2006. The PA banned party banners and slogans in the celebrations. This move was derided as a weak attempt to undermine claims that Islamic Jihad and Hamas had delivered the Israeli decision to leave Gaza.⁵⁷⁶

In the same vein, PA spokesmen voiced concern about the overtly militarized nature of the celebrations. Qassam rocket launchers were paraded, evoking Hezbollah's celebrations of the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, sure to provoke international and Israeli scorn.⁵⁷⁷ Statements from Hamas leaders did not help the PA in this regard. For example, on 15 August spokesman Sami Abu-Zuhri argued that Sharon himself had once equated the Gaza settlement Netzarim with Tel Aviv, suggesting that withdrawal from Gaza foretold the eventual liberation of all of historic Palestine.⁵⁷⁸ Hamas's underground military wing projected ownership over the withdrawal, releasing statements that compared the gains of the four-year armed uprising against ten years of Fatah-dominated negotiations.⁵⁷⁹

Indeed, in what would prove a key theme of the coming elections, over 84% of Palestinians viewed the withdrawal as the result of armed resistance. This fortified Hamas's position, arming them with a message that resonated in sharp distinction from Fatah's prominence in the resumption of security coordination through the PASF. In fact, Hamas explicitly stated, "so-called security coordination with the occupation is a crime against the homeland and against religion; it should be severely punished."⁵⁸⁰

Nonetheless, in the weeks following the withdrawal, Fatah's position improved slightly in the polls, and only 30% of projected voters planned to support Hamas in the PLC elections. The same survey found that though a clear majority attributed the disengagement to armed

⁵⁷⁵ G. Myre, Steven Erlanger, and Dina Kraft, "Thousands of Settlers Remain in Gaza, Defying Israeli Orders; Military Moves In," *New York Times* 15 August 2005.

⁵⁷⁶ "Palestinian Paper Notes Rift between Government, Factions on Pullout Celebrations," BBC 6 August 2005; "Palestinian TV Airs Live Programme on Gaza 'Liberation.'" BBC Monitoring Middle East 15 Aug 2005.

⁵⁷⁷ BBC, "Palestinian paper notes rift between government, factions on pullout celebrations," 5 August 2005.

⁵⁷⁸ "Hamas Vows to Confront Any Israeli Presence in Gaza Following Pullout," BBC Monitoring Middle East 15 August 2005;

"Hamas Leader Says Gaza Pullout 'Partial Liberation,'" BBC Monitoring Middle East 12 August 2005.

⁵⁷⁹ International Crisis Group, "Enter Hamas," 7.

⁵⁸⁰ "Change and Reform List: Election Manifesto for the Elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council 2006," in Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 295; Hilal, "Ās'ilat mā b'ad al-insiḥab al-isrā'īlī min ghaza," 6.

struggle, 62% opposed continued armed resistance and 60% backed arms collection from the factions. Nearly 80% supported a continued ceasefire, and the vast majority of Palestinians concentrated their sights on reconstruction and economic development. Perhaps most interestingly, strong majorities of both Fatah and Hamas-supporting voters supported a two-state solution with Palestinian sovereignty in the West Bank and Gaza, suggesting the ideological flexibility of Hamas backers despite the group's rhetorical stances.⁵⁸¹

Agreement on Movement and Access in Gaza

Protracted trilateral negotiations on the logistics of the withdrawal between Israel, the Palestinians, and the Quartet continued through the autumn. This period brought to light the serious limitations of the Quartet. Neoconservative actors within the Bush administration, pushing hardline pro-Israel views, dominated the process and rejected putting pressure on Israel. Deputy National Security Advisor Elliot Abrams was key among these individuals; infamous for his role in the Iran-Contra affair, he spent the 1990s at a think tank criticizing the Oslo process before being rehabilitated by the Bush Administration. An ardent supporter of Israel with personal ties to Sharon, in February 2005 Abrams was charged with the Global Democracy Strategy portfolio in the National Security Council.⁵⁸²

In the Gaza withdrawal negotiations, Abrams repeatedly interfered in favor of maximalist Israeli positions. In one instance, Abrams rewrote Wolfensohn's draft agreement on Palestinian mobility to include positions closely aligned with those of Israel before presenting it to Secretary Rice. His meddling was unveiled and Rice angrily redrafted the document. However, these tensions caused Wolfensohn's relationship with the Administration to sour, seeing himself as a "nuisance" in the eyes of Abrams and other insiders.⁵⁸³ Rice, for her part, was a "true believer" in the peace process. As one former USSC official remembered in an interview, Rice's trips fell into a predictable pattern: often when the Secretary flew back to Washington, Tel Aviv would phone the White House and reverse whatever compromise she had forced through from Israel. Rice would discover the news when she landed in the US.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸¹ Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, "Palestinian Public Opinion Poll 17" (Ramallah: September 2005), 2-5.

⁵⁸² Reinhart, *The Road Map to Nowhere*, 37.

⁵⁸³ Interview, April 2017; Smooha, "All the Dreams We Once Had Are Now Gone"

⁵⁸⁴ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

Mirroring the difficulties Wolfensohn faced in delivering an agreement on Palestinian mobility from Gaza, within the Strip and the West Bank, living conditions remained chaotic following the disengagement. In September, Wolfensohn's efforts came to naught when Gazans looted and destroyed the Gush Katif greenhouses in a much-publicized scene.⁵⁸⁵ Continued Israeli assaults on Hamas and Islamic Jihad targets, including targeted assassinations using airstrikes, threatened to unravel the fragile ceasefire.⁵⁸⁶ During the same period, Israel also accelerated construction in the sprawling Ariel settlement, and Sharon was quoted in the Palestinian press acknowledging that the Gaza disengagement served foremost to strengthen Israel's hold on the West Bank.⁵⁸⁷ Most pressing, however, was Israel's refusal to coordinate the withdrawal fully with the PASF, leaving the Gaza border crossings regularly closed and transforming the densely populated Strip into a virtual prison.⁵⁸⁸

After months of delay, Secretary Rice arrived in the region 14 November, and convinced her Israeli and Palestinian counterparts to sign an Agreement on Movement of Access (AMA).⁵⁸⁹ The Agreement mandated continuous operation at the crossings. It stipulated new scanning equipment for installation by December 31, so that the daily transit of cargo trucks would exceed 150 in January 2006 and reach 400 per day by the end of the year.⁵⁹⁰ Per the AMA, Wolfensohn and his team would test the new equipment and join the USSC in consulting at the border crossings.

However, the wording of the AMA was noticeably vague, and Wolfensohn described it as "too little, too late."⁵⁹¹ The AMA called for "a common management system" between the Israelis and Palestinians, and stipulated that the PA would "establish, without delay, a unified system of border management." In keeping with the Mitchell Report, Tenet Workplan, and Roadmap, the AMA's weak monitoring mechanisms offered little prospect of consistent oversight, much less pressure on Israel to fulfill its obligations.⁵⁹² As Wolfensohn later recalled

⁵⁸⁵ World Bank. "The Palestinian Economy and the Prospects for its Recovery," (Washington, DC: Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, December 2005), 4.

⁵⁸⁶ "7 Shuhadā' wa 15 jarīhān fī qaṣīf sayyara b-mukhayyam jabāliyya," 28 October 2005.

⁵⁸⁷ "Isrā'īl tuqarir bunā' 300 waḥīdat sakaniyya fī "Arī'īl," lā insihābāt ukhrā b'ad qitā' ghaza," Al-Quds 6 September 2005.

"Sharon: kharajnā min ghaza l-n'aziz qubḍatinā fī a-dafa al-gharbiyya," Al-Quds 14 September 2005.

⁵⁸⁸ "Isrā'īl ughlaqat m'abr rafaḥ dūn tansīq m'a al-jānīb al-filastīnī," Al-Quds 9 September 2005.

⁵⁸⁹ World Bank, "The Palestinian Economy and the Prospects for its Recovery," 4.

⁵⁹⁰ 15 November 2005. Agreement on Movement and Access (PLO): 1-2.

⁵⁹¹ Smooha, "All the Dreams We Once Had Are Now Gone."

⁵⁹² 15 November 2005. Agreement on Movement and Access (PLO): 2.

bitterly, the announcement of the official AMA was the death penalty to his mission. His team was disbanded and the “Israelis and Americans took apart that agreement one by one.”⁵⁹³

As a result, the Palestinian economy remained shaky as 2005 drew to a close, and basic freedoms of movement were denied. The Palestinian GDP per capita fell 30% lower than pre-intifada levels, and youth unemployment hovered at 35%, reaching 60% in Gaza’s southern refugee camps. Over 40% of Palestinians remained below the poverty line. Despite its hiring freezes and international budget oversight, the PA’s fiscal situation was increasingly unsustainable, with monthly budget deficits surpassing \$57 million.⁵⁹⁴ Calling the AMA “only a first step,” the World Bank noted that while some hoped Secretary Rice’s involvement would encourage action on the AMA, Israeli officials had already threatened complete closure of Gaza. As a result of a suicide attack in Netanya on 5 December 2005, Israel delayed the start of bus convoys scheduled for December 15 per the AMA.⁵⁹⁵ It was against this backdrop of Palestinian economic frailty and factionalism, and fractured political will held together by a beleaguered team of divided international officials, that the January 2006 PLC elections would take place.

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, the Quartet’s ambition to implement its Roadmap of Palestinian reform was drastically sidetracked by Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in August 2005. The decision – a valuable domestic political move for Ariel Sharon, and designed to postpone indefinitely territorial compromise in the West Bank – entirely reoriented the international community’s priorities. Under American guidance, the key provisions of the Roadmap were discarded and the focus of energies lay in accommodating Israel’s unilateral decision to withdraw from Gaza.

Disregarding the concerns of the Palestinian population, the Quartet focused on reconstituting the Palestinian Authority to meet Israeli demands. The resumption of security coordination with Israel figured among the top American priorities, and Washington initiated its US Security Coordinator mission to guarantee control over the issue. In enacting these reforms, Washington imported dominant economic and political values enforced in Iraq by the ‘global

⁵⁹³ Smooha, “All the Dreams We Once Had Are Now Gone.”

⁵⁹⁴ World Bank, “The Palestinian Economy and the Prospects for its Recovery,” 6-9.

⁵⁹⁵ World Bank, “The Palestinian Economy and the Prospects for its Recovery,” 10.

war on terror.’ In Palestine, the PA’s reconstruction hinged upon its accordance to principles that alienated the PA from its own population. The Palestinian reform initiatives’ dependence on the international donor community is evident in the March 2005 London conference, which invited unprecedented levels of international direction of Palestinian public and security sector affairs. Abbas’s vision of integrating the Oslo rejectionists through the Cairo Agreement similarly relied upon the goodwill of international donors supporting Palestinian democratization. The following chapter turns to a close examination of the manner in which this support was always conditional on PA compliance with American prerogatives.

Chapter 3: A Bridge Too Far: Democratization and its Aftermath

Introduction

Democratization was the centerpiece of American policy in the Palestinian territories between late 2004 and early 2006, enshrined in the Roadmap reforms foisted on the Palestinian Authority (PA). Though Arafat’s status had diminished over several years of American pressure, the US saw his death as an opportunity to fundamentally transform the PA. Shortly after his reelection in November 2004, President Bush stated his intention to “use the next four years to spend the capital of the United States” to establish a democratic, independent, and viable

Palestinian state. The president argued there was a “great chance” for this endeavor if the Palestinians “committed to fighting terror and committed to the cause of democratic reform.”⁵⁹⁶

The democratization aim tied the PA to the wider ‘freedom agenda’ for transformation of the Middle East, whose momentum was Washington’s driving concern. Democratization of the PA legitimized the Roadmap and served as the key measure of Palestinian performance. Attention to reform culminated with the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections, the apex of Washington’s ‘freedom agenda’ in Palestine.

Chapter Outline

This chapter first describes the support for Palestinian elections that steered American policy in 2005. It highlights the dissonance between calls for democratization and interventions intended to predetermine election outcomes. Following the success of Hamas in the 2006 PLC elections, the American agenda pivoted sharply, prioritizing securitization. The latter section of this chapter traces Washington’s about-face, and its crippling effects on Palestinian political and economic viability. In keeping with the precedent established by the Roadmap, the primary conduits of American pressure against the elected PA originated in technical support. This chapter highlights how this technical support, framed as apolitical, functioned to condition the Palestinian Authority to a shared American-Israeli agenda. In particular, the analysis highlights the office of the US Security Coordinator (USSC), which was instrumental in enforcing the American securitization policy. This analysis demonstrates the tenuous nature of American support for democratization, the limits of the ‘freedom agenda,’ and the ways both frameworks served to exclude actors deemed unacceptable by Washington, and by extension, Israel. The analysis in this chapter sheds light on irreconcilable contradictions in American policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict following the onset of the ‘global war on terror.’

The Politics of Democracy Promotion

In the push to hold Palestinian elections, American and internal PA interests converged. On the American side, elections in the PA were intended to connect Washington’s policy of

⁵⁹⁶ United States Congressional Research Service - Jim Zanotti, “U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority” (Washington, DC: January 2010), 7; Elliot Abrams, *Tested by Zion: The Bush Administration and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 119.

regime change in Iraq with the idea of popular will regionally. Democratization of the PA sought appeal to locals' 'hearts and minds.' As one former elections observer noted, President Bush was enormously invested in "the beauty of democracy and how it will help save all of these governments and these people ... it was important to us that they have a democratic vote."⁵⁹⁷ Similarly, as National Security Council (NSC) member Elliot Abrams later remarked, "Arafat was a man on the wrong side of the war on terror, an enemy of democracy and good governance, and therefore of the president's repeated calls for reform in the Arab world and for the advance of democracy." Bush hoped to include Palestine alongside the Iraqis and Afghans – who had elected Hamid Karzai as president on 9 October 2004 – in his vision of "tomorrow's democracies."⁵⁹⁸

The PA elite, for their part, desperately needed the legitimacy endowed by elections, particularly following the loss of Arafat, who had served as the "adhesive glue" to Palestinian politics since the Oslo Accords.⁵⁹⁹ The erosion of the PA's political unity had accelerated with the intifada, evidenced by the emergence of the alternative, younger leaders.⁶⁰⁰ At the same time, the Palestinian public was wary of the foreign meddling behind the push for democratization. The PA hoped to renew public trust and solidify support for its foreign-backed reform mandate through the democratic process, beginning with a series of municipal elections in the course of 2005, followed by a legislative contest.

However, Washington's counterterrorism and democratization agendas collided in the course of advocating for elections. As Abrams later said, "what is striking in retrospect is that we never considered deviating."⁶⁰¹ The following analysis demonstrates that Washington's enthusiasm for elections was prejudiced from the outset. The Bush Administration struggled to reverse its course even as it became clear the 'freedom agenda' was counterproductive to stated US priorities in Palestine.

Programming Palestinian Democracy

⁵⁹⁷ Interview, Carter Center 2006 PLC elections observer, 20 March 2017.

⁵⁹⁸ Abrams, *Tested by Zion*, 121.

⁵⁹⁹ Giacaman, "Mustaqbal a-nizām a-sīyyāsī al-filasṭīnī b'ad 'Arafāt," 1.

⁶⁰⁰ Haddad, *Palestine Ltd.*, 544. (eBook); See, for example Tariq Dana, "Palestinian Civil Society: What Went Wrong?" *Al Shabaka* 14 April 2013. <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/palestinian-civil-society-what-went-wrong/>; Mandy Turner, "Creating 'Partners for Peace': The Palestinian Authority and the International Statebuilding Agenda," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 5, 1 (2011): 15; Islah Jad, "The Post-Oslo Palestine and Gendering Palestinian Citizenship." *Ethnicities* 11, 3 (2011): 372.

⁶⁰¹ Abrams, *Tested by Zion*, 120.

The US led the way in the civil society and aid efforts in preparation for elections in 2005. An “Electoral Reform Support Group” was established in the spring of 2005 with European and American representatives, including a prominent role by USAID and its American NGOs subcontractors. These initiatives built upon several decades of democracy promotion in the Middle East spearheaded from Washington. As Sheila Carapico notes, American and European development agencies, foundations, and advocacy groups operated as both partners and rivals for influence in Middle Eastern democracy promotion. Though USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy, and groups like the privately-funded Ford Foundation made the US the most generous donor in the field, European projects like the 1995 Barcelona Declaration had also created a vast web of financially connected programs, conferences, and grants. Broadly, they aimed to enable pluralistic Arab political participation, often with emphasis on good governance and women’s socio-economic empowerment.⁶⁰²

A number of scholars have critically theorized the purposes and extent of European and American democracy promotion in the Middle East. In 2002, the US inaugurated its “Middle East Partnership Initiative,” a broad program of support for civil society organizations - especially those focused on women and democracy - from Morocco to Pakistan. Washington’s push for Palestinian democracy responded both to attempt to pacify and condition the sorts of civil society that existed in the Middle East, and to the specific moment of the ‘global war on terror’ in 2005, with its discourse bound up in the language of Iraqi ‘freedom.’⁶⁰³

As Leila Farsakh points out, civil society organizations have been central to the World Bank and USAID’s attention in the West Bank. Through initiatives that prioritized empowerment of individuals over the collective, a focus on civil society has permeated every area of aid since Oslo. Such projects empower Palestinian individuals to the extent that this empowerment does not conflict with acquiescence to Israel’s primacy, setting clear political limits on civic engagement.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰² The US created the National Endowment for Democracy and the partisan National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and International Republican Institute in the early 1980s. London and Ottawa followed suit with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the International Center for Human Rights and Democracy Development (ICHRDD), respectively. Sheila Carapico, “Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World,” *Middle East Journal* 56, 3 (2002): 381-4.

⁶⁰³ Zakia Salime, “Securing the Market, Pacifying Civil Society, Empowering Women: The Middle East Partnership Initiative,” *Sociological Forum* 25, 4 (2010): 726-727; Saba Mahmood, “Feminism, Democracy, and Empire: Islam and the War on Terror,” in Hanna Herzog and Ann Braude, *Gendering Religion and Politics: Untangling Modernities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 197.

⁶⁰⁴ Leila Farsakh, “Undermining Democracy in Palestine: The Politics of International Aid since Oslo.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 45, 4 (2016): 49-51.

The dynamics on the ground as the ‘freedom agenda’ swung into full gear in Palestine support Farsakh’s arguments. In the run-up to the municipal and legislative elections, USAID and its subcontractors invested millions of dollars in a wide variety of capacity building projects designed to strengthen popular understanding of the political process and encourage voter turnout, which had reached only 60% for the presidential elections in January 2005. For example, USAID recruited the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), two Washington-based organizations, to the Task Force on Palestinian Reform. IFES won contracts of \$5 million to support the Palestinian Central Election Commission (CEC), providing voter education programs and coordinating media coverage of the campaigns.⁶⁰⁵

As IFES reported, Palestinian voters expressed a high level of dissatisfaction and deception by the Legislative Council. As such, the education programs focused on strengthening direct links between representatives and their constituencies, and “explaining the importance of an elected parliament in a democratic presidential system.”⁶⁰⁶ This language is an example of Farsakh’s critique that such civil engagement projects were at once condescending and foster individual, rather than associational, relationships to public authority. The reasons for this approach evidently lay in a desire to exclude collectives from that conflict with externally imposed conditions, foremost the popularity of Hamas.⁶⁰⁷ By restricting conversation about democracy to technicalities, election promotion initiatives acted on the same principle. They sought to marginalize political parties, trade unions, and community organizations unsavory in Washington.⁶⁰⁸

Conditioning Support, Choosing Winners

Moreover, while official American discourse presented an image of impartial embrace of Palestinian democracy, behind the scenes, US organizations were actively working to ensure Washington’s preferred outcome. In doing so, Washington kept with its Oslo-era endorsement of

⁶⁰⁵ IFES was created in the early 1990s from a USAID loan. Carapico, “Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World,” 383. International Foundation for Electoral Systems, “West Bank/Gaza Presidential Elections – Final Report” (Washington, DC: Center for Transitional and Post-Conflict Governance, February 2005), 2.

⁶⁰⁶ International Foundation for Electoral Systems, “General Voter Education Plan for the Palestinian Legislative Council Election” (Washington, DC: Center for Transitional and Post-Conflict Governance, January 2005), 23.

⁶⁰⁷ Lisa Bhungalia, “Managing Violence: Aid, Counterinsurgency, and the Humanitarian Present in Palestine,” *Environment and Planning A* 47 (2015): 2318.

⁶⁰⁸ Salime, “The Middle East Partnership Initiative,” 737; Farsakh, “Undermining Democracy in Palestine,” 59.

the 1996 PLC elections to rubber stamp Arafat's hegemony. Then, there was little regard for the inevitable privileging of Fatah's continued dominance the vote brought, given the strength of the executive branch and the exclusion of the most powerful rivals for political representation by the litmus test of the two-state solution. Instead, a popular vote was seen as critical to legitimizing Arafat's grasp over the executive branch.⁶⁰⁹

In the post-Arafat era, policymakers' discussions make clear that the US envisioned elections as a tool to bolster Abbas. For example, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee discussed the urgency of developing a strategy to contend with growing support for Hamas in an October 2005 report.⁶¹⁰ The need to back Fatah became all the starker as elections approached. As Yezid Sayigh notes, the US "sought to boost the electoral chances of Fatah and other competitors to Hamas by budgeting \$42 million in support and training for the conduct of their campaigns." Washington funneled these funds through the NDI and International Republican Institute.⁶¹¹

In particular, Washington set out to dismantle Hamas's built-in support network by enabling the PA to deliver tangible services to Palestinians accustomed to relying on Hamas's charitable organizations. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee worried that simply forcing Palestinian partners to sign the anti-terrorism certifications USAID required was insufficient to undermine Hamas, and perhaps counterproductive for Hamas. As local actors refused these conditions, American aid providers would cede whole areas of influence to Hamas.⁶¹² USAID's own literature in this regard is instructive: USAID declared that no mature Palestinian parties existed, comparing Fatah to the Chinese Communist party due to its interlocking control over the PA and PLO. USAID described Hamas as an effective, but not democratic, organization. USAID replicated hardline White House positions, arguing it was reasonable to exclude Islamist candidates from election preparation initiatives that would "ensure [...] their capacity to mount

⁶⁰⁹ Leila Farsakh, "Democracy Promotion in Palestine: Aid and the "De-Democratization" of the West Bank and Gaza" (Birzeit, Palestine: Center for Development Studies- Birzeit University, 2011), 8.

⁶¹⁰ United States Senate, "Staff Trip Reports: Israel's Disengagement from Gaza and Several West Bank Settlements" (Washington, DC: Foreign Relations Committee, October 2005.)

⁶¹¹ Yezid Sayigh, "Inducing a Failed State in Palestine," *Survival* 49, 3 (2007): 42.

⁶¹² United States Senate, "Staff Trip Reports: Israel's Disengagement from Gaza and Several West Bank Settlements," 4; United States Government Accountability Office, "Foreign Assistance: Recent Improvements Made, but USAID Should Do More to Help Ensure Aid Is Not Provided for Terrorist Activities in West Bank and Gaza" (Washington, DC: 29 September 2006.)

terror campaigns.”⁶¹³ A clear conditionality pervaded US support for Palestinian democracy, using financial support to exclude certain parties and promote others.

Israeli rhetorical support for the elections was the result of American pressure, coupled with Israel’s own opportunism. Already in September of 2004, acting Israeli Minister for Internal Security, Gideon Ezra, had forced the Palestinian CEC to cease registering voters in what Israel considers the municipality of Jerusalem.⁶¹⁴ However, at a June 2005 meeting with Saeb Erekat, Sharon adviser’s Dov Weisglass agreed that allowing voters to travel was “good PR even for Israel – facilitating democracy.”⁶¹⁵ Though staunchly opposed to Hamas’s participation, Israel was reticent to directly undermine elections under Washington’s watchful eye.

The US worked to reconcile Israel’s refusal to facilitate the elections with the Palestinian call for pluralism and representation. American organizations like the NDI and IEFES stepped in to bridge these conflicting demands while avoiding overt US intervention by imposing norms for participation in the elections. For example, they joined the International Republican Institute in suggesting the CEC adopt “candidacy requirements.” The NDI also worked with the Arab Thought Forum to formulate a “code of conduct” for the PLC elections in late 2005. The code stopped short of banning candidates, but tacitly targeted Hamas by requiring candidates to commit to peaceful, fair campaigning, and acceptance of poll results. On 5 January 2006, Hamas – explicitly named as the subject of concern in the NDI’s pre-election report – signed the code.⁶¹⁶

Hamas’s Electoral Rise

Despite this interference, Hamas’s electoral ascendance proved unstoppable. Hamas presented an anti-corruption, reconstruction-focused agenda, embodied by its “Change and Reform” slogan, that appealed widely to Palestinians. The campaign emphasized national unity, PA accountability, and separating the PLO from the PA. More traditional calls for protection of

⁶¹³ United States Agency – International Development, “West Bank and Gaza Political Party Assessment” (Washington, DC: Democracy International, Inc. and ARD, Inc., January 2006), 7.

⁶¹⁴ National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, “CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: April 1 to June 30, 2005. West Bank and Gaza: International Observation of Voter Registration (04859) USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00” (Washington, DC: USAID, 2005).

⁶¹⁵ June 2005 Meeting Minutes – Dov Weisglass and Saeb Erekat (PLO): 6.

⁶¹⁶ National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, “Final Report: Palestinian Local Elections 2005” (Washington, DC: USAID, 2006), 2.

Jerusalem and advocacy for prisoners and refugees were also central. While grounded in Islamist tropes, the Change and Reform manifesto protected minorities and pluralism.⁶¹⁷

It is important to note that the Hamas campaign reflected its grassroots relationship to the Palestinian public. Hamas's more pragmatic wing had won out in the political integration debate, driven by moderate figures like Ismail Haniyeh. Their outlook was apparent in the Change and Reform manifesto. For example, in its external relations section, the platform aimed to "establish balanced political relations within the family of nations in a manner that would guarantee an active participation in the international community."⁶¹⁸ This moderate trend was also apparent in the diversity among Change and Reform candidates. Drawing in businessmen and respected professionals, Hamas met public desires for less corrupt and more accountable governance.⁶¹⁹

The experience of Dr. Ayman Daraghmeh, a professor of chemistry from the northern West Bank district of Tubas, is illustrative in this regard. After three years in Israeli detention, Daraghmeh worked in the Ministry of Health and joined the Change and Reform list as an independent. In an interview, Daraghmeh framed his participation as a natural outcome of Hamas's attention to his neighbors' and family's crises, contrasting with Fatah's dead-end leadership. Daraghmeh argued Fatah's failure was manifest in Abbas's insistence on negotiations as the only legitimate channel to fulfill Palestinian demands, ignoring the abject rejection of the peace process's shortcomings among his constituents.⁶²⁰

Hamas drew its support from a base of social organizations that had grown noticeably during the intifada years. Islamic social welfare organizations had long played a critical role in service provision to Palestinians: for example, prior to the intifada an estimated 65% of all primary school and childcare facilities in Gaza were controlled or affiliated with Hamas.⁶²¹ However, as the socioeconomic shocks of the intifada jeopardized daily life, and most sharply in Gaza, this reliance grew. Whereas in 1999 20% of Palestinians fell below the poverty level, the rate had risen to 60% by 2003 and only inched toward recovery in 2005.

Though countless NGOs provided services in Palestine, the Islamic charities were widely perceived as the most efficient, and the piety and humility of their officials contrasted visibly

⁶¹⁷ "Change and Reform List: Election Manifesto for the Elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council 2006," in Tamimi, Hamas, 292-316.

⁶¹⁸ "Change and Reform List: Election Manifesto for the Elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council 2006," 297.

⁶¹⁹ International Crisis Group, "Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration," Middle East Report 49, January 2006, 9.

⁶²⁰ Interview, Ayman Daraghmeh [Change and Reform list MP, Tubas district] Ramallah: 27 August 2017.

⁶²¹ Malka, "Forcing Choices," 38.

with the opulent corruption displayed among a number of prominent Fatah figures.⁶²² A European diplomat stationed in Gaza explained this dynamic to the US diplomatic corps in Jerusalem. He stated that PA officials were discredited, “if not despised,” and no amount of foreign assistance or infrastructure projects would be able to rehabilitate them in the public’s eyes.⁶²³

Increased dependence on Islamic welfare organizations during the intifada translated to growing popularity for political Islam among those most likely to require assistance, like the unemployed, or those outside the formal labor market, such as housewives. Students, similarly, had strong rates of Islamist activism, reflecting Hamas’s organization in universities and its ideological sway there. In the intifada years, 75% of Hamas’s supporters were non-wage-earners, reflecting what Adi Ophir refers to as the “catastrophization” of Palestinian society by Israel.⁶²⁴ Hamas’s rise thus reflected popular dependence on the Islamists’ social welfare services in the context of the destruction of Palestinian economic life.⁶²⁵

Pre-Election Deliberations

The international community’s respect for the Palestinians’ democratic process was far from certain as the legislative council elections approached. At a bilateral meeting on 22 September 2005, Secretary Rice sympathized with the Israeli refusal to facilitate elections with Hamas. Rice noted that, “We tried very hard to think of examples where an armed group was elected without the understanding that they would lay down their arms and we couldn’t.”⁶²⁶ Rice worried whether Palestinians understood Hamas’s politics, failing to grasp the Islamic organization’s vital services in the place of a functioning state.⁶²⁷ Of course, these statements flew in the face of the reality of US ‘democratization’ in Iraq and Afghanistan, where armed factions competed with each other in elections. Hamas denounced Washington’s hypocrisy, “stressing that the Americans promoted democracy only when it suited their purposes.”⁶²⁸

⁶²² Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 220.

⁶²³ 16 September 2005 Gaza – Security Deteriorates, PA Hesitates, But Hamas Consolidates [WikiLeaks], 4.

⁶²⁴ Adi Ophir, “The Politics of Catastrophization” in Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi, *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 54-55.

⁶²⁵ Hilal, “Charting Hamas’s Rise,” 13-15.

⁶²⁶ 22 September 2005. Notes from PA-US Bilateral Meetings - Condoleezza Rice, Salam Fayyad, David Welch, Robert Zoellick (PLO), 2.

⁶²⁷ 22 September 2005. Notes from PA-US Bilateral Meetings - Condoleezza Rice, Salam Fayyad, David Welch, Robert Zoellick (PLO), 1-2.

⁶²⁸ Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 94.

Multiple affiliates to the US Security Coordinator, on the other hand, noted that Hamas was much more popular in the Palestinian street, including its armed forces. One European diplomat described Hamas militants as a stabilizing force in Gaza, where smaller armed factions were often actually groups of friends looking to settle a score in the anarchy that prevailed followed Israel's withdrawal in August 2005.⁶²⁹ In an interview, Jill Sinclair, former Canadian Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, recalled that Hamas was seen popularly as a "non-corrupt alternative."⁶³⁰ It was the American political leadership, however, that failed to appreciate these nuances. American legislators' discussion of democracy promotion in Palestine echoed Rice's concerns. In October 2005, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee described the PA's commitment to nonviolence as vastly beneficial to Palestinians. However, the legislators noted that "there is very little appreciation of this on the streets," where criticism of the armed resistance and its martyrs indicated alienation from the national struggle.⁶³¹

Washington's anxiety that Palestinian democratization might lead to a Hamas victory was alleviated by Fatah's confidence. During a visit to Washington in May 2005, Abbas predicted a Fatah victory. Reproducing the rhetoric of the 'war on terror,' Abbas assured American officials the coming election would reverberate throughout the Middle East and deal Sunni Islamist militancy a significant setback.⁶³² As the PLO assured Secretary Rice in September, "the hope is to elect a peace-loving government in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip." Washington's interlocutors, especially Abbas and the new Minister of Finance Fayyad, were confident, arguing, "Hamas will not make it, [their] ideology is not accepted by the vast majority of Palestinians."⁶³³

On 14 October, chief PLO negotiator Saeb Erekat reiterated this message, assuring Washington that Palestinian law already addressed concerns of violence and incitement. Erekat contended that Hamas's participation would be "the turning point in Middle East history [...] if Israel or the US stops these elections we will have the Algerian model," referring to the 1991 armed conflict after the Front de Libération Nationale rejected the electoral success of the Islamic Resistance Front.⁶³⁴ Interestingly, Erekat did not mention an example closer to home: the

⁶²⁹ 16 September 2005 Gaza – Security Deteriorates, PA Hesitates, But Hamas Consolidates [WikiLeaks].

⁶³⁰ Interview, Jill Sinclair, January 2018.

⁶³¹ United States Senate, "Staff Trip Reports: Israel's Disengagement from Gaza and Several West Bank Settlements," 7.

⁶³² ICG, "Enter Hamas," 10.

⁶³³ 22 September 2005. Notes from PA-US Bilateral Meetings - Condoleezza Rice, Salam Fayyad, David Welch, Robert Zoellick (PLO): 3.

⁶³⁴ 14 October 2005. NSU Memorandum re: Meeting with Peres on Border Crossings, Rafah, and Elections (PLO): 4.

1981 student council elections at An-Najah University in Nablus. There, Fatah-affiliated students refused to cede control of the council, instead establishing a new, parallel *majlis* after losing the student elections. Frustrated Islamist students forcibly overtook the council in January 1982, in striking parallel with developments to come in 2006.⁶³⁵ The American fixation on elections persisted without a nuanced understanding of the prevailing Palestinian economic, political, and social changes since the intifada. By encouraging the PA – with Fatah at the helm – to reform, Washington ignored the longer-term processes that had undermined the group’s popularity, as well as the repercussions of overt American support for the PA elite.

Ultimately, Washington’s interest in Palestinian democracy matched its overarching aim of consolidating a new American order in the Middle East. The same principle informed the timing of post-invasion elections in Iraq, designed to quiet the Shi’a *ūlama*’s opposition to the ongoing occupation rather than fundamentally alter the status quo.⁶³⁶ There, the external creation of the Iraqi Transitional National Authority in November 2004 was the culmination of a shifting American approach to democratization after toppling Saddam Hussein.

First, the exiled elites favored by neoconservative regime change proponents, foremost Ahmed Chalabi’s Iraqi National Congress and American-trained Free Iraq Forces, failed to garner popular support. In response, the Coalition Provisional Authority created the Iraqi Governing Council, responsible for establishing local governing structures that fit Washington’s concept of Iraq’s demographic balance. This tactic both denied indigenous participatory processes and enshrined “ethnic and sectarian difference as the major lines of political cleavages.”⁶³⁷

Washington applied the same conditionality to its democracy promotion in Palestine as it did in Iraq in 2004. Washington’s guiding principle in its ‘freedom agenda’ was “the notion that external actors could and should” empower a preferred political elite.⁶³⁸ The chosen elite was invariably deemed ‘moderate’ by merit of this relationship to Washington.⁶³⁹

Israeli Conditions, American Policy

⁶³⁵ Nasser a-Din al-Sha’er, who became deputy Prime Minister through the Hamas victory in 2006, was also a leading Islamist student in the An-Najah University conflict. Iyyad Barghouti, “Tadākhul al-idiolojiyyā wa a-siyyāsa fī nazū‘a ḥamās ilā al-‘unf,” *Majallat al dirāsāt al filastīniyya* 18, 71 (2007): 53.

⁶³⁶ Usher, “The Democratic Resistance: Hamas, Fatah, and the Palestinian Elections,” 21.

⁶³⁷ Carrie Manning, “Political Elites and Democratic State-building Efforts in Bosnia and Iraq,” *Democratization* 13, 5 (2006): 727-729.

⁶³⁸ Manning, “Political Elites and Democratic State-building Efforts in Bosnia and Iraq,” 725.

⁶³⁹ Turner, “Creating ‘Partners for Peace,’” 13, 17.

The American embrace of Israel's unilateralism meant that in Palestine, the feature that defined Palestinians as 'moderate' in Washington's eyes was willingness to meet Israeli demands. The close coordination between Washington and Israel in this regard is evident in the leaked minutes of a meeting between Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin and State Department officials in November 2005. Diskin implored his American colleagues to "do the most to help Fatah."⁶⁴⁰ US backing for Fatah in the elections sought to prejudice the outcomes explicitly to serve Israel's purposes, demonstrating the American internalization of Israeli demands enacted in the PA ascendant after the Second Intifada.

In Palestine, association with Washington was a massive campaign disadvantage. Fatah was fraught by irreconcilable pledges, and these were highlighted sharply in the election context. Tariq Dana notes that since Oslo, Fatah had opportunistically maintained a discourse of national liberation and anti-colonial struggle while at the same time using the vocabulary of peace-building and negotiations. This language answered the donor audience which supported Fatah.⁶⁴¹ Fatah conceived of elections as the key to regaining popular legitimacy after the decay of its revolutionary legitimacy, and Abbas in particular was open to democratizing the PLO.⁶⁴²

Fatah and the PA's visible dependence on Western donors made them an easy target for criticism. In one example, Hamas added a page on its campaign website depicting Fatah security insider Mohammed Dahlan as an Israeli security agent, accusing him of participating in the assassination of Islamist activists in Gaza and questioning the sources of his wealth. Also in Gaza, Hamas raised campaign banners that proclaimed, "The Choice: Qassam Rocket or a Policeman Protecting Israel," emphasizing Fatah's corruption. Hamas understood the elections as a critical moment to protect the national struggle, occurring when American pressure on the PA had reached new heights, without Arafat to block aggression on the besieged Palestinians. Joining the elections was a means to restructure the PLO to provide for Palestinians.⁶⁴³

The PA's western backers, in turn, understood Palestinian elections as a tool to legitimize a politics of compromise.⁶⁴⁴ While American enthusiasm for PA reform coincided with indigenous calls for change to the PA, Washington disregarded the substance of diverse

⁶⁴⁰ 28 November 2005 ISA Chief Diskin Views Rafah as Test Case [WikiLeaks], 3.

⁶⁴¹ Dana, "The Prolonged Decay of the Palestinian National Movement," 8.

⁶⁴² Baconi, Hamas Contained, 78. Barghouthi, "Tadākhul al-idiolojyyā wa a-siyyāsa fī nazū'a ḥamās ilā al-'unf," 154.

⁶⁴³ 19 January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Elections SITREP #8 [WikiLeaks], 4. Baconi, Hamas Contained, 77.

⁶⁴⁴ Hilal, The Polarization of the Palestinian Political Field," 36; International Crisis Group, "Palestine: Salvaging Fatah," Middle East Report 91, 12 November 2009: ii.

Palestinian demands.⁶⁴⁵ As one former NDI observer noted, the American proponents of the elections were caught up in their own narrative, even as it became evident their outlook did not match voters' desires.⁶⁴⁶ Perhaps most glaringly, the Change and Reform manifesto described the Oslo Accords as "a thing of the past," drawing into question their plans for the PA itself.⁶⁴⁷ Hamas's armed resistance remained fundamentally at odds with the functions of the PA during the Oslo years, designed to quell resistance. A vote against Fatah was not simply a rejection of its leadership of the PA, but of the PA itself.⁶⁴⁸ A process of renewal in the PA did little to hide the inherent contradiction of its continued existence without a viable political horizon, all the more acute should a party critical of its existence control it.

This paradox was not lost on the Palestinian public. Indeed, many commentators at the time questioned the logic behind the elections in light of Israel's continued insistence that Abbas did not constitute a viable "partner for peace," much less Hamas. In the context of intensifying colonization, the construction of the separation wall, as well as continuous Israeli incursions in Gaza, the effective annexation of the Jordan Valley, and encirclement of Jerusalem, the attempt to unite constituents behind representatives without concrete prospects of a political solution was an exercise in futility. George Giacaman called this the transformation of national struggle into "a giant municipality to administer Palestinian affairs."⁶⁴⁹

From another perspective, Jamil Hilal predicted that the unilateralism of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza had created new centers of authority among the factions claiming victory there. With elections in the absence of a coherent political vision moving forward, these tensions threatened to be enshrined in the Legislative Council. Indeed, this prospect loomed in the months prior to the election as the Fatah-dominated PA de-legitimized Hamas within the Palestinian polity. The Preventative Security Forces, Military Intelligence, and General Intelligence Services carried out political detentions against Hamas activists.⁶⁵⁰ In a significant article written at the

⁶⁴⁵ International Crisis Group, "The Meanings of Palestinian Reform," 2.

⁶⁴⁶ Interview, Carter Center 2006 PLC elections observer, March 2017.

⁶⁴⁷ "Change and Reform List" in Tamimi, Hamas, 315; Usher, "The Democratic Resistance," 25.

⁶⁴⁸ Barghouthi, "Tadākhul al-idiolojiyyā wa a-siyyāsa fī nazū' a ḥamās ilā al-'unf," 55.

⁶⁴⁹ George Giacaman, "Ḥamās wa fatah: širā' barāmij ām širā' 'alā a-sulṭa," *Majallat al dirāsāt al filastīniyya* 17, 68 (2006): 54. Similar criticisms befell pre-Oslo municipal elections under the Israeli Civil administration, called "Village Councils," that legitimized the occupation's structure while preventing PLO influence. Barghouthi, "Tadākhul al-idiolojiyyā wa a-siyyāsa fī nazū' a ḥamās ilā al-'unf," 54; Giacaman, "Mustaqbal a-nizām a-sīyyāsī al-filastīnī b'ad 'Arafāt," 5.

⁶⁵⁰ Addameer, "Stolen Hope: Political Detention in the West Bank" (Ramallah: Addameer, February 2011), 10.

time, Hilal warned that this polarization could lead Palestinians to take up arms against each other.⁶⁵¹

Election Reality Bites, and the Quartet Falters

It is worth briefly dissecting the actions of the Quartet, the body charged with overseeing Palestinian democratization through the Roadmap. Though intended as a mechanism to internationalize the American role as broker of Israeli-Palestinian peace, the Quartet was beholden to the embrace of Israeli unilateralism in Washington that characterized the post-9/11 era. The Quartet grappled with the participation of Hamas in the election in ways that can only be characterized as ambivalent. As Alvaro de Soto, a Peruvian diplomat appointed United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process in May 2005 later recalled, the elections took on a dynamic of their own due to Hamas's participation.

De Soto formulated a strategy by which the Quartet could play on its diverse membership to offset the constraints imposed by the American and European prohibition on contact with a recognized terrorist group. His proposal called for a "common but differentiated approach" in the event of a Hamas-oriented government, with the UN and Russia taking the Quartet lead in helping the Islamists to continue on the path of evolution they had embarked upon by participating in the elections.⁶⁵² This tactic recognized the weight of Hamas in Palestinian society, preferring to influence the Islamists' development through interaction rather than ceasing contact.

Following consultation with Abu Mazen, after the Quartet's 20 September 2005, meeting UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan read a carefully-worded statement to the press. Annan conveyed the Quartet's belief that the PLC elections should be viewed as a "stage in the Palestinian evolution toward democracy, and that the question of participation should be left to the Palestinians themselves notwithstanding the fundamental contradiction between participation in elections and possession of militias."⁶⁵³ The Quartet thus expressed the view that all parties – namely Israel – should cooperate with the outcomes of the Palestinian democratic choice. As de Soto noted, this formulation endorsed Abu Mazen's co-option calculus, allowing the Palestinians to skip over the Roadmap commitment to disarm the militias in favor of democratization. In

⁶⁵¹ Jamil Hilal, "Ās'ilat mā b'ad al-insihab al-isrā'īlī min ghaza," 8.

⁶⁵² De Soto, End of Mission Report, 17.

⁶⁵³ De Soto, End of Mission Report, 15-16.

Israel, the Quartet statement was derided as a capitulation, all the more so as the Palestinian press reported that Washington would not pressure the PA with regards to Hamas before the PLC vote.⁶⁵⁴

However, with American midterm elections fast approaching in late 2005, the American approach coalesced around the principle that Hamas's participation was illegitimate. Led by the hardliners in the Republican Party, the anti-Hamas position gained bipartisan support. De Soto noted that the Americans had clearly determined who were "the bad guys."⁶⁵⁵ This shift behind the scenes clashed with the overt support for the democratization agenda, affecting the entire international community's engagement with the elections. In short order, the Quartet's veneer of multilateralism collapsed into a ceremonial forum to legitimize American unilateralism.

Under US pressure, the Quartet followed suit in condemning Hamas, albeit while attempting to modify the American decisions to which it acquiesced. Some quipped that this situation rendered the Quartet into 'the Quartet *sans trois*.' The multilateralism the Quartet displayed was a performance, and its actual actions were enforced by US pressure on the EU, UN, and Russia. Where the Europeans disagreed in substance with the hardline American-Israeli position, their ability to dissent was plagued by the presumption that adopting any position too critical toward Israel would lead to the removal of European voices from the 'peace process.'⁶⁵⁶

The US reoriented the Quartet's approach to accommodate Israel's political agenda. A leaked cable documenting a meeting between Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin and the US Embassy in Tel Aviv is instructive in this regard. At the January 13 gathering, Diskin predicted that Hamas's electoral success might force the group to "deal with its terrorism policy and modify it." Diskin thus acknowledged that Hamas's participation in the elections was a move toward moderation, not inherently a security threat to Israel. In the same conversation, Diskin speculated that the Islamists sought only to control the health, education, and welfare ministries. Moreover, he saw an opportunity to potentially increase Israel's security through dialogue. Diskin believed Hamas would abandon resistance in exchange for substantial political compromise from Israel.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁴ "Washington lan taḍaghat 'alā al-filastīniyyīn fīmā yuta 'laq b-'ḥamās,'" Al-Quds, 22 October 2005.

⁶⁵⁵ De Soto, End of Mission Report, 17; "Washington tua'kid innahā lan tuwāḥir nuwāb 'ḥamās' itha fāzū fī al-intakhābāt," Al-Quds, 10 September 2005.

⁶⁵⁶ Tocci, "The Middle East Quartet and (in)Effective Multilateralism," 37; Catherine Charrett, "Ritualised Securitisation: The European Union's Failed Response to Hamas's Success," European Journal of European Relations 0, 00 (2018): 17.

⁶⁵⁷ 13 January 2006 ISA Chief Diskin Says Hamas to Do Well in Elections [WikiLeaks], 3.

However, Diskin dictated to the American diplomats the Israeli political sensitivities that would shape Washington's position, ignoring his own security-based assessments. Given the fragility of Sharon's coalition, Diskin explained that Israel had to appear steadfast and inflexible against Hamas, even if the Islamists maintained quiet and moderated away from their Charter. Diskin reiterated to the US Embassy officials that "no one should recognize Hamas unless they agree to abandon terrorism and disarm."⁶⁵⁸ The iron wall Israeli security officials imposed responded to Israel's domestic political concerns, rather than substantive fears of a Hamas takeover of the PA and what that could conceivably mean for Israel's security. Despite these admissions of Hamas's rational behavior, Israel pushed the US – and thereby the Quartet – to treat the Islamists as a front in 'war on terror.' Washington's acceptance of these Israeli political demands as security needs demonstrates the extent of the US embrace of Israeli unilateralism.

The Quartet Cracks Down

Following a pre-election teleconference December 28, the Quartet issued a more pointed statement about Hamas's participation, while commending the recently formulated Code of Conduct. The communiqué contended: "a future Palestinian Authority Cabinet should include no member who has not committed to the principles of Israel's right to exist in peace and security and an unequivocal end to violence and terrorism."⁶⁵⁹ This demand directly contradicted Abbas's move to coopt Hamas, positing disarmament as a precondition to its legitimate governance.

In the US, the shift in policy took a harsher tone, in line with Diskin's directives. On 2 January 2006, Republican Senator Rick Santorum proposed a "Palestinian Compliance Act" to the 109th Congress. The bill specifically forbade any disbursement of funds to a potential Hamas-affiliated PA until the Islamists renounced violence and altered their August 1988 Charter. Santorum's bill contradicted Rice's tacit agreement to Abbas's strategy by calling on Hamas to recognize Israel, and any potential Hamas-led PA to resolve (once more) to disarm.⁶⁶⁰

Despite the international community's tepid acceptance of Hamas's participation, by the time the PLC elections took place, the writing was on the wall. A leaked cable from a meeting just weeks before the election shows that Israeli intelligence officials predicted the Islamists

⁶⁵⁸ 13 January 2006 ISA Chief Diskin Says Hamas to Do Well in Elections [WikiLeaks], 3.

⁶⁵⁹ Quartet Statement (Jerusalem, 28 December 2005.); De Soto, End of Mission Report, 24-25; Interview, Nick Krafft, April 2017; Interview, Nigel Roberts, April 2017.

⁶⁶⁰ United States Congress, "S. 2237: Palestinian Compliance Act of 2006" (Washington, DC: US Senate, 1 February 2006.)

would win 30-40% of votes. Responding to pressure from Egypt and the US, Abbas had delayed the planned July elections due to disarray in Fatah and unrest in Gaza. Municipal votes took place in multiple rounds, a new system designed to buy time to unify Fatah factions. Nonetheless, Hamas's strong showing was manifest during the municipal elections in the course of 2005.⁶⁶¹

Hamas capitalized upon the extra time to excel in electoral strategy. Its banners adorned the center of Palestinian cities, and local campaign offices registered voters and distributed stickers wearing the Islamic movement's characteristic green hats. On election days, Nablus voters received multiple text messages reminding them to vote in accordance with God's will. Hamas's campaign was coordinated and professional despite Israeli arrests of many of its staff and candidates. In the first round of voting, Hamas captured seven of twenty-six local councils over twelve for Fatah. In the second and third rounds Hamas won Qalqiliya and gained the majority in Bethlehem; in December, it won the Fatah bastion of Nablus as well as Jenin and al-Bireh. Fatah maintained its control in rural areas. Prior to the PLC vote, Hamas thus had full or joint control in Gaza and of all of the West Bank's largest towns except Ramallah.⁶⁶²

These losses reflected the disunity that befell Fatah in preparation for the elections. Many of the movement's most popular leaders had been liquidated through Israeli assassinations or detention.⁶⁶³ Through a move designed expand representation of the younger base, Fatah held primaries that disintegrated into armed infighting and were cancelled. Key figures within the movement, including the imprisoned Marwan Barghouti, refuted the candidate rankings for the elections and created their own "Future" list. At the last minute, the split was resolved, but many disgruntled candidates decided to remain as independent candidates, detracting heavily from Fatah's position and reinforcing the perception of Fatah cadres fighting for personal privileges.⁶⁶⁴

Finally, Hamas's campaign narrative coincided with the shortcomings in the Agreement on Movement and Access. The November 2005 deal failed to alleviate the months of damage to

⁶⁶¹ 13 January 2006 ISA Chief Diskin Says Hamas to Do Well in Elections [WikiLeaks], 2.

⁶⁶² International Crisis Group, "Enter Hamas," 8-9; Mahjoob Zweiri, "The Hamas Victory: Shifting Sands or Major Earthquake?" *Third World Quarterly* 27, 4 (2006): 676-679.

⁶⁶³ Hilal, "Ās'ilat mā b'ad al-insiḥab al-isrā'īlī min ghaza," 8; Tamimi, Hamas, 206.

⁶⁶⁴ 19 January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Elections SITREP #8 [WikiLeaks], 3; International Crisis Group, "Palestine: Salvaging Fatah," 3; "Hamed: al-intakhābāt a-dākhiliyya l-ḥarakat fataḥ b'ad 'uṭla 'eid a-fiṭr," *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda*, 26 October 2005; Jamil Hilal, "Hamas's Rise as Charted in the Polls, 1994-2005," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, 3 (2006): 16-17; Giacaman, "Mustaqbal a-nizām a-sīyāsī al-filasṭīnī b'ad 'Arafāt," 1-2.

Palestinian livelihoods, infrastructure, and economic viability wrought by continual Israeli incursions and aerial campaigns.⁶⁶⁵ The continued precariousness of life in Gaza in particular made Hamas's economic growth and stabilization platforms all the more appealing. Despite Quartet Representative James Wolfensohn and Rice's efforts, conditions did not improve significantly after the November AMA. As several officials affiliated with the Wolfensohn team noted, living conditions in the Gaza Strip deteriorated precipitously between the August 2005 disengagement and the January 2006 elections.

Even with donor disbursements for the year reaching \$1.1 billion, real Palestinian GDP reached only two thirds of its pre-intifada level. The AMA committed Israel to allow 150 trucks of goods to exit Gaza through the Karni crossing by December 2005, but actual levels remained below 25 trucks daily through January.⁶⁶⁶ Over 44% of Gazans were unemployed in the month before the elections, rising to 60% in refugee camps.⁶⁶⁷ While the economy deteriorated after the Israeli withdrawal, the IDF's presence on the ground in Gaza also decreased, lending credence to Hamas's message of steadfastness.

Moreover, violence increased sharply in the weeks prior to the election. On 18 November 2005, the IDF closed the Erez checkpoint for two days on suspicion of a coming attack. Coordination efforts at Rafah through the European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) began 24 November, under the direction of Lt. Gen. Pietro Pistolese.⁶⁶⁸ Trilateral negotiations continued to discuss transit between Gaza and the West Bank, with only marginal improvements. Israel proposed only one convoy per day with 250 passengers. The permitted Gazans would be allowed to remain in the West Bank for up to ten days, but males 16-35 were barred.⁶⁶⁹

Following a suicide bombing attack by Islamic Jihad on 5 December in Netanya, Israel announced the suspension of further deliberations on the bus convoys between the West Bank and Gaza. Gaza's border terminals were briefly closed before being re-opened under more stringent PA security measures, delaying transit of goods and individuals. Israeli officials reiterated that any inclusion of Hamas in the PA would be grounds to end coordination. At a

⁶⁶⁵ Interview, Nick Krafft; Interview, Nigel Roberts.

⁶⁶⁶ World Bank, "Technical Team Report: Update on Palestinian Movement, Access and Trade in the West Bank and Gaza," 3, 5. World Bank, "The Palestinian Economy and the Prospects for its Recovery," 44-45; Tamimi, Hamas, 217.

⁶⁶⁷ World Bank, "The Palestinian Economy and the Prospects for its Recovery," 4; Interview, Nick Krafft; Interview, Nigel Roberts.

⁶⁶⁸ 24 November 2005. Letter from US Consul General Jacob Walles to Palestinian Authority Minister of Civilian Affairs Mohammed Dahlan (PLO); European Union External Action, "Facts and Figures – EUBAM Rafah," <http://eubam-rafah.eu/en/node/5054>

⁶⁶⁹ 6 December 2005. NSU Memorandum re: Meeting Notes between Ghassan Khatib & Jake Walles (PLO): 1.

meeting January 16, IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz predicted a strong showing for the Islamists in the election, while bemoaning Abbas's impotence. Halutz argued that Abbas had done nothing to crack down on Islamic Jihad, and that his promises to pass anti-terror legislation within a month of the vote were useless. The PASF lacked clear political leadership, Halutz complained, making them unreliable counterterror partners.⁶⁷⁰

In late December, PM Sharon suffered a mild stroke. Upon his return, he authorized Operation Blue Skies on Christmas Day to remotely pacify the northern Gaza Strip and create a "no-go" zone for militants using aerial drones and attack helicopters.⁶⁷¹ This state of affairs continued as the official PLC campaigning period started 3 January, with intermittent Islamic Jihad attacks, incursions, and closures amidst the continued IDF operation. Shelling and airstrikes on Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades targets proceeded unabated for weeks into January, when Sharon suffered a second, massive stroke. Powers were transferred to his vice Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert.⁶⁷²

In the final run-up to election day, the IDF arrested Change and Reform candidates, preventing their travel to East Jerusalem, dispersed rallies, and prevented transit of electoral officials. However, the Bush Administration was insistent on elections, and Secretary Rice's repeated phone calls led Olmert to consent on January 10.⁶⁷³ Under State Department pressure, Israeli officials established joint coordination centers for the election in Bet El, and Major General Yosef Mishlev ensured the arrival of voting equipment through Sufa crossing point to Gaza. In a meeting the day before the election, Mishlev assured the US Ambassador that IDF troops "had been ordered to be on special behavior."⁶⁷⁴

Nonetheless, on January 18, Erez was closed once again, reopening only four days before the PLC election on 25 January. Under these conditions, the formative factor in Palestinian voting patterns remained the daily humiliations and dangers of the occupation. The faith invested in Abbas through his election in January 2005 and his negotiation of the Cairo Agreement dissipated with Israel's continued assassinations and restrictions on movement.⁶⁷⁵ These realities

⁶⁷⁰ 16 January 2006 IDF's Halutz Warns of Hamas Election Success and GoI Response [WikiLeaks], 3-4.

⁶⁷¹ Li, "The Gaza Strip as Laboratory," 38, 49.

⁶⁷² Esposito, "Chronology: 16 November 2005 – 15 February 2006," 218-35.

⁶⁷³ Reinhart, *The Road Map to Nowhere*, 144.

⁶⁷⁴ 27 January 2006 Mishlev Discusses the PA Elections, Karni, and Rafah Crossings, and Outposts with the Ambassador [WikiLeaks], 2.

⁶⁷⁵ Hilal, "Hamas's Rise as Charted in the Polls, 1994-2005," 18.

figured heavily into the process to democratize the PA, though this was surely not grasped by the American architects of the ‘freedom agenda.’

The End of the Freedom Agenda

The PLC elections that occurred on 25 January 2006 were free and fair according to international observers. Hamas won an outright majority, securing 74 of 132 possible seats, compared to only 34 by Fatah. Hamas also earned 44% of the popular vote, as opposed to Fatah’s 41%.⁶⁷⁶ The reward for mastering the democratic process, however, was an immediate, complete overturn of stated American policy. In short order, Washington dismissed the democratization agenda and turned to rapid securitization of the West Bank. According to Jamil Hilal, the outcome of the success of Washington’s ‘freedom agenda’ was the “criminalization of the Palestinian national movement, Islamic or otherwise, even as it [rebuilt] itself on democratic principles.”⁶⁷⁷

The following section explores the centrality of the ‘war on terror’ framework for understanding Washington’s acquiescence to Israeli aims of overturning the election results. It focuses first on the initial aftermath of the election before turning to the securitization of the PA under the aegis of the newly empowered US Security Coordinator.

The Post-Election Pivot

In the months following the PLC election, the international community, Fatah, and Hamas struggled to formulate a response to this sea change in the Palestinian political leadership. De Soto called the Hamas victory a “body blow” to Abbas’s strategy of cooption, and the Hamas victory perplexed the Bush Administration. However, the election victory also placed inordinate pressure on Hamas. The Islamists had intended to maintain their gradualism, and expected merely to mount opposition within the legislature.⁶⁷⁸ On 26 January, the Quartet issued an initial statement calling on all to “respect the result of the election” and urging an atmosphere of calm,

⁶⁷⁶ Glenn E. Robinson, “The Fragmentation of Palestine,” *Current History* 107, 704 (2007): 422; Office of the Quartet, “Statement by Middle East Quartet” (Jerusalem: 26 January 2006.)

⁶⁷⁷ Hilal, “Hamas’s Rise as Charted in the Polls, 1994-2005,” 18.

⁶⁷⁸ De Soto, *End of Mission Report*, 16; International Crisis Group, “Palestinians, Israel, and the Quartet: Pulling Back from the Brink,” *Middle East Report* 54, 13 June 2006: 2; Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 97.

while highlighting the “fundamental contradiction between armed groups and militia activities and the building of a democratic state.”⁶⁷⁹

However, within a week, the Quartet’s position hardened to reflect massive pressure from officials in the White House. Washington called for reassessment of all aid to the Palestinians on the basis of new criteria that precluded respect for Hamas’s control of the PLC. De Soto rejected their demands, believing the Americans aimed to overstep their authority and steer the entire Quartet. De Soto was subject to a barrage of criticism from Elliott Abrams and Assistant Secretary of State David Welch upon his arrival in London for the Quartet meeting 30 January. The Americans threatened that the US would withdraw its contribution to the UN should De Soto not agree to their demands. EU and Russia quickly bent to the American pressure. De Soto later recalled that he alone argued to encourage Hamas to proceed in its path of moderation signaled through the elections and the prolonged ceasefire the party had upheld.⁶⁸⁰

The same day, Secretary Rice gave a press conference, confirming American faith in the democratic process and the Palestinian people. However, she also posited that “the United States can’t fund a government that is run by an organization that it lists as a terrorist organization [...] Middle Eastern states are going to have to come to terms with how Islam relates to open political systems.”⁶⁸¹ The same week, President Bush stated that Hamas’s agenda was antithetical to peace and political negotiations.⁶⁸²

Meanwhile, within the Quartet, the hardline perspective prevailed. De Soto was overruled, and the Quartet’s 30 January statement took a distinctly punitive tone in line with Rice’s views. It stated that “all members of a future Palestinian government must be committed to nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map [sic].”⁶⁸³ This formulation effectively imposed sanctions on the freely elected Palestinian government, and set preconditions for dialogue that contradicted the Change and Reform platform.

Hamas’s response – embodied in a 31 January 2006 op-ed by political bureau leader Khaled Meshal – was not surprising. Change and Reform list candidates were taken aback by the

⁶⁷⁹ Office of the Quartet, “Statement by Middle East Quartet” (Jerusalem: 26 January 2006.)

⁶⁸⁰ De Soto, End of Mission Report, 19.

⁶⁸¹ “Rice Lauds Peaceful Palestinian Elections, Decries Terrorism,” *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* 2 February 2006.

⁶⁸² “Bush: barnāmiġ ‘ḥamās’ yaj’al min al-mustahīl an takūn sharīkān lil-salām,” *Al-Ayyām* 31 January 2006.

⁶⁸³ Office of the Quartet, “Statement by Middle East Quartet” (Jerusalem: 30 January 2006.); “‘A-Rubā’ iyya’ tukarir l-‘ḥamās’: ‘alaykum nabth al-‘unf wa al-‘ī tirāf b-isrā’īl wa a-taqbūl bil-itifāqāt a-sābiqa,” *Al-Ayyām* 31 January 2006.

unexpected imposition of Quartet conditions. One PLC member noted in an interview that should Hamas have foreseen the international response to their victory, they would have “recalculated [...] who wants to put himself in this position?”⁶⁸⁴ Hamas contended that American and European threats collectively punished the Palestinians for exercising their democratic will.

Meshal argued that Palestinian voters were among the most educated and politicized in the world, and knew well what they had chosen. Palestinians supported Hamas because it promised reform and to never concede their legitimate rights.⁶⁸⁵ Meshaal believed that the world’s most vocal proponents of democracy had failed their own test, and Hamas must protect the platform on which Palestinians elected them. In an interview, Daraghmeh echoed Meshal, claiming that the US was angered only that Hamas had won a majority, rather than join the PA as a minority opposition party in the PLC.⁶⁸⁶ In fact, the Change and Reform list believed that Washington earnestly sought the legitimacy conveyed by Hamas participation. However, the Islamists had overstepped their bounds by wresting the elections from American control.

International Sanctions and Internal Isolation

The financial repercussions of Hamas’s refusal to bow were swift and devastating to the fragile Palestinian economy. Aid transfers through the World Bank and the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee the Bank supervised were blocked by American and European legislative restrictions on working with blacklisted organizations. In the immediate aftermath of the election, the PA’s monthly budgetary shortfall was already \$70-80 million. In February and March 2006, the PA managed to meet its recurrent wages and essential goods costs through additional bank loans, tax advances, and a degree of continued international support.⁶⁸⁷

However, in early February the outgoing PLC convened, and Israel began withholding clearance revenues from Palestinian value added taxes (VAT) and customs fees. Consequently, the PA was repeatedly unable to pay its 135,000 employees, who supported 942,000 dependents in the West Bank alone. Palestinian workers were also more systematically denied work permits in Israel, and remittances that had amounted to 7% of gross domestic income in 2005 dried up.⁶⁸⁸ As De Soto noted, this Israeli cessation of transfer to the PA directly violated the 1994 Paris

⁶⁸⁴ Ayman Daraghmeh [Change and Reform list MP, Tubas district] Ramallah: 27 August 2017.

⁶⁸⁵ Khalid Mish’al, “We Will Not Sell Our People or Principles for Foreign Aid,” The Guardian 31 January 2006.

⁶⁸⁶ Interview, Ayman Daraghmeh [Change and Reform list MP, Tubas district] Ramallah: 27 August 2017.

⁶⁸⁷ 13 September 2006. NSU Meeting Notes, Marc Otte and Saeb Erekat.

⁶⁸⁸ World Bank, “West Bank and Gaza Economic Update and Potential Outlook” (Washington, DC: April 2006), 4:

Protocol signed with the PLO, a stark contrast to the Quartet demands that Hamas abide by previous PLO agreements, highlighting the selective nature of such demands.⁶⁸⁹ Without the tax transfers, the PA's monthly budgetary gap grew to over \$130 million.⁶⁹⁰

While the US was at the forefront of the international effort to force Hamas to accept the Quartet conditions, it did not act alone. The push to disqualify Hamas found willing Palestinian partners in the Fatah elite upset by their loss, and among figures friendly to Washington. The Hamas win aggravated the most authoritarian tendencies within the Fatah elite, particularly the prominent PA security chiefs. In the weeks following the election, American diplomats held briefings with a number of high-level Palestinian officials in order to grasp the unfolding situation and Hamas's prospects. The leaked minutes of these meetings speak to the profound factional distrust that was heightened by Hamas's PLC win and found common cause in Washington's efforts to undermine the new PA.

In early February, PA Ministry of the Interior Ibrahim Salameh warned US Consul General Jake Waller that no power sharing between Hamas and Fatah would be possible due to the ideological chasm between the two, and the history of their competition. Recounting how he had once beaten a newly-elected Hamas legislator with his own hands, Salameh invoked the Fatah repression of Oslo rejectionists that had characterized the 1990s. "These people used to curse me when I came to their homes to arrest them," Salameh said.⁶⁹¹ Waller showed him an article soon to appear in *Newsweek* that quoted Salameh arguing a Palestinian civil war would be preferable to Hamas ownership of the PA. Defensive, Salameh claimed he had been misquoted, before questioning Waller. "They aren't going to publish this in Palestine, are they?"⁶⁹²

A similar dynamic played out with *mukhābarāt* chief Tawfiq Al-Tirawi, representing the inner circle of the Fatah old guard who held a firm grasp on the PA's security services. Al-Tirawi met with State Department officials on February 24 and presented a variety of proposals for shutting Hamas out of control over the PASF, including the creation of a new National Security Council to oversee the forces and appointment of insiders to key positions. Abbas could indefinitely stall legislation, an effective tool against Hamas attempts to reorganize the PASF.

⁶⁸⁹ De Soto, End of Mission Report, 20.

⁶⁹⁰ World Bank, "West Bank and Gaza Economic Update and Potential Outlook," 31.

⁶⁹¹ 14 February 2006 MoI DG Salameh – Hamas Will Not Collapse Quickly [WikiLeaks], 3-4.

⁶⁹² 14 February 2006 MoI DG Salameh – Hamas Will Not Collapse Quickly [WikiLeaks], 3-4.

Al-Tirawi informed the Americans of Abbas's intent to integrate Force-17 into the Presidential Guard, which he stressed was important given the threats on the President's life in Gaza.⁶⁹³

Al-Tirawi also assured his American counterparts that the PA intelligence services held a number of tools to "embarrass Hamas in 50 different ways" and that Fatah would seize the initiative in causing difficulties for Hamas. Al-Tirawi referred to his colleagues Mohammed Dahlan and Rashid Abu Shabak as Washington's "friends in Gaza," demonstrating the convergence between Fatah insiders and the American-led boycott.⁶⁹⁴ The State Department reported that Al-Tirawi's plans to reconstitute the forces and screen them for loyalty to Abbas "harked of Arafat-style patronage relationships."⁶⁹⁵ However, this unsavory reality did not stop Washington from pursuing just the tactics Al-Tirawi suggested.

Besides the security chiefs, the US also found a sympathetic ear in Salam Fayyad, the former Minister of Finance. Fayyad was elected to the PLC January 26, though his Third Way party garnered less than 3% of votes. Fayyad briefed State Department officials multiple times in the weeks following the vote, assuring the Americans that he would turn down Hamas's offers to join their new government. Fayyad described the Hamas officials as unprepared; even Ismail Haniyeh had virtually no relevant professional experience, from Fayyad's perspective.⁶⁹⁶ He reported that one Islamist legislator with whom he had met mistakenly believed the VAT sum Israel transferred to the PA was assistance, not taxes from Palestinian purchases.⁶⁹⁷ Fayyad noted that blocking the PA's funds would weaken Hamas's ability to govern, and predicted an insurmountable budget crisis in the coming months. Historically, the PA received no more than half of the projected need in assistance, according to Fayyad, and without customs clearance revenues Israeli retained, the PA would require an additional \$120 million monthly to function.⁶⁹⁸

Fayyad was an important intermediary for the US agenda. At one meeting, with State Department officials, he outlined financial mechanisms for keeping the PA afloat while bypassing the PLC, including tapping the Palestine Investment Fund. However, Fayyad worried

⁶⁹³ 24 February 2006 GI Chief Al-Tirawi Offers Ideas on PASF Control, Predicts Conflict with Hamas [WikiLeaks], 3-4.

⁶⁹⁴ 24 February 2006 GI Chief Al-Tirawi Offers Ideas on PASF Control, Predicts Conflict with Hamas [WikiLeaks], 3-5.

⁶⁹⁵ 24 February 2006 GI Chief Al-Tirawi Offers Ideas on PASF Control, Predicts Conflict with Hamas [WikiLeaks], 3-4.

⁶⁹⁶ 24 February 2006 Salam Fayyad on Hamas [WikiLeaks], 3.

⁶⁹⁷ 27 February 2006 Fayyad Describes Fluid Political Situation, Hamas-Led PA Won't Survive Financially Beyond June [WikiLeaks], 2.

⁶⁹⁸ 24 February 2006 Fayyad and Al-Wazir on PA's Current and Future Finances, Refund of USG Cash Transfer, and PIF Assets [WikiLeaks], 2-5.

overall about the American-led strategy of bolstering the President's office. Fayyad described the Presidency as "a group of weak amateurs" and doubted the efforts would succeed.⁶⁹⁹ The situation was fluid, Fayyad said, and every time Washington criticized the Islamists, Hamas's popularity swelled.

Nonetheless, Fayyad assured the State Department officials that he concurred with the American plan to isolate Hamas. Fayyad claimed "he would like to see Hamas alone in the government so that no else would be blamed for its failures."⁷⁰⁰ At another meeting, Fayyad speculated that forcing Hamas to govern would "demystify" them in the public eye, where they were seen as "saviors, philosophers, and wise men."⁷⁰¹ Exemplifying his utility to the US, Fayyad met with Hamas hardliners like Mahmoud Zahar in Gaza February 23, and provided a read-out of the meeting to the US Consulate General later that week during a briefing. Alongside Fatah insiders, Fayyad represented the interests of a Palestinian elite in whom the US found partners eager to overturn Hamas's rise.

The American Anti-Democratic Turn

US designs to overturn the results of Washington's experiment in Palestinian democratization began in February 2006. These ambitions are consistently expressed in the documents leaked to WikiLeaks and Al-Jazeera, which contain evidence of the varied ways that the US undercut Hamas's elected authority and cast the Islamists as illegitimate. Interviews with security personnel stationed in Jerusalem at the time further corroborate the insertion of the American plans to unseat Hamas into their daily work in both subtle and overt ways.

This section will examine the steps through which the US induced state failure, in Yezid Sayigh's words, in Palestine.⁷⁰² First, the Americans and their European counterparts provided technical assistance at the border crossings out of the Gaza Strip as Israel refused to operate the checkpoints with the Hamas-affiliated PA. Next, through this involvement, the US Security Coordinator in particular developed a newfound relationship with certain elements of the PA security forces (PASF). Under the direction of Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, appointed in December

⁶⁹⁹ 27 February 2006 Fayyad Describes Fluid Political Situation, Hamas-Led PA Won't Survive Financially Beyond June [WikiLeaks], 4.

⁷⁰⁰ 24 February 2006 Salam Fayyad on Hamas [WikiLeaks], 2.

⁷⁰¹ 24 February 2006 Salam Fayyad on Hamas [WikiLeaks], 3.

⁷⁰² Sayigh, "Inducing a Failed State in Palestine," 13.

2005, the USSC undermined Hamas's elected authority under the pretext of facilitating the AMA and enabling foreign aid transfers. Finally, American interference in the PASF came to a head in the summer of 2007 and instigated the outbreak of armed factional conflict that June, devastating the Palestinian national project and the prospects of a return to the negotiating table.

The USSC's growing role after the PLC election entirely contradicted the previous US agenda of democratization, instead infusing the Palestinian arena with language and priorities of securitization and counterterrorism drawn from the 'global war on terror.' Secretary Rice specifically selected Dayton for the USSC mission due to his reputation for inspiring loyalty among his troops. Dayton had previously headed the Iraq Survey Group, searching for weapons of mass destruction.⁷⁰³ At the same time as the USSC reflected the 'global war on terror' paradigm, it also coincided with the priorities of Fatah. Displaced from power by the elections but nonetheless Washington's preferred interlocutors, the USSC and Fatah shared joint purposes in 2006, demonstrating the frailty of American commitment to democracy.

Technical Interventions and Political Purposes

The immediate financial quarantine showed no signs of abating as Hamas began assembling its government. In an effort to gain international legitimacy, the Islamists extended their unilateral ceasefire with Israel after the election. Further, they attempted to compose a technocratic coalition with Fatah and independents in order to enable international cooperation without reneging upon Hamas's campaign platform.⁷⁰⁴

In Washington, a few voices of dissent toward engineering the Hamas government's downfall emerged.⁷⁰⁵ For example, Robert Malley testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, arguing for a measured response to Hamas's moves toward political integration. Malley contended that it was unlikely that cheating Palestinians of the Hamas electoral victory would create solid foundations for democracy or elicit support for Fatah. He noted that the despair that had ushered in Hamas's success would only be exacerbated by rejecting ascendance in the mainstream. Malley said:

⁷⁰³ 'Abd al-Sattār Qāssem, "Dayton: Za'īm filasṭīn," Al-Jazeera 1 July 2009.

⁷⁰⁴ Tamimi, Hamas, 225; "'Ḥamās' tadrus tashkīl ḥukūmat "teknōqrāṭ" ithā khafaqat muḥāwilāt tashkīl i'tilāf m'a 'fataḥ,'" Al-Ayyām 28 January 2006.

⁷⁰⁵ United States Senate, "Statement by Robert Malley, Middle East and North Africa Program Director, International Crisis Group" (Washington, DC: Foreign Relations Committee, 15 March 2006), 1.

Many throughout the Moslem [sic] world are watching the Palestinian experience to test the benefits of democracy and the sincerity of the West's endeavor. In fact, one of the more critical battles taking shape is not between Islamists and secularists, but within the Islamist camp itself: between political Islamists who are flirting with democratic activism and *jihadi* Islamists who cling to the purity of armed confrontation. [...] we need to be mindful of the impact that a concerted effort to prevent Hamas from governing will have on that debate and on the ensuring regional balance of power between *jihadists* and political Islamists.⁷⁰⁶

Washington's actions, however, make evident that Malley's warnings fell on deaf ears.

Washington set its sights on isolating Hamas both internationally and within Palestinian politics, exerting quite overt pressure. On 25 February 2006, US Assistant Secretary of State David Welch, Consul General Jake Walles, and USSC Dayton met with the PLO's negotiators. Chief negotiator Saeb Erekat presented the Americans with a translation of the *kitāb at-takhlīf*, the document Abbas issued to Hamas's Ismail Haniyeh to form a government. Erekat assured the Americans that Fatah would reject a national unity government unless Hamas accepted the Quartet's conditions.

However, Welch was adamant, arguing "Hamas should form the government on their own. We don't at all like the idea of a national unity government composed of so-called "technocrats." There's no utility putting in nice faces on different ministries."⁷⁰⁷ Erekat warned that Israeli and American refusal to compromise could benefit Hamas, allowing the Islamists to cement their image of patriotic righteousness and ownership of the 'liberation' of Gaza. To this potentiality, Welch asked his Palestinian counterparts, "What constitutes a Hamas failure?"

Welch and Walles reassured the Palestinians they would continue to supply humanitarian aid, but that new channels unaffiliated with Hamas must be found. Under American pressure, Abbas discouraged independents and Fatah members from joining Haniyeh's cabinet. Some Fatah legislators reported that they were warned they might be placed on the US terrorist watch list should they serve in the cabinet formed by Hamas. Combined American and Fatah pressure resulted in a PA cabinet that included a few independents but was dominated by Hamas, ensuring that it continued to be quarantined.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁶ United States Senate, "Statement by Robert Malley," 2-3.

⁷⁰⁷ February 2006. Meeting Minutes Saeb Erekat and David Welch (PLO): 1.

⁷⁰⁸ De Soto, End of Mission Report, 21.

This isolation severely disrupted Hamas's ability to govern, and undermined the few independents that joined, such as Dr. Samir Abu Eisheh. A Pennsylvania-educated civil engineer, Abu Eisheh had regularly consulted on World Bank and other aid initiatives with the PA since Oslo. However, he found his work as Minister of Planning severely obstructed by the fallout from the Change and Reform list election, despite his autonomy.⁷⁰⁹ Fatah civil servants continued to form the backbone of the PA bureaucracy. They agitated to impede Hamas rule by exploiting Hamas's limited governing experience, disobeying their bosses and stalling work. Palestinian domestic affairs became paralyzed, discrediting the Islamists' promises of efficiency.⁷¹⁰

Toward Presidential Rule: Anti-Hamas Purposes Converge

In the months after the election, Fatah's thinking shifted into line behind the American and Israeli redlines, securing their own political primacy. In mid-March, the party laid down its own conditions to join a Hamas-led PA. The Islamists would have to accept Israel's right to exist and acknowledge the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian cause.⁷¹¹ Refusing these conditions, Hamas developed an increasingly conspiratorial outlook toward Fatah's obstructionism.⁷¹²

More damagingly, the Fatah leadership took a series of legal measures to maximize their diminished position, using both the PLO and the Office of the President. On the one hand, Abbas revived the dormant PLO office of the representative for foreign affairs, attempting to sidestep Hamas's legitimate cabinet minister. On the other hand, at the final meeting of the outgoing Fatah-dominated PLC on 13 February, the legislators granted Abbas sweeping new powers as President. These powers included the ability to appoint a new constitutional court to arbitrate disagreements with the incoming Hamas government, and veto any law deemed to violate the Palestinian Basic Law. Hamas's new parliamentary speaker, 'Abd al-'Aziz Dweik, decried that the constitutional courts enabled Abbas to absolve the Legislative Council at will.⁷¹³

⁷⁰⁹ Interview, Dr. Samir Abu Eisheh, September 2017.

⁷¹⁰ Brenner, *Gaza Under Hamas*, 34.

⁷¹¹ Tamimi, *Hamas*, 227-228.

⁷¹² Brenner, *Gaza Under Hamas*, 34-35; Barghouthi, "Tadākhul al-idiolojiyyā wa a-siyyāsa fī nazū'a ḥamās ilā al-'unf," 55.

⁷¹³ Usher, "The Democratic Resistance," 29. Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 111.

As a result of Fatah's moves, Fatah loyalists comprised the head of the anti-corruption commission, PA head of personnel, chief administrator of the PLC, and director of public sector salaries and pensions. Through a series of decrees issued in April and May 2006, Abbas claimed exclusive control over the police force, media outlets, and the crossing points between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza. He also installed nine Fatah loyalists as under-secretaries to the ministries, ensuring they would report to him.⁷¹⁴ With American backing, Abbas built up a locus of power under his Office of the President to undercut the PLC.

Strikingly, several of Abbas's decrees ran counter to the reforms previously forced on Arafat by the US with the explicit purpose of diffusing presidential authority. Abbas appointed Rashid Abu Shabak to head the General Internal Security and moved the portfolio to his jurisdiction, preventing reform through the Ministry of the Interior that the US had compelled the PA to empower in February 2003 to manage the security forces. In a sign of developments to come, David Welch, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, suggested that Abbas appoint Salam Fayyad as 'finance director,' formally incapacitating the PA's Ministry of Finance in order to continue aid transfers.⁷¹⁵

Abbas's moves under American pressure demonstrated the tenuous, inconsistent nature of Washington's reform and democratization agenda. Moreover, Washington's attempt to shape the PA to its liking in effect internalized Israeli prerogatives into the American agenda. In February 2006, Israel was to transfer security control in Area A back to the PA, per the Sharm al-Sheikh Understanding. Though these measures did little to ensure Israeli adhered to its obligations, they incentivized the centralization of Palestinian security affairs under the Office of the President. However, the agreement went unfulfilled as Israel stalled, demonstrating the expansive flexibility of Israel's security logic.⁷¹⁶

A framework lifted from other sites of the 'global war on terror' created space both for Israel's security logic to define American policy, and for Palestinians to position themselves as partners in fighting terror for their own purposes. At a meeting between the State Department Coordinator of Counterterrorism and Israeli Director of Military Intelligence Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin February 27, the partners discussed their shared 'war on terror.' Yadlin compared the challenge Israel saw in Hamas to "what the US faces in Iraq," highlighting the threat of suicide

⁷¹⁴ Tamimi, Hamas, 229.

⁷¹⁵ Tamimi, Hamas, 229.

⁷¹⁶ Hussein, "Restructuring the PNA Security Organisations," 48.

bombings and the importance of intelligence.⁷¹⁷ The shared American-Israeli perspective on the “current threat environment” would prove the determining factor in shaping US interventions in the PA into a useful tool for intelligence collection and counterterrorism purposes.⁷¹⁸

This same dynamic – in which US actors carried out Israeli security and political objectives – also shaped how Washington chose its Palestinian interlocutors. Throughout meetings in 2006 with Shin Bet officials, American diplomats and security personnel asked after the Israeli intelligence community’s preferences among the possible Palestinian leaders. At one meeting, Dayton explicitly asked Yuval Diskin of the Shin Bet who Israel “would choose to work with if he could make the choice for the Palestinians.”⁷¹⁹ Diskin offered his estimations of Tawfiq Al-Tirawi, Mohammed Dahlan, and Rashid Abu Shabak, a close Dahlan associate.

The course of events demonstrates that the US did not take seriously Israel’s trepidation about Dahlan. However, the fact that Dayton considered the Shin Bet a valid source for determining his Palestinian interlocutors demonstrates the extent to which the USSC’s reform agenda served to insert Israeli agendas into the PA. This attempt to re-determine the PA’s policies from Washington was the result of the match between Palestinian factional ambitions and Israeli pacification purposes, both of which Washington cast as legitimate ‘counterterror’ goals.

Security Forces and International Border Oversight

Following the election, the Ministry of the Interior immediately became a pressure point in relations between Hamas and Fatah. As Björn Brenner argues, the security forces answered theoretically to Hamas’s Minister of the Interior, Siad Siam. In reality, however, Hamas was “a general without an army.”⁷²⁰ Most of the PASF’s upper echelons were Fatah insiders; they worked independently of Siam, and reported only to their party. This included cooperating with Israel to arrest Hamas members, heightening distrust between the parties.⁷²¹

As Israeli closures and the breakdown in coordination at the border threatened Gaza’s economy, American and European military personnel took on more prominent roles in facilitating travel in and out of Gaza. Beginning in early February, American and European

⁷¹⁷ 27 February 2006 Israeli Military Intel Chief’s 2/23 Meeting with S/CT Coordinator Crumpton [WikiLeaks], 1-2.

⁷¹⁸ 27 February 2006 Israeli Military Intel Chief’s 2/23 Meeting with S/CT Coordinator Crumpton [WikiLeaks], 2.

⁷¹⁹ 10 December 2006 USSC Dayton Raises Rafah, AMA and Badr Brigade with Diskin [WikiLeaks], 2.

⁷²⁰ Usher, “The Democratic Resistance,” 27.

⁷²¹ Brenner, *Gaza Under Hamas*, 35.

officials were on the ground coordinating because Israel had refused to operate border crossings with Hamas officials.⁷²² The American representatives coordinated the transfer of lists of Palestinian fugitives, negotiated security protocol with each side, and aided with technical expertise and procurement of equipment like scanners.⁷²³

Though Gaza remained the USSC's focus, the team's American members were unable to visit the Strip and their duties were still carried out under the leadership of the Canadian attaché to the mission, Col. Michael Pearson. In an interview, Pearson described how he precariously reached the National Security Forces in Gaza, waiting along the border for Israeli bombing to halt and a Palestinian team to fetch him safely.⁷²⁴ In Gaza, the USSC embarked upon a major initiative to create a security barrier around the Karni crossing point and establish appropriate security protocols. Dayton worked with the Palestinians to develop the Karni Security Plan for the crossing, through which the EU was invited to send monitors for further assistance.⁷²⁵ The EU Border Assistance Mission allowed the average number of travelers crossing to increase from only 580 in January-June 2005 to over 1,400 daily in the early summer of 2006.⁷²⁶

Despite these efforts, the AMA remained largely unfulfilled, and the closure regime on Palestinian mobility intensified.⁷²⁷ Though the Karni crossing reopened in May 2006 under USSC and EU oversight, exports were negligible for the next four months, and humanitarian imports became a lifeline in Gaza. About 110 truckloads passed into Gaza daily throughout July and August despite ongoing Israeli military actions. However, all exports were blocked after June 23, accelerating dependence on aid. By August, real incomes had decreased by over 30%, and two-thirds of the population was impoverished.⁷²⁸ James Wolfensohn stepped down as Quartet Envoy, attributing the collapsing Palestinian economy to “systematic violations of the

⁷²² United States Senate, “Statement by United States Security Coordinator Lieutenant General Keith W. Dayton” (Washington, DC: Foreign Relations Committee, 15 March 2006.); 16 February 2006 ISA Chief Diskin – Hamas on the Horizon [WikiLeaks], 4.

⁷²³ 8 February 2006. Meeting Notes re: Minister Khatib meeting with US Officials (PLO): 2-4.

⁷²⁴ Interview, Pearson, February 2018.

⁷²⁵ 17 June 2006. NSU Draft re: USSC Karni Security Plan (PLO); 28 September 2006. Letter from Saeb Erekat to Javier Solana (PLO); September 2006 Letter from Erekat to Solana re: US Assistance at Karni (PLO); 29 November 2006. Karni Crossing Plan – US Security Coordination (USSC), Palestinian President's Office, and the General Administration for Crossings and Borders (PLO).

⁷²⁶ The mission began formally in November 2005 following the AMA and began officially 25 November; European Union External Action, “Facts and Figures – EUBAM Rafah.”; World Bank, “Technical Team Report: Update on Palestinian Movement, Access and Trade in the West Bank and Gaza,” 7-10.

⁷²⁷ Sayigh, “Inducing a Failed State in Palestine,” 11.

⁷²⁸ World Bank, “Technical Team Report: Update on Palestinian Movement, Access and Trade in the West Bank and Gaza,” 6.

commitments by Israel” and complaining of neoconservative efforts to undermine him throughout his stint.⁷²⁹

The NSU criticized the American privileging of Israeli positions that consistently undermined efforts to implement the AMA and improve living standards in Gaza. In a memorandum prepared for Erekat prior to an August meeting with Dayton, the NSU criticized American proposals for the Karni Crossing as replicating “almost verbatim” the wording of a rejected Israeli draft of the AMA.⁷³⁰ The NSU urged Erekat to resist the American formulation that held Palestinian trade hostage to unsubstantiated and limitless Israeli perceptions of security threats. The NSU contended, “This is PRECISELY the problem that we have spent the last two years trying to resolve. [It] allows Israel to continue to use “security” as a premise to use Karni as a political tool – i.e. opening and closing the crossing as a form of collective punishment.”⁷³¹ This dynamic would soon play out in a more systematic manner.

Dayton’s technical approach misinterpreted the fundamental reason for Israeli closures, designed to pressure the Palestinian population for domestic political purposes rather than a byproduct of some logistical or infrastructure deficiency on Israel’s part. The USSC foregrounded convincing the Palestinians to accept their role as providers of Israeli security, disregarding any notion of mutuality or security for Palestinian.⁷³²

Fractured International Views

By unquestioningly accepting Israeli demands, the USSC was a consistent obstacle to Hamas’s governance. This reality was evident to international aid workers and European diplomats on the ground at the time, including the European Union’s Special Representative to the peace process, Marc Otte. At a meeting with Saeb Erekat, the two discussed the differing European and American visions of a path forward. Otte argued that the EU recognized Hamas’s place in Palestine, and the importance of preventing years of investment in Palestine from deteriorating.

Where the EU sought to encourage Hamas to change, Otte bluntly assessed that “the US wants to see a Hamas government fail.”⁷³³ Otte echoed Alvaro de Soto, who attested that his

⁷²⁹ Sayigh, “Inducing a Failed State in Palestine,” 12; Smooha, “All the Dreams We Once Had Are Gone.”

⁷³⁰ 15 August 2006. NSU Talking Points for Meeting with Dayton (PLO): 1.

⁷³¹ Emphasis in original. 15 August 2006. NSU Talking Points for Meeting with Dayton (PLO): 2.

⁷³² November 2006. NSU: Assessment of USSC Karni Security Plan (PLO): 1-2.

⁷³³ 21 March 2006. NSU Meeting Minutes: Dr. Saeb Erekat and Ambassador Marc Otte (PLO): 1.

American counterparts in the Quartet overtly pushed for confrontation between Hamas and Fatah. Otte confided that he was concerned about the creation of a “parallel authority” by his American counterparts, empowering Fatah-dominated security forces, governors, and NGOs.⁷³⁴

Most strikingly, Erekat and Otte discussed the “option to dissolve the PA” preferred by the US. Erekat was resolute, noting that though some in the Fatah elite supported the move, he and Abbas rejected it. “It will have serious repercussions on the region, given the situation in Iraq. It means handing the region to Bin Laden. Regimes like Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia may not survive.”⁷³⁵ Instead, Erekat joined Otte in hoping the Islamists would modify their platform. Otte suggested financial support could alter Palestinians’ political beliefs, and that incentivizing moderation better met European interests than a failed Islamist government.⁷³⁶

As the US strengthened its ties with Abbas to the exclusion of the larger PA structure, Hamas grew increasingly wary of Fatah’s intentions. Hamas ministers repeatedly issued warnings criticizing American efforts to torpedo their government and use the looming fiscal crisis to push Abbas to hold early elections.⁷³⁷ However, Hamas’s condemnation of its international financial isolation met disdain from some Palestinians. Salam Fayyad, for one, expressed incredulity at Hamas’s misunderstanding of the inherently subordinate nature of PA decision-making to external pressure. Fayyad characterized Hamas as a naïve political player in an op-ed to the Palestinian press. He wrote: “One has to ask how credible and realistic a government program can be when it is based on the slogan of change and reform but the government is not fully aware of the full dimensions of what it wants to change and reform.”⁷³⁸

Fayyad had a finger on the American political pulse. On 26 April, the US Office of Foreign Assets Control initiated a tertiary boycott prohibiting transactions connected with any assets controlled by Hamas. This decision was reinforced by legislation deeming areas under PA control a “terrorist sanctuary,” as the US promised to prosecute any international or domestic entity that dealt with the Hamas government. Intended to prevent Iran from disbursing \$250 million it pledged the PA following Western cuts, the threat of American prosecution forced the

⁷³⁴ De Soto, End of Mission Report, 21.

⁷³⁵ 21 March 2006. NSU Meeting Minutes: Dr. Saeb Erekat and Ambassador Marc Otte (PLO): 1-2.

⁷³⁶ 21 March 2006. NSU Meeting Minutes: Dr. Saeb Erekat and Ambassador Marc Otte (PLO): 1.

⁷³⁷ Brenner, Gaza Under Hamas, 36.

⁷³⁸ “Fayyād yurad ‘alā t’alqiyyāt masū’lī ḥamās: hathihī al-ḥaqā’iq kāmila ḥawal al-waḍ’a al-mālī,” Al-Ayyām 4 May 2006.

Arab states to forgo aid to the Palestinians, and even pushed Israeli banks to cease supplying currency. Change and Reform legislators' personal accounts were also frozen.⁷³⁹

American omnipresence in the global banking system soon made even Palestinian banks refuse to work with the PA.⁷⁴⁰ By May 2006, the Palestinian economy had sunk into a profound recession. Food and gasoline shortages mounted, and the PA's monthly budget had contracted to less than a third of its resources in 2005. Despite continued refusal to transfer Palestinian taxes, Israel began using the withheld Palestinian funds to reimburse the Israeli public sector water, electricity, and health care providers delivering services in the West Bank and Gaza.

Driven by Washington, the PA's crisis expanded further in the summer and autumn of 2006. Reflecting the prevailing neoconservative views in Washington, in May the US Congress passed H.R. 4861, the "Palestine Terrorism Act of 2006." The bill doubled down on demands against the PA, prohibiting US funding unless it was verified that "no elements of the PA have any ties to terrorist organizations."⁷⁴¹ As Wolfensohn later complained, this policy was intended to starve the Hamas-led Palestinians into submission. Surpassing demands of previous negotiations, the PA was enjoined to recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.⁷⁴² These requirements were irreconcilable with both Hamas and Fatah platforms, not to mention the rights of the non-Jewish citizens of Israel.

The shortsighted nature of the policy was evident as it harmed Fatah supporters most acutely, who were far more likely to be employed in the civil service. Extreme poverty rose by 20% among Fatah supporters in the course of 2006.⁷⁴³ The Palestinian population, whose daily livelihoods fell victim to shifting international agendas, felt most sharply Washington's contradictory response to the outcomes of its 'freedom agenda.'

Coordinating Security

Alongside the economy, the PA's control of its security forces began to unravel in this polarized climate. Citing unpaid and partially paid salaries, armed PASF personnel began to regularly threaten their bosses or use force in order to seize their wages. The PA's budget crisis

⁷³⁹ Sayigh, "Inducing a Failed State in Palestine," 18; Interview, Abdelrahman Zeidan, September 2017.

⁷⁴⁰ Interview, Abu Eisheh, September 2017.

⁷⁴¹ United States Congressional Budget Office, "H.R. 4681: Palestine Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006" (Washington, DC: House Committee on the Judiciary, 10 May 2006.)

⁷⁴² Alistair Crooke, "Talking to Hamas," *Prospect Magazine*, 25 June 2006.

⁷⁴³ Sayigh, "Inducing a Failed State in Palestine," 18.

threatened breakdown in cadre discipline and cohesion.⁷⁴⁴ As Col. Pearson recalled in an interview, he sensed that tension was building in Gaza, where he was stationed with the USSC attempting to empower the National Security Forces to manage the border crossings. Patrols by Hamas's militia increased in the Gazan countryside, as did the overall visibility of armed groups.

Despite the beginnings of the US-backed build-up against Hamas, in the summer of 2006, there was a *modus operandi* between the armed groups operating in Gaza. The PASF and Hamas's military wing - the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Pearson recollected, at first had "no stomach" for confrontation.⁷⁴⁵ However, Washington's pressure quickly fragmented Palestinian political life. US intervention took on new, increasingly militarized dimensions as the USSC bolstered Abbas and undermined the Ministry of the Interior's ability to monopolize force.

Beginning 25 May 2006, Dayton sent a series of letters to the NSU via Erekat, inquiring over the legal status of the National Security Force (NSF) and Presidential Security, comprised of the recently combined Presidential Guard and Force-17. Once these communications clarified that the units fell under Abbas's jurisdiction, Dayton intensified his coordination with them at the border crossings. Dayton convinced Israel to allow the Presidential Guard to rearm, ending the no-gun policy imposed on the PA since the intifada. Dayton persuaded the Israeli Ministry of Defense of the Presidential Guard's vital role in protecting Abbas.⁷⁴⁶

With the USSC's mediation, the NSF and Presidential Security were able to play a more useful role at the border crossings. These plans cohered at a series of meetings 9 and 11 June 2006 in Jericho between the USSC and NSU. Dayton noted that the Israelis considered the PASF unprofessional and distrusted the older PASF elite, limiting his ability to entrust them with greater security responsibilities.

Dayton's pressure on the PASF explicitly pushed Fatah to align with Israel against its Islamist rivals. Dayton contended the Palestinians should not promise more than they could deliver, and rely upon Israel to counter Hamas. He recommended that the PASF highlight younger leaders in order to gain Israel's trust.⁷⁴⁷ The USSC role was also advisory, questioning

⁷⁴⁴ In the first quarter of 2005, the PA accessed approximately \$180 million per month, versus only \$50-55 million for April 2006. World Bank, "Technical Team Report: The Impending Palestinian Fiscal Crisis, Potential Remedies" (Washington, DC: 9 May 2006), 1-3.

⁷⁴⁵ Interview, Pearson, February 2018.

⁷⁴⁶ 25 May 2006. Letter from Dr. Saeb Erekat to Lieutenant-General Dayton (PLO); 1 June 2006. Draft Letter from Dr. Saeb Erekat to Lieutenant-General Dayton (PLO).

⁷⁴⁷ 11 June 2006. NSU Meeting Minutes: Saeb Erekat and Keith Dayton, Jericho (PLO): 1.

Col. Hazem Atallah about why the Office of the President had not conducted thorough investigation of attempts to blow up Karni's security structures. The USSC encouraged the Palestinians to visibly fight security breaches by multiplying gates and inspections.

Most importantly, however, Dayton advised the Palestinians to revamp the forces' composition, picking "people that the President can trust."⁷⁴⁸ He outlined plans for new American-sponsored security training facilities to be established in Jordan. He explained: "The idea is to train around 100 individuals in 6 week cycles, in order to progressively replace present staff [...] At the end of the process, there would be up to 1000 trained personnel for security at crossing points (under the reformed border agency)."⁷⁴⁹ After the 11 June meeting, the USSC decided to train a new unit to take over at Karni, replacing those moved to Rafah.⁷⁵⁰ These units would need firepower to secure Karni and the northern Gaza Strip, and the USSC promised to acquire at least one thousand guns and three million bullets for their immediate needs. The Americans also obtained toll booth-style gates to regulate access on the Palestinian side.⁷⁵¹

One USSC member at the time recalled in an interview that the NSF and Presidential Guard chiefs with whom he established contacts were neither well-placed, nor well-respected locally. "They were welcoming because if they got the chance to talk to the Americans it would make them look better over the other Palestinian security chiefs who had equal rank."⁷⁵² The prospect of external patronage drove Palestinian interest in the security sector reform plan.

Crisis Compounds and Palestinians Respond

While Washington strengthened its relationship with the Office of the President, the Hamas-led PA's straits reached a point of crisis in the summer of 2006. With its coffers empty, the PA was unable to pay its employees' salaries, including doctors and hospital staff. This was the direct result of the US-led sanction regime, as Washington threatened its Quartet partners and even the World Bank with repercussions for funding the PA.⁷⁵³

⁷⁴⁸ 9 June 2006 NSU Meeting Minutes: Saeb Erekat and Keith Dayton, Jericho (PLO): 2.

⁷⁴⁹ 9 June 2006 NSU Meeting Minutes: Saeb Erekat and Keith Dayton, Jericho (PLO): 2.

⁷⁵⁰ 11 June 2006. NSU Meeting Minutes: Saeb Erekat and Keith Dayton, Jericho (PLO): 3.

⁷⁵¹ 9 June 2006 NSU Meeting Minutes: Saeb Erekat and Keith Dayton, Jericho (PLO): 1.

⁷⁵² Interview, former USSC official.

⁷⁵³ "Al-Itihād al-ūrūbī yā' mil fī inshā' šundūq d'am lil-filastīniyyīn fī nihāyyat ḥuzayyrān al-qādim," Al-Ayyām 18 May 2006.

"'Aqabāt "amrikiyya" tuwajah binā' āliyyat al-musā'idāt wa taqu'āt b-'ajzha 'an tajāwz al-azma al-iqtisādiyya," Al-Ayyām 14 May 2006; "Al-Bank a-duwalī yuḥathir min inhiyyār mū'asisāt a-sulṭa wa tafāqum al-azma al-insāniyya wa tazayyud al-falafān al-āmnī," Al-Ayyām 9 May 2006.

In light of the PA's financial crisis, the European Commission stepped in with a Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) to disburse funds. The TIM planned to provide fuel payments and direct social allowances in lieu of salaries to healthcare employees. The TIM's plans quickly expanded to support to pensioners and welfare recipients, and eventually grew to include food allocations and drugs for hospitals. Before the TIM was finalized in mid-July, the PA was reduced to smuggling cash through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, which it used to pay late salaries.⁷⁵⁴ The TIM demonstrated the depth of the PA's dysfunction under the US-led sanction regime, even as it prevented an outright humanitarian disaster.⁷⁵⁵

Growing frustrated with the ongoing political impasse, grassroots Palestinian actors introduced initiatives to end the PA's isolation. First, a set of prominent prisoners, including Marwan Barghouti, published a National Reconciliation Document, known as the 'Prisoners' Initiative,' on 11 May. Endorsed by leaders from thirteen different factions, the text identified the territories occupied in 1967 as the target of Palestinian resistance, providing cover for Hamas to accommodate the Quartet's demands. Contemporary polls showed that a majority of Palestinians supported the initiative, and both Haniyeh and Israel did not reject it out of hand.⁷⁵⁶ However, its publication played into a familiar dynamic as Abbas and the Fatah 'old guard' sought to undermine the leadership of Barghouti. These younger activists insisted once more on the need for reform within the PLO and Fatah. Coupled with the prospect of sharing power with Hamas, the stakes were too high for many of Fatah's elite.⁷⁵⁷

The Fatah old guard's reticence to move toward power-sharing with Hamas was evident in leaked minutes from their meetings with foreign officials. In one instance, Saeb Erekat at once swore that "anyone who says the Palestinians aren't ready for democracy is a racist," yet argued that he hated Hamas and its social program.⁷⁵⁸ This sentiment was shared among a significant segment of the Fatah leadership, motivating them to reorient the popular frustration embodied in the Prisoners' Initiative toward preserving their leadership. Abbas and his advisors decided to harness the growing unrest on the streets by holding a nation-wide Palestinian referendum on the

⁷⁵⁴ Michele K. Esposito, "Quarterly Update on Conflict and Diplomacy," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36, 1 (2006): 117; Oxfam International, *Poverty in Palestine: The Human Cost of the Financial Boycott* (London: April 2007), 5.

⁷⁵⁵ Oxfam, *Poverty in Palestine*, 5.

⁷⁵⁶ Esposito, "Quarterly Update on Conflict and Diplomacy," 118; "Interview with Marwan Barghouti: Life and Politics in Prison, National Unity, and the Resistance," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 53, 4 (2014): 60; "A-Ra'īs: al-waṭan fī khaṭr wa 'alaynā injāh al-ḥiwār tawajaha al-'itimād 'wathīqat al-āsra' asāsān lil-niqāsh," *Al-Ayyām* 26 May 2006.

⁷⁵⁷ Sayigh, "Inducing a Failed State in Palestine," 16.

⁷⁵⁸ 23 March 2007. NAD Meeting Minutes re: Belgian Foreign Minister's Visit (PLO): 1.

two-state solution. Through endorsement by the Palestinian public, he hoped to force Haniyeh towards the Quartet's terms and resume relations with the outside world. According to De Soto's evaluation, the referendum would "bring about the untimely demise of the PA government led by Hamas," or bend Hamas to the Quartet's conditions.⁷⁵⁹

These developments were interrupted when Israel responded to Islamic Jihad attacks by launching, on May 29, its first ground force invasion of the Gaza Strip since the disengagement. Following an Israeli artillery attack that killed eight Palestinians in Beit Lahiyah 9 June, Hamas suspended its ceasefire with Israel. Hamas's Qassam Brigades resumed rocket launches into Israel, leading to intense targeting by the IDF. On 25 June 2006, Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was captured from Kerem Shalom by the Qassam Brigades and the Popular Resistance Committees, assisted by a previously unknown group calling itself *Jaysh al-Islam* (Army of Islam.)⁷⁶⁰

Shalit's kidnapping drastically undermined Hamas's aspirations to ingratiate itself with the international community and laid bare the divisions within the movement, unable to domesticate its more radical elements. The kidnapping sparked a vast campaign of condemnation by Israel that rejected any distinction between Hamas's political and military wings. As Israel threatened large-scale incursions, Abbas momentarily reconciled with Haniyeh in order to avert further international pressure. With an eye to lending the PA legitimacy at the height of the crisis, Abbas engineered an agreement between all of the major Palestinian factions except Islamic Jihad. However, the effort fell short of explicitly discussing Shalit's release, and was not well received abroad. The US and UK issued strong statements calling for the soldier's unharmed release. At the same time, Hezbollah operatives acting in solidarity with Gaza assailed northern Israel with rockets before sneaking across the border and capturing two more soldiers.⁷⁶¹

Acting on the pretext of freeing Shalit, on 27 June 2006 the IDF launched Operation Summer Rain, which entailed a massive and pre-meditated arrest campaign of PA cabinet and PLC members from the Change and Reform list. Israeli commentators later revealed that Israeli Attorney General Menachem Mazuz delivered the warrants for these arrests to the IDF well prior to Shalit's capture. Israel held the legislators on criminal charges of belonging to a terrorist

⁷⁵⁹ Maqatil thelāta ashkhāṣ fī ishtabākāt bayna 'ānṣar "fataḥ" wa "ḥamās" fī muḥāfīzat Khān Yūnis," Al-Ayyām 9 May 2006; De Soto, End of Mission Report, 21.

⁷⁶⁰ Esposito, "Quarterly Update on Conflict and Diplomacy," 119.

⁷⁶¹ Baconi, Hamas Contained, 115.

organization, rather than in administrative detention or affording them any diplomatic immunity, claiming they could not “behave like terrorists and expect to be treated like statesmen.”⁷⁶²

Even while Hamas celebrated entrapping Israel in the “jaws of resistance,” Israel began a massive bombardment of Lebanon. Deploying what became known as the ‘Dahiyyeh doctrine’ for the southern Beirut neighborhood it first collectively punished, the Israeli Air Force pounded areas well outside Hezbollah’s operations in hopes of pushing the Lebanese to oppose the group. By the early August, over 1,000 Lebanese citizens were killed, nearly a million displaced, and much of Lebanon’s infrastructure lay in ruins.⁷⁶³

At the G8 summit 8 July 2006, the US secured a statement by attendees calling for an end to Palestinian rockets and the safe transfer of Shalit, without condemning ongoing Israeli operations in Gaza. The incursions and arrest campaign expanded to the West Bank, particularly to Nablus, where the municipal administrative buildings and security force headquarters came under Israeli siege in late July. Large scale Israeli ground and aerial incursions continued to batter Gaza through mid-August 2006. A majority of the resulting 213 Palestinians deaths were civilians, as Shalit remained in Hamas custody.⁷⁶⁴

National Unity: First Attempts

In September, Abbas attempted once more to mediate the crisis by securing promises from Hamas to honor the PLO’s previous agreements and form a National Unity Government (NUG) to overcome the political impasse. Signaling compromise, the Islamists granted the PLO and PA President a mandate to continue negotiations with Israel with the goal of establishing a state in the 1967-occupied territories.⁷⁶⁵

Although Abbas took Hamas’s endorsement of his leadership as a breakthrough, Washington quickly stonewalled him. At a meeting with EU representative Marc Otte, Erekat complained that the US Assistant Secretary of State David Welch had refused to even read the documents Abbas provided on the NUG, warning that “there are only two ways: the Road Map [sic] or no way.”⁷⁶⁶ Welch admonished Abbas that should he succeed in forming a national unity government, the Americans would treat any member of it as a Hamas affiliate.

⁷⁶² Conal Urquhart, “25% of Palestinian MPs Detained by Israel,” *The Guardian*, 21 August 2006.

⁷⁶³ Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 116-118.

⁷⁶⁴ Esposito, “Quarterly Update on Conflict and Diplomacy,” 119-124.

⁷⁶⁵ Hovdenak, “Hamas in Transition,” 60.

⁷⁶⁶ 13 September 2006. NSU Meeting Notes, Marc Otte and Saeb Erekat (PLO): 1.

In light of the Israeli-American entrenchment, Otte related that the EU position could not be solidified without a change in the American vision. Further, on the key issue of tax transfers, there was little the Europeans could do to enable the PA to pay its employees, short of asking Washington to sway Israel on the issue.⁷⁶⁷ Otte and Erekat's exchange highlights the level of American pressure on the PA, and the extent to which its agenda drove internal Palestinian political divisions over any premise of a shared brokerage of the peace process through the Quartet.⁷⁶⁸ A week after Otte and Erekat's meeting, the Quartet convened and restated the pressing need to implement the AMA. Predictably, the statement lacked any pressure on Israel to comply.⁷⁶⁹

Despite these setbacks, Hamas continued to gesture toward moderation, albeit without entirely renouncing the platform on which it was elected. For instance, in January 2007 Ahmed Youssef, Haniyeh's political advisor, published a proposal for a five-year *hudna*, calling for a multinational force comprised of the Quartet and Turkey to guarantee the ceasefire and allow confidence to renew with Israel before resuming negotiations. Youssef's framework included the creation of an international oversight body to ensure that no donor funds be used in line with Quartet demands on the PA.⁷⁷⁰

Hamas's moderation fell on deaf ears in Washington, where Bush signed into law the Senate-approved version of the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006. With no irony, the legislation at once barred all contact with the Hamas-led PA, and created a \$20 million fund to promote Palestinian democracy.⁷⁷¹ Persistent American intransigence in support of Israel even as Hamas attempted to reconcile its diplomatic predicament with its campaign promises plunged the Islamist movement into disunity. The ideological moderation manifest in the national unity government and unilateral ceasefire were anathema to more hardline, maximalist positions within Hamas. The fact that such offers yielded no discernible benefits marginalized Hamas's centrist players, lending credence to the less conciliatory elements of the movement.⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁷ 13 September 2006. NSU Meeting Notes, Marc Otte and Saeb Erekat (PLO): 2.

⁷⁶⁸ Hovdenak, "Hamas in Transition," 60.

⁷⁶⁹ Sayigh, "Inducing a Failed State in Palestine," 13.

⁷⁷⁰ January 2007. NSU – Unofficial Translation of Hudna Proposal by Ahmad Youssef; "Mesh'al: ḥamās satuqābil ayy khuṭwāt isrā'īliyya lil-salām, lakinḥā tatamsik bil-muqāwima," Al-Ayyām 4 May 2006.

⁷⁷¹ United States Congressional Research Service - Paul Morro, "International Reaction to the Palestinian Unity Government" (Washington, DC: May 2007), 6; United States Agency – International Development, "West Bank and Gaza: Updated Anti-Terrorism Procedures, Update to Mission" (Washington, DC: 5 October 2007), 14.

⁷⁷² Hovdenak, "Hamas in Transition," 60.

Regime Change Returns

American frustrations grew as financial pressure failed to induce the changes Washington wanted in the PA. Into this dynamic stepped the USSC, using its amplified technical assistance role at the border crossings as a platform for political intervention. The USSC became heavily involved in skewing the Palestinian political playing field by late 2006, pinning hopes on Mohammed Dahlan to force change where the sanctions regime failed.

A longtime Fatah member elected to the PLC in January 2006 from the Gaza Strip, Dahlan had previously been in charge of the security negotiations portfolio under Arafat and was admired by President Clinton and CIA Director Tenet. Until December 2005, Dahlan served as Minister of Civilian Affairs, where he worked closely with the American and Israeli coordinating teams, designing protocols for the border crossings.⁷⁷³

Dahlan had other links in Washington: as one former USSC official recalled in an interview, Dahlan's prominence was due to his relationship with the CIA, gathering and sharing intelligence. It was not "who was who in Gaza, [but] using Palestinians posing as agents in the rest of the Arab world," the official explained.⁷⁷⁴ Dahlan's importance to Washington exemplified the reasons Laleh Khalili describes as motivating American interest in foreign security sectors globally. Rather than simple assistance, Washington's help ensured relationships of access that benefitted American strategic aims.⁷⁷⁵

As Consul General Walles noted at an early February 2006 meeting with PA officials, Washington entrusted Dahlan with a number of responsibilities, seeing him as their right-hand man locally. Walles appreciated Dahlan's close, "committed" cooperation with the Americans, sending lists of Palestinians for a PA-Israeli shared "terrorist list" for travel restrictions.⁷⁷⁶ In the months following the election, Dahlan met personally with President Bush on three occasions, and Bush described him as a "solid leader."⁷⁷⁷

Washington urged Abbas to elevate Dahlan due to his strong working relationship with White House officials and the US intelligence community. In December 2006, Abbas appointed

⁷⁷³ November 2005. Letter from Walles to Dahlan Re: Opening of Rafah Crossing Point (PLO).

⁷⁷⁴ Interview, former USSC member, February 2018.

⁷⁷⁵ Laleh Khalili, "The Utility of Proxy Detention in Counterinsurgencies" in Jan Bachmann, Colleen Bell, and Caroline Holmqvist, eds., *War, Police, and Assemblages of Intervention* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 95.

⁷⁷⁶ 8 February 2006. Meeting Notes re: Minister Khatib meeting with US Officials (PLO), 2.

⁷⁷⁷ David Rose, "The Gaza Bombshell," *Vanity Fair* April 2008.

Dahlan as National Security Advisor, where he was central to Abbas's Technical Team for Reform, collaborating with the USSC and EUBAM-Rafah.⁷⁷⁸ Dahlan was critical in the rearrangements undertaken under USSC supervision at the Karni crossing, where the USSC stationed re-trained PASF under Dahlan's control. At Karni, the US designed plans for battalions to be deployed, with an arsenal of 1,800 Kalashnikovs, 150 machine guns, and 836,000 bullets.⁷⁷⁹

Following the PLC election, Dahlan was particularly vociferous, vowing he would never join a Hamas government even if Fatah did.⁷⁸⁰ Dahlan's personal rivalry with Hamas and disdain for Islamism made him a convenient interlocutor for Washington, giving a Palestinian voice to Israel's view that Hamas was an incorrigible threat. Hamas insiders believed Dahlan was instrumental in demonizing Islamism throughout the Middle East in the eyes of the Bush White House.⁷⁸¹ Dahlan's ascendance intensified with the creation of a new Directorate of Internal Security under the supervision of Rashid Abu Shabak, a close associate of Dahlan. Its establishment coincided with American legislation in December 2006 that set out to professionalize and strengthen the PASF under Abbas with Dayton's guidance.⁷⁸²

Following a fatal spate of attacks in December 2006, the Bush Administration requested \$86 million "to dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism and establish law and order in the West Bank and Gaza."⁷⁸³ The funding would be used to rehabilitate and reform security forces "loyal to Abbas."⁷⁸⁴ Key to this transformation was the introduction of "Enhanced Battalions" in the Directorate of Internal Security, with American funding. A series of early retirements and replacements by younger officers without any political affiliation would ensure the Enhanced Battalions' allegiance to the American plan. The budget for this plan figured at \$1.27 billion for

⁷⁷⁸ 12 January 2007. Department of the Army – Department of Defense: USSC Security Working Group Executive Summary, Colonel Paul Rupp (PLO): 2-4; 10 January 2007. USSC Agenda: Security Working Group Meeting (PLO): 8.

February 2007. NSU Inception Phase Workplan – Security (PLO); 15 February 2007. NSU Talking Points for 5th CSC Meeting (PLO). 14 June 2007 NSU Talking Points: Security Sector Liaison Group Meeting (PLO): 2; 6 June 2007. NSU Talking Points: Meeting with Lt.-Gen. Dayton and Consul General Walles (PLO): 2.

⁷⁷⁹ March 2007. Palestinian Authority, Technical Team for Reform: Deployment of Border Units Along Palestinian-Egyptian Crossing (PLO): 2-10.

⁷⁸⁰ "Dahlān: 'fatah' tarfuḍ al-mushārika fī ḥukūma tushakillhā ḥarakat 'ḥamās,'" *Al-Ayyām* 28 January 2006; "Dahlān: Abū Māzen khiyyār al-sh'ab wa naḥnu mutamsikūn bihi wa nad'mihu," *Al-Ayyām* 29 January 2006; Usher, "The Democratic Resistance," 27.

⁷⁸¹ Nāfidh Abu Ḥasana, "Ḥamās wa al-jihād: al-muṣālaḥa wa al-muqāwama al-maslaha," *Majallat al dirāsāt al filastīniyya* 110 (2014): 106; "Qā'id jaysh al-islām: ḥalūnā naḥnu wa ḥamās iḥtiyyāl Dahlān khamsa marāt wa fashalnā," *Al-Quds* 22 June 2007.

⁷⁸² Brenner, *Gaza Under Hamas*, 35; Zanotti, "U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority," 7-10.

⁷⁸³ Steven Erlanger, "Day After Killings, Hamas Leader Calls for a Truce," *New York Times* 6 January 2007.

⁷⁸⁴ Morro, "International Reaction to the Palestinian Unity Government." 3.

the first year.⁷⁸⁵ The plan fell under the Office of National Security at the Presidency and under Dahlan's jurisdiction as National Security Advisor. At a donor conference on the "transformation" ongoing in the PASF, international partners hinted at the instability of the US mission. Turkish representatives "asked if the USSC had obtained guarantees that the infrastructure established by the project would not be destroyed by the IDF," to which Dayton demurred.⁷⁸⁶

Regardless, the infusion of American cash under Dahlan was an affront to Hamas's Ministry of the Interior, provoking Hamas even as the Islamists attempted to reconcile their campaign promises with the Quartet's demands. In response to American backing for Fatah, Interior Minister Siam created an Executive Force of 3,000 answering to the Prime Minister. He appointed Jamal Abu Samhadana, former head of the rejectionist Popular Resistance Committees, to head the Executive Force. Abu Samhadana served as a warning to Fatah as he was an adamant advocate of armed struggle and had rejected the 2005 Cairo Agreement.⁷⁸⁷ The message was clear: Dahlan's cooperation with Israel was unwelcome, and Hamas would not be swayed.

The creation of the Executive Force in response to American backing for Abbas and Dahlan catalyzed growing instability and invited Iranian funding, adding a new dimension to the crisis. Where Fatah decried the Executive Force's unconstitutionality, Hamas pointed to Dahlan's own militias that operated in Gaza without presidential endorsement, such as the "Death Squads" and "People's Army." The Executive Force's creation from a base of Qassam fighters made Dahlan and his allies "reactive," encouraging them to confront Hamas. Hamas, for its part, stood its ground, sowing further disunity with independent members of the government, like cabinet member Dr. Abu Eisheh, who tried to carry on with their ministries' functions.⁷⁸⁸

By December 2006, the Executive Force had expanded to 5,000, and exchanges of gunfire between armed Fatah and Hamas supporters occurred daily.⁷⁸⁹ American funding for the

⁷⁸⁵ 10 March 2007. A-Sulṭa al-waṭāniyya al-filastīniyya: al-farīq al-fanī lil-iṣḻah - niqāt lil-ḥadīth (PLO): 3.

⁷⁸⁶ 10 March 2007. A-Sulṭa al-waṭāniyya al-filastīniyya: al-farīq al-fanī lil-iṣḻah - niqāt lil-ḥadīth (PLO): 5.

⁷⁸⁷ Brenner, Gaza Under Hamas, 35; Khaled Abu Toameh, " Hamas to Expand 'Executive Force,'" Jerusalem Post 21 December 2006; "Šiyyām yu'alīn inṭlāq 'aml al-quwā al-amniyya al-khāša wa a-ri'āsa tuṭalibuhu bil-tarāja' li-'adm qānūn," Al-Ayyām 18 May 2006; "A-Ra'īs yu'akid rafdhahu inshā' al-quwā al-amniyya al-khāša wa masīrāt ḥāshida fī ghaza, Khān Yūnis did intishārḥā," Al-Ayyām 19 May 2006.

⁷⁸⁸ Interview, Abu Eisheh; Baconi, Hamas Contained, 113. The Palestinian press made clear the proliferation of such groups already in the early summer of 2006: "Quwāt al-ḥimaya al-khāša tāb'iyya l-ḥarakat fataḥ tantashiru fī jenīn," 4 June 2006 Al-Hayyāt al-jadīda; Fataḥ tu'aln tashkīl maḥkama ḥarakīyya wa tiftaḥu maqarayn lihā fī rām allah wa ghaza 19 June 2006 Al-Hayyāt al-jadīda.

⁷⁸⁹ Brenner, Gaza Under Hamas, 35.

Office of the President was slow to arrive, and everyday safety deteriorated rapidly. Armed militias affiliated with both parties took matters into their own hands, kidnapping, torturing, and killing in a climate of *falatān amnī* (security anarchy). Rival checkpoints were set up between Gaza neighborhoods, and both sides stockpiled arms. Fatah militants attacked government buildings and seized public land, assaulting PA personnel.⁷⁹⁰

Alongside internecine factional violence, domestic violence and kidnapping of foreigners also increased, and Salafist jihadi groups emerged in the chaos, including *a-Tawhīd wa al-Jihād* and *Jaysh al-Islam*.⁷⁹¹ Alvaro de Soto remarked that the situation had reached a state of “near civil war,” which he bitterly recalled that his American counterparts in the Quartet cheered. At a Quartet envoy meeting in Washington in late February 2007, the American representative noted: “I like this violence [...] it means that other Palestinians are resisting Hamas.”⁷⁹² With Gaza veering toward “Iraqisation,” the US barreled forward.⁷⁹³

However, financial pressure was not intended to work in isolation. Washington also endorsed the overthrow of the democratically elected PA, well-documented through a number of insider leaks. The orchestration of a ‘hard coup’ to supplement the pressure of international sanctions fell to a coterie of neoconservatives in the White House.⁷⁹⁴

The perspective of the Washington Institute for Near East Peace handily summarizes the neoconservative outlook. From this perspective, the Hamas victory was an intolerable threat to American interests regardless of the group’s goals, which were always framed in terms of security.⁷⁹⁵ Director Robert Satloff argued that Middle Eastern democratization was a bad gamble, as Islamists succeeded at the polls in Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories.⁷⁹⁶ Satloff contended Hamas rule should be aborted quickly. “The U.S. interest is not that Hamas slowly wither on the vine. That would require many years of containment, during which Hamas

⁷⁹⁰ “A-Ra`īs: al-waṭan fī khaṭr wa ‘alaynā injāh al-ḥiwār tawajaha al-‘itimād ‘wathīqat al-āsra’ asāsān lil-niqāsh,” Al-Ayyām 26 May 2006; “UNWRA: 70% min sukān qitā’ ghaza bātū y’atimidūn ‘alā a-musā’ida al-ghathā’iyya a-duwaliyya,” Al-Ayyām, 8 July 2006; “11 shuhadā’ fī yom damawī isrā’ ilī ākhir fī qitā’ ghaza,” Al-Ayyām 8 July 2006; “19 shuhadā’ wa ‘ashrāt al-jarḥā fī ghārāt ‘alā bayt lāhiyyā wa jabāliyya wa khān yunis,” Al-Ayyām 9 July 2006; “Istishhād 25 muwaṭinān baynahum aṭfāl fī ‘udwan ‘alā qitā’ ghaza,” Al-Ayyām 27 July 2006.

⁷⁹¹ Brenner, *Gaza Under Hamas*, 36; Sayigh, “Inducing a Failed State in Palestine,” 27.

⁷⁹² De Soto, *End of Mission Report*, 21.

⁷⁹³ Sayigh, “Inducing a Failed State in Palestine,” 27.

⁷⁹⁴ Smooha, “All the Dreams We Once Had Are Gone”; Alistair Crooke, “Elliot Abrams’ Uncivil War,” *Conflicts Forum* 1 January 2007.

⁷⁹⁵ Corinna Mullin, “The US Discourse on Political Islam: Is Obama’s a Truly post-‘War on Terror’ Administration?” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 4, 2 (2011): 267.

⁷⁹⁶ Robert Satloff, “Hobbling Hamas: Moving beyond the U.S. Policy of Three No’s,” *Weekly Standard* 3 April 2006.

could foil our efforts by tightening its grip on power as the ayatollahs have in Iran. To the contrary, the US interest is that Hamas collapse speedily and spectacularly.”⁷⁹⁷

It is with this mindset that neoconservative voices pushed a covert plan to unseat the elected PA, drawn up as early as February 2006 and signed off on by Condoleezza Rice.⁷⁹⁸ As Alistair Crooke revealed, Elliot Abrams was adamant about the need to supply Fatah with firepower to oust Hamas, frustrated with the inefficiency of what he referred to as the “financial noose” on Hamas rule.⁷⁹⁹ His efforts funneling arms through neighboring Arab states to Dahlan were met with disdain by Pentagon officials and military personnel. Even Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld disagreed with the plan, worried that the revelation of a covert anti-Hamas agenda could harm US soldiers battling Sunni groups in Iraq. Israeli intelligence officials expressed similar derision; Shin Ben chief Yuval Diskin, for example, noted that prospects of replacing Hamas rule with its disintegrating rival were nonsensical.⁸⁰⁰ Contemporary polling supported this position: while Palestinian opinions were split on the Quartet conditions, only 13% blamed Hamas leadership for the decline in security and economic standards.⁸⁰¹

The centrality of Dahlan to the plan was particularly implausible to the Israelis. One Israeli Ministry of Defense official cautioned the US against trusting Dahlan, warning “Dahlan is like drugs; what he tells you is better than reality.”⁸⁰² Quartet insiders were similarly incredulous at American meddling. De Soto recalled that Washington “appears to listen to a small clique of Palestinian interlocutors who tell them what they want to hear.”⁸⁰³ This led American policymakers to over-rely on strongman Dahlan and his confidence in countering Hamas, encouraging the harshest anti-democratic tendencies in the place of the ‘freedom agenda.’

The Mecca Agreement: National Unity Again

It is in this context of heightening tensions, ongoing international sanctions, and deteriorating security for civilians that Saudi King Abdullah made a last-ditch attempt at intra-Palestinian reconciliation. On February 7, Hamas and Fatah signed an agreement for an official

⁷⁹⁷ Satloff, “Hobbling Hamas.”

⁷⁹⁸ Steven Erlanger, “U.S. and Israelis Are Said to Talk of Hamas Ouster,” New York Times 14 February 2006.

⁷⁹⁹ Crooke served as an aide to Javier Solana, EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. Abrams, *Tested by Zion*, 164.

⁸⁰⁰ Crooke, “Elliot Abrams’ Uncivil War.”

⁸⁰¹ Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, “Public Opinion Poll #23” (Ramallah: 23 March 2007.)

⁸⁰² 15 February 2006 Israeli MOD POLDIR Gilad Discusses the AMA and the Future of the PA [WikiLeaks], 3.

⁸⁰³ De Soto, *End of Mission Report*, 21.

National Unity Government, in which Haniyeh would remain Prime Minister but Fatah members and independents would take up key cabinet positions. Abbas's close ally Ziad Abu Amr would become Foreign Minister, and former World Bank official and Washington confidante Salam Fayyad would serve as Finance Minister.⁸⁰⁴

In a significant move toward moderation, through the Mecca Agreement Hamas promised to respect previous PLO-Israeli accords as the basis for forming the government, tacitly acknowledging Israel's right to exist. The Mecca Agreement – and Hamas's reluctance to explicitly recognize Israel – demonstrated the Islamists' rational, long-term strategy, and suggested their withholding as a negotiating tactic. Hamas was well aware recognition of Israel was a key point of leverage, and could not be conceded for naught. As Ahmed Yousef, a senior advisor to Haniyeh, noted in 2007, "I know that if I say I recognize Israel it will not lead to anything in return from Israel ... There are certain factors they [the Quartet] have to address before they push Hamas to recognize Israel."⁸⁰⁵ Israel consistently violated the same agreements the Quartet pressured Hamas to recognize and uphold. As another Hamas legislator contended, "We would respect it if the Quartet had asked us both to comply with these demands – but they are demanding it from us, the weaker party, only."⁸⁰⁶ In an interview, Dr. Abu Eisheh, the independent Minister of Planning, called Israel's failure to reciprocate and meet the same Quartet-imposed standards the main reason for the PA's unwillingness to comply.⁸⁰⁷

Hamas's refusal to definitively renounce armed struggle similarly demonstrated the group's rational decision-making process. To abandon resistance without concrete dividends would put the Islamists in the same predicament as Fatah: reliant on Israeli and Western support. Without promise of a fair payoff, Hamas saw no incentive to rebuke the credentials on which it had been elected.⁸⁰⁸ The Mecca Agreement balanced these conditions, preserving Hamas's legitimacy while enabling partnership with Fatah.

In its internal communications, the PLO negotiators were enthusiastic about the Mecca Agreement, which it called a victory for Palestinian democracy. The team maintained that the national unity government created a common political platform, ending factional infighting and uniting Palestinians around endorsement of a two-state solution. It provided a basis for the

⁸⁰⁴ Morro, "International Reaction to the Palestinian Unity Government," 2.

⁸⁰⁵ Quoted in Hovedenak, "Hamas in Transition," 71.

⁸⁰⁶ Quoted in Hovedenak, "Hamas in Transition," 71.

⁸⁰⁷ Interview, Abu Eisheh.

⁸⁰⁸ Barghouthi, "Tadākhul al-idiolojiyyā wa a-siyyāsa fī nazū' a ḥamās ilā al-'unf," 55-56.

pressing issue of security force reform and consolidation under the principle of “one authority, one gun.”⁸⁰⁹ Indeed, Hani Qawasmi, the NUG’s new Minister of the Interior, outlined plans to this effect 14 April 2007. Qawasmi persuaded Hamas and Fatah leaders to discipline unit commanders and their rank and file through clarified chains of command and joint patrols.⁸¹⁰ The NUG thus created a moment of opportunity to stabilize the Palestinian political and security situation.

However, the international community, led by the US, did not budge, effectively rendering the Palestinian reconciliation null and void as the conditions that necessitated it persisted. Secretary Rice and Consul Walles were furious at Abbas’s move toward reconciliation with Hamas.⁸¹¹ Indeed, as De Soto explained, the Americans “seemed to believe on any number of occasions that Abu Mazen was just around the corner from taking Hamas on – but this misjudged both the man and the balance of forces he faced.”⁸¹² The existing sanctions were upheld, and the House of Representatives introduced H.R. 1856, the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act Amendments of 2007, to further constrict relations with the PA.⁸¹³ American domination of the Quartet pushed the European allies to follow suit, and only Switzerland and Norway initiated relations with the National Unity Government.⁸¹⁴

While further isolating Hamas, Washington resumed talks with individual Palestinian officials in a manner that only exacerbated the distrust and division the Mecca Agreement had sought to eradicate. Two weeks after the Mecca Agreement, Secretary Rice held a terse trilateral discussion with Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Olmert complained that Abbas had broken his promise not to form a unity government, while Abbas blamed the US for forcing the elections. He argued that his actions since had simply charted a way to avert civil war.⁸¹⁵

On 20 March, Jacob Walles met with Salam Fayyad, and on 17 April Rice spoke with him at the State Department. Their conversation centered on channels to bypass regulatory prohibitions on passing funding to the PA, using Arab and European accounts to funnel aid to Abbas through PLO accounts held by Fayyad. In the same period, a House Appropriations subcommittee cleared for disbursement \$59 million intended to bolster Abbas, which included \$43

⁸⁰⁹ May 2007 Key Points on NUG – An Opportunity for Peace through Negotiations (PLO): 1.

⁸¹⁰ Brenner, *Gaza Under Hamas*, 36.

⁸¹¹ Rose, “The Gaza Bombshell.”

⁸¹² De Soto, *End of Mission Report*, 20-21.

⁸¹³ Morro, “International Reaction to the Palestinian Unity Government,” 6.

⁸¹⁴ Hovdenak, “Hamas in Transition,” 74-75.

⁸¹⁵ Abrams, *Tested by Zion*, 221.

million for training the Presidential Guard and \$16 million for the USSC-supervised efforts at the Karni Crossing.⁸¹⁶ Additionally, the USSC supervised the hiring of private security subcontractors, such as Global Defense Solutions, to provide technical services to the Karni project.⁸¹⁷

As Yezid Sayigh points out, Washington's outright rejection of Hamas's moves toward moderation encouraged the more adversary elements within Fatah, who favored eschewing further dialogue and preparing for conflict.⁸¹⁸ While this tension reflected the existing generational split within Fatah to a degree, it also drew in "insiders" vested in Fatah's dominance, especially from the PASF and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.⁸¹⁹ Many of these figures had opposed the PLC elections, aware voters would not necessarily rubber stamp Fatah hegemony. Mohammed Dahlan was at the forefront of this trend.⁸²⁰

In March 2007, Dahlan was instated as head of the Preventative Security Forces, a red flag to Hamas. The same month, Abbas triggered a new crisis that threatened the tenuous reconciliation forged in Mecca by creating a *lajnat al-sāḥa* (arena committee) to oversee Fatah's civilian organization in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The majority of the committee's fifty-six members had allegiances to Dahlan, signaling close coordination with the US State Department, the White House's Near East team, and the USSC. Qawsami's security force consolidation plan was scuttled only weeks after its inception as Fatah commander Rashid Abu Shabak broke the agreement by deploying forces to block roads in northern Gaza. Shabak was closely aligned with Dahlan and his American backers, and Hamas interpreted this as a provocation. Qawsami resigned, and Hamas condemned Abbas and his security forces' confrontational tactics.⁸²¹

As Consul Walles later recalled, Hamas's deep distrust of Dahlan's relationship with Washington intensified following the Mecca Agreement. Walles explained, "I think Hamas really did believe we were conspiring with Dahlan to bring them down." This suspicion was not baseless. Walles equivocated, arguing "I don't think we were in the sense that they believed we were, but ... all that spring [...] there were repeated clashes in Gaza between [...] Dahlan's

⁸¹⁶ Morro, "International Reaction to the Palestinian Unity Government," 3.

⁸¹⁷ 3 May 2007. NSU Draft Letter to UNOPS re: Security Contractors (PLO).

⁸¹⁸ Sayigh, "Inducing a Failed State in Palestine," 20.

⁸¹⁹ Usher, "The Democratic Resistance," 24.

⁸²⁰ Barghouthi, "Tadākhul al-idiolojyyā wa a-siyyāsa fī nazū'a ḥamās ilā al-'unf," 56-57.

⁸²¹ Interview, Abu Eisheh; Brenner, *Gaza Under Hamas*, 37.

people, and Hamas [...] and we were meeting with Dahlan.”⁸²² American officials were explicitly aware of the subversive nature of their work.

Leaked internal communications from the NSU confirm clandestine, top-level coordination between Dayton’s team and Dahlan’s backers, encouraging their confrontational attitude toward Hamas. On 11 March, a small group of Israeli, Egyptian, and Palestinian military officials began a new quadripartite initiative titled the “Gaza Security Committee,” mediated by Gen. Dayton and Col. Pearson of the USSC.⁸²³ At the meeting, Dahlan and his associates Rashid Abu Shabak, Jamal Queaid, and Basil Jaber confirmed the Israeli analysis of Hamas strategy. The Israeli perception centered on Hamas’s adoption of a “Hezbollah model,” using rockets on Israeli civilians, tunnels to transport funds and militants, and preparation against any incoming force in Gaza. In a nod to Fatah’s own concerns, Dahlan and his associates agreed with Gen. Amos Gilad that, “the main strategic goal of Hamas is to take over the PA and then the PLO.”⁸²⁴

As Col. Pearson explained in an interview, the coordination efforts in fact prioritized anti-smuggling efforts along the Gazan border with Egypt and did not specifically target Hamas. As the USSC’s man on the ground in Gaza, Pearson became directly involved in locating tunnels used to smuggle everyday items as well as weapons, at times causing firefights with the armed groups running the smuggling.⁸²⁵ The anti-smuggling effort was coordinated with CIA operatives on the Sinai side. The entire project responded to Israeli concerns voiced to Washington repeatedly since the August 2005 withdrawal about the increased insecurity of the border due to the tunneling phenomenon.⁸²⁶ In delegating American personnel from the CIA and USSC to address Israel’s border security concerns, Washington’s internalization of the Israeli security agenda is evident.

The level of converging interests between Dahlan and his Israeli counterparts is noteworthy, as are the multiple insistences in the meeting minutes that the forum should be secret. “All parties made clear than any leakages would immediately result in the cessation of the use of this forum and the projects being aborted. Also not to be shared is the fact the forum

⁸²² Walles quoted in Abrams, *Tested by Zion*, 229.

⁸²³ 11 March 2007. NSU Memorandum re: Quadripartite Meeting of Gaza Security Committee (PLO): 1-2.

⁸²⁴ March 2007 Meeting Minutes- Quadripartite Meeting of Gaza Security (PLO): 2.

⁸²⁵ Interview, Pearson, February 2018.

⁸²⁶ 15 February 2006 Israeli MOD POLDIR Gilad Discusses the AMA and the Future of the PA [WikiLeaks], 3-4; 16 February 2006 ISA Chief Diskin – Hamas on the Horizon [WikiLeaks]; 10 December 2006 USSC Dayton Raises Rafah, AMA and Badr Brigade with Diskin [WikiLeaks], 2-3.

exists, nor should who is attending the meetings be leaked. The press will not be involved.”⁸²⁷ However, as Change and Reform Minister of Planning and Public Works Abdelrahman Zeidan recalled in an interview, Hamas well aware of Dahlan’s backroom efforts with Washington. Holding Abbas complicit, Zeidan and his colleagues repeatedly notified the President of their misgivings about Dahlan in order to “put the responsibility on him.”⁸²⁸

Two days later, at a meeting of the Technical Team for Reform, the degree of American intervention was evident. The team’s talking points for discussion noted that “the team works in a *bi-shakl yawmīyya* (in a daily manner) with Dayton’s team” to transform the security forces.⁸²⁹ Dayton’s role was far from impartial mediation in this context: as one former member noted in an interview, the USSC’s joke internally was “we had the coup forces, and we had the counter coup forces.”⁸³⁰ Critically, the transformation planned to empower Dahlan’s security capacity with 3,700 retrained forces in the Gaza Strip, and a further 1,400 in the West Bank. In gendarmerie style, these forces would answer to Abbas, with the support of the American Congress and USSC Dayton.⁸³¹ When Dahlan held a rally in Gaza that drew over 100,000 Fatah supporters in mid-May 2007, Hamas prepared for confrontation.

Ultimately, the armed clashes in which Hamas overtook the Gaza Strip and drove out Fatah’s security forces were short lived. In a period of less than two weeks, Hamas operatives acted on deep-seated apprehension about the intentions of Dahlan and his American backers. As Col. Pearson reflected in an interview, it was perhaps the visibility of his USSC team identifying and digging up tunnels in Rafah that made Hamas “itchy” and provoked their takeover; the two events coincided, in any case, and the perceived American backing of Fatah strongmen was the determining factor.

Indeed, during the meltdown of the Presidential Guard and National Security Forces units against Hamas – each fighting individually – Dayton and the USSC in Jerusalem were on the phone throughout the night. They frantically discussed with their Israeli security contacts ways to rescue what Pearson referred to as “our Palestinians,” the Fatah generals who were holed up in

⁸²⁷ 11 March 2007. NSU Memorandum re: Quadripartite Meeting of Gaza Security Committee (PLO).

⁸²⁸ Interview, Zeidan, September 2017.

⁸²⁹ March 2007 – Talking Points Technical Team Reform Meeting with Fayyad (Arabic), 1.

⁸³⁰ Interview, former USSC official, Washington, April 2017.

⁸³¹ March 2007 – Talking Points Technical Team Reform Meeting with Fayyad (Arabic), 2-3.

his Gaza apartment complex. An Israeli helicopter airlift was deemed too risky, and the generals ultimately surrendered to Hamas.⁸³²

Washington's 'freedom agenda' lay in tatters in the aftermath, but this did not prevent the White House from once more switching courses to meet its own shifting interests. On 16 June 2007, Abbas fulfilled America's long-term goal of collapsing the Hamas-led government. He appointed Salam Fayyad to form an emergency government. President Bush praised Abbas's decision and Israel vowed assistance; a week later, VAT tax transfers to the PA resumed.⁸³³ The next week, the Quartet met in Sharm al-Sheikh and affirmed support for Abbas and Fayyad, even as Consul General Walsh delicately denied to the Palestinian press any American responsibility for the Palestinian civil war.⁸³⁴

Conclusion

In displacing Hamas rule, Washington's interests coincided with those of a Palestinian elite unseated by the January 2006 elections. At the same time, American backing for Israel's political aims of eliminating Hamas resistance converged with the 'global war on terror' framework, and this convergence operated through the Palestinian Authority proxy.

In the days following the declaration of the emergency government, the PA-aligned daily *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda* illustrated the Fatah elite's internalization of American thinking for their own purposes. The newspaper published a series of articles backing Abbas, using language that mirrored American policy toward Hamas. On 21 June, Abbas declared that there would be "no dialogue with murderous terrorists," and the same week the press decried the transformation of "our sons" into the Taliban. Throughout, Abbas and Fayyad's narrative blamed Hamas's "bloody coup" for fulfilling Israeli aspirations to divide the Palestinians, ignoring their own role in building up forces prepared to unseat the Islamists.⁸³⁵

⁸³² Interview, Pearson, February 2018.

⁸³³ "A-ra'īs yukalif Salām Fayyād b-tashkīl ḥukūmat ṭawwā' rā," *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda* 16 June 2017. "Al-wilayyāt al-mutaḥida tu'akid d'amahā al-kāmīl l-Abu Māzen wa isrā'īl tadrus taḥwīl amwāl a-drā'ib l-t'azīz mawqī' ahu," *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda* 16 June 2007; International Foundation for Electoral Systems, "General Voter Education Plan for the Palestinian Legislative Council Election" (Washington, DC: Center for Transitional and Post-Conflict Governance, 2006) <http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/1433/>; "Isrā'īl t'atezm taḥwīl 400 miliyyon dollār lil-sulṭa wa bid' mufāwwaḍāt al-ḥal al-nihā'ī," *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda*, 22 June 2007; "A-ra'īs yu'aliq al-'aml b-āḥkām a-muwād 65 wa 66 wa 67 min muwād al-qanūn al-āsāsī," *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda* 17 June 2007; "Al-Ḥakūma al-isrā'īliyya tuqir al-ifrāj 'an juz' min al-amwāl al-filasṭīniyya," *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda* 25 June 2007.

⁸³⁴ "Walsh: amrīkā lam tuseleh ayyat jiha filasṭīniyya min ājl khalq ḥarb āhiliyya," *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda* 27 June 2007; "Al-Rubā'iyya" tu'akid d'amahā li-qarārāt a-ra'īs 'Abbas al-mashrū'a wa al-qanūniyya," *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda* 17 June 2007.

⁸³⁵ "A-ra'īs: lā ḥiwār m'a al-qutala al-irhābiyyīn an y'atethirū min al-sh'ab wa munzamat a-taḥrūr," *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda* 21 June 2007; "Abnā' ṭalībān!" *Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda*, 19 June 2007; "Azl qaṭā' ghaza ... Sharon wa Olmert ḥalimābihi wa ḥaqaqathu

When the Palestinians' brief flirtation with democracy undermined Washington's aims, the White House was pleased to find a partner in the disgruntled Fatah to implement its own 'war on terror' in the occupied Palestinian territories, dismantling the election results in favor of securitization. As Graham Usher argues, the American position was based on a hardline embrace of Israeli dictates, rather than any coherent consideration of Palestinian needs or a disinterested survey of Israeli security requirements. Indeed, there could be no more solid guarantor of Israeli security than a lasting peace with a democratically elected Islamist party. Hamas's steady moves toward moderation and endorsement of a two-state solution were rebuked in favor of Israeli demands for a more useful proxy empowered to curtail resistance to the occupation.

The iron wall that the PA faced following its transformation into a representative body cuts to the heart of the contradiction of American policy.⁸³⁶ This chapter has demonstrated the effects of the American conscription of elections to Washington's 'global war on terror' prerogatives, as the US promoted the twin principles of counterterrorism and democratization. Washington envisioned the Roadmap's performance-based approach as a legitimizing device to render America's image in the region more palatable following regime change in Iraq. Elections were a critical element of this performance. However, the US's simultaneous embrace of Israeli unilateralism clashed with the principle of pluralism enshrined in the push for elections.

Instead, Washington's acquiescence to Israel's ever-expanding political demands garbed as irrefutable security needs rendered both missions impossible. Washington's acceptance of the Israeli dictum that Hamas constituted unredeemable terrorists both contradicted the Islamists' own policies, and made prospects of Palestinian pluralism impossible. As the next chapter reveals, in the aftermath of the split between Gaza and the West Bank, the US position only hardened in favor of securitizing Palestine and enforcing Israel's political aims through the PA. As David Welch, President Bush's Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, later explained, "once it became clear that Hamas had won in Gaza, then the whole thing was a lot clearer to do in the West Bank."⁸³⁷

ḥamās," Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda 19 June 2007; "Fayyāḍ: lā muḥādathāt m'a ḥamās ilā ān t'atarif bil-ḥukuma wa taqabul al-ijrā'āt al-distūriyya alaḥī itakhadhahā a-ra'īs," Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda 27 June 2007; Alf shakhṣiyya filastīniyya tuḍīn al-inqilāb al-damawī fī ghaza wa tad'am al-shar'iyya wa qararāt "al-markazī" wa al-iḥtikām lil-muwāṭin al-nākhib," Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda 28 June 2007; "Quwā wa faṣā'il: al-inqisām alaḥī sababahu ḥamās yu'atī al-iḥtilāl furṣa li-tas'īd jarā'imahu," Al-Ḥayyāt al-jadīda 28 June 2007.

⁸³⁶ Usher, "The Democratic Resistance," 26.

⁸³⁷ Quoted in Nathan Thrall, *The Only Language They Understand: Forcing Compromise in Israel and Palestine* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017), 117.

Chapter 4: Security Coordination and the ‘Global War on Terror’

Introduction

This chapter examines the securitization of US assistance to the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank between the summers of 2007 and 2008. Following the factional violence that saw Hamas gain control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, US interventions focused on directing Palestinian security sector reform. Legitimized by the discourse of ‘counterterrorism,’ security sector reform enabled unprecedented US micromanagement of the Palestinian Authority (PA).⁸³⁸ The US Security Coordinator (USSC) was charged with overseeing Palestinian reform under the

⁸³⁸ Friedrich and Luethold, “And They Came in and Took Possession of Reforms,” 202-204.

banner of apolitical assistance to foster accountability and good governance necessary for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.⁸³⁹ At the core of this intervention was an intent to securitize the West Bank and eradicate the politics of resistance central to Hamas's success in the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections.

Rather than overt military means, much of the securitization examined here operated through policies designed to foster public order.⁸⁴⁰ However, the testimonies of USSC personnel interviewed for this chapter cast a different light on Washington's framing of the project, and expose the impact of the counterterrorism policy that pervaded American foreign policy after 9/11. As such, it is essential to situate the USSC in the broader scope of American defense policy since the onset of the 'global war on terror.' In this context, the USSC emerged as a mechanism to 'manage' the conflict remotely through local partners. The USSC functioned in keeping with Pentagon policies ascendant globally since 9/11, and this chapter speaks to the depth of the parallels between Palestine and other sites in which Washington asserts strategic control.

The US measured the success of aid to the Palestinians first and foremost by its ability to reduce the threat of terrorism, and second its utility in inclining the Palestinians toward peace with Israel.⁸⁴¹ This chapter demonstrates how the US deployed its aid efforts to implement Israel's security agenda on the ground, in effect introducing a policy of counterinsurgency through the PA. As one former USSC official noted, the "security first" approach, under conditions in which Israel defined what constituted a threat, was not liable to promote diplomatic progress toward a Palestinian state, which was the official aim of the security sector reform. The mechanism for producing compromise – consistent US pressure on Israel in negotiations – was replaced by US intervention that bent the Palestinian cause to Israeli demands from within the PA.⁸⁴²

The USSC mission formed the face of the counterterror push that Washington prioritized in its dealings with its Palestinian partners in the Ramallah emergency government. In partnership with President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, the US weaponized security sector reform with the purpose of eradicating Hamas's political and social influence in the West Bank. This chapter reveals the converging interests between Fatah

⁸³⁹ United States Department of State – Office of Inspector General, "Middle East Regional Office: Performance Evaluation of Palestinian Authority Security Forces Infrastructure Construction Projects in the West Bank" (Washington, DC: March 2011), 3.

⁸⁴⁰ Jeff Halper, "The 94 Percent Solution: A Matrix of Control." Middle East Report 21 (2000): 15.

⁸⁴¹ Zanolli, "U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority," 28.

⁸⁴² Personal papers, former USSC official.

hardliners set on unseating Hamas's threat to their hegemony, and American and Israeli agendas. In examining the common interests of these players, the staying power of the security regime elaborated in 2007 and 2008 becomes clear, as well as its destructive impact on Palestinian political pluralism.

This chapter draws on original interviews with civilian and military personnel formerly associated with the USSC mission housed at the Consulate General in Jerusalem. The USSC was a hub of American, Canadian, British, and European technical experts providing reform assistance to the PA. Through its increased budget in 2007, the USSC became a persistent organ of US policy in Israel-Palestine. The interviewees' testimonies are therefore an informative lens from which to view wider US policy. Further, communications between American military and diplomatic envoys and their partners in the PA leaked to WikiLeaks and the Palestine Papers provide insights into Washington's broader defense policy.

Chapter Outline

Taken together, these sources reveal striking similarities between the USSC and other sites where the US has externalized its security policy to local proxies since 9/11. This chapter first details the USSC's emergence before mapping out the location of the USSC in US foreign policy. The analysis argues that the USSC's prominence in American engagement with the Palestinians reflects the growing militarization of American foreign aid since 9/11, overwhelmingly focused on counterterrorism.

The USSC differs, however, from the wider militarization of US foreign policy in its relationship to the ongoing Israeli occupation, acting on the political prerogatives of the Israeli government. After establishing the place of the USSC in American defense policy in the 'global war on terror, this chapter then turns to a close examination of the USSC's role in reasserting PA control in the West Bank. These US-directed campaigns in the Palestinian cities evoked Washington's own counterinsurgency efforts in Iraq. The American coaxing that fostered renewed Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation was critical to realize Israel's internal political priorities. A close examination of American intervention through the PA on Israel's behalf in Nablus and Jenin reveals the extent of Washington's hand in forcing the Palestinian leadership to meet Israeli demands.

The chapter finally analyzes the Annapolis negotiations, focusing on the connection between the ‘security first’ policies enacted on the ground in the West Bank and their political weight at the diplomatic level. It exposes the distance between the ostensible purpose of renewed bilateral negotiations to resolve the conflict, and the impact of daily American interventions on the ground. Through the USSC’s ‘counterterror’ work, Washington embraced Israel’s political logic of maximum control with minimal contact. The USSC served as one of the key institutions which reproduced, to use Lisa Bhungalia’s phrase, regimes of war which persist even “in moments when direct military violence is held in abeyance.”⁸⁴³ This chapter highlights an unprecedented strategic partnership between the US and Israel as American military and diplomatic personnel wove Israeli demands into the fabric of Palestinian self-rule.

Situating the United States Security Coordinator

The testimonies of numerous former and current USSC personnel interviewed for this chapter demonstrate that the USSC conceived of itself as different from US security sector assistance programs globally. Former USSC personnel noted the mission’s efficiency in building capacity and reforming the fractured Palestinian security forces (PASF) in the West Bank after Hamas’s takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007.

The USSC was distinct from other US interventions because of its intimate knowledge of the local context and its small scale. Jill Sinclair, former Canadian Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, described the USSC as a “boutique” mission. Sinclair noted that the USSC’s size was unusual in American-led security sector reform efforts, which are often sprawling, bureaucratically inefficient operations.⁸⁴⁴ The team was small – about 20 Americans, plus a handful of Brits and Canadians who served as the Coordinator’s “eyes and ears” in the West Bank, where the State Department forbid American personnel to travel.⁸⁴⁵

John Deverell, a British brigadier who served in Lt. Gen. Dayton’s team searching for Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq before joining the USSC, confirmed Sinclair’s account. According to Deverell, the full-time commitment of personnel allowed the USSC to carry through on plans in contrast to typical security sector reform projects where US and European

⁸⁴³ Bhungalia, “Managing Violence,” 2308.

⁸⁴⁴ Interview, Sinclair, January 2018.

⁸⁴⁵ Interview, former USSC official, April 2017.

personnel merely flew in as consultants.⁸⁴⁶ Sinclair described such typical projects as “transactional, [more] about being there than having an impact.”⁸⁴⁷

The USSC’s presence on the ground, by contrast, was critical in order to shape Palestinian behavior day-to-day. Col. Philip J. Dermer, stationed at the USSC from 2005 until 2007, wrote a reflection on the mission that circulated widely among the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CENTCOM, senior White House staff, and the Defense Intelligence Agency. Dermer argued that the downfall of the ‘peace process’ lay in the distance between negotiators “too far removed from the real attitudes and of the main players and the pertinent nuances of the situation on the ground.”⁸⁴⁸ By contrast, Dermer contended that the USSC acted on the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan, recognizing that human engagement and relationships were critical for security policy - what General David Petraeus referred to as the “human terrain.”⁸⁴⁹ A “sleeves-rolled-up, down-in-the-trenches” attitude was necessary to improve conditions for peace, Dermer said.⁸⁵⁰

Drawing on Dermer’s conclusions, it is possible to compare the USSC with other sites of US intervention. The USSC integrated two key facets of American defense policy in the ‘war on terror’ into its engagement with the Palestinian Authority. First, the USSC’s attention to pairing economic development assistance with security campaigns reflected the stabilization imperative derived from the ‘war on terror.’ Second, Washington deployed security sector reform assistance in order to achieve stability in the West Bank, a prominent mechanism of American intervention since 9/11. By analyzing the USSC against US defense policy since 9/11, the role of the USSC in folding Palestine into Washington’s wider ‘war on terror’ is evident.

The Rise of Stabilization Missions: A Model for Global Intervention

The USSC’s perhaps rare organizational efficiency aside, there are unmistakable parallels between the mission and wider shifts in US foreign policy following 9/11. First, it is important to note a general increase in Department of Defense influence over US foreign assistance. In 2001, the Pentagon disbursed 29% of US foreign aid, and by 2007 that figure had risen to 60%.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁶ Interview, John Deverell, January 2018.

⁸⁴⁷ Interview, Sinclair, January 2018.

⁸⁴⁸ Dermer, “Trip Notes on a Return to Israel and the West Bank,” 66-68.

⁸⁴⁹ David Petraeus, “Counterinsurgency Concepts: What We Learned in Iraq,” *Global Policy* 1, 1 (2010): 116-117; Peter Dahl Thruelsen, “Security Sector Stabilisation in Counterinsurgency Operations: The Case of Afghanistan,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, 4 (2011): 619-643.

⁸⁵⁰ Dermer, “Trip Notes on a Return to Israel and the West Bank, 66-68.

⁸⁵¹ United States Congressional Research Service, “Foreign Aid Reform, National Strategy, and the Quadrennial Review” (Washington, DC: February 2011), 2.

While a considerable portion of the funding went to Afghanistan and Iraq, the Pentagon's heightened wartime influence triggered a number of related changes to how the US prioritized its international aid programs. Perhaps most important was the increased insertion of security priorities into the diplomatic and humanitarian aid realms. The Pentagon's influence grew through the integration of its prerogatives and personnel into the State Department and USAID.

In its 2007 foreign affairs budget rationale, the Bush Administration stated, "there are no hard lines between our security interests, our development interests, and our democratic goals."⁸⁵² This statement aligned with significant policy changes in 2005 and 2006 that responded to the experiences of the Department of Defense (DoD) in Iraq and Afghanistan. In both cases, prolonged insecurity forced Washington to reconfigure its plans for the reconstruction and waylaid the timeline to transfer political power to Iraqis and Afghans. As a result, the Pentagon increasingly understood stabilization to be inextricable from economic development and humanitarian relief. Finding interagency solutions to these problems dominated the Bush Administration.⁸⁵³

A number of policy decisions emerged from the growing appreciation of the importance of non-military inputs to create stability. In November 2005, the DoD issued Directive 3000.05, which elevated ambiguously defined "stability missions" to the same importance as combat operations. Jennifer Taw argues that Directive 3000.05 constituted a fundamental rewriting of US military policy. She characterizes the expansion of the DoD's influence into traditionally civilian diplomatic and aid endeavors as an example of "mission creep."⁸⁵⁴ By taking on humanitarian support roles around the globe, military operations increasingly lacked clear objectives or strategy.

In keeping with Directive 3000.05, the push for interagency coordination was formalized in December 2005 through National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSDP-44). Through NSDP-44, the White House placed responsibility for coordinating interagency efforts around reconstruction and stabilization missions globally in the hands of the Department of State. NSDP-44 empowered the Department of State to harmonize its efforts with the Pentagon, in

⁸⁵² United States Congressional Research Service, "Foreign Aid Reform, National Strategy, and the Quadrennial Review," 3.

⁸⁵³ Taw argues the challenges the US faced in Iraq and Afghanistan were similar to those seen in Vietnam, but in the 'war on terror' the Department of Defense proved willing to reformulate its approach and develop new doctrines. Jennifer Morrison Taw, *Mission Revolution: The U.S. Military and Stability Operations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 7; 24-25; Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 371.

⁸⁵⁴ Taw, *Mission Revolution*, 179-180.

accordance with Directive 3000.05.⁸⁵⁵ An urgent priority was to bring existing interagency initiatives up to speed with the exigencies of the ‘war on terror.’ For example, at the time, the “Global Train and Equip” program supported international allies’ defense operations. The State Department also operated the International Military Education and Training program, as well as the Foreign Military Sales/Foreign Military Financing programs. However, Defense officials criticized the rigid, slow execution of the State Department’s existing programs.⁸⁵⁶

As Condoleezza Rice notes in her memoir about her service as Secretary of State, a tense rift existed between the Pentagon and State Department in the early days of her tenure. Shortages of civilian personnel and the perception that the diplomatic corps “reflected the State Department’s ambivalence at best and resentment at worst toward the Iraq war” plagued the relationship.⁸⁵⁷ To improve this situation, Rice commissioned a fact-finding mission to determine how the State Department could better support the Pentagon. Her recommendations – for the construction of Provincial Reconstruction Teams that blended military officers, diplomats, and USAID personnel – are emblematic of the broader thinking that emerged in US strategy from the war in Iraq.⁸⁵⁸

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2006 followed through on Directive 3000.05 and NSDP-44, prioritizing interagency cooperation. In light of significant Pentagon lobbying, Congress passed Section 1206 funding as part of the 2006 Defense budget. Section 1206 “in effect provided the Pentagon with the ability to create its own military assistance program.”⁸⁵⁹ It reflected the Pentagon’s eye to developing effective partnerships to disrupt terrorist networks abroad, and focused on training partners with the appropriate language and cultural knowledge to carry out the US’s counterterror agenda internationally.⁸⁶⁰

Due to continued congressional concern that slowed the implementation of Section 1206, the 2006 budget also allocated up to \$100 million for transfer to the Department of State, acting on Rice’s aim to support the Pentagon. Called Section 1207, these funds were earmarked for

⁸⁵⁵ United States Congressional Research Service - Nina M. Serafino, “Security Assistance Reform: “Section 1206” Background and Issues for Congress” (Washington, DC: December 2014), 1-2.

⁸⁵⁶ Serafino, “Security Assistance Reform,” 3.

⁸⁵⁷ Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 372.

⁸⁵⁸ Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 372.

⁸⁵⁹ Carol Lancaster, *George Bush’s Foreign Aid: Transformation or Chaos?* (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2008), 41; Serafino, “Security Assistance Reform,” 3.

⁸⁶⁰ Serafino, “Security Assistance Reform,” 2-5.

joint efforts with foreign partners to stabilize states identified as “fragile.”⁸⁶¹ Section 1206 and 1207, renewed annually since 2007, exemplify the Pentagon’s increased foreign policy weight that has been embedded into Washington’s diplomatic organs.

The perception that weak states inherently harbor potential threats is a major post-9/11 shift that unites these policy changes. Counterterrorism experts understood the inability of central governments to provide basic services, ensure the rule of law, and alleviate poverty as interconnected factors that contributed to extremism.⁸⁶² The need for a comprehensive solution led to strategies that wed traditional military fixes to humanitarian aid. The Pentagon’s December 2006 Counterinsurgency Manual also foregrounded stability operations; the publication was the first update in twenty years and filled the doctrinal gap soldiers faced in the ‘war on terror.’⁸⁶³

Responding to the challenges of counterinsurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Manual claimed, “most valuable to long-term success in winning the support of the populace are the contributions land forces make to conducting stability operations [...] to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.”⁸⁶⁴ Throughout, the Manual presented offensive, defensive, and stability missions as equally vital elements of US military operations, justifying the expanding role of Pentagon personnel in humanitarian and governance roles.⁸⁶⁵

Security Sector Reform Assistance

The advent of Directive 3000.05, the creation of Sections 1206 and 1207, and the emphasis on stabilization operations in the 2006 Counterinsurgency Manual all complement the rise of security sector reform (SSR) assistance as a tool of US foreign policy. In January 2006,

⁸⁶¹ United States Congressional Research Service - Liana Sun Wyler, “Weak and Failing States: Evolving Security Threats and U.S. Policy” (Washington, DC: August 2008), 13, 21; United States Congressional Research Service - Nina M. Serafino, “Department of Defense “Section 1207” Security and Stabilization Assistance: A Fact Sheet” (Washington, DC: November 2008), 1-2.

⁸⁶² Derek S. Reveron, *Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010: 21; Noëlle Quéniwet, “You are the Weakest Link and We Will Help You! The Comprehensive Strategy of the United Nations to Fight Terrorism,” *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 11, 3 (2006): 374, 383-84; Aiden Hehir, “The Myth of the Failed State and the War on Terror: A Challenge to Conventional Wisdom,” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 1, 3 (2007): 307-308.

⁸⁶³ United States Department of Defense, Counterinsurgency Department of the Army Field Manual 3-24, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 (Washington, DC: 15 December 2006), forward; Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 371.

⁸⁶⁴ United States Department of Defense, Counterinsurgency, 1-5. For an overview of the emergence of the Iraqi counterinsurgency to US occupation, see Ahmed Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 59-60, 70-82.

⁸⁶⁵ United States Department of Defense, Counterinsurgency, 5-2; Many Turner, “Peacebuilding as Counterinsurgency in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” *Review of International Studies* 41 (2015): 78-79.

Secretary Rice announced that due to the interconnectedness of American security, development, and democratic interests, Washington intended to restructure its foreign assistance through what she described as “transformational diplomacy.”⁸⁶⁶

SSR programs originated in the post-Cold War reform of Eastern bloc states’ security apparatuses, aligning their forces with democratic norms.⁸⁶⁷ However, under the ‘global war on terror’ paradigm, “transformational diplomacy [...] has offered Washington opportunities to resurrect practices previously associated with police aid during the Cold War.”⁸⁶⁸ As Washington seeks out and empowers local partners to carry out its counterterrorism agenda, aid to bolster the host states’ defense capacity has become a critical currency.

The US presents a consistent ideology underpinning security assistance in its myriad sites of ‘apolitical’ intervention. Washington attaches significance to the values of civil society, rule of law, humanitarianism, and good governance. Laleh Khalili terms their defining characteristics as a “liberal counterinsurgency.”⁸⁶⁹ For example, the masterminds of the surge in Iraq, Gen. Petraeus and his adviser, David Kilcullen, Chief Strategist in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the State Department expounded on the importance of grassroots, civil society organizations in order to fight terror. They also focused on empowering private business owners, both large and small scale, in order to build capital that would demand stability.⁸⁷⁰

In its October 2008 manual on stability operations, the Department of the Army elaborated its conception of SSR as an integrated, “whole of government” approach. SSR operated under Department of State leadership, with distinct roles for the Pentagon and USAID in addition to the Department of Homeland Security, the Treasury, and the Department of Justice.⁸⁷¹ The Manual presented SSR as integral to the broader goal of stabilization “to ensure conditions do not foment crisis and conflict.”⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁶ Alice Hills, “Trojan Horses? USAID, Counterterrorism and Africa’s Police.” *Third World Quarterly* 27, 4 (2006): 629.

⁸⁶⁷ Jake Sherman, “The “Global War on Terrorism” and Its Implications of US Security Sector Reform Support.” In Mark Sedra, *The Future of Security Sector Reform*. Waterloo, Ontario: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2010: 60.

⁸⁶⁸ Hills, “Trojan Horses,” 629-630.

⁸⁶⁹ Markus Hochmüller and Markus-Michael Müller, “Locating Guatemala in Global Counterinsurgency,” *Globalizations* 13, 1 (2016): 95.

⁸⁷⁰ David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 160; David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 7, 38; David Kilcullen, Greg Mills, and Jonathan Oppenheimer, “Quiet Professionals: The Art of Post-Conflict Economic Recovery and Reconstruction,” *RUSI Journal* 156, 4 (2011): 100-107. For an overview on the ways in which the US strategy proved shortsighted, see: Lars Erslev Andersen, “The Locals Strike Back: The Anbar Awakening in Iraq and the Rise of the Islamic State,” in Louise Wiuff Moe and Markus M. Müller (eds.) *Reconfiguring Intervention: Complexity, Resilience, and the ‘Local Turn’ in Counterinsurgent Warfare* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 187-188.

⁸⁷¹ United States Department of Defense, *Stability Operations Department of the Army Field Manual 3-07* (Washington, DC: 6 October 2008), 6-2.

⁸⁷² United States Department of Defense, *Stability Operations*, 6-4.

In the decade since the issuance of Section 1206/1207, the US developed at least 194 security assistance programs, reaching every continent.⁸⁷³ As Derek Reveron writes, “the United States does not operate an Imperial Office or a Foreign Legion [...] Instead, it offers mentors to create security forces that obviate US presence.”⁸⁷⁴ Security assistance became a fundamental pillar of US strategy, a form of soft power used to shape local behavior.

Like the rise of drone warfare and the expansion of the US military’s network of bases, SSR missions act on impulses from the ‘war on terror’: to assert US control globally and stabilize distant locations. Ian Shaw characterizes US foreign policy by its “boundless geographical logic,” and security assistance missions are central to this project.⁸⁷⁵ One clear manifestation of the Department of Defense’s post-9/11 shift is the creation of AFRICOM, which combines counterterrorism and surveillance with aid to African communities. AFRICOM’s stabilization efforts often operate in conjunction with USAID. Jan Bachmann argues that the AFRICOM project can be understood as “normalizing good order.”⁸⁷⁶ Shaw, similarly, argues that the Pentagon envisions AFRICOM as central to a new, integrated system of global US control through physical bases that Shaw describes as “hubs,” as well as the “spokes” of drone warfare.

Through this architecture of hubs and spokes across the Middle East and Africa, the Pentagon eradicates the “tyranny of distance” and brings the “dangerous splinterlands” under its watchful eye.⁸⁷⁷ Today, AFRICOM operates in forty-nine countries as US surveillance multiplies across the continent.⁸⁷⁸ Lt. Gen. William ‘Kip’ Ward departed the USSC and became the first head of AFRICOM in 2007, one of many close connections linking Palestine to other sites where the US exerts its reach through local proxies.

Technical Assistance, Strategic Purpose

The USSC emerged from the forces of the ‘global war on terror,’ and bears significant connections to the militarization of US foreign assistance. By examining American intervention in the PA, we see exchanges in personnel and shared models of intervention that weave Palestine

⁸⁷³ United States Government Accountability Office, “Building Partner Capacity: Inventory of Department of Defense Security Cooperation and Department of State Security Assistance Efforts” (Washington, DC: March 2017), 2.

⁸⁷⁴ Reveron, *Exporting Security*, 5.

⁸⁷⁵ Shaw, *Predator Empire*, 112.

⁸⁷⁶ Jan Bachmann, “Policing Africa: The US Military and Visions of Crafting ‘Good Order,’” in Jan Bachmann, Colleen Bell, and Caroline Holmqvist, eds. *War, Police and Assemblages of Intervention* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 46.

⁸⁷⁷ Shaw, *Predator Empire*, 141

⁸⁷⁸ Adam Moore and James Walker, “Tracing the US Military’s Presence in Africa,” *Geopolitics* 21, 3 (2016): 686-716; Shaw, *Predator Empire*, 23; 137-141.

into the ‘global war on terror.’ Like the USSC, many aspects of the militarization of US foreign policy assistance masquerade as ‘rule of law’ assistance programs while enacting Washington’s agenda.

The close collaboration between USAID, the State Department, and the Department of Defense in undertaking Directive 3000.05 means that stabilization missions regularly operate out of US diplomatic missions, inserting officers amid civilian personnel.⁸⁷⁹ Like the USSC, a number of these programs fall under the Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).⁸⁸⁰ In particular, the INL is an important arm of the ‘war on drugs’ in Latin America, where it has been at the forefront of externalizing US security policy to Mexico, Guatemala, and Colombia.⁸⁸¹ Between 2007 and 2009, for example, the INL’s budget for combating narcotics trafficking in Mexico alone rose from \$36.7 million to \$450 million through the implementation of the “Merida Initiative.” One of the Merida Initiative’s key pillars is the reform of Mexico’s police and penitentiaries through retraining. Another is financial support for the mobilization of military forces to patrol Mexican cities alongside civilian police.⁸⁸²

Another significant expansion of Pentagon influence through the State Department is CARSI, the Central American Regional Security Initiative. Inaugurated in 2008, the INL has spent over \$979 million in building local law enforcement capacity in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.⁸⁸³ A central component of the security reform assistance the INL provides is support for “intelligence-led policing,” expanding population surveillance among often authoritarian partners.⁸⁸⁴ The priorities of CARSI – to create “safe streets,” disrupt criminal activity, develop institutions, and ensure the rule of law – echo the transformation envisioned in the West Bank under USSC guidance.⁸⁸⁵

⁸⁷⁹ Hochmüller and Müller, “Locating Guatemala in Global Counterinsurgency,” 101.

⁸⁸⁰ United States Government Accountability Office, “Building Partner Capacity,” 45.

⁸⁸¹ Reveron, *Exporting Security*, 5, 15. Khalili, “The Utility of Proxy Detention in Counterinsurgencies,” 95; United States Congressional Research Service - Clare Ribando Seelke and Kristin M. Finklea, “U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: the Mérida Initiative and Beyond” (Washington, DC: January 2011), 14, 33; Horace A. Bartilow and Kihong Eom, “Busting Drugs While Paying with Crime: The Collateral Damage of U.S. Drug Enforcement in Foreign Countries,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 5, 2 (2009): 93-116; Oliver Villar and Drew Cottle, *Cocaine, Death Squads and the War on Terror: US Imperialism and Class Struggle in Colombia* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011.)

⁸⁸² Nicola Chávez Courtright, “Green for Blue in the Mexican Security State,” *North American Congress on Latin America*, 15 February 2018 <https://nacla.org/news/2018/02/15/green-blue-mexican-security-state>

⁸⁸³ United States Department of State – Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, “Central American Regional Security Initiative,” 20 January 2017. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/261079.pdf>

⁸⁸⁴ United States Congressional Research Service - Peter J. Meyer and Clare Ribando Seelke, “Central American Regional Security Initiative: Background and Policy Issues for Congress” (Washington, DC: December 2015), 12.

⁸⁸⁵ Meyer and Ribano, “Central American Regional Security Initiative,” 15.

In keeping with the focus on stability prominent in US defense policy after 9/11, CARSI combats Guatemala's "state weakness," cast as a threat to the United States and a refuge for Mexican criminal insurgents.⁸⁸⁶ The INL introduced a model of assistance in the country's urban centers to combat violence called "community policing." The INL promised individual empowerment through policing. "Citizen security" is the buzzword in INL-backed security sector reform initiative in Guatemala, and its result bears key similarities to Palestine: "a depoliticization/demilitarization of previously highly militarized" security forces.⁸⁸⁷

In pushing the 'war on drugs' onto proxies, the INL has promoted a massive militarization with devastating results. Since 2008, over 640,000 Mexican troops have served in "public security missions," as the military's budget has exploded to over \$5 billion and homicide rates tripled.⁸⁸⁸ While the INL attributes the increase in violence to the pressure gangs face, indicating the effectiveness of CARSI and the Mérida Initiative, the reality is that the US takes little note of its partners' abuse. In this case, most US aid flows to "police and military forces that only two decades earlier were engaged in horrifying acts of killing and torture against political opponents and indigenous communities."⁸⁸⁹ The partners are of interest to the US to the degree that they are effective in carrying out American strategic purposes.

As a result of Washington's global reach, the militarization of US foreign policy has profound repercussions for any state in which the US finds strategic interests.⁸⁹⁰ It is essential to understand the USSC's enduring role in Palestine against this backdrop of reliance on authoritarian local partners to enact American policy.

Stabilizing Palestine: Israeli Policy in American Hands

⁸⁸⁶ Hochmüller and Müller, "Locating Guatemala in Global Counterinsurgency," 97.

⁸⁸⁷ Hochmüller and Müller, "Locating Guatemala in Global Counterinsurgency," 101.

⁸⁸⁸ Courtright, "Green for Blue in the Mexican Security State."

⁸⁸⁹ Alexander Main, "The U.S. Re-Militarization of Central America and Mexico," North American Congress on Latin America, 3 July 2014 <https://nacla.org/news/2014/7/3/us-re-militarization-central-america-and-mexico-0>

⁸⁹⁰ Nelson B. Arteaga, "The Merida Initiative: Security-Surveillance Harmonization in Latin America," *European Review of Latin America and Caribbean Studies* 87 (2009): 103-110.

As shown above, the USSC can be located among myriad relationships Washington has fortified in the post-9/11 era, seeking local conduits for geostrategic purposes.⁸⁹¹ In its turn to the West Bank in the summer of 2007, the USSC replicated the push for stabilization seen in other sites of the ‘war on terror’ and emphasized in contemporary Department of Defense policy. The fact that USSC intervention took the form of security sector reform only further folded Palestine into Washington’s wider ‘war on terror.’⁸⁹²

In the Palestinian case, the collapse of PA rule in Gaza and the assumption of power by Hamas in June 2007 represented, from the US perspective, an imminent threat of instability. As one former US Security Coordinator recalled, President Bush’s perspective was that the West Bank’s potential loss to Hamas was an urgent problem “We don’t want the West Bank to fall to Hamas. Let’s rescue the West Bank from the Hamas threat.”⁸⁹³

Several former USSC personnel argued in interviews that ‘counterterrorism’ in the West Bank did not drive the mission *per se*. Rather, they claimed that their technical support was critical to increasing the PA security forces’ (PASF) professionalism and capacity. The goal was to “persuade the Israelis that the Palestinians can take care of themselves, can take care of this terror problem, can get rid of Hamas in the West Bank. The Israelis all of a sudden decided they would support that very strongly.”⁸⁹⁴ However, the USSC’s technical support upheld the Israeli view that Palestinian resistance – and in particular Islamist resistance – inherently constituted terror.

When viewed as a vital element of an assemblage that includes USAID in Palestine, the USSC constitutes a stabilization mission *par excellence*. It is an operation designed to manage complex, perpetual conflict. Jennifer Taw describes a “culmination of institutional privileging” that has seen the US military’s insertion into the arenas of humanitarian and development work globally since 9/11, underpinned by security responsibilities under the banner of fighting terror.⁸⁹⁵ The prominence the USSC assumed aligned American defense priority shifts with Israeli political demands: the USSC successfully reformed the PASF and stabilized the West

⁸⁹¹ Mark Sedra, Special Report 296: Security Sector Transformation in North Africa and the Middle East (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2011), 2-5.

⁸⁹² Sherman, “The ‘Global War on Terrorism’ and Its Implications of US Security Sector Reform Support,” 66-70.

⁸⁹³ Interview, former USSC member, April 2017.

⁸⁹⁴ Interview, former USSC member, April 2017.

⁸⁹⁵ Taw, *Mission Revolution*, 182.

Bank, but offered no mechanism to translate these achievements into reciprocal Israeli concessions at the political level.

Tellingly, in 2008, the USSC sought Section 1207/1210 funds, which provide money or equipment for foreign state stabilization and defense. In a report prepared by the USSC, the mission debated how to frame its application for these resources. The report exposes the depth of American intervention in the PA: “As [the DoD] supports USSC’s mission to build PASF capacity, [the Department of State] must lead the parallel effort to build the ministerial capacity required to provide oversight, budgeting, and sustainment of this newly-trained security force. This is an imperative mutually shared by [DoD] and the Israeli government.”⁸⁹⁶ Another document provided to me by a former USSC official lays bare the USSC’s underlying purpose in fortifying the PA. It states: “1210 funds are specifically authorized only for foreign countries; the PA is not a country. However, it needs to be made clear that USSC 1210 requests will plan to execute programs enhancing Israel's security. The money will be spent “for” Israel, but not “in” or “on” Israel.”⁸⁹⁷

This section traces the interventions enacted by the USSC under the direction of Gen. Dayton between the summer of 2007 and the winter of 2008. Dayton oversaw the gradual transfer of control from the IDF to the PASF of the major West Bank cities. The USSC was integral to renewing security coordination, generating both trust and logistical links between the IDF and PASF. The US invested top personnel, tens of millions of dollars, and strong support from the upper echelons of the Bush Administration to reform the PASF. The hands-on approach that the USSC took acted on priorities presented by Israel, and reform thereby functioned as a conduit for implementing Israeli policy.

The Palestinian Leadership Post-Gaza

Before delving into the USSC’s interventions on the ground in the West Bank, it is worthwhile to map out the positions of the Palestinians that Washington hoped to reform. The priorities of the PA, now under the direction of the Presidential branch headed by Mahmoud Abbas and his caretaker emergency government under Salam Fayyad, are evident in position papers drafted by the Negotiations Support Unit (NSU) the same week as the violence between

⁸⁹⁶ Personal papers, former USSC member.

⁸⁹⁷ Personal papers, former USSC member.

Hamas and Fatah that split the West Bank from Gaza subsided. These documents demonstrate the PLO's attempt to walk a tightrope, at once attributing the loss of Gaza to Israel's actions and asserting its own legitimacy from Ramallah.

A leaked list of PLO talking points shows that the PLO saw that the primary cause for the crisis was the absence of a viable political horizon since the August 2005 Israeli unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. This was coupled with a deterioration of humanitarian and economic conditions and the failure of the international community to deliver on its promises. The NSU urged against allowing Israel to further isolate the Strip physically.⁸⁹⁸ Further, in repeated policy proposals the PLO insisted upon its continued position as the sole legitimate negotiator for the Palestinian people. The PA argued the Palestinian *inqisām*, or division, did not affect the PLO's mandate or negate Israel's obligations as an occupying power.⁸⁹⁹

The Ramallah government attempted to mediate its precarious internal political situation. The PA and Fatah leadership pinned the crisis on Washington's disgraced interlocutor, the failed security chief Mohammed Dahlan. Dahlan's ownership of the coordination effort with Dayton and overt hostility toward the Islamists was well known. In his first public statement after the violence, Dahlan referred to the Hamas takeover as an "occupation."⁹⁰⁰ Prominent Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) members such as Jibril Rajoub and the jailed Marwan Barghouti publicly called for an investigation of the events in Gaza. However, privately most blamed Dahlan, long seen as Washington's friend in Gaza. Fatah maneuvered to remove Dahlan from the public eye.⁹⁰¹

At the same time, the Fatah elite came to the aid of the Fayyad emergency government instated by Abbas with the American and Israeli approval. For example, Marwan Barghouti condemned the Hamas takeover in Gaza, which he labeled a coup and called "a threat to the democratic experience."⁹⁰² Cognizant of the delicate balance of power upon which the Fayyad government depended, the NSU was careful to argue its legitimacy. An internal memo dated 19 June stated that the President had the right, per the Basic Law, to dissolve the National Unity Government and form a new body within three weeks. However, the Basic Law clearly stipulated that a new government's Prime Minister and cabinet members could only assume its

⁸⁹⁸ June 2007 General Talking Points Post-Gaza Disengagement (PLO): 1- 2.

⁸⁹⁹ June 2007 NSU Talking Points for PLO Negotiations (PLO): 1-2.

⁹⁰⁰ 19 June 2007, Fatah Leaders Pinning the Blame and Taking Next Steps. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁰¹ 24 February 2006 GI Chief Al-Tirawi Offers Ideas on PASF Control, Predicts Conflict with Hamas. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁰² 19 June 2007, Fatah Leaders Pinning the Blame and Taking Next Steps. [WikiLeaks]

responsibilities with a vote of confidence by the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The Basic Law did not define steps in case the PLC failed to convene or reach quorum, the NSU warned.⁹⁰³

In these deliberations, Abbas drew upon powers endowed upon him under a state of emergency. The President could legally renew the state of emergency in the case of an armed insurrection past its initial 30 days only once, and only with legislative backing. “It is obvious, given the current composition of the PLC, that this kind of majority cannot be secured in the present climate,” opined the NSU.⁹⁰⁴ The long-term accountability of Fayyad’s government would be fraught by such questions of legality and democratic legitimacy.⁹⁰⁵ However, it is clear that Fatah’s leadership saw the need to reassert their “political primacy,” as Philip Leech argues, in the aftermath of Hamas’s takeover in Gaza.⁹⁰⁶ The US’s ‘war on terror’-driven security sector reform agenda was an opening for Fatah’s interests, charting a new course for the Palestinian Authority.

The West Bank First

The Canadian attaché to the USSC, Col. Pearson, was in Gaza on Washington’s behalf in the months prior to Hamas’s takeover. Pearson described the Gaza takeover in an interview. He characterized the battles between Hamas and Fatah as “five to six hundred Hamas guys – really strong, really well-organized – that went from battle to battle and fought thousands and thousands of PA security forces one at a time.” Hamas’s highly motivated, well-coordinated fighters were invincible, in Pearson’s words, “because there was no credible force against them, unless they were all together, and they did not stand together, they all stood one at a time.”⁹⁰⁷ Pearson emphasized that poor coordination between the PASF branches was their primary weakness.

Tackling the PASF’s disunity became one of the USSC’s key priorities as the mission sought to build outward from the West Bank.⁹⁰⁸ As Pearson recalled, the mission had survived its first “existential crisis” with the January 2006 election. In June 2007, the USSC was again left

⁹⁰³ 19 June 2007, NSU Memo Re: Implications of Change in de facto Control in Gaza (PLO): 2.

⁹⁰⁴ 19 June 2007, NSU Memo Re: Implications of Change in de facto Control in Gaza (PLO): 4.

⁹⁰⁵ 19 June 2007, NSU Memo Re: Implications of Change in de facto Control in Gaza (PLO): 4.

⁹⁰⁶ Philip Leech, “After ‘Security First’: An Analysis of Security Transition and ‘Statebuilding’ in the West Bank 2007-2011,” *New Middle Eastern Studies* 4 (2014): 9.

⁹⁰⁷ Interview, Pearson, February 2018.

⁹⁰⁸ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

rudderless and unsure whether it would be disbanded. On the contrary, Pearson recollected that Secretary Rice telephoned his boss, USSC Dayton, and empowered Dayton to design the US's new strategy. Rice said, "we're not going to get rid of you, we're going to do something called the 'West Bank First strategy.'" Dayton said, "What's that?" and she responded, "I'm not sure, I need to you to provide some advice of what it could look like."⁹⁰⁹ As Nathan Thrall notes, Washington did not take Hamas's elimination of its 14-year investment in the 53,000-strong PASF to mean that the mission had failed. Insiders like Deputy National Security Adviser Elliott Abrams saw the PASF's rapid defeat instead as an opening.⁹¹⁰

In formulating plans to overcome the security impasse after Hamas's capture of Gaza, Washington adopted and implemented Israel's preferred course of action. Close inspection of a meeting held 11 June, as the Fatah-Hamas violence was in full swing in the Gaza Strip, is instructive in understanding the Israeli priorities that permeated the USSC's efforts. Speaking with American diplomats, Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin rejected the notion of security benchmarks. These indicators would tie Palestinian security performance to reciprocal Israeli improvements of Palestinian freedom of movement. Diskin's approach echoed a longstanding Israeli aversion to such measures, heightened by what he described as the desperate situation in Gaza.⁹¹¹ By rejecting security benchmarks, Diskin directly contradicted the November 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA). The AMA acknowledged the insecurity that arose as a result of the shuttering of economic livelihoods, and sought to ease movement in order to bolster security efforts.⁹¹²

Calling the prospect of benchmarks dangerous, Diskin argued they were easy for negotiators to agree upon but did not reflect conditions in the Palestinian street. From his perspective, such arbitrary indicators pushed Israel toward confidence building measures that would necessitate unreasonable risks. "If we lift the roadblocks in Kalkiliya [sic], I can assure you that tomorrow we will have Mohammed from Kalkiliya blowing himself up in Tel Aviv."⁹¹³ By contrast, Diskin argued that the Palestinians should carry out the first confidence building measures. Diskin proposed that the PA start small, taking responsibility for clamping down on criminality and pacifying resistance in individual Palestinian urban centers. Diskin suggested the

⁹⁰⁹ Interview, former USSC official, January 2018.

⁹¹⁰ Thrall, *The Only Language They Understand*, 117.

⁹¹¹ 12 June 2007, ISA Chief Diskin Opposed to Benchmarks, Proposes "Starting Small" in Nablus. [WikiLeaks]

⁹¹² 14 June 2007, NSU Talking Points – Security Sector Liaison Group (SSLG) Meeting (PLO): 1.

⁹¹³ 12 June 2007, ISA Chief Diskin Opposed to Benchmarks, Proposes "Starting Small" in Nablus. [WikiLeaks]

PASF first redeploy in Nablus, “a particularly problematic city for Israel.”⁹¹⁴ Nablus was a center of resistance from which many of the Second Intifada’s suicide bombers originated, home to militants from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades as well as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Diskin argued that the Israeli security umbrella would support the PASF as they rounded up militants and reasserted control in Nablus, and emphasized that the Fatah security chiefs would see the opportunity the Israeli plan presented them. The Israelis proposals built on a pattern of targeting Hamas through the PA: in 2005, the IDF established an intelligence body called Unit 504 specifically for the purpose of tracking Palestinian Islamist activism. After the Gaza-West Bank split, Unit 504’s data was increasingly used to instruct the PA’s security chiefs.⁹¹⁵

Though critical of the Palestinian security chiefs – Diskin described Tawfiq Al-Tirawi, head of the General Intelligence Services, or *mukhābarāt*, as “psychopathic, cruel, and dangerous” – the Shin Bet praised the Palestinian intelligence agencies when willing to share intelligence with Israel.⁹¹⁶ Their heavily Fatah composition ensured shared interests in fighting rejectionist groups with Israel. As Diskin put it: “The method is simple. You get a promise from each fugitive that he will not attack us, and then you have him turn his gun over to the [Palestinian] security forces.”⁹¹⁷ From the Shin Bet’s perspective, the PASF could lift a burden on the IDF, while growing PASF autonomy. As such, the Israeli counterinsurgency program both met Fatah’s interests and constituted ‘counterterrorism’ in the American parlance. Diskin called on Fatah to focus on the West Bank and “make it blossom.”⁹¹⁸

Managing the Palestinian Authority

In the months following the PASF’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Diskin’s suggestions drove decision-making at the USSC. The main existing conduits of American coordination with the PASF remained those established through the Roadmap, particularly the Technical Team for Reform dating from December 2006. With the endorsement of the USSC, President Abbas laid out new plans to professionalize the PASF. “We are eager to see

⁹¹⁴ 16 February 2006, ISA Chief Diskin – Hamas on the Horizon. [WikiLeaks]

⁹¹⁵ International Crisis Group, “Squaring the Circle: Palestinian Security Reform Under Occupation,” Middle East Report 98, 7 (2010), 28.

⁹¹⁶ 11 June 2007, ISA Chief Diskin on Situation in Gaza Strip and West Bank. [WikiLeaks]

⁹¹⁷ 12 June 2007, ISA Chief Diskin Opposed to Benchmarks, Proposes “Starting Small” in Nablus. [WikiLeaks]

⁹¹⁸ 12 June 2007, ISA Chief Diskin Opposed to Benchmarks, Proposes “Starting Small” in Nablus. [WikiLeaks]

professional, affordable, well-trained and equipped security institutions, which are not political, which function within the framework of law and order, protecting the basic rights of Palestinian citizens.”⁹¹⁹

These plans disregarded the situation in the Gaza Strip, where physical separation solidified and economic conditions deteriorated under closure. On June 18, the Erez Crossing briefly opened for pedestrian traffic, but closed after a large crowd of Palestinians attempting to flee Gaza rushed the crossing. The Palestinian contact with whom Israel normally coordinated movement of people through the crossing had vanished. As a result, anyone could queue up at Erez, and refugees, valid permit holders, and foreign nationals alike crowded the crossing.⁹²⁰ The same week, Israel allowed ten trucks from the World Food Program through Kerem Shalom crossing, as well as emergency medical supplies. However, without a systematic mechanism in place to deal with the collapse of the Fatah-operated border crossings, the Gaza Strip was closed. As one former head of the USSC mission recalled, “Gaza was the other side of the moon.”⁹²¹

The ‘West Bank First’ strategy Dayton’s team developed had several main components. First, the USSC coordinated with Israel to enable the existing PASF to bring its more disorderly elements to heel. Next, the USSC funded the retraining of battalions in Jordan, as well as the re-equipment of the Ramallah-based PA security sector. The success of these programs in bringing calm to the West Bank was a major coup for the final status negotiations that began at Annapolis in November 2007.

Within weeks, the Israeli-approved and American-orchestrated plan to subdue the West Bank was in motion, focused on combating lawlessness and preventing the proliferation of armed groups. As one PASF officer noted, the PA presented the monopoly of force as crucial to return to negotiations. “We have pulled the rug out from under some of Israel’s argumentation related to security.”⁹²² The PA Ministry of the Interior (under the direction of Minister Abdel Razzak Yahya once more) worked closely with Dayton to bring the plan to fruition. At a meeting 29 June, Dayton promised to secure financial support, and Yahya noted that several key aspects of the plan would require direct coordination with Israel.⁹²³

⁹¹⁹ 14 June 2007, NSU Talking Points – Security Sector Liaison Group (SSLG) Meeting (PLO): 1-2.

⁹²⁰ 19 June 2007, GOI Update on Crossings and Fuel Situation in Gaza. [WikiLeaks]

⁹²¹ Interview, former USSC official, April 2017.

⁹²² International Crisis Group, “Squaring the Circle,” 5.

⁹²³ 29 June 2007, Meeting Summary – Abdel Razaq Yahia and Keith Dayton (PLO): 1.

In order to regain control of the West Bank's cities, Yahya supported the use of the Badr Brigades. A 1500-strong force traditionally attached to both the PLO and the Jordanian army, the Ministry of the Interior hoped to enlist them to assist the existing PA security forces in securing the West Bank's population centers.⁹²⁴ However, Diskin had informed Dayton of the Badr Brigades' weaknesses, so Dayton dissented, once more imposing Israel's security vision on the PA. Dayton urged Yahya against their deployment, repeating the Shin Bet's intelligence that the Brigades were under-equipped, and had not been paid for months. Instead, Dayton encouraged Yahya to turn his sights to accelerated training, under American tutelage, of new PASF units.⁹²⁵

On August 2, 2007, the US and PA signed a "Framework Agreement" to formalize the American 'West Bank first' strategy.⁹²⁶ Under the Agreement, Washington established two tracks for engagement with the Palestinian security forces. The State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) directed infrastructure projects through the PA's Ministry of Finance. The INL-overseen plans included construction of nine PASF training camps and garrisons; five police stations; and a college for the Presidential Guard.⁹²⁷

In the second track, INL contracted private security firm DynCorp International to train, provide equipment, and develop logistics capabilities to assist the PASF in the West Bank and Jordan. With a staff of five in 2007, the INL office in Jerusalem grew by 2011 to over 17, and a budget responsibility of nearly \$400 million the same year. "A fixture of wartime US contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan," in the same period, the DynCorp project cost \$98 million.⁹²⁸ The 'global war on terror' legitimated this multifaceted, extensive American intervention in the workings of the Palestinian Authority.

Factionalism and Counterterrorism

⁹²⁴ Barak Ravid, "Abbas Asks PM: Let PLO Brigade Serve in West Bank," Haaretz 27 June 2007.

⁹²⁵ 29 June 2007, Meeting Summary – Abdel Razzaq Yahia and Keith Dayton (PLO): 2; 24 July 2007, Meeting Minutes – Saeb Erekat and Keith Dayton (PLO): 2.

⁹²⁶ United States Department of State, "Performance Evaluation of Palestinian Authority Security Forces Infrastructure Construction Projects in the West Bank," 3

⁹²⁷ United States Department of State, "Performance Evaluation of Palestinian Authority Security Forces Infrastructure Construction Projects in the West Bank," 5.

⁹²⁸ United States Department of State, "Performance Evaluation of Palestinian Authority Security Forces Infrastructure Construction Projects in the West Bank," 3, 6; United States Department of State – Office of Inspector General, "Middle East Regional Office: Performance Evaluation of Training and Logistical Support for Palestinian Authority Security Forces" (Washington, DC: July 2011), 2-4. It is worth noting that DynCorp has held multiple Pentagon and Department of State contracts. It is worth noting that DynCorp has held multiple Pentagon and Department of State contracts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and was accused of defrauding the State Department by the Department of Justice in 2008. Spencer Ackerman, "Iraq War Contractor Accused of Inflating Costs – But Still Holds Pentagon Contract," The Guardian 20 July 2016.

The first element of the security sector reform plan entailed demobilizing and dismantling the armed groups, both militant and criminal, that prevented the PASF from holding a monopoly of force in Area A. The plan responded to the reigning lawlessness in a manner that betrayed the factional purposes that motivated the PA to adopt the mantle of counterterrorism. Though the Ministry of the Interior touted its goals of creating professional, transparent, and “politically answerable” PASF, a clear factionalism drove the plan, and it lacked any democratic oversight for its implementation.⁹²⁹

A confidential Ministry of the Interior draft dating from early July 2007 noted that the President had issued decrees to disband militias and confiscate illegal weapons. However, it admitted that the PA had not reached a resolution on how to deal with militia members from factions outside the PLO, noting Israel’s past refusal to allow amnesty for such individuals.⁹³⁰

This tension reemerged with discussions over how to dismantle the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. The PA Minister of the Interior argued that the USSC should urge Israel to cease its pursuit of members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, nearly half of whom were previously members of the Palestinian security forces according to USSC estimates.⁹³¹ Because they were Fatah supporters, the security plan allowed for members of the Brigades to their return to their jobs with the PA’s security forces, in contrast with Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants who threatened the PA’s hegemony. The Brigades had engaged in suicide bombings and violent attacks against Israeli civilians, and the US and European Union had joined Israel in classifying the group as a terrorist organization. In cities like Nablus, the Brigades often settled local disputes during the intifada, but also engaged in violent extortion, creating chaos that disrupted communities.⁹³²

According to the Ministry of the Interior’s plans, 173 members of the Brigades were to be released under close supervision, while the PA negotiated the removal of an additional 260 militants from Israel’s wanted lists.⁹³³ The PA’s approach to the Brigades was accommodating. Interior Minister Yahya noted, “we have been preparing them psychologically for this [...] We proposed to them that anyone who wishes to join the security forces will be accepted. We will

⁹²⁹ July Outline for Restoring Law and Order in Parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (PLO): 2.

⁹³⁰ July Outline for Restoring Law and Order in Parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (PLO): 2-3.

⁹³¹ 29 June 2007, Meeting Summary – Abdel Razzaq Yahia and Keith Dayton (PLO): 1; 9 July 2007, Khalil Shikaki on Fatah’s West Bank Situation and Prospects. [WikiLeaks]; Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

⁹³² Holly Fletcher, “Backgrounder: Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade,” Council on Foreign Relations 1 November 2005; International Crisis Group, “Squaring the Circle,” 6.

⁹³³ July 2007, Palestine Ministry of Interior Security Plan (PLO): 2.

submit that list to the Israelis.”⁹³⁴ Reintegration included assistance to the families of cadres and rebuilding the homes of those Israel destroyed with the UN Development Program.⁹³⁵

At a meeting on July 15, Dayton applauded Minister Yahya’s work on the first stage of the security efforts. Dayton called the West Bank plan a “new game” for Israel. Yahya catalogued his progress: 38 fugitives had been disarmed, and Israel had passed on a further list of 178 names to be apprehended. Yahya informed Dayton that the PA had arranged with Israel to halt IDF operations for a period of 42 hours in order for the PASF to approach the fugitives and ensure they sign the *t’ahad*, or undertaking.⁹³⁶

The USSC was aware of the factionalism that made the ‘West Bank First’ strategy possible and chose to turn a blind eye. As Col. Pearson recalled, much of the “so-called terror” from the West Bank emanated from Fatah operatives. In an interview, Pearson described his frequent trips to the President’s compound in Ramallah. There, he skirted around a convalescent wing for young, wounded Fatah fighters from the Al-Aqsa Martyr Brigades, where the Israelis would never go. The USSC accepted that the PA would do little to punish the Al-Aqsa Martyr Brigades, who were powerful and well-connected, including with the PA’s own security chiefs. “It was awkward,” Pearson recalled, but did not lead to a systematic reappraisal of the reform agenda.⁹³⁷

Interests Converge: Eradicating Hamas

Hamas, on the other hand, faced the brunt of the PA’s counterterror focus, belying the manner in which Palestinian factionalism interacted with Israeli demands.⁹³⁸ As one former USSC official recalled, “the Israeli authorities put pressure on the PA to essentially decapitate – that’s an unfortunate word – but to remove from positions of responsibility” all members of Hamas.⁹³⁹ The Israeli Shin Bet passed its Palestinian counterparts in the Palestinian intelligence lists of Hamas militants to arrest, and fulfilling these demands was the PA’s ticket to resuscitate itself in the West Bank with international support.⁹⁴⁰

⁹³⁴ 29 June 2007, Meeting Summary – Abdel Razzaq Yahia and Keith Dayton (PLO): 2.

⁹³⁵ July 2007, Palestine Ministry of Interior Security Plan (PLO): 3.

⁹³⁶ 29 June 2007, Meeting Summary – Abdel Razzaq Yahia and Keith Dayton (PLO): 2.

⁹³⁷ Interview, Pearson, February 2018.

⁹³⁸ 9 July 2007, Khalil Shikaki on Fatah’s West Bank Situation and Prospects. [WikiLeaks]

⁹³⁹ Interview, former USSC official, January 2018.

⁹⁴⁰ International Crisis Group, “Squaring the Circle,” 22.

Hamas’s extensive social support network of hospitals, clinics, and schools also came under fire through a number of Presidential decrees issued in June and July 2007. In August 2007, the PA set out to entirely re-organize and securitize the non-profit sector, asserting PA control over welfare benefits Palestinians had depended on for decades. The first stage of this process entailed shuttering 107 Hamas-affiliated charitable establishments under the argument that they violated the PA’s Non-Profit Organizations law.⁹⁴¹ In July and August 2007, the PA security forces detained and arrested an estimated 8-10,000 pro-Hamas Palestinians, throughout denying that the arrests were political.⁹⁴² In the second stage, the PA dismantled and appropriated the functions of the Palestinian *zakat*, or alms-giving, committees. The *zakat* committees were organized on a community level and functioned without international assistance or party affiliation; the links they had to Islamic groups were organic and individual. The *zakat* committees had provided Palestinians with immediate material and financial relief under crisis without significant interference from Israel since 1967, or the PA since 1994, in recognition of their non-political nature. In November 2007, however, the PA summarily shuttered all 92 *zakat* committees in the West Bank and retired their boards of directors, and a month later dismissed hundreds of *zakat* employees. The PA then centralized control of the *zakat* and handpicked new directors for the committees, collecting and redistributing alms in an effort to demonstrate its own capacity that led many Palestinians to cease their donations.⁹⁴³

The PA’s campaign against Hamas internalized the language of the ‘war on terror’ in the service of Fatah’s factional agenda. In the US, the post-9/11 era saw an outpouring of legislation and scrutiny around the financial sources supporting terror organizations, a new securitizing lens used to criminalize Muslim charitable and social organizations in the US and abroad. According to Beverley Milton-Edwards, Israel did not initially seek Washington’s condemnation of the Palestinian *zakat* organizations, and indeed they delivered significant emergency services during the Second Intifada as Palestinian hospitals and governance collapsed. Instead, it was the political shift toward the elimination of Palestinian collective organization, and its replacement with a controlled PA proxy, that brought the *zakat* committees into the Israeli crosshairs.

⁹⁴¹ Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist Social Sector* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 214; Beverly Milton-Edwards, “Securitizing Charity: The Case of Palestinian *Zakat* Committees,” *Global Change, Peace and Security* 29, 2 (2017): 164.

⁹⁴² International Crisis Group, “Squaring the Circle,” 27.

⁹⁴³ Milton-Edwards, “Securitizing Charity,” 174; “Palestinian Participatory Poverty Assessment Project,” PNA Ministry of Planning and International Cooperations, United Nations Development Program, and Department for International Development (DFID) (Ramallah: 2002.)

After June 2007, Fatah saw a strategic opening in explicitly endorsing Israel's condemnation of what it called the Islamist 'terrorist infrastructure.' In setting out to dismantle the any traces of Hamas influence at the grassroots level, the zakat committees were a useful forum to bolster the PA's attempts to position itself as the sole legitimate allocator of benefits in the West Bank.⁹⁴⁴ The US Consulate in Jerusalem actively oversaw the restructuring of the zakat committees. Washington even offered the PA consultants from the US Department of Justice, all with the purpose of preventing Hamas from funneling money to its coffers, despite the lack of evidence that such a practice had occurred.⁹⁴⁵

The PA also undermined the civil protections afforded to Palestinians. It did this under the mantle of fighting terror, with the explicit purpose of targeting Fatah's political opponents. A decree issued 6 July considerably expanded the PA's ability to crack down on political opponents – described as threats to public order – through the provisions of the emergency government. Some Presidential decrees spoke of the "criminal war" conducted by Hamas in Gaza in order to justify disarming resistance militants. Most importantly, the President endowed all Palestinian security forces with the capacities of the Judicial Police, and instated a military prosecutorial system to carry out the functions of the public prosecutor.⁹⁴⁶ The security forces arrested most suspected Hamas sympathizers without warrants and tried them in military courts. Due to the systematic dismantling of Hamas's financial base at the same time, many were denied legal counsel.⁹⁴⁷

Concurrently, the PA established an investigation into the Gaza takeover, to be conducted internally within Fatah. The Jenin branch of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades declared Hamas's Qassam Brigades illegal before Abbas banned all Hamas militias in late June. At the same time, as Sara Roy notes, the IDF systematically targeted Islamist-affiliated civil infrastructure, including malls, schools, charities, orphanages, media organizations, and municipal councils.⁹⁴⁸ These simultaneous events demonstrate the overt factionalism that underpinned the

⁹⁴⁴ Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza*, 214.

⁹⁴⁵ 19 October 2007. PA to Restructure Zakat Committees in Effort to Curb Flow of Funds to Hamas [WikiLeaks]; 7 August 2008. DOJ Attorneys Discuss Zakat Committees with Awqaf Ministry [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁴⁶ "Presidential Decrees issued June-July 2007," *The Palestinian Basic Law: Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre*, <https://www.palestinianbasiclaw.org/presidential-decrees/presidential-decrees-issued-on-june-july-2007>

⁹⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, "Squaring the Circle," 27.

⁹⁴⁸ Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza*, 218-219; "Fayyād̄ yu'kid baṭālān al-ijarā'āt al-isrā'īliyya d̄id mu'sasāt Nāblis," *Al-Quds*, 11 July 2008.

reestablishment of law and order in the West Bank, as the PA's actions synchronized with Israel's ongoing campaigns against Hamas.

All the while, the USSC backed the PA under the mantle of fighting terror. The clarity in using 'counterterror' for political purposes complicated the notion that the international community could intervene in the PA apolitically.⁹⁴⁹ The parallels with the US invasion and selection of partners for political transition in other sites of the 'global war on terror' was not lost on members of the USSC: as one former USSC affiliate recollected, in Afghanistan it was Karzai, in Iraq it was Maliki, and in Palestine it is Fatah. The same official worried many of the USSC trainers had just arrived from Iraq and Afghanistan, where they had trained army battalions. "I felt as though a lot of people were in the wash, rinse, repeat mode" from the 'global war on terror.'⁹⁵⁰

The proceedings of a late August meeting between Fayyad and an interagency US team demonstrate Fayyad's keen grasp of the importance of the counterterror framework in dealing with Washington. The officials convened to discuss several charges against the PLO through American anti-terror litigation protecting US citizens. Fayyad noted that the case imperiled the Palestinian banking sector, with potentially drastic ramifications for the PA's pension fund. Describing the previous PA approach as foolhardy, he showed a nuanced understanding of the American political landscape that rendered him a sympathetic figure in Washington. His grasp of the counterterrorism imperative cast the PA as a willing and capable partner in the 'global war on terror.'⁹⁵¹

Fayyad's savvy came at a price: it is critical to underline the autocratic turn that this period entailed. The entire anti-Hamas campaign occurred by decree and violated the jurisdiction of the elected Change and Reform list legislators.⁹⁵² On July 22, the PLC failed for the third time in two weeks to reach quorum due to a boycott by Fatah legislators. Leaked US diplomatic communications note that Fayyad was content with the situation, but that his legitimacy was increasingly called into question as the emergency period expired. Popular calls for new

⁹⁴⁹ 19 June 2007, Fatah Leaders Pinning the Blame and Taking Next Steps. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁵⁰ Interview, former USSC member, April 2017. The US security forces training in Iraq was originally earmarked \$5.7 billion (in 2005), but by 2011 costs had risen to over \$24 billion. In Afghanistan, the figures rose from \$797 in 2004 to \$2.7 billion in 2008. Dodge, "Intervention and Dreams of Exogenous Statebuilding," 1205-1209.

⁹⁵¹ 24 September 2007, PM Fayyad Describes PA Efforts to Combat Money Laundering and Terror Financing; Welcomes USG Support. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁵² International Crisis Group, "Squaring the Circle," 27.

elections for prime minister grew more vocal.⁹⁵³ Seeking to better understand the political landscape, Dayton met repeatedly with leading Palestinian pollster Khalil Shikaki. Shikaki painted a portrait of declining popularity for the PA in the West Bank.⁹⁵⁴

The US's clear partisan stakes in security sector reform are laid bare by the leaked records of Dayton's encounters with Shikaki. The USSC attempted to sketch out the parameters of its engagement with Fayyad's government, and the limits of the technocrat's utility. Dayton inquired in particular about the prospects of reviving Fatah. In early July, Shikaki explained to Dayton that continued disarray and corruption within Fatah meant the party had failed to capitalize on the downturn of support for Hamas since the Islamists' seizure of Gaza. Shikaki described Fatah as the guardians of liberal values among the Palestinians, but clarified that only 10-20% of the Palestinian population identified with a liberal, secular agenda.⁹⁵⁵ At a second briefing on 2 October, Shikaki noted that support for Hamas continued to recede after the June takeover. Shikaki described Fayyad as "not charismatic, a poor communicator, and without an operational support base." Fayyad had failed to articulate his values to the public, evoking the tensions that would undermine his legitimacy in the coming years.⁹⁵⁶

Indeed, Fayyad's strategy prioritized ingratiating himself with the American leadership, a tactic that was a clear departure from the popular ambitions revealed in the election of Hamas. At a meeting with a congressional delegation, Fayyad explained the links between the security plan and his overall strategy for the Palestinian leadership. Fayyad said that security was the lynchpin for all other issues; a political process would be impossible without law and order in the West Bank.⁹⁵⁷ A close relationship with the US was central to Fayyad's vision of offering Palestinians an alternative to extremism, which he cast as a last chance. "We are trying to change the prevailing culture; we are honored to be friends with the US, not ashamed," Fayyad said.⁹⁵⁸ Fayyad's objective of consolidating political primacy in the West Bank centered on presenting the PA as "the only possible legitimate government, and its institution-building agenda as the

⁹⁵³ 23 July 2007, PLC Session Fails Again, Fayyad Continues Governing. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁵⁴ 9 July 2007, Khalil Shikaki on Fatah's West Bank Situation and Prospects. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁵⁵ 9 July 2007, Khalil Shikaki on Fatah's West Bank Situation and Prospects. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁵⁶ 2 October 2007, Palestinian Pollster Shikaki's Views of the West Bank. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁵⁷ "Fayyād fī Nāblis: ist'āda makānat a-sulṭa ḍarūrī l-inhā al-iḥtilāl," Al-Ayyām, 15 November 2007; 20 July 2007, PM Fayyad Lays Out Security/Development Strategy. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁵⁸ 20 July 2007, PM Fayyad Lays Out Security/Development Strategy. [WikiLeaks]

only reasonable means to achieving Palestinian independence.”⁹⁵⁹ Fayyad had a willing partner in the US. Washington’s top priority was to ensure the survival of Fayyad’s government.⁹⁶⁰

The Politics of Security Sector Reform

Fayyad’s vision aligned with the second step of the USSC-backed ‘West Bank first’ strategy. This stage amounted to an intensive train-and-equip program akin to those deployed in other sites of the ‘war on terror’ internationally. The USSC would help train new units of the National Security Force (NSF) and Presidential Guard (PG) in Jordan and Palestine. In addition, the European Union’s training outfit with the Palestinian police, EUPOLL-COPPS, would outfit additional units of the Palestinian civil police.⁹⁶¹

Former USSC member Col. Dermer likened this period of the USSC’s work to the ‘surge’ in Iraq. According to Dermer, the battalions of the NSF that the USSC trained in Jordan arrived just in time: with a few more months, the West Bank would have been lost. The battalions returned as Israel finished construction on the security wall and IDF operations had reduced the rate of Palestinian attacks significantly. The USSC initiative represented, to Dermer, the “unique dovetailing of security dynamics indicative of the complex political-military interchange occurring on the ground.”⁹⁶² The political-military exchange that Dermer described cast the 2007 surge in Iraq as a ‘security first’ doctrine, much like Israel’s.⁹⁶³ From Washington’s vantage point the PASF retraining program usefully met urgent stabilization prerogatives, in themselves Israeli aims.

Patronage for Partnership

Finalized in July 2007, the budget of the security reform plan introduced a pattern of replacing existing forms of patronage with those under closer supervision from the international community. Initial equipment costs for the plan were estimated at \$2 million for the Presidential Guard units and \$7.8 million for the NSF. The US and Israel created a \$4 million personnel identification system to vet new recruits. The Ministry of the Interior outlined plans to train three

⁹⁵⁹ Leech, “After ‘Security First,’” 9.

⁹⁶⁰ 30 July 2008, UAE National Security Advisor Hazza Discusses Palestinian Assistance with USSC Dayton. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁶¹ July 2007, Palestine Ministry of Interior Security Plan (PLO): 3-4.

⁹⁶² Dermer, “Trip Notes on a Return to Israel and the West Bank,” 75.

⁹⁶³ The surge brought an additional 30,000 US troops to Iraq in 2007 to combat counterinsurgents. David Petraeus, “How We Won in Iraq.” Foreign Policy 29 October 2013 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/10/29/how-we-won-in-iraq/>

new NSF battalions in Egypt and Jordan, and courses for 440 existing NSF personnel, in addition to local training in Jericho. Funding had already been processed for training for the Presidential Guard, with courses designed for 374 people over a period of 6 months in Jericho.⁹⁶⁴

The plan also constructed new facilities to replace those destroyed by Israel, bringing total costs to \$37 million. While awaiting the completion of these facilities, the USSC-funded training in Jordan took place at the same facility where the Coalition Provisional Authority had contracted private security firm DynCorp to train the Iraqi police.⁹⁶⁵ As one former USSC member recalled in an interview, construction of facilities was an inescapable priority when his team saw the conditions on the ground of the PASF in the West Bank. He described visiting the Jenin, where NSF Brig. Gen. Abu Hadid was presiding over the wreckage of a destroyed garrison, complete with a makeshift prison and shacks for his soldiers. “We were the first Westerners to go to Jenin since the end of the intifada – it had been like three years, we were treated like heroes.”⁹⁶⁶

Acquisition of new arms was also a top Ministry of the Interior aim, and the USSC obliged. The USSC had successfully requested Israeli permission to purchase some firearms and pistols for the USSC-led training in Jericho before the June violence. The USSC allocated \$4 million for the Presidential Guard at that time, bypassing the Ministry of the Interior under Hamas’s leadership.⁹⁶⁷ At a follow-up meeting after the West Bank-Gaza split, Dayton noted a funding delay as Congressional approval first required Israeli endorsement.⁹⁶⁸ Confident the funds would arrive, Dayton recommended \$43 million for communications and training centers in Bethlehem and Jericho, \$10 million to train a set of officers, and \$23 million for new NSF battalions. He specified that the budget was classified and suggested the mission would suffer should it be publicized.⁹⁶⁹ Dayton maintained that the PASF needed capacity-building more urgently than arms, despite Abbas’s repeated requests for weapons.⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁴ July 2007, Palestine Ministry of Interior Security Plan (PLO): 4-5.

⁹⁶⁵ US Department of State, “Letter of Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan Concerning the Training of Iraqi Police in Jordan” (Washington, DC: 13 October 2003) <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/84481.pdf>; DynCorp International, “DI Press Release: DynCorp International Continues Police Training in Iraq,” 23 June 2008. <http://www.dyn-intl.com/media-center/press-releases/dyncorp-international-continues-police-training-in-iraq/>

⁹⁶⁶ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

⁹⁶⁷ 15 July 2007 Meeting Summary – Abdel Razzaq Yahya and Keith Dayton (PLO): 3.

⁹⁶⁸ 24 July Meeting Minutes – Abdel Razzaq Yahya and Keith Dayton (PLO): 1-2.

⁹⁶⁹ 24 July Meeting Minutes – Abdel Razzaq Yahya and Keith Dayton (PLO): 1; 23 July 2007, USSC – Palestinian Security Forces \$37 Million Spending Plan (PLO): 1-2.

⁹⁷⁰ 30 July 2008, UAE NSA Hazza Discusses Palestinian Assistance with USSC Dayton. [WikiLeaks]

Another key focus of the security sector transformation was to clarify the organizational structure of the USSC. The USSC lobbied for the international community to funnel its donations through the Ministry of the Interior. As one person close to the process recalled in an interview, “the forcing function of something like USSC [was] saying to the Palestinians you know, we need trusted interlocutors that are part of a chain of command [so] that we know an order will be followed through and [that] it comes from a higher authority.”⁹⁷¹ With a budget of \$3 million, the USSC established an office of Strategic Planning at the Ministry of the Interior, in consultation with the Israeli Coordinator of Government Affairs in the Territories (COGAT). Dayton’s team hired the initial planners for the department.⁹⁷²

In addition, the American Consulate in Jerusalem established specific conduits for its aid projects within the PA. These mechanisms gave the USSC direct access to insert its priorities into the structure of Palestinian self-rule. Under the direction of the State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), which stationed personnel at the Consulate in Jerusalem, Washington coordinated with the specially created International Relations Department (IRD) at the Ministry of Finance. The IRD’s Project Implementation Unit hired vetted Palestinian contractors.⁹⁷³

At each step, the Consulate exerted stringent oversight over building, procurement, and training of the PASF. INL engineers in Jerusalem reviewed all project proposals, and funds for their execution could not be withdrawn without approval from the Consul. A West Bank accounting firm audited each contract for the INL.⁹⁷⁴ Some within the USSC were apprehensive about the focus on construction of large buildings. “Oh, look, great target reference points for the IDF in the next intifada,” a former USSC member remarked sarcastically in an interview.⁹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, construction consumed a considerable portion of the USSC budget.

The USSC’s ability to rationalize the PA security hierarchy to meet Israel’s demands was critical as Israel remained distrustful of the Palestinian reform plans. Where Israel sought a new direct link to push its agenda on the PA, the USSC preferred to expand the set of Palestinians

⁹⁷¹ Interview, former USSC official, January 2018.

⁹⁷² 26 November 2007, USSC Dayton Briefs IDF Central Commander on Steps to Strengthen Palestinian Capabilities. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁷³ United States Department of State, “Performance Evaluation of Palestinian Authority Security Forces Infrastructure Construction Projects in the West Bank,” 23.

⁹⁷⁴ United States Department of State, “Performance Evaluation of Palestinian Authority Security Forces Infrastructure Construction Projects in the West Bank,” 23.

⁹⁷⁵ Interview, former USSC official, April 2017.

answering to Israeli and US patronage. Dayton noted at a meeting with PLO chief negotiator Saeb Erekat on July 24 that the Israeli National Security Council had specifically inquired, “who replaces Dahlan? Who is the new strong man?” The USSC was concerned that the lesson had not been learned. After the Gaza coup, more oversight was necessary, and support would be channeled through the Ministry of Interior, under close USSC supervision.⁹⁷⁶

Despite the unprecedented level of donor micromanagement of the PA that the security sector reform plans enabled, Dayton emphasized that the US sought Palestinian ownership of the transformation. In a meeting with the Ministry of the Interior, he stated: “We do not decide for you. We think Palestinian solutions should come from the Palestinians. All we do is advise, support, help you with the Israelis when they are not helping, and also help secure funds.”⁹⁷⁷

However, the security sector reform agenda pushed by international donors was divorced from local demands. As Asem Khalili and Raffaella del Sarto note, Israeli and international donors measured Palestinian security and stability based on metrics divorced from the experiences of Palestinians themselves. Assistance to the PA security sector went “hand in hand with the strengthening of an increasingly undemocratic and unaccountable regime.”⁹⁷⁸ The fragmentation of bodies overseeing the Palestinian security sector among different donors – including prominently the USSC – only hastened the growing chasm between the PASF and Palestinians.

The ‘global war on terror’ paradigm drove Washington’s generosity in rebuilding the PASF.⁹⁷⁹ Former USSC officers explained the strategy behind the ostensible American benevolence toward the PA. One noted, “The relationships that we have with these countries is not there for their benefit, it’s there for our benefit [...] it’s not a serious effort to try to get them to do their jobs necessarily in a more respectable way.”⁹⁸⁰ The US was adamant about its ownership over the security portfolio of PA reforms, where it inserted Israel’s demands.

In Washington’s mind, however, Israeli security needs were indistinguishable from ‘counterterrorism.’ Former USSC officials acknowledged the centrality of the ‘global war on terror’ to its work to differing degrees. The mission was concerned with its mandate of

⁹⁷⁶ 24 July 2007 Meeting Minutes – Saeb Erekat and Keith Dayton (PLO): 1.

⁹⁷⁷ 24 July Meeting Minutes – Abdel Razzaq Yahya and Keith Dayton (PLO): 2.

⁹⁷⁸ Khalil and Del Sarto, “The Legal Fragmentation of Palestine-Israel and European Union Policies Promoting the Rule of Law,” 145.

⁹⁷⁹ 15 July 2007 Meeting Summary – Abdel Razzaq Yahya and Keith Dayton (PLO): 4.

⁹⁸⁰ Interview, former USSC official, January 2018.

coordination, and training and equipping, but was not directly tied to a regional US policy of fighting terror, several officials maintained. However, as another official noted, “obviously on the security coordination that the USSC was by definition working on, it was all about counterterrorism, right?”⁹⁸¹ In its move to address the Palestinian security sector, the USSC folded the Palestinian issue into Washington’s portfolio of ‘war on terror’ fronts, using the reform toolkit to stabilize the West Bank and eradicate Hamas.

Pinning the War on Terror on the Resistance

The subtle convergence of Israeli and American counterterrorism prerogatives with the factional interests of the PA security chiefs is evident in the proceedings of a late July 2007 meeting. Frances Townsend, President Bush’s Assistant for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, met with Israeli National Security Council (NSC) Counterterrorism Head, Danny Arditi.⁹⁸² The meeting exposed how Israel sought US counterterror support to egg the PA and its Fatah security chiefs into targeting Hamas.

During the meeting, the Israeli NSC proposed extending additional financial support to the Fayyad government. In particular, Mossad chief Meir Dagan suggested empowering the PA to expand its social service provision and undercut Hamas’s Islamic *da’wa* network of charitable and zakat institutions. This assistance would help the PA ramp up its campaign to marginalize Hamas in the educational and religious sectors, barring it from functioning in the West Bank.⁹⁸³ The Israelis also sought American support to increase Fayyad’s ability to monitor the Palestinian financial sector and minimize Hamas’s activity. Arditi argued this “would not be the first time we have tried to help Fatah.”⁹⁸⁴ The USSC’s ability to control the PA could thus condition the PA. From the Israelis’ perspective, Fatah stood to benefit from this arrangement, regardless of how anti-democratic the routing of Hamas became.

The Israeli officials anchored their concerns in the discourse of the ‘global war on terror.’ In appealing for American support in their intervention on Fayyad’s behalf in the PA, they connected the Palestinian arena to what they described as the specter of Iranian influence and the growing boldness of Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups.⁹⁸⁵ The Israeli NSC was skeptical about Abbas

⁹⁸¹ Interview, former USSC official, January 2018.

⁹⁸² 26 July 2007, APHSCT Townsend Receives Action Plan on Palestinian Issue from Israeli NSC. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁸³ International Crisis Group, “Squaring the Circle,” 28.

⁹⁸⁴ 26 July 2007, APHSCT Townsend Receives Action Plan on Palestinian Issue from Israeli NSC. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁸⁵ 26 July 2007, APHSCT Townsend Receives Action Plan on Palestinian Issue from Israeli NSC. [WikiLeaks]

and Fayyad's ability to "turn back the wheel" on what they perceived as wider trends that gave rise to terrorism. Israeli NSC Chairman Ilan Mizrahi pointed to "the weakness of Arab and Muslim communities that fail to join the advances of the modern world." From Mizrahi's perspective, this weakness bolstered the rise of political Islam in concert with the overall decline of secular parties in Iraq, the Palestinian territories, and Lebanon. American and Israeli hesitance to restrain popular voices in the region would only enable the ascendance of radical forms of Islam.⁹⁸⁶

The American officials agreed with Mizrahi's diagnosis about the ascent of Al-Qaeda-like groups. Townsend suggested that the Israelis approach Deputy National Security Advisor Elliott Abrams and Under Secretary for the Treasury Stuart Levey as appropriate counterparts for plans to operationalize the agenda.⁹⁸⁷ Though inconclusive, the meeting shows precisely how top officials from the Israeli and US governments concurred on their agenda for interaction with the Palestinian Authority. The US validated Israel's appeal to situate Hamas in the context of the wider 'global war on terror,' with clear benefits for Israel and Fatah.

As the summer of 2007 drew to a close, US policymakers surveyed a rapidly transforming situation in the West Bank. The USSC's support of the Fayyad government's crackdown garnered a wave of Hamas arrests. As Condoleezza Rice recollected, Fayyad's efforts needed international accolades in order to "sustain the good guys."⁹⁸⁸ Ensuring PA primacy in the West Bank was critical to the final status talks Rice was eager to resume. In order to understand the connection between US interventions on the ground and the higher diplomatic level, it is important to examine the course of PASF operations in Nablus and their links with the Annapolis conference.

Nablus, Annapolis, and Paris: Staying Power for the PA

In the final months of 2007, a number of significant developments accelerated at the diplomatic level to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict under US stewardship. Late November saw the Annapolis Conference, which signaled the resumption of direct bilateral talks between Israel and the PLO about the conflict's outstanding issues. The Annapolis summit was followed

⁹⁸⁶ 26 July 2007, APHSCT Townsend Receives Action Plan on Palestinian Issue from Israeli NSC. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁸⁷ 26 July 2007, APHSCT Townsend Receives Action Plan on Palestinian Issue from Israeli NSC. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁸⁸ Rice, No Higher Honor, 601.

by a donor conference in Paris at which the Fayyad government revealed its signature Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP). Simultaneously, USSC-vetted and trained battalions of the National Security Forces (NSF) and Presidential Guard (PG) returned from Jordan and were used to reassert PA control in the West Bank city of Nablus.

This section draws together these three events – Annapolis, the Paris Conference, and the security campaign in Nablus – to highlight how the ‘West Bank First’ strategy adopted by the USSC connected with the return to negotiations. While it is beyond the scope of this study to detail the Annapolis process in full, this section introduces the interplay between American intervention on the ground in Palestine and the security portfolio of the bilateral talks. Through a close analysis of what happened in Nablus, it is evident that the USSC’s interventions served to ensure the PA could conform to international wishes, micromanaging the PA so that it served as a useful proxy for Israel.

However, the underlying purpose of the reform agenda contradicted the Israeli security redlines presented at Annapolis. In the process of enforcing the securitization of the West Bank, the USSC’s work on the ground set conditions in place that made its stated goals of good governance and accountability impossible. Instead, the securitization reforms gave rise to an increasingly autocratic and unrepresentative PA. In the place of a path to sovereignty, the flexible interpretation of the USSC’s ‘counterterrorism’ prerogative served Palestinian factional purposes.

Operation Smile and Hope

The USSC supervised the PA’s implementation of its plans regain the monopoly of force in the West Bank in a manner that would meet Israel’s political demands.⁹⁸⁹ The city of Nablus was a logical first site for the PA to reassert control. Once the bustling trade capital of the West Bank, its economy had largely collapsed.⁹⁹⁰ As Beshara Doumani relates, the trauma caused to the city by the Israeli destruction of invaluable historical buildings and killing of over 110 individuals during Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 was matched only by the social effects on the city. Israeli tactics of collective punishment attempted to divide the city’s residents between

⁹⁸⁹ 11 September 2007 Memo – Meeting Summary of EUBAM Capacity Building (PLO): 2.

⁹⁹⁰ Hasan A. Arafat, Issam A. Al-Khatib, and Abdulsalam Abu Zahra, “Effects of Prevailing Conditions during Second Palestinian Uprising on Solid Waste Management System in Nablus City in Palestine,” *International Journal of Environmental Health Research* 16, 4 (2006): 283-285.

militant areas and civilian neighborhoods by inflicting both with nighttime raids and extended curfews. Doumani writes that a “slow and cruelly systematic asphyxiation of an entire social formation” wrought Nablus.⁹⁹¹ The Israeli siege forcibly divided Nablus from its villages and the West Bank, while turning every movement of daily life – to school, work, or shops – inside the city into a formidable undertaking. As a result, tens of thousands of Nabulsi left the city. Conditions of *falatān āmnī*, or security anarchy, proliferated in the absence of PA governance during the uprising, further debilitating the city.⁹⁹²

As Shin Bet head Diskin argued in his June meeting with the USSC, Nablus was a thorn in the IDF’s side. Palestinians referred to the city as *jabl an-nār*, or mountain of fire, for its resistance dating back to Napoleon.⁹⁹³ IDF officials with whom USSC Dayton spoke called Nablus the “terrorist laboratory of Judea and Samaria.”⁹⁹⁴ Under semi-permanent enclosure since 2002, 73% of Nabulsi voters supported Hamas during the December 2005 municipal elections, and the city and its camps remained home to a hard core of Fatah-affiliated militants, as well as criminal elements.⁹⁹⁵ The city’s pacification epitomized the factional impulses at play in the PASF’s engagement with the USSC.

The USSC’s vision was to first restore order in Nablus with its retrained PA security forces, and then reward the city with economic projects. The USSC, Consulate, and EU officials tightly supervised the “major security operation.”⁹⁹⁶ The “Second Special Battalion,” trained in Jordan by the USSC, prepared to carry out the operation alongside the local police and *mukhabarāt* leadership, as well as the National Security Forces and Presidential Guard.⁹⁹⁷

⁹⁹¹ Doumani, “Scenes from Daily Life: The View from Nablus,” 43.

⁹⁹² “Quwāt al-āmn, al-muntazara, tantashr fī Nāblis,” *Al-Ayyām*, 3 November 2007; “Al-ḥamila al-āmnīyya b-muḥāfiẓat Nāblis tashī’a ajwā’ān min al-āmn wa a-ṭumā’inyya bayn al-muwāṭni’n,” *Al-Ayyām*, 8 November 2007; Lisa Taraki, “Enclave Micropolis: The Paradoxical Case of Ramallah/Al-Bireh,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, 4 (2008): 8; Doumani, “Scenes from Daily Life,” 49; Leech, “After Security First,” 9.

⁹⁹³ Doumani, “Scenes from Daily Life,” 48.

⁹⁹⁴ 26 November 2007, USSC Dayton Briefs IDF Central Commander on Steps to Strengthen Palestinian Capabilities. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁹⁵ William Booth and Ruth Eglash, “Palestinians in Nablus, Once Known for Suicide Bombers, Now Seeking Better Days,” *Washington Post* 21 October 2012; “Muqāwimūn filastīniyyūn yuḥāṣirūn 14 jundiyyān fī balāṭa,” *Al Jazeera* 28 February 2002. “Hamas Rolls to Victory in Local West Bank Voting,” *New York Times* 16 December 2005; Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator, “The Impact of Closure and Other Mobility Restrictions on Palestinian Productive Activities, 1 January 2002 – 30 June 2002” (New York: October 2002), 8; “Israel Re-opens Nablus Closed Since Second Intifada,” *Ma’an News Agency* 3 February 2013; “Israeli Military Launches Nablus Offensive,” *The Guardian* 31 May 2002.

⁹⁹⁶ 9 November 2007, Quartet Envoys Meeting. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁹⁷ 26 November 2007, USSC Dayton Briefs IDF Central Commander on Steps to Strengthen Palestinian Capabilities. [WikiLeaks]

At the same time, the USSC bolstered the PASF: the November operation in Nablus coincided with the construction of new training centers in Jericho. With its “Special Battalions” successfully trained in Jordan, the USSC shifted its approach. A “train the trainers” program was scheduled to begin November 18, this time in Jericho. The USSC also facilitated the procurement of

Fayyad's vision of close alignment with the US came into practice during the deployments. PM Fayyad insisted that any member of the PASF who attempted to obstruct the Nablus mission would be imprisoned and face criminal proceedings.⁹⁹⁸

The course of the PASF's operations in Nablus shows how the IDF saw the PA as a proxy that was useful to perform unsavory tasks. On 5 November 2007, leaked reports from the USSC reveal that the PASF began their operation, called "Hope and Smile."⁹⁹⁹ The first target was the densely populated refugee camp of Balata on the outskirts of Nablus.¹⁰⁰⁰ Just days before, the IDF confiscated 80-90 flak jackets from the Presidential Guard, prompting Dayton's team to inquire after them. In an internal communiqué, the USSC clarified to the Consulate that the vests "can easily be defeated by IDF weapons," but that they would protect the Presidential Guard against many of the arms available to Palestinian assailants.¹⁰⁰¹

The American hand in ensuring Palestinian obedience is evident in this exchange, even as Israel was reluctant to grant the Palestinians any leeway to operate. Indeed, at each step of the Nablus operation, the USSC was critical to transfer Israeli security responsibilities to the retrained PASF. For example, Dayton liaised with IDF officials to receive their permission for the PASF to conduct a mission lasting more than 24 hours in Nablus. Previously, the PASF suffered from what the USSC referred to as "Cinderella syndrome," as Israeli restrictions forced them to hurry home once dark fell.¹⁰⁰² For the counterinsurgency operation to pacify Nablus to succeed, the USSC support was necessary all the way.

A USSC briefing on November 6 detailed the PASF operations in Nablus. Brigadier General Thiab Ali reported that his troops manned six positions throughout Nablus, conducting vehicle and foot patrols. Ali's troops had completely surrounded Balata camp. Eleven suspected criminals and militants were arrested the first night of the operation. Ali informed Dayton that his troops prohibited displays of unauthorized arms in order to project the PA's monopoly of force. The PASF would next target 'Ein al-Ma'ā camp and other "problem areas" before moving

new equipment and vehicles to the NSF and PG. "Tamwīl Amrīkī l-ta'a mashārī'a fī Nāblis," *Al-Ayyām*, 15 November 2007; 9 November 2007, Quartet Envoys Meeting. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁹⁸ 5 November 2007, Nablus Deployment – Patrols/Arrest Operations Underway. [WikiLeaks]

⁹⁹⁹ Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, "Security Forces Spotlight: Palestinian Security Sector Governance – The View of the Security Forces in Jenin," September 2009.

¹⁰⁰⁰ 5 November 2007, Nablus Deployment – Patrols/Arrest Operations Underway. [WikiLeaks]; "Quwāt al-āmn, al-munṭaẓara, tantashr fī Nāblis," *Al-Ayyām*, 3 November 2007; "Mukhayyam Balāṭa: quwāt al-āmn tataṣḍā l-musalahīn wa tua'kid iṣrārhā 'alā fard siyyadat al-qānūn," *Al-Ayyām*, 6 November 2007.

¹⁰⁰¹ 5 November 2007, Nablus Deployment – Patrols/Arrest Operations Underway. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁰² Interview, former USSC official, January 2018.

into the old city. The USSC described the old city of Nablus as a “warren of stone houses and markets along narrow alleyways,” noting the dangers it posed.¹⁰⁰³

Despite Israel’s clear aim to keep the PASF vulnerable to Israeli discipline, Dayton received support for the Nablus initiative from Israel. One commander offered Israeli assistance to help the PA by building jails. He reported to Dayton: “We want well-trained security personnel with the right values and adhering to a high operational standard. [...] We have no problem with them going into Balata. We want them to be strong.”¹⁰⁰⁴

However, even while the PASF reasserted their control in Nablus, continuing IDF incursions underscored the limits of Palestinian self-policing. On November 6, Israeli troops conducted a raid deep in Area A, entering the *qasbah*. Two days later, they invaded Balata and arrested 25 Palestinians left behind by the PASF.¹⁰⁰⁵ The PASF ceased operations in order to prevent a clash between them and IDF soldiers. Moreover, the IDF persisted in holding onto the Presidential Guard’s protective jackets, and Dayton’s team stepped in to mediate between the PASF and the IDF. The Nablus commanders of the intelligence agencies complained to Dayton that Israel “accuses the PA of failing to act against terror but refuses to give PA intelligence any names or information the PASF could use to arrest terrorist suspects.”¹⁰⁰⁶ Israeli distrust of the PASF continued, and the USSC was necessary to foster sustained contact and communication between the two bodies.

Nonetheless, on November 8 the NSF reported to the USSC that the operation to reassert PASF control in Nablus was proceeding apace. PA forces had entered Nablus’s Rafidiyya and Makhafiyya districts. In a pattern seen throughout the West Bank, the PASF searched mosques and arrested individuals who Hamas claimed as members in subsequent statements to the Palestinian press.¹⁰⁰⁷ Colonel Kamayl of the NSF reported to Dayton that the Second Special Battalion had “weakened HAMAS in Nablus by dismantling cells, confiscating weapons, and disrupting the local Shura council.”¹⁰⁰⁸

The intersection between Israeli security priorities and Palestinian factional interests propelled Operation Smile and Hope in Nablus. Whereas Fatah militants were largely amnestied,

¹⁰⁰³ 6 November 2007, Nablus Operations. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁰⁴ 26 November 2007, USSC Dayton Briefs IDF Central Commander on Steps to Strengthen Palestinian Capabilities. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁰⁵ “Ijtiyāh isrā’īliyya l-mukhayyam Balāta: ‘ataqāl 25 muwātinān,” *Al-Ayyām*, 8 November 2007.

¹⁰⁰⁶ 6 November 2007, Nablus Operations. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁰⁷ International Crisis Group, “Squaring the Circle,” 6-8.

¹⁰⁰⁸ 13 December 2007, PASF December 11 Update to LTG Dayton. [WikiLeaks]

the USSC-backed operation gave cover for the Fatah security chiefs to root out Hamas.¹⁰⁰⁹ The USSC was aware of their Palestinian partners' mobilization of counterterror discourse to appeal to Washington. Indeed, as one former USSC official noted in an interview, "The anti-terror focus that the Palestinian security forces gave to themselves was really a political tool that the President [Abbas] used. He was only too glad to smash Hamas in the West Bank, because he could."¹⁰¹⁰

Another former USSC official remarked in an interview, "once again we were taking sides, and that worried me – because you know, whether you're in Afghanistan or you're in Palestine or you're in Iraq, you pick a side."¹⁰¹¹ Indeed, while Fatah-affiliated militants were rehabilitated into Nablus's public sector, Hamas's extensive social services network – essential to its electoral success in the city – was systematically dismantled under the banner of fighting terror. In public appearances in Nablus, Fayyad emphasized that the end of lawlessness in the city was a benefit to Nabulsi, who would enjoy peace and security in their homes.¹⁰¹²

PA officials were sensitive to the popular perception that factional prejudice pervaded the 'counterterror' security mission. In a meeting with the USSC, Nablus's governor and Fayyad voiced concerns about backlash in the city. They argued for greater Palestinian autonomy, pointing out that when IDF raids occurred alongside the PASF redeployment, local Palestinians surmised that the PASF and IDF were running a joint operation, "and just doing a shift change at night."¹⁰¹³ The PA complained that this impression fortified "terror groups' propaganda which claims PASF are doing the IDF's work for them."¹⁰¹⁴

However, the USSC's close coordination with Israel ensured that the Israeli prerogative of stabilizing the West Bank and eradicating Hamas was at the forefront of the PASF's work, no matter the political sensitivities among Palestinians. At each step of the Nablus operation, the USSC was in contact with the Israeli Ministry of Defense to ensure Israel approved PASF supplies and plans.¹⁰¹⁵ On November 26, Dayton updated IDF Central Commander Maj. Gen. Gadi Shamni, on the 'West Bank First' strategy's progress. Dayton alerted Shamni of the

¹⁰⁰⁹ "Fayyād fī Nāblis: al-khiṭa al-āmniyya tataqdim," Al-Ayyām, 9 November 2007.

¹⁰¹⁰ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

¹⁰¹¹ Interview, former USSC official, April 2017.

¹⁰¹² "Al-ḥamila al-āmniyya b-muḥāfiẓat Nāblis tashī'a ajwā'ān min al-āmn wa a-ṭumā'inyya bayn al-muwāṭnīn," Al-Ayyām, 8 November 2007.

¹⁰¹³ 8 November 2007, Nablus Operations. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰¹⁴ 8 November 2007, Nablus Operations. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰¹⁵ 26 November 2007, USSC Dayton Briefs IDF Central Commander on Steps to Strengthen Palestinian Capabilities. [WikiLeaks]

upcoming NSF battalion training in Jordan, scheduled for three weeks in January 2008, and noted that President Bush had recently allocated \$25 million to support his mission and supplement the existing budget of \$86 million. Part of these funds were slated to train the NSF battalion of 700 men, and an additional 440 members of the PG would receive training in Egypt in February.

Dayton also outlined his close supervision of the Nablus redeployment, explaining that he visited the city weekly.¹⁰¹⁶ Shamni attested to Israel's increased confidence in the PASF under USSC supervision. He argued that the IDF had "allowed" the PASF to move platoons into Area B 119 times. "Coordination is not a problem," Shamni emphasized.¹⁰¹⁷ Nonetheless, Shamni described the West Bank in bleak terms. Shamni insisted on the IDF's purpose in bolstering Fatah, which met Israeli purposes of collecting information. Shamni stated, "this serves Fatah. We want to weaken Hamas, especially the civilian infrastructure it employs to support terror."¹⁰¹⁸ Simply put, a 'moderate' Fatah militant could be co-opted into cooperating with Israel, whereas a Hamas militant was a 'terrorist' and could not be reformed.

From Israel's perspective, the PASF's capacity to ensure order increased under USSC tutelage, but ultimately responsibility for fighting terror had to remain in Israeli hands. Shamni complained that the PASF had done little to counter the hard core of Hamas operatives. Despite the political aims that brought Israeli and PA interests together, the anti-Hamas campaign fit the bill of counterterror for the USSC. The PASF reported to Dayton that "some HAMAS members voluntarily turned their weapons over to the PASF and renounced the group, which they would never have done to the IDF."¹⁰¹⁹ The PASF assured Dayton that the Palestinian intelligence would prepare for any attempts by Hamas to rebuild in Nablus.

The Nablus operation demonstrates that Israel welcomed tight US control to ensure the compliance of its Palestinian proxy. Shamni's concerns about the limits of PASF usefulness against Hamas, and the Israeli Ministry of Defense's seizure of protective jackets for the

¹⁰¹⁶ 26 November 2007, USSC Dayton Briefs IDF Central Commander on Steps to Strengthen Palestinian Capabilities. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰¹⁷ 26 November 2007, USSC Dayton Briefs IDF Central Commander on Steps to Strengthen Palestinian Capabilities. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰¹⁸ 26 November 2007, USSC Dayton Briefs IDF Central Commander on Steps to Strengthen Palestinian Capabilities [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰¹⁹ 13 December 2007, PASF December 11 Update to LTG Dayton. [WikiLeaks]

Palestinian battalions, typified the anxieties that exist for colonial regimes over how much to empower local intermediaries.¹⁰²⁰

By early December, the PASF reported their successes to the USSC. The Nablus team told Dayton they had “referred hundreds of criminal cases to the courts, destroyed over 300 illegal vehicles, and defused 39 bombs” during their month-long operation. Nablus was under PASF control, and the local PASF prepared for a smooth departure of the Second Special Battalion.¹⁰²¹ Describing the USSC agenda as an “imbalanced,” over-militarized approach, a former USSC official was open in an interview about the effects of backing Fatah’s ambitions after its electoral losses: “The reality of it was that you were beginning to trade one sort of strongmen for a different sort of strongmen.”¹⁰²²

Annapolis: The Peace Process Revived?

The successful completion of the PASF redeployment in Nablus coincided with a renewal of the ‘peace process’ under American brokerage at Annapolis. The same day the PASF entered Balata, Abbas and Secretary Rice announced their intent to reach a final status agreement by the end of 2008.¹⁰²³ Rice had begun raising the issue of final status negotiations in June 2007.¹⁰²⁴ The direct talks between the PLO and government of Israel signaled a return to the Roadmap after the lengthy diversions embodied by Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip and Hamas’s ascent.

The PA’s ongoing reassertion of control in the West Bank was a central legitimating factor for the talks, and the Annapolis conference was designed to bolster Abbas and his ‘moderate’ approach. Rice saw direct talks as critical to maintain momentum behind the progress made in the ‘West Bank First’ strategy. Negotiations provided political capital to Washington’s ongoing purpose of isolating Gaza, even as US officials acknowledged the impracticality of implementing a peace treaty without Hamas.¹⁰²⁵ With his tenure nearing its end, the opportunity to seal Bush’s legacy with a peace deal appealed.

¹⁰²⁰ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 53-61.

¹⁰²¹ 13 December 2007, PASF December 11 Update to LTG Dayton. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰²² Interview, former USSC official, April 2017.

¹⁰²³ “‘Abbās wa Rice: a-tuwaṣūl lil-itifāq a-nihā’ī khilāl wilāyyat Bush,” *Al-Ayyām*, 6 November 2007.

¹⁰²⁴ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

¹⁰²⁵ “Al-umum al-mutaḥida: ‘amliyyat salām lā tushārik fihā ḥamās lan takūn qābila lil-taṭbīq,” *Al-Ayyām* 29 November 2007. Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 600-602; Friedrich and Luethold, “And They Came in and Took Possession of Reforms,” 199.

However, it proved more difficult to bring the parties to the table than Rice hoped, and prospects for a successful resolution from the meeting that ultimately convened 28 November 2007 were hampered by the fact that the parties had different purposes for attending.¹⁰²⁶ For Abbas, a concrete solution would provide needed political weight to his message against Hamas; for Olmert, whose term had been ridden by simmering political scandals, negotiations were a welcome news item but little more. As Rice recalled:

The Arabs wanted the invitations to set the terms for a peace agreement. The Israelis wanted little more than a time and place. The Palestinians wanted the core issues – borders, security, and refugees spelled out. “That will bring down my coalition,” Olmert said. The Arabs wanted a deadline for the conclusion of an agreement. “In the invitation?” I asked. They dropped the idea.¹⁰²⁷

President Bush was skeptical of the ‘peace process’ and adamant that he would not negotiate an agreement, but rather provide support for the parties to work bilaterally. In the vague equation hammered out at Annapolis, multiple tracks ran simultaneously. Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni addressed final status issues with veteran PLO negotiator Ahmed Qurei in continuous, closed-door talks, while PM Olmert met directly with President Abbas. Full implementation of the Roadmap would precede any peace treaty, entailing continued PA reforms.¹⁰²⁸

While bilateral talks under US supervision resumed, Washington sent two generals – James Jones and William Fraser – to the region.¹⁰²⁹ The generals’ role was to provide independent evaluations in America’s capacity as broker of the ‘peace process.’ Jones served as Special Envoy for Middle East Regional Security, reporting to Secretary of State Rice about security arrangements necessary for a Palestinian state. Jones consulted with all parties to inform the American perspective on the security portfolio negotiations, as well as review the ongoing USSC mission.¹⁰³⁰ Fraser, meanwhile, was charged with monitoring Israeli and Palestinian implementation of the Road Map. As Deputy National Security Adviser Abrams recalled, the two generals supplemented General Dayton’s ongoing bottom-up approach, which Washington understood as more likely to garner success than the all-or-nothing negotiations.¹⁰³¹ British

¹⁰²⁶ “Lā wathīqa mushtarika fī Annapolis bisabab al-khalāfāt wa a-tuwijeh l’arḍ kul ṭarf,” Al-Ayyām 23 November 2007.

¹⁰²⁷ Rice, No Higher Honor, 604.

¹⁰²⁸ “Mu’atmr Annapolis: yuṭalq al-yowm masīra ḥaṭhītha ‘alā 3 masārāt mutawāziyya,” Al-Ayyām, 27 November 2007; “Prelude to Operation Cast Lead: Israel’s Unilateral Disengagement to the Eve of War,” Journal of Palestine Studies 38, 3 (2009): 158.

¹⁰²⁹ Abrams, Tested by Zion, 259-260.

¹⁰³⁰ “Al-Jenrāl Jones: nejm al-marḥala al-muqabila,” Al-Ayyām, 29 November 2007; 2 February 2008 Meeting Summary Saeb Erekat and James Jones (PLO): 2.

¹⁰³¹ Abrams, Tested by Zion, 259-260.

former Prime Minister Tony Blair also joined the international effort at Annapolis as the Quartet's new representative, focused on economic projects to bolster the negotiations.

The ongoing US interventions to reform the PA security forces on the ground in Palestine were closely connected to the Annapolis talks. At a meeting of the Quartet envoys in the run-up to Annapolis held November 9, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch explicitly connected the ongoing operations in Nablus with support for the negotiations. As one leaked memo from the meeting notes, Welch cited the Nablus operation as a crucial improvement on the ground to buttress the negotiations, noting the importance as well of “public diplomacy efforts after Annapolis to demonstrate its achievements.”¹⁰³² Similarly, Dayton emphasized the centrality of counterterrorism to the Annapolis process with his Israeli security colleagues. In a meeting on November 26, IDF Gen. Shamni praised the USSC's capacity building approach in the PA as an important step toward a “global campaign to weaken Hamas.”¹⁰³³

Security Redlines and Horizon for Reforms

In the weeks following the Annapolis conference, the PA argued that the success of the Nablus operation provided a valuable opportunity to shore up public support behind the PA's political project. In a meeting with Dayton December 13, PASF commanders responsible for Nablus called for Israel to lift its siege in order to sustain the stability achieved by Operation Hope and Smile and alleviate poverty and unemployment. With freer movement, the city would not be “strangled” and Palestinians would believe Israel's seriousness about negotiations.¹⁰³⁴ The USSC was eager to capitalize on security changes on the ground, and recognized the PA's political vulnerability. As one USSC member noted at the time, apart from the Fatah elite and its international sponsors, “no other Palestinians have confidence in the process.”¹⁰³⁵

However, Israeli security insiders put little political weight behind the PASF's accomplishments. At an introductory meeting December 20, PM Olmert, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Shin Bet head Diskin, and Israel Defense Intelligence head Amos Yadlin briefed Gen. Jones on the multifaceted security threats facing Israel. The Israelis

¹⁰³² 9 November 2007, Quartet Envoys Meeting. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰³³ 26 November 2007, USSC Dayton Briefs IDF Central Commander on Steps to Strengthen Palestinian Capabilities. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰³⁴ 13 December 2007, PASF December 11 Update to LTG Dayton. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰³⁵ Personal papers, former USSC official.

promised to assign Jones a defense expert to keep him informed as the Annapolis process continued. Stressing the triad of nuclear proliferation, Islamist terror, and rogue states, Barak presented Israel's security redlines:

Israel would need to retain the settlement blocs around Jerusalem and in the northern West Bank, but would give up the other settlements. Since the Palestinian border would only be nine miles from the sea, Israel's security margin would require that the Palestinian state be demilitarized. Israel would retain control of the air space, as well as military access to the Jordan Valley for years to come.¹⁰³⁶

Yadlin dismissed the USSC's retraining efforts, arguing that the PASF were at least three to five years from being able to provide security in the West Bank.¹⁰³⁷ Moreover, the Israeli insistence on a demilitarized state in fact contradicted the entire purpose of the USSC retraining: a demilitarized Palestinian state would be unable to monopolize force. The PLO rejected the call for a "demilitarized" Palestinian state, which would fundamentally undermine Palestinian sovereignty. As the PLO noted, demilitarization had never been required of an entire state.¹⁰³⁸

At the same meeting on December 20, Livni raised a series of questions that showed how the Israeli political elite saw security sector reform within the PA as little more than a mechanism to create a compliant proxy. "Should Israel support a seaport or airport for the Palestinians, now, or even in the future? (No, in her view). What does Palestinian capacity-building mean? Will Palestinians chose Fatah in the future?"¹⁰³⁹ Noting that Israeli security depended on a force "willing to fight Hamas house-to-house," Livni emphasized that the challenge of the security portfolio of negotiations lay not in bridging gaps but in ensuring that security was done "the right way."¹⁰⁴⁰ From this conversation, the limits of technical reform assistance become evident. In short, the possibility of Palestinian sovereignty constituted a security risk to Israel, no matter how well the PA could be reformed to perform.

The Paris Conference and the Statebuilding Agenda

Just weeks after the Annapolis summit, international attention turned once more to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a donor conference in Paris. Seeking to shore up additional

¹⁰³⁶ 20 December 2007, Gen. Jones First Meetings in Israel. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰³⁷ 20 December 2007, Gen. Jones First Meetings in Israel. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰³⁸ November 2007 NSU Draft Language on Security Issues (PLO).

¹⁰³⁹ 20 December 2007, Gen. Jones First Meetings in Israel. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁴⁰ 20 December 2007, Gen. Jones First Meetings in Israel. [WikiLeaks]

support behind the statebuilding and negotiations agenda, the PA sought nearly \$6 billion over three years. The funds were contingent on a detailed reform plan, also submitted at the conference. The plan presented in Paris became the basis for the 2008-2010 Palestine Reform and Development Plan (PRDP).¹⁰⁴¹ It was written by one official from the PA and one consultant from the UK Department for International Development.¹⁰⁴² The plan's national policy goals were to advance public safety and good governance, increase prosperity, and enhance quality of life. Reforming the security services to strengthen civil and criminal justice, and increasing their "professionalism, accountability, and effectiveness" were central aspects of the plan.¹⁰⁴³

Fayyad's plans presented a technocratic, institutional-growth focused platform designed to empower Abbas's ongoing negotiations. The view was that Fayyadism would succeed where decades of failed strategies had failed in pressuring Israel to facilitate the creation of a Palestinian state.¹⁰⁴⁴ Fayyad's vision was embraced by Israel because it harnessed the Palestinian internal agenda to Israeli measurements of Palestinian self-policing. At the Paris conference, FM Livni highlighted that economic development and personal security should be advanced together.¹⁰⁴⁵

Fayyad's reforms were popular in some Palestinian circles, and they conferred a degree of normalcy throughout parts of the West Bank. As Alaa Tartir notes, Fayyad improved financial management of the PA. However, the PA under his technocratic expertise remained heavily dependent on the international donor community. Moreover, Fayyad's plans did not represent a democratic consensus about the changes made to the Palestinian national movement.¹⁰⁴⁶ Azmi Bishara memorably accused Fayyad of transforming the Palestinian struggle for liberation into "a contrived folk festival passed off as authenticity," focused on Israeli security to the detriment of Palestinian interests.¹⁰⁴⁷

¹⁰⁴¹ Ian Black, "Paris Donor Nations Pledge Billions for Palestinians," *The Guardian* 17 December 2007; Palestinian National Authority. "Palestinian Reform and Development Plan: 2008-2010." <http://www.mopad.pna.ps/en/attachments/article/2/National%20Plan%202008-2010.pdf>; "A Palestinian State in Two Years: Interview with Salam Fayyad, Palestinian Prime Minister," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, 1 (2009): 58-74; Lally Weymouth, "Salam Fayyad: Building a Palestinian State," *Newsweek* 23 October 2009.

¹⁰⁴² Turner, "Peacebuilding as Counterinsurgency in the Occupied Palestinian Territory," 95; Tariq Dana, "The Symbiosis between Palestinian 'Fayyadism' and Israeli 'Economic Peace': The Political Economy of Capitalist Peace in the Context of Colonialism," *Conflict, Security and Development* 15, 5 (2015): 464.

¹⁰⁴³ Palestinian National Authority, "Palestinian Reform and Development Plan," 4.

¹⁰⁴⁴ "Fayyād fī Nāblis: ist'āda makānat a-sulṭa ḍarūrī l-inhā al-iḥtīlāl," *Al-Ayyām*, 15 November 2007.

¹⁰⁴⁵ State of Israel – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Address by Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Livni to the Paris Donor Conference" (Paris: 17 December 2007.)

¹⁰⁴⁶ Alaa Tartir, "Securitized Development and Palestinian Authoritarianism under Fayyadism," *Conflict, Security, and Development* 15, 5 (2015): 482.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Azmi Bishara, "We Want to Live," *Al-Ahram* 13-19 May 2010.

Fayyad's plans caused a paradigm shift in the PA and the Palestinian national movement.¹⁰⁴⁸ Abandoning all forms of armed struggle in exchange for the promise of negotiations, the statebuilding agenda embraced an Israeli-American driven project.¹⁰⁴⁹ As Sara Roy notes, Fayyad's political-economic model did not confront the occupation, but instead encouraged Palestinian faith in Israeli goodwill as it advocated silence and repressed criticism.¹⁰⁵⁰ The Paris conference asserted Fayyad and Abbas's vision as the only viable path to Palestinian statehood, and reform of the security forces constituted a key element of their vision of stability and institution-building in the West Bank.

Securitized Stability

The winter of 2007 saw the PASF continue to reassert control in the West Bank's urban centers. The NSF prepared to secure Bethlehem for the heightened activity of the holiday season, informing Dayton that the force had adequate personnel for the responsibility. However, in a meeting with Dayton just before Christmas, the local NSF commander complained of equipment, vehicle, and ammunition shortages, and bemoaned an incident in which the IDF had fired on his forces when they moved into Area B, killing an NSF member.¹⁰⁵¹

Monitoring Reforms

In the early months of 2008, the USSC's budget swelled as its awaited \$86 million finally arrived. In total, the fiscal year's expenditures on the PA would reach \$375 million from Washington in emergency supplemental support.¹⁰⁵² As the USSC worked to ensure stability in the West Bank, its program of reform continued. At the same time, PASF troops continued to redeploy in Area A, and Gen. Jones surveyed the implications of PASF reform and performance for the Annapolis process.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Hill, "From the Small Zinzana to the Bigger Zinzana," 9.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Nu'man Kanafani, "As If There Is No Occupation: The Limits of Palestinian Authority Strategy," Middle East Research Project 22 September 2011. <https://www.merip.org/mero/mero092211>

¹⁰⁵⁰ Sara Roy, "Reconceptualizing the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Key Paradigm Shifts," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41, 3 (2012): 83.

¹⁰⁵¹ 20 December 2007, PASF Dec 17 Update to LTG Dayton on Bethlehem Preparations, Israeli Coordination. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁵² United States Congressional Research Service – Stephen Daggett, Susan B. Epstein, Rhonda Margesson, Curt Tarnoff, and Pat Towell, "FY2008 Supplemental Appropriations for Global War on Terror Military Operations, International Affairs, and Other Purposes" (Washington, DC: April 2008), 41-42.

The influx of funding enabled the team to tackle two new projects that had been identified as urgent needs by PM Fayyad's government, but also dovetailed with the Israeli priorities expressed by Maj. Gen. Shamni. The first initiative was to support the pensions of retiring PASF members, allowing for a new crop of security officers trained under USSC supervision. The second effort focused on revamping of the PA's penal sector, including the construction of new jails.¹⁰⁵³

At meetings with the donor community, Dayton displayed his comprehensive vision of the conflict. Dayton argued that the USSC's functions were vital despite donors' reasonable apprehension about the immediate visuals to taxpayers that seemed like nothing more than "Arabs with guns."¹⁰⁵⁴ In these appeals, Dayton found a number of willing partners. The government of Japan stepped in to fund the construction of jails. Canada offered additional personnel for the USSC as a result of lessons learned in rebuilding Afghanistan, where security and counterterrorism were found to be necessary preconditions for economic and social projects.¹⁰⁵⁵

By early January 2008, Minister of the Interior Yahya was able to report a 180-degree transformation of law and order in Nablus, and a reduction of residents' fear and insecurity in Nablus since the November operation. Yahya described the successes of the PASF redeployment in terms that privileged the Israeli vision of the PA's purpose. The Minister explained to Dayton that PASF doctrine was improving security for average Palestinians while preventing confrontation with the IDF. As such, Yahya was pleased that an IDF raid in Nablus on January 11 ended without a single bullet fired. Key capacities of the PA had solidified: on 15 January 2008, Dayton toured the newly established Strategic Planning Division at the Ministry of the Interior, where international consultants crafted the PA's long-term vision.¹⁰⁵⁶

In order to maintain momentum of linking security performance in Palestine to the Annapolis process, Jones's team familiarized itself with the situation on the ground. On February 2, Jones met with senior Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat. Erekat briefed Jones on the Palestinian platform for a final status security agreement: a Palestinian state with limited arms for internal, defensive security purposes. The Palestinians were open to a third-party presence on

¹⁰⁵³ 6 December 2007, Canadian Contributions for Palestinian Security. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁵⁴ 6 December 2007, Canadian Contributions for Palestinian Security. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁵⁵ 6 December 2007, Canadian Contributions for Palestinian Security. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁵⁶ 16 January 2008, MOI al-Yahya Positive about PASF Efforts, but Critical of IDF Interference. [WikiLeaks]

the borders to meet Israeli security demands but insisted all Israeli soldiers must depart for the occupation to end. Erekat derided Israel's insistence on defensive positions on the Jordan River.¹⁰⁵⁷

Jones and his team also assessed the progress of Dayton's USSC mission. At the February meeting, Erekat praised the USSC efforts.¹⁰⁵⁸ He noted that the professionalism Dayton inculcated in the PA security forces contrasted with mistaken tendencies in the past to build up strongmen.¹⁰⁵⁹ Jones's mandate included gathering information on what was called the 'initiation of demonstrations' – meaning successful security deployments by the PASF – to present in Washington. On March 31, Jones's team convened with Maj. Gen. Atallah from President Abbas's office, newly appointed Chief of Police. Atallah cautioned Jones's team against a public fanfare when visiting Palestinian cities, which threatened to inflate expectations about the negotiations.

Atallah noted that the next Palestinian security force deployment would take place in the northern West Bank city of Jenin, which worried him. Israel imposed the decision to permit Palestinian operations in Jenin, ignoring the PA's demands to put Hebron next, and announced the decision to the media. Jones's team tried to persuade the PA that while Hebron was more politically pressing, the absence of settlers nearby made Jenin an easier task for the PASF. One member of Jones's team offered a lesson from the US counterinsurgency in Iraq: "You hold the place and slowly spread out, as in Anbar."¹⁰⁶⁰

Pacifying Jenin

In accordance with the Israeli decision, in the first week of May 2008 Operation Hope and Smile continued in the Jenin governate. Like Nablus, Jenin was a site of ongoing *falatān āmnī* and home to organized resistance cells during the Second Intifada. In Jenin once more, the PA security forces' utility to Israel as a proxy under close supervision is evident. The NSF commander for the West Bank updated the USSC of its preparations. With a force of 400 men from the NSF and Presidential Guard, armed with Kalashnikovs, the PASF entered Jenin early in

¹⁰⁵⁷ 2 February 2008 Meeting Summary Saeb Erekat and James Jones (PLO): 1.

¹⁰⁵⁸ 4 March 2008 Letter from James Jones to Saeb Erekat Re Palestinian Security Efforts (PLO).

¹⁰⁵⁹ 2 February 2008 Meeting Summary Saeb Erekat and James Jones (PLO): 1.

¹⁰⁶⁰ 31 March 2008, Meeting Summary – Hazem Atallah and Nick Pratt (PLO): 1-2.

the morning of May 2.¹⁰⁶¹ The PASF were “well-dressed, well-equipped, well-trained and mostly masked,” entering Jenin “in dozens of new, foreign-bought military vehicles.”¹⁰⁶²

The PASF’s operation in Jenin focused first on the city’s refugee camp (home to prominent Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades militants) and then moved to the Islamic Jihad stronghold of Qabatiya, a neighboring village of 24,000.¹⁰⁶³ Many militants surrendered in order to take advantage of the PA’s promise of light sentencing in consideration of their cooperation. The *mufti* of Jenin endorsed the PA campaign, and the local Islamic Jihad leadership promised not to prevent the pursuit of criminals.¹⁰⁶⁴ Nonetheless, firefights broke out in Qabatiya early May 6, and local Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade leader Nasser Khzaymeh warned the PASF not to target resistance fighters.¹⁰⁶⁵

The PASF went to great lengths to project an image of autonomy from Israel and the US, “emphasizing the operation’s Palestinian face.”¹⁰⁶⁶ The US Consulate reported that Operation Smile and Hope was enthusiastically received by Jenin’s residents on 2 May, and the PASF sought to capitalize on its welcome with an information campaign. On 4 May, Fayyad visited Jenin with NSF and police commanders. He applauded the operation and urged the security forces to stand firm, “enforcing the law without discrimination.”¹⁰⁶⁷ In order to build public support, the PASF distributed photos and fliers advertising a crime hotline. The information campaign emphasized that Operation Smile and Hope was a “Palestinian-ordered and funded operation.”¹⁰⁶⁸ The PASF also published its goals for the operation: to enforce law and order and provide “security to the Palestinian people to further their national goals of freedom and independence.”¹⁰⁶⁹

However, in reality the PASF were tightly controlled by Israel. Seeking reinforcements to fight militants in Qabatiya, NSF commander Maj. Gen. Ali noted that he would request backup

¹⁰⁶¹ 5 May 2008, PA Operation Begins in Jenin, PASF Welcomed by Locals, Arrest 23 Wanted Criminals. [WikiLeaks]; 1 May 2008, Palestinian Plans for Early May Security Deployment/Operations in Jenin. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁶² “Intishār al-mi’āt min rijāl al-āmn fī muhkayyam Jenīn ḍamn al-marḥala al-thālitha min khaṭat taṭbīq al-qānūn,” Al-Ayyām, 5 May 2008; Alaa Tartir, “Criminalizing Resistance: The Cases of Balata and Jenin Refugee Camps,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, 2 (2017): 9.

¹⁰⁶³ 6 May 2008, Jenin PASF Exchange Fire with Gunmen in Qabatiya, Continue Arrests/Vehicle Seizures. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁶⁴ “Jenīn tastaqbil quwāt al-āmn al-jadīda bil-warūd wa al-ḥalawā: muhimat ‘al-basma wa al-āml’ inhā’ al-fawḍa wa farḍ al-qānūn,” Al-Ayyām 4 May 2008.

¹⁰⁶⁵ 6 May 2008, Jenin PASF Exchange Fire with Gunmen in Qabatiya, Continue Arrests/Vehicle Seizures. [WikiLeaks]; “Qabāṭiyya: iṣāba muwāṭin b-jirah khafira khilāl t’ arḍ quwāt al-āmn l-nirān majmu’ a musalahīn,” Al-Ayyām 7 May 2008.

¹⁰⁶⁶ 6 May 2008, Jenin PASF Exchange Fire with Gunmen in Qabatiya, Continue Arrests/Vehicle Seizures. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁶⁷ 5 May 2008, PA Operation Begins in Jenin, PASF Welcomed by Locals, Arrest 23 Wanted Criminals. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁶⁸ 6 May 2008, Jenin PASF Exchange Fire with Gunmen in Qabatiya, Continue Arrests/Vehicle Seizures. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁶⁹ “Fayyād: yatafḍ al-intishār al-āmnī fī Jenīn: farḍ al-qānūn yed’ am tanfidh khaṭat a-tanmawīyya,” Al-Ayyām 5 May 2008; 5 May 2008, PA Operation Begins in Jenin, PASF Welcomed by Locals, Arrest 23 Wanted Criminals. [WikiLeaks]

from police and NSF soldiers: “as many as the IDF permits me to bring in.”¹⁰⁷⁰ Although Israel permitted the PASF to carry out the operation without interruption, the IDF continued to control the minute details of the PASF’s work. Israeli oversight included determining which protective gear the Palestinians could use: Kevlar vests and helmets were forbidden, but fiberglass or plastic equipment was permissible.¹⁰⁷¹ As in Balata, the IDF conceived of the PASF as a useful proxy, but Israel was always careful to limit the PA forces’ strength. USSC mediation of the security coordination ensured that subservience.

Security Sector Reform and Its Contradictions

As the Jenin operation concluded, Israeli incursions resumed in order to capture militants and activists that remained in the city. While the USSC’s efforts in training new PASF made the Palestinians more reliable to uphold the security coordination agreement, the USSC recognized the need for a comprehensive transformation of the security situation. With regards to Jenin specifically, the USSC began, in the early summer, to formulate proposals for an intensive security and economic development initiative to bring law and order to the city. In talking points for a meeting with Israeli security officials on Jenin, the USSC suggested a moratorium on daylight incursions into Area A, and urged the IDF to maintain a low profile in Areas B and C.¹⁰⁷²

In exchange for Israel allowing the PASF more significant operations, the USSC molded the PA into a reliable partner. In one internal document, the USSC promised to “work with the appropriate offices and personnel across the Palestinian Authority, its security forces, and its criminal justice system, to build Palestinian capacity to “pick up the slack” when it comes to security threats.”¹⁰⁷³ Indeed, Israel understood the USSC as a partner enforcing the PASF’s compliance. In the leaked minutes of a meeting between Dayton and Fayyad July 29, the USSC explained that Israel was confident of Washington’s strong hand in directing the PASF. Dayton noted that Israel did not believe that the USSC trained Palestinian battalions but allowed the Palestinians themselves to decide where the PASF would deploy.¹⁰⁷⁴

¹⁰⁷⁰ “Dayton: isrā’īl wāfaqat ‘alā musā’idat a-sulṭa wa Amrīkā fī t’azīz qawat al-āmn al-waṭanī,” Al-Ayyām 16 August 2008.

¹⁰⁷¹ 5 May 2008, PA Operation Begins in Jenin, PASF Welcomed by Locals, Arrest 23 Wanted Criminals. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁷² Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹⁰⁷³ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹⁰⁷⁴ 29 July 2008 Meeting Summary – Keith Dayton and Salam Fayyad (PLO): 2.

At the same meeting, the USSC discussed leadership changes within the PASF, where existing security chiefs were strongly opposed to the USSC's reforms. "For the plan to work the old chiefs need to be replaced by new people who will enact the change and implement reform because the current chiefs are not going to implement any of it."¹⁰⁷⁵ Dayton complained that unchecked donor spending was distorting his preferences for the reform process. "One way to weaken the chiefs is by cutting off their independent sources," the minutes from the meeting note.¹⁰⁷⁶ He noted excessive Spanish funds to the intelligence services and ballooning American support of the NSF.

This discussion shows the paradox that pervaded the USSC's vision. While the security sector agenda officially promoted a rationalized hierarchy in the PASF, in keeping with Fayyad's discourse of accountability and good governance, the effect of international intervention at every level of the PA was to create a new system of patronage. Despite the USSC's focus on bolstering the PA's Ministry of the Interior, the legal basis of its work was shaky: as one internal USSC communiqué pointed out, the National Security Forces had no legal remit under Palestinian law. As a result, they had no mandate to arrest, "or do much of anything, really. Yet here we are training them on things like how to conduct an ambush (!) and how to investigate crimes."¹⁰⁷⁷

Indeed, one USSC member questioned Washington's discourse about nation-building at the time. "The perception is that the US support to the NSF is intended to provide Fatah with an ability to deter/contain Hamas, both in the [West Bank] and, sooner or later, in Gaza, which is why the training is being permitted by Israel."¹⁰⁷⁸ Though the USSC was careful to ascribe Palestinian self-rule into its mission, the PA's ability to perform as a partner in the 'war on terror' was much more important than trying to build PA strength for Palestinians themselves.

The USSC's interventions served to ensure the allocation of American-directed funding was the most eminent form of patronage for the PA. These funds were used to induce the PASF to meet American policy demands. This is borne out in leaked internal USSC documents. In its application for new support from Congress in the summer of 2008, the USSC noted the extent of American intervention in the PA and the necessity of a 'whole of government' approach for its comprehensive efforts. The Departments of State and Defense had, according to the USSC,

¹⁰⁷⁵ 29 July 2008 Meeting Summary – Keith Dayton and Salam Fayyad (PLO): 2.

¹⁰⁷⁶ 29 July 2008 Meeting Summary – Keith Dayton and Salam Fayyad (PLO): 2.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Personal papers, former USSC official.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Personal papers, former USSC official; "Dayton: isrā'īl wāfaqat 'alā musā'idat a-sulṭa wa Amrīkā fī t'azīz qawat al-āmn al-waṭanī," *Al-Ayyām* 16 August 2008.

“mutually supporting capabilities that can be combined with international efforts and applied to the vast range of requirements that include building capacity within the Ministry of Interior, building the civil police, prison and judiciary overhaul, and developing the security forces.”¹⁰⁷⁹

In addition to \$35 million to Security and Stability Assistance Funds (section 1207/1210) to train and equip the second PASF battalion in August 2008, the USSC planned to request \$200 million per fiscal year between 2009 and 2013. These funds would allow the Pentagon to work with the existing Department of State-directed USSC to provide defense articles, military education and training to Palestinian security forces, facilities construction, crime control and police training services, and develop ministerial capacity.¹⁰⁸⁰

The reasons for such an expansive budget were anchored in the logic of the ‘war on terror,’ while working to ensure the PA’s utility as a proxy to Israel. However, at the same time, Pentagon support would enable the USSC to “prevent rogue elements and terrorist formations from gaining further influence in the territory and provide the PA the capacity to regain control of Gaza.”¹⁰⁸¹ The contradiction between the premise of reforms for PA accountability and the insertion of the counterterrorism prerogative into the PA pervaded the USSC’s work. Using mechanisms of intervention central to Pentagon policy during the ‘war on terror,’ the USSC enmeshed the PASF into the Israeli regime of control.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced American policy toward Palestine during 2007 and 2008, connecting interventions on the ground in the West Bank with the revival of final status negotiations at Annapolis. The chapter has shown how the tools that the US Security Coordinator mission mobilized to address the Palestinian Authority emerged from contemporary Pentagon defense policy. These interventions in Palestine focused on stabilization and security sector reform, policies integral to the Bush Administration’s ‘global war on terror.’

In the same vein, the chapter has shown how concern with counterterrorism drove the USSC to integrate its approach to the West Bank with that of Israel, casting Palestinian resistance that refused the PA’s hegemony as ‘terror.’ While ostensibly building the reformed security forces necessary for a future Palestinian state, Washington’s retraining program met

¹⁰⁷⁹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹⁰⁸¹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

urgent stabilization prerogatives, in themselves Israeli aims. The USSC, in short, directly facilitated Israeli military aims while positioning itself as a mediator. The ‘West Bank First’ strategy that the USSC developed represents the third paradigm derived from the ‘war on terror’ that Washington applied to Palestine after 9/11. As seen in the first three chapters, Washington embraced Israeli unilateralism during the Second Intifada, before imposing and then quickly retracting its the ‘freedom agenda.’ Third, the ‘West Bank First’ plan that Washington presented securitized Palestinian life.

In its attempt to pacify the West Bank, Washington worked against political pluralism in Palestine and bolstered the PA’s most anti-democratic, autocratic elements.¹⁰⁸² Promising solutions after the IDF’s destruction of the PA’s infrastructure in the Second Intifada, the USSC’s subsidized PA compliance with Israeli demands. However, the contradiction between Washington’s stated concern for accountability, and the reality of constructing an authoritarian counterterrorism partner in the West Bank, was glaring. Moreover, as this chapter shows, the PA’s ability to perform its security obligations occurred without a mechanism to ensure that Israel took note, even in the context of scrutiny from the American brokers of the Annapolis negotiations. The final chapter of this study addresses the tensions that fraught the USSC’s efforts to reconcile its concern for Palestinian legal norms with the push for Israeli security that underpinned its mission in Jenin, a case emblematic of the ‘West Bank First’ strategy.

¹⁰⁸² Yezid Sayigh, “Policing the People, Building the State: Authoritarian Transformation in the West Bank and Gaza” (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 2011.)

Chapter 5: The Jenin Initiative and the Counterinsurgency of Technical Assistance

Introduction

This chapter undertakes an in-depth exploration of the “Jenin Initiative,” an intensive campaign by the international donor community to transform the northern West Bank city in the summer and fall of 2008. The Jenin Initiative was conceived as a “proof of concept” to show how the United States Security Coordinator’s (USSC) ‘West Bank first’ strategy could implement the Roadmap.¹⁰⁸³ Its foremost purpose was to demonstrate to Israel that the Palestinian Authority security forces (PASF) retrained by the USSC could meet Israel’s security demands.

The Jenin Initiative attempted to renew faith in the faltering Annapolis negotiations. Bilateral talks led by senior Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) negotiator Saeb Erekat and Israeli Foreign Minister (FM) Tzipi Livni sputtered on, but looming deadlines cast a shadow over the ‘peace process.’¹⁰⁸⁴ As seen in Chapter 4, Israel introduced new security redlines that created unprecedented barriers to Palestinian sovereignty. Further, the ‘peace process’ faced structural issues: the Palestinian leadership remained divided, with Hamas isolated and the Gaza Strip under full blockade. Unelected standing Prime Minister Salam Fayyad’s term as a caretaker of the emergency Palestinian Authority (PA) government in the West Bank had no legal legitimacy per the Palestinian Basic Law.

Further, in September 2007, Israel had declared the entire Strip a hostile territory, and the ongoing hostage crisis around Gilad Shalit put Hamas’s attempts at national reconciliation at odds with Abbas’s policy of negotiating with Israel.¹⁰⁸⁵ Responding to ongoing rocket fire by splinter groups from the Strip, in February 2008 Israel launched Operation Hot Winter, targeting Gaza with air strikes and a ground incursion. Though President Abbas briefly suspended negotiations with Gaza under fire, he quickly returned to the negotiating table under pressure from the US. A six-month ceasefire announced June 16 between the Gaza factions and Israel added an additional deadline to the stumbling peace process.¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸³ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 651.

¹⁰⁸⁵ “Barak: a-tahdi’ a yajib an tshaml Shalit wa nurid ist’adata al-amn b-ayy wasila min al-wasa’il,” *Al-Ayyam*, 22 May 2008; “Prelude to Operation Cast Lead: Israel’s Unilateral Disengagement to the Eve of War,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 38, 3 (2009): 157.

¹⁰⁸⁶ “Prelude to Operation Cast Lead,” 160-163.

At the same time, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert faced a storm of allegations about his financial conduct and leadership during the Israeli war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006. Olmert scrambled to stabilize a fragile coalition that included the Shas party, unequivocally opposed to any division of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁸⁷ Meanwhile, President Bush's second term neared its end, ushering in the uncertainty of a new American presidency to broker the 'peace process.' In July, Quartet Representative Tony Blair admitted to the Palestinian daily *Al Quds* that Olmert's political difficulties made an agreement by the end of 2008 unlikely.¹⁰⁸⁸

In this climate, the Jenin Initiative promised to catalyze renewed faith in Fayyad's institution-building program and Abbas's negotiations.¹⁰⁸⁹ The Initiative flooded Jenin with new internationally-funded development projects, attempting to show Palestinians the benefits of the 'West Bank first' strategy. Many of these initiatives were explicitly linked to Fayyad's Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP). The international community's efforts to bolster Fayyad functioned as a continued rejection of the politics of resistance that brought Hamas to power in the January 2006 elections.¹⁰⁹⁰ The Jenin Initiative was scrutinized at the highest levels of US government, as Bush Administration officials hoped the 'security first' approach in Jenin could spur political confidence.¹⁰⁹¹ In doing so, the Jenin Initiative exemplifies the growing precedence of military thinking over diplomatic efforts in US foreign policy.

This chapter argues that the Jenin Initiative did indeed exemplify the 'West Bank first' strategy, though not in the manner its designers intended. In Jenin, the fundamental shortcomings of the technical assistance that the international community offered Palestine after the demise of the 'freedom agenda' are revealed. On the one hand, the involvement of myriad international advisers rendered Palestinian ownership over the reforms impossible. On the other, the fact that the PA had to answer to USSC priorities ensured the creation of a stifling system of self-policing in Jenin. The Jenin Initiative was fundamentally responsive to Israeli political demands, as Washington stepped in to subjugate the West Bank to Israeli authority. Whereas the reassertion of PA rule in Jenin (and Nablus) through Operation Hope and Smile formed the military side of the counterinsurgency campaign Washington directed against the Palestinians, the Jenin

¹⁰⁸⁷ "Isrā'īl tatajih nahū ijrā' in thakhabābāt mubakira wa Livni t'daū hizbhā l-ikhitiyyār khalifāt Olmert," *Al-Ayyām*, 31 May 2008; "Prelude to Operation Cast Lead," 162.

¹⁰⁸⁸ "Khālid Mesh'al l-ṣaḥīfa iṭāliyya: isrā'īl ghayr musta'da lil-salām," *Al-Quds* 2 July 2008; "Tony Blair lil-Quds: wadha' a-siyyāsī fī isrā'īl yuja' l min a-ṣ'ab al-wuṣūl ilā itifāq salām bi-ḥulūl nihāyyat al-'ām," *Al-Quds* 12 July 2008.

¹⁰⁸⁹ "Fayyād: binā' dowlat al-mu'asasāt wa takrīs ḥukm al-qānūn min alwā awlūwiyyātnā," *Al-Ayyām* 31 May 2008.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Tartir, "Securitized Development and Palestinian Authoritarianism Under Fayyadism," 491.

¹⁰⁹¹ Office of the Quartet. "Statement by Middle East Quartet." Jerusalem, 26 September 2008.

Initiative drew on the same counterinsurgency doctrines to uphold PA control. Linda Tabar argues that in Jenin, resistance “was subdued by separately intervening technologies of power, including [...] a long colonial counterinsurgency campaign that was followed by donor-driven projects.”¹⁰⁹² The Jenin Initiative is central to that story.

This chapter draws on original interviews and the personal papers of former officials stationed with the USSC in Jerusalem. These papers have been anonymized in full to protect the identity of all those involved. The USSC coordinated the Jenin Initiative and designed the security elements of the effort. Analyzing the USSC’s slideshows, meeting minutes, internal communications, and press briefings tells the story of how the mission’s work unfolded on the ground. The chapter also benefits from diplomatic cables about the Jenin Initiative leaked to WikiLeaks and *Al Jazeera*. Taken together, these sources reveal the underbelly of the efforts deployed in Jenin.

Chapter Outline

This chapter is a case study of a specific moment in the ‘peace process’ that reverberates to this day. The Jenin Initiative makes clear how the international community mobilized resources to co-opt Palestinians, seeking to ‘manage’ the conflict rather than solve it, even as the Initiative promised to propel confidence at the political level. It first examines the design and execution of the Jenin Initiatives’ economic development and infrastructure support elements. The chapter highlights how these measures implemented the Israeli vision of ‘economic peace’ with the Palestinians, and their reception among a Palestinian elite amenable to the status quo. The analysis also focuses on the technical fixes that the USSC proffered to address Israeli restrictions that stifled the Palestinian economy, exposing the implicit continuation of Israeli control such fixes ensured.

The final section of this chapter explores an internal investigation conducted by the USSC in Jenin. Israeli claims that the retrained PASF were quickly releasing detainees concerned the USSC. In the course of its investigation, the USSC faced the full scale of Israel’s deployment of the concept of ‘security’ for political ends. Rather than assert pressure against the Israeli policies, the chapter shows that the USSC demurred and carried on constructing an

¹⁰⁹² Linda Tabar, “The ‘Urban Redesign’ of Jenin Refugee Camp: Humanitarian Intervention and Rational Violence.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41, 2 (2012): 48.

effective apparatus of Palestinian self-policing. As a result, the USSC was instrumental in inserting Israel's political demands into the growing security regime of the Palestinian Authority. The repercussions of the USSC's failures to confront this reality endure today, as the chapter also demonstrates: the USSC mission was integral to duplicating the repression Palestinians face from the occupation in the form of the Palestinian Authority. The 'security-first' agenda, meanwhile, has only enabled Israel's project of colonial settlement, displacement, and control. The story of the Jenin Initiative is thus important to understand the impact of interventions that address repressive systems only to redress their inefficiencies, thereby fortifying them.

A Security-Development Microcosm

Following the PASF's successful redeployment in Nablus and Jenin in November 2007 and May 2008 respectively, the international community sought to build momentum to support the ongoing Annapolis talks in the summer of 2008. On June 24, the international donor community convened in Berlin to pledge support for the PA's security sector reform underway under USSC supervision. This section analyzes the proceedings of the Berlin conference and the development packages offered to kick-start the economy in Jenin. It highlights the contradiction between security sector reform that emphasized accountability, and the intrusion of international donors at every level of the PA as a result of the same reform's financing.

The Berlin Conference

In order to enable the Jenin pilot project and enforce the PA's political primacy, the international donor community gathered in Berlin in June 2008. Framed as a continuation of the November 2007 Paris conference in support of Palestinian reform, the Berlin meeting focused specifically on the policing and justice sectors.¹⁰⁹³ Though the Berlin Conference donors foregrounded Palestinian performance and accountability, Washington's counterterrorism paradigm drove international efforts behind the scenes.¹⁰⁹⁴ While situating the Berlin conference

¹⁰⁹³ 6 June 2008, Preparatory Meeting for Berlin Conference on Palestinian Civil Security and Rule of Law. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁹⁴ Friedrich and Luethold, "And They Came in and Took Possession of Reforms: Ownership and Palestinian SSR," 198-199.

amidst wider efforts to “keep the political process on track,” attention to policing confirmed Washington’s domination of the Quartet’s priorities.¹⁰⁹⁵

At a preparatory meeting in Jericho on June 6, Palestinian representatives explained their priorities to American and European diplomats. Khalid Salim of the PA’s Ministry of the Interior noted that each of the Palestinian proposals was written in line with the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP), but focused support on the PA’s limited capacity to meet its security performance obligations per the Roadmap. Salim noted the insufficient legal framework, lack of equipment and transportation, and inadequate infrastructure that beset the Palestinian police and judiciary sectors. The PA prioritized the construction of modern courthouses and offices for prosecutors, as well as a forensic medical institute, and the expansion of prosecutorial capacity.¹⁰⁹⁶ The PA encouraged contributions through the Ministry of Finance’s Single Treasury Account, a mechanism backed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.¹⁰⁹⁷

In the run-up to the Berlin conference, the Quartet also convened in the German capital. The Quartet’s statement on June 24 “underscored the urgent need for more visible progress on the ground in order to build confidence and support progress in the negotiations launched at Annapolis.”¹⁰⁹⁸ With these purposes in mind, the assembled donors – primarily European – pledged over \$224 million to support the Palestinian police and an array of programs designed to strengthen the rule of law in the West Bank.¹⁰⁹⁹ The EU focused on the PA’s ability to ensure law and order. European attention to Palestinian judicial reform rested on the notion that ‘justice’ and ‘good governance’ had a substantive value in the absence of a state.¹¹⁰⁰

In reality, these values were fleeting. Instead, the Berlin conference provided significant rationale for the creeping transformation of the PA into an ever more malleable proxy by multiplying the channels through which the international community directed the security sector reform process. The United Nations’ Office for Project Services stepped up as a conduit between

¹⁰⁹⁵ Office of the Quartet, “Statement by Middle East Quartet” (Jerusalem, 2 May 2008.); Office of the Quartet, “Statement by Middle East Quartet” (Jerusalem, 24 June 2008.); Martin Beck, Henner Fürtig, and Hanspeter Mattes, “Herausforderungen deutscher Außenpolitik im Nahen Osten.” GIGA Focus 6 (2008)

¹⁰⁹⁶ 6 June 2008, Preparatory Meeting for Berlin Conference on Palestinian Civil Security and Rule of Law. [WikiLeaks]; 30 April 2008, PA Security Chiefs, IDF Commanders Coordinate Future Jenin Operation, Area B Operations and Police Stations. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁹⁷ 6 June 2008, Preparatory Meeting for Berlin Conference on Palestinian Civil Security and Rule of Law. [WikiLeaks]

¹⁰⁹⁸ Office of the Quartet. “Statement by Middle East Quartet.” Jerusalem, 24 June 2008.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Local Aid Coordination Secretariat, “Berlin Conference on Support for Palestinian Civil Security and Rule of Law: Financial Support for the Palestinian Civil Police and Rule of Law,” 24 June 2008 http://lacs.ps/documentsShow.aspx?ATT_ID=604; Matthias Monroy, “Deutschlands “Herz der Polizei” schlägt in der West Bank,” Heise Telepolis 8 February 2011.

¹¹⁰⁰ Khalil and Del Sarto, “The Legal Fragmentation of Palestine-Israel and European Union Policies Promoting the Rule of Law,” 144.

technical assistance providers, and the UN Development Program joined the USSC in coordinating programs.¹¹⁰¹ The European Union's mission to train the Palestinian police - EUPOL-COPPS – also increased its involvement in 'rule of law programs.' EUPOL-COPPS inserted consultants in Palestinian courts, the Palestine College of Police Sciences (Jericho), and the PA's penitentiary system. EUPOL-COPPS advised the PA's High Judicial Council, Attorney General, and the Palestinian bar association.¹¹⁰² The EU regarded its growing prominence as a mark of both technical success, and as proof of an assertive European presence on the ground. With EUPOL-COPPS, the EU was able to break its reputation as a "payer, not a player" in the US-dominated Middle East 'peace process.'¹¹⁰³

However, Washington continued to serve as the driving force behind security reform, anchoring the Palestinian agenda in commitment to Israeli security. After the Berlin donor conference, the American development agency, USAID, expanded its efforts to reform the Palestinian justice sector. USAID's programs included the NETHAM Rule of Law initiative, and the Palestinian Justice Enhancement Project, totaling \$29 million together and run through Californian subcontractor DPK Consulting.¹¹⁰⁴ USAID's Palestinian Authority Capacity Enhancement (PACE) Program, subcontracted to two Washington based-firms, carried out programs to professionalize the Palestinian ministries. One program included teaching Ministry of Transportation personnel Hebrew.¹¹⁰⁵ The "Justice Now" program supported a number initiatives that addressed the shortages in personnel and equipment in the Palestinian judicial sector.¹¹⁰⁶

¹¹⁰¹ Friedrich and Luethold, "And They Came in and Took Possession of Reforms," 198-199.

¹¹⁰² Alaa Tartir and Filip Ejodus, "Effective? Locally Owned? Beyond the Technocratic Perspective on the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories," *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, 1 (2018): 143.

¹¹⁰³ Tartir and Ejodus, "Effective? Locally Owned? Beyond the Technocratic Perspective on the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories," 143; 2 May 2008, Chief Justice, Attorney General, and Justice Minister on Jenin, Justice Sector Framework. [WikiLeaks]

¹¹⁰⁴ Dmitris Bouris, *The European Union and Occupied Palestinian Territories: State Building without a State* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2014), 144 -146; United States Agency – International Development, "Justice and Enforcement Program in the West Bank and Gaza NETHAM Project – Report on Status of Palestinian Judiciary" (DPK Consulting - Washington, DC: April 2007.) DPK Consulting is now called Tetra Tech DPK. TetraTech DPK, "West Bank and Gaza: Rule of Law Program – Justice and Enforcement," <http://www.tetratedpk.com/index.php/countries/135-asia-near-east/west-bank-and-gaza> United States Agency – International Development. "West Bank and Gaza: NETHAM Rule of Law Program Justice and Enforcement, 18th Quarterly Report" (Washington, DC: DPK Consulting, March 2010.)

¹¹⁰⁵ ReliefWeb, "USAID West Bank/Gaza Mission Program Achievements – Week of 22 June 2009," <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/usa-id-west-bank-gaza-mission-program-achievements-week-22-jun> The Kaizen Company: Development Transformations, "West Bank and Gaza – Palestinian Authority Capacity Enhancement (PACE), USAID, 2008-2012." <http://www.dev.thekaizencompany.com/west-bank-and-gaza-palestinian-authority-capacity-enhancement-pace-usaid-2008-2012/> Susan M. Roberts, "Development Capital: USAID and the Rise of Development Contractors," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104, 5 (2014): 1030-1051.

¹¹⁰⁶ Bouris, *The European Union and Occupied Palestinian Territories*, 146.

On May 21, the PA's Chief Justice, Minister of Justice, and Attorney General held a "Justice Day" in the West Bank in order to strengthen public understanding of the transformation of the justice sector. USAID's NETHAM program targeted 1,500 West Bank schools with programming about the "Rule of Law" initiative, emphasizing the equality of all Palestinians before the law.¹¹⁰⁷ The ongoing implementation of the Seyada I project provided further depth to the justice sector transformation envisioned in Jenin. Run by the European Commission, the first phase of Seyada ("sovereignty" in Arabic) had a budget of €3.75 million and included the establishment of the Palestinian Judicial Training Institute for professionalization, the creation of an inspection library, and technological training for staff at the High Judicial Council.¹¹⁰⁸

In the absence of democratic rule in Palestine, the influx of aid for the purpose of strengthening 'democratic' institutions was a hollow premise. Instead, the steady flow of international consultants made reform enacted in the PA ever more responsive exclusively to the donor community. By 2008, foreign assistance to the PA accounted for 58% of the GDP, up from 18% in 2000.¹¹⁰⁹ Instead of a forging a path to sovereignty, the proliferation of internationally-funded projects distanced the PA from ordinary Palestinians. International intervention in the PA replaced popular representation with an amorphous and expanding set of internationals who were responsible for 'managing' the West Bank.

Several scholars have critically theorized the distorting effects of aid interventions in the PA. As Benoît Challand argues, USAID in particular worked with a small, select coterie of local implementing organizations, created closed circuits that promote a "procedural approach to aid which has to be *managed* rather than built with local partners."¹¹¹⁰ Eyal Weizman contends that humanitarian interventions globally are driven not by naive compassion, but rather "a highly specialized and concerted international effort to manage populations that are seen posing a risk."¹¹¹¹ As Mandy Turner notes, reform to the PA relied on alliances with local elites to create stability. This Palestinian elite policed fellow Palestinians, mediating the obtrusiveness of the occupation. The international donor community interfaced with this elite to create more insidious

¹¹⁰⁷ 2 May 2008, Chief Justice, Attorney General, and Justice Minister on Jenin, Justice Sector Framework. [WikiLeaks]

¹¹⁰⁸ Bouris, *The European Union and Occupied Palestinian Territories*, 146.

¹¹⁰⁹ Roy, "Reconceptualizing the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Key Paradigm Shifts," 82-83.

¹¹¹⁰ Benoît Challand, "The Evolution of Western Aid for Palestinian Civil Society: Bypassing Local Knowledge and Resources," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, 3 (2008): 409-410.

¹¹¹¹ Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 56-57.

forms of ensuring security and stability.¹¹¹² Laleh Khalili shows how the same dynamics are at play in many sites of contemporary counterinsurgency. Aversion to the use of raw violence for control has led to transformations of the “complexion of power,” relying instead on persuasive means. In the reforms enacted with the support of the Berlin conference, the practices of peace- and institution-building envisioned by the international donor community were intertwined with the promise of sustained Israeli control.

Nestled in Fayyad’s vision of institutional transformation in the West Bank, the Berlin conference lent international support for the USSC-directed revamping of the PA’s security forces. However, as Tariq Dana notes, one of the major shortcomings of Fayyad’s vision was that it ignored the asymmetrical power relations between Israel and the Palestinians.¹¹¹³ Without a viable mechanism to translate Palestinian institution building and security performance into actual statebuilding, Fayyadism threatened to make reform an end in itself. With the outpouring of financial support offered in Berlin for security sector fortification, the only certain result was the securitization of Palestinian life. In examining the Jenin Initiative, the results of the vision proposed by Fayyad and his international patrons to meet Israeli demands are evident.

Transforming Jenin

Jenin was one of the most prominent of sites of resistance during the Second Intifada. The birthplace of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the city and its surrounding villages were the most active area of the West Bank in conducting *istishhadi*, or martyrdom, operations during the uprising.¹¹¹⁴ In April 2002, the city’s refugee camp was the site of a battle in which much of the camp’s buildings were destroyed. “Jeningrad,” as Yasser Arafat called it, was heralded among the Palestinian resistance as a symbol of *ṣumūd*, or steadfastness.¹¹¹⁵

As the Second Intifada drew to a close, the city’s infrastructure was under duress and poverty rates hovered around 47%.¹¹¹⁶ Further, as Nasser Abufarha explains, Jenin’s militancy during the Second Intifada had generated social chaos. Like in besieged Nablus, the near-total absence of local governance for sustained periods gave rise to young, charismatic leaders. The

¹¹¹² Turner, “Peacebuilding as Counterinsurgency in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” 88.

¹¹¹³ Dana, “The Symbiosis between Palestinian ‘Fayyadism’ and Israeli ‘Economic Peace,’” 464-5.

¹¹¹⁴ Abufarha, *The Making of a Human Bomb*, 2, 82.

¹¹¹⁵ Tartir, “Criminalizing Resistance,” 9.

¹¹¹⁶ Leila Farsakh, “Palestinian Economic Development: Paradigm Shifts since the First Intifada,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 45, 2 (2016): 60.

model of local resistance was characterized by personal initiatives undertaken by cells within Jenin's *kitā'ib*, or sections of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. These forces only accelerated the disintegration of daily life within Jenin.¹¹¹⁷

The Jenin Initiative both responded to the economic marginalization of the city and envisioned an explicit plan to upend the city's politics of resistance. Despite the prominence of the Fatah *tanzim* in Jenin historically, in December 2005 Hamas candidates ousted Fatah in elections for the municipal council. The Islamists' victory demonstrated Jenin's strong local support for the resistance, and constituted a sharp rebuke to Fatah's leadership.¹¹¹⁸

Linda Tabar and Lisa Bhungalia have both demonstrated the historical precedents of humanitarian intervention in Jenin. In 2002, UNRWA led a large-scale reconstruction of Jenin's refugee camp. In the process, the camp's alleys were redesigned to fit the dimensions of the Israeli Merkava Mark III tank, refashioning the camp's terrain itself into a "spatial technology of control."¹¹¹⁹ The Jenin Initiative continued the transformation of the city from a "radical space of collective opposition" to a focal point of US-led pacification of one of the West Bank's most marginalized populations.¹¹²⁰

A West Bank Exemplar

As one former USSC official closely involved with the project related in an interview, the Jenin initiative was designed to be a microcosm of the US's vision for transforming the West Bank. Through carefully coordinated, well-funded development projects, economic growth would bring stability. USSC advocacy with Israeli security officials would facilitate Palestinian movement, reinforcing economic growth. This integrated security-development approach was called "the Washington Matrix" internally among the Initiative's designers. The matrix's components were security, the economy, infrastructure, and administration of justice.¹¹²¹

Jenin was selected because of its geographical location – removed from settlement concentrations – and because of its economic dynamics prior to the intifada.¹¹²² Before 2000, according to the USSC, nearly 15,000 Jenin residents worked daily within Israel, and the city

¹¹¹⁷ Abufarha, *The Making of a Human Bomb*, 87.

¹¹¹⁸ "Duniyya filasṭīn: ḥamās tuḥāṣid ghālabiyyat muqā'd al-intakhābāt al-baladiyya fī mudun al-ḍifa al-gharbiyya," *Al-Watan Voice*, 16 December 2005.

¹¹¹⁹ Bhungalia, "Managing Violence," 2309.

¹¹²⁰ Tabar, *The 'Urban Redesign' of Jenin Refugee Camp*, 48.

¹¹²¹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹²² Personal papers, former USSC member.

hosted up to 35,000 Palestinian citizens of Israel as visitors who shopped on the weekends.¹¹²³ Although the nearest crossing, called Jalame, had been largely inactive prior to the uprising, the USSC fixated on its revival as a top priority. The Jenin initiative emerged in hopes of “improving livelihoods, [and] improving perceptions,” as one USSC talking point put it.¹¹²⁴

In July 2008, the USSC began its preparations to support the Jenin Initiative. Dayton inquired after British support for the project to complement that of Quartet Envoy Tony Blair and Gen. Jim Jones, Washington’s special envoy for Middle East security.¹¹²⁵ Jones, charged by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice with providing an American evaluation of the security needs for an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, took special interest in the Jenin Initiative.¹¹²⁶ Dayton deputized British Brigadier John Deverell to lead the USSC’s efforts. Deverell was appointed “coordinator for all international efforts to improve the quality of life for all Palestinian living in Jenin Governate.”¹¹²⁷ The Ramallah-based British contingent to the USSC and the mission’s Canadian attachés formed the face of the Jenin Team, due to ongoing State Department restrictions on travel in the West Bank. Internally, the USSC referred to the British Support Team and Canadian Road Warriors.¹¹²⁸

The counterinsurgency perspective that the Jenin Initiative’s leadership brought to the project demonstrates the USSC’s impact in folding Palestine into Washington’s ‘war on terror.’ As discussed in Chapter 4, the ‘war on terror’ iteration of US counterinsurgency entailed a role for the military in tasks like constructing roads and providing community services. In some instances, the application of the counterinsurgency lens in Palestine meant borrowing solutions applied in Iraq and Afghanistan explicitly. For example, in Jenin, the USSC sought to establish Development Operations Centers, adapted from the Pentagon’s Reconstruction Operations Centers in Iraq.¹¹²⁹

¹¹²³ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹²⁴ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹²⁵ United States Department of State & USAID, “Joint Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism” (Washington, DC: May 2016.)

¹¹²⁶ “Watch Jim Jones, He Breaks Stalemates,” *The Daily Star* 6 December 2008.

¹¹²⁷ John Deverell, “Fifteen Months in the West Bank – Working toward a Secure and Stable Palestinian State,” *British Army Review* 146 (2009): 61.

¹¹²⁸ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹²⁹ Personal papers, former USSC official; Mick Ryan, “The Military and Reconstruction Operations,” *Parameters* (2007): 58-70. Run primarily by private security contractors, like British company Aegis, the Reconstruction Operations Centers coordinated efforts between governmental, aid, and private security bodies, as well as fulfilling intelligence collection purposes that would traditionally have fallen to governmental organizations. Steve Fainaru and Alec Klein, “In Iraq, a Private Realm of Intelligence Gathering,” *The Washington Post* 1 July 2007; Christopher McKinsey, *Private Contractors and the Reconstruction of Iraq: Transforming Military Logistics* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 66-67.

In US counterinsurgency thinking, social and economic reforms were designed to co-opt populations to under US rule.¹¹³⁰ Special Envoy for Middle East Security Jones in particular espoused this perspective: Jones had overseen NATO forces in Afghanistan, where he emphasized that securitized development was key to stability.¹¹³¹ In conversation with Israeli Ministry of Defense officials, Jones pointed to the Marine Corps' counterinsurgency doctrine as a guide for his assessments of the West Bank security situation. Jones stressed the interconnections between economic development, reconstruction, education, and training that formed the basis of US counterinsurgency policy.¹¹³² Jones also chaired the 2007 Independent Commission on the Iraqi Security Forces, reviewing the training Iraqi forces had undergone and evaluating their preparation to provide security in an independent Iraq. While Jones's official role in Palestine differed, his purpose was similar, demonstrating that Washington conceived of experience in other sites of the 'war on terror' as a form of expertise to better understand Palestine.

The USSC team in Jenin submitted weekly updates on its progress to the White House and the National Security Council.¹¹³³ A significant component of the USSC's work consisted of liaising with Israeli defense officials to ease security restrictions on Palestinian movement. At the same time, the USSC strengthened and communicated the growing capacity of the PASF to Washington and Israel.¹¹³⁴ In a planning meeting with Gen. Jones on April 13, Fayyad worried that the spectacle around the Initiative threatened to raise public expectations, especially Blair's much-publicized Quick Impact Projects.¹¹³⁵ Jones argued that the "optics" of the Jenin Initiative were important to capture the imagination of international donors. "Tell Blair to keep talking to his friend Barak about removing checkpoints," Fayyad responded, referring to the Israeli Defense Minister.¹¹³⁶ The interest of the upper echelons of US government and the disagreement between Fayyad and Jones speaks to the conflicting reasons that the US and the PA took interest in the Jenin Initiative from the outset.

¹¹³⁰ Khalili, *Time in the Shadows*, 242.

¹¹³¹ 13 January 2008 US Envoys Dayton, Jones and Frazier – Mission Description and Biographical Highlights (PLO): 2.

¹¹³² 20 December 2007, PASF Dec 17 Update to LTG Dayton on Bethlehem Preparations, Israeli Coordination. [WikiLeaks]

¹¹³³ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

¹¹³⁴ 11 September 2008 Meeting Recap: Saeb Erekat and Jim Jones (PLO): 1.

¹¹³⁵ 28 March 2008, Scen setter for NEA Assistant Secretary Welch's April 1 Visit to Qatar. [WikiLeaks]; Isabel Kershner, "Blair Unveils Proposals to Improve Life on the West Bank," *The New York Times* 14 May 2008; 18 November 2007, Annapolis Quick Impact Projects (PLO); Stop the Wall Campaign, "Development or Normalization? A Critique of West Bank Development Approaches and Projects," <https://www.stophthewall.org/downloads/PRDPcritique.pdf>

¹¹³⁶ 13 April 2008 Meeting Minutes – Salam Fayyad and Jim Jones (PLO): 2.

The leaked proceedings of a September 2008 meeting between Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat and Jones reveal some of the interests that drove the Jenin Initiative. The project was significant to its intended Palestinian audience, where the threat of failed negotiations endangered the PA. Erekat complained about the Israeli negotiating team's intransigence with regards to security, imploring Jones to provide an impartial assessment of Israeli security demands. The Israeli negotiators called for an Israeli security presence in the West Bank, and particularly the Jordan Valley. Erekat characterized the Israeli redlines as a "sick attitude," and told Jones there was little point in changing the title from "occupation" to "state" if Israeli troops remained.¹¹³⁷

In the same meeting, however, Erekat bemoaned the slow path toward reform within Fatah. Should the negotiations collapse, Erekat warned Abbas would have to step down. "If all this fails, however, Ben Laden [sic] will have won," Erekat warned, using the alarmist discourse that Fatah deployed to mobilize the counterterrorism-driven US support against Hamas.¹¹³⁸ As USSC member Deverell noted, "The Palestinian moderates who promote peaceful negotiation as a better strategy than violence for getting a state desperately need to be able to show the people some tangible results for their pains."¹¹³⁹

'Team Jenin' referred to their work as "a trans-West Bank exemplar."¹¹⁴⁰ The project's timing reflected the factional interests of the Palestinian leadership dependent on the viability of the 'peace process.' The Jenin Initiative's model of securitized development exemplifies the militarization of foreign assistance under the counterterror paradigm ascendant after 9/11, transforming the US role from deeply flawed broker of negotiations to director of a multifaceted counterinsurgency campaign on the ground in Palestine. The same model privileged the Israeli purpose of casting all resistance as a security threat, while providing staying power for the politically vulnerable PA.

Fayyadism, Economic Peace, and Counterterrorism

In exploring the Jenin Initiative's economic development components, it is useful to understand their context within Fayyad's vision. The basic principles of Fayyad's platform were

¹¹³⁷ 11 September 2008 Meeting Recap: Saeb Erekat and Jim Jones (PLO): 2.

¹¹³⁸ 11 September 2008 Meeting Recap: Saeb Erekat and Jim Jones (PLO): 3.

¹¹³⁹ Deverell, "Fifteen Months in the West Bank," 63.

¹¹⁴⁰ Personal papers, former USSC member.

twofold. First, the reforms he carried out exhibited to the international community Palestinian capacity for statehood. At the same time, reforms would improve the daily lives of West Bank residents, particularly in terms of economic growth and personal security, creating a popular buy-in for Fayyad's mandate. While many cogent critiques and defenses of 'Fayyadism' exist, his overall political calculus, exemplified in Jenin, had a number of profound repercussions that endure to this day.¹¹⁴¹ Before analyzing the Jenin Initiative's achievements, it is useful to map out the manner in which Fayyadism intersected with the Israeli premise of "economic peace," and the two converged with Washington's counterterrorism focus in Jenin.

The economic stabilization and institution-building foregrounded in Fayyad's development plans promised Palestinians day-to-day normalcy as a condition to end the occupation.¹¹⁴² As Raja Khalidi and Sobhi Samour argue, the PA under Fayyad was inextricable from a "US-sponsored attempt to prop up a pliable, "moderate" Palestinian leadership, integrate Israel in the wider region, and manage (not resolve) the conflict."¹¹⁴³ A number of scholars have outlined the effects of Fayyad's policies, which are evident in the Jenin Initiative. As Alaa Tartir notes, Fayyadism fragmented Palestinian society into a core – the bubble of Ramallah and tourist hub of Bethlehem – and a residual periphery. The refugee camps, as well as cities like Nablus and Jenin, were cast as "spaces of chaos," and as pools of potential cheap labor.¹¹⁴⁴

Interest in cheap labor linked some Palestinian elites to the PRDP. These elites were "separated from the rest of society by a wide gulf in terms of wealth and power."¹¹⁴⁵ They derived from a handful of families of Palestinian capital at ease with the transformation of the West Bank under American direction. As Lisa Taraki, Ghazi-Walid Falah, and Leila Farsakh note, a major result of the Second Intifada was the growing enclavisation of the West Bank. Physical separation into enclaves isolated refugee camps from the cities; the militant urban centers of Nablus and Jenin from the rest of the West Bank; and the marginalized Palestinians at

¹¹⁴¹ For a range of assessments, see for example: Tariq Dana, "The Symbiosis between Palestinian 'Fayyadism' and Israeli 'Economic Peace,'" 455-477; Raja Khalidi and Sobhi Samour, "Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Program and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, 2 (2011): 6-25; Thomas L. Friedman, "Green Shoots in Palestine," *The New York Times* 4 August 2009; Nathan Brown, "Fayyad is Not the Problem, but Fayyadism is Not the Solution to Palestine's Political Crisis" (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 17 September 2010.)

¹¹⁴² Farsakh, "Palestinian Economic Development," 60.

¹¹⁴³ Khalidi and Samour, "Neoliberalism as Liberation," 12.

¹¹⁴⁴ Tartir, "Securitized Development and Palestinian Authoritarianism Under Fayyadism," 492-493.

¹¹⁴⁵ Philip Leech, "Re-Reading the Myth of Fayyadism: A Critical Analysis of the Palestinian Authority's Reform and State-Building Agenda, 2008-2011," (Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2012), 66. For more, see: Sari Hanafi and Linda Tabar, *The Emergence of a Palestinian Globalized Elite: Donors, International Organizations, and Local NGOs* (Jerusalem and Ramallah: Institute of Palestine Studies and Muwatin, the Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, 2005.)

the intersection of those identities – poorer, often refugees or villagers – from an elite and growing middle class amenable to the reform agenda.¹¹⁴⁶ Fayyad’s reforms – by elevating the interests of that same elite – exacerbated the fragmentation of Palestinian society.

Tariq Dana similarly analyzes the transformation of Palestinian civil society that accelerated under Fayyad. Dana argues that the influx of foreign aid caused a dramatic decline in “decentralized grassroots activism and its replacement with a hierarchical structure narrowly defined by a growing elitist tendency.”¹¹⁴⁷ While the NGO-ization of Palestinian civil society has evolved since the onset of the Oslo process, increased foreign interest and funding in primarily Ramallah and Bethlehem-based NGOs spawned a market logic in Palestinian civil society.¹¹⁴⁸ Their focus on proposals, grant-writing, socioeconomic assessments, and program evaluation for foreign donors forestalled local decision-making. Like the economic fragmentation of the West Bank, Dana argues that “this exclusion process has resulted in a systemic de-politicization, demobilization, and de-radicalization of the masses at large,” who instead stood “at the receiving end of services and values.”¹¹⁴⁹ The elite NGO class, meanwhile, was beholden to the discourse of aid organizations, acting as a class of professionals to interface with development agencies.

This elite was required to tailor its message to reflect the concepts in vogue with its patrons, such as non-violence, capacity-building, and women’s representation.¹¹⁵⁰ Like Fayyad’s technocratic pedigree, civil society’s ‘insiders’ were equipped with technical and managerial tools that avoided the root of social and economic problems in Palestinian society: the Israeli occupation. Instead, their connections to the donor community constituted another form of patronage, allocating privileges. The distance between beneficiaries of donor largess and the lived experiences of those excluded from Fayyad’s vision generates popular resentment that only lent credit to Islamist alternatives, excluded from the PA.¹¹⁵¹ Those not co-opted by Fayyad’s vision faced its coercive side in the form of the US-trained PASF.

¹¹⁴⁶ Ghazi-Walid Falah, “The Geopolitics of ‘Enclavisation’ and the Demise of a Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” *Third World Quarterly* 26, 8 (2005): 1341-1372; Taraki, “Enclave Micropolis,” 6-20; Farsakh, “Independence, Cantons, or Bantustans,” 230-245.

¹¹⁴⁷ Tariq Dana, “The Structural Transformation of Palestinian Civil Society: Key Shifts,” *Middle East Critique* (2015): 9

¹¹⁴⁸ Islah Jad, “NGOs: Between Buzzwords and Social Movements,” *Development in Practice* 17, 4-5 (2007): 624-626.

¹¹⁴⁹ Dana, “The Structural Transformation of Palestinian Civil Society,” 12; Noemi Casati, “Political Participation in a Palestinian University: Nablus Undergraduates’ Political Subjectivities through Boredom, Fear, and Consumption,” *Ethnography* 17, 4 (2016): 519-524.

¹¹⁵⁰ Abufarha, *The Making of a Human Bomb*. 94.

¹¹⁵¹ Dana, “The Structural Transformation of Palestinian Civil Society,” 12

Moreover, Fayyadism's focus on economic growth and improving daily life dovetailed neatly with Israeli political plans both old and new. Fayyadism replicated the basic tenets of the principle of asymmetric containment. Asymmetrical containment had been at the forefront of Israeli plans for the occupied Territories since the 1967 Allon Plan, but was epitomized by the Oslo Accords that installed the PA.¹¹⁵² Asymmetric containment envisioned Israeli control over important strategic assets and continued colonization, while maintaining order among Palestinians who populate the remaining land. Fayyad's promise of good governance and stability presented a Palestinian face to the Israeli prerogative of asymmetrical control.¹¹⁵³

More specifically, Fayyadism also converged with the Israeli aim of substituting final status negotiations for "economic peace."¹¹⁵⁴ Nearly concurrent with the Jenin Initiative, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu articulated the concept of "economic peace" as he began positioning himself for a possible campaign to replace Olmert in early elections. Like Fayyadism, "economic peace" proposed market-driven solutions to the conflict. It promised to counter the appeal of Islamist alternatives with an influx of Western financial support to the Palestinians.¹¹⁵⁵

Seizing upon the tenet that states avoid conflict when the costs to profit are higher than the benefits of violence, Netanyahu argued that the existing bilateral negotiations were misguided. Instead, the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian impasse lay in improving the Palestinian economy. At a conference in Herzliya he described the economic situation in the West Bank as conducive to despair and terror.¹¹⁵⁶ Netanyahu stated:

Palestinians need hope. They must believe that there is a possibility to improve their lives, that there is a future for their children. Economic peace rests on Israeli security and on facts of the market. We must create "islands" of prosperity, bases of hope – farming projects, industries, tourism and others. Projects that are aimed at the periphery. We must promote projects that rely on real market forces which will constitute a cycle and an option for discourse with the Palestinian Authority.¹¹⁵⁷

In exchange for compliance with the political status quo and tightening security control, the "economic peace" formulation – like Fayyadism – suggested that Palestinians should be rewarded with improved job prospects, better flow of products, and growing foreign investment.

¹¹⁵² Gilbert Achcar, "Le sionisme et la paix: Du plan Allon aux Accords de Washington," *L'homme et la société* 114 (1994): 7-25.

¹¹⁵³ Leech, "Re-reading the Myth of Fayyadism," 7, 9.

¹¹⁵⁴ Raphael Ahren, "Netanyahu: Economics, Not Politics, Is the Key to Peace," *Haaretz* 20 November 2008.

¹¹⁵⁵ Nizan Feldman, "Economic Peace: Theory versus Reality," *Strategic Assessment* 12, 3 (2009): 24.

¹¹⁵⁶ Feldman, "Economic Peace," 21.

¹¹⁵⁷ Herzliya Conference. "MK Benjamin Netanyahu: 8th Conference," (Herzliya, Israel: 20-23 January 2008.)

While the messages of Fayyadism and “economic peace” resonated with each other, their purposes were at odds. Netanyahu’s ‘economic peace’ purported to create the conditions for Palestinians and Israelis to negotiate. Fayyadism envisioned creating a *de facto* Palestinian state, to be granted sovereignty by international organizations by merit of its state-like attributes.¹¹⁵⁸ Netanyahu’s proposal, by contrast, matched his broader rejection of territorial concession with the Palestinians and mirrored the Likud’s previous insistence on Palestinian democratization as a diversion from the substance of negotiations.¹¹⁵⁹ Fayyad’s vision was earnestly embraced by international financial institutions and the US-led donor community. In echoing Netanyahu’s language, Fayyad inserted Israeli political aims into the organs of Palestinian self-governance.

USSC members in the Jenin Initiative were aware of the weak basis on which Fayyad’s government rested, composed of technocrats who spoke the finance and management language donors valued but lacked political legitimacy among Palestinians. One internal USSC report noted: “it is important to understand that even within the PA and the PASF, not everyone is entirely committed either to the continuation of the Fayyad government, nor to increased transparency of security operations and activities, nor to the potential reshaping of the Palestinian security sector hierarchy.”¹¹⁶⁰ Another USSC communication explained that the Fayyad government was threatened both by the specter of Hamas, and the clique of Fatah security chiefs. Calling the chiefs “clowns,” the USSC believed their schemes to reassert Fatah control in Gaza by force would only result in more violence and disaster for the PA.¹¹⁶¹

Another USSC memorandum noted that Washington’s whole-hearted support of Fayyad meant little if he had no supporters, even if he had “done more to achieve a Palestinian state than any other Palestinian leader.”¹¹⁶² The USSC was wary that Fayyad would be perceived as a puppet – one memo noted: “suggest public affairs campaign, but not led by USSC.”¹¹⁶³ As such, bolstering Fayyad’s popularity was critical, as well as bringing the security chiefs into the fold. As USSC attaché Deverell put it, the thesis of the Jenin Initiative was the USSC could “consolidate the position of the moderates and show all Palestinians that there was a valid and

¹¹⁵⁸ Feldman, “Economic Peace,” 24.; “Fayyād: Ist’ādat wiḥdat al-waṭn mumkina bil-istijābat l-mubādarat a-ra’īs wa tashkīl ḥukūmat tuwafuq waṭnī,” *Al-Ayyām*, 20 August 2008.

¹¹⁵⁹ Avi Shlaim, “The Likud in Power: The History of Revisionist Zionism,” *Israel Studies* 1, 2 (1996): 293.

¹¹⁶⁰ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁶¹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁶² Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁶³ Personal papers, former USSC member.

preferred alternative to the violence promoted by extremists.”¹¹⁶⁴ Jones’s position was more simplistic: “Let’s start with dignity. Let’s do things that make people happier.”¹¹⁶⁵

The American perspective succinctly recapitulated Netanyahu’s premise of economic peace. USSC officials involved in the Jenin Initiative reflected the understanding that the American defense establishment gained in Iraq and Afghanistan, where Pentagon ambitions to transfer political control to local leadership were persistently stymied by ongoing violence.¹¹⁶⁶ USSC officials involved with the Jenin Initiative echoed the same sentiment. As one member of the mission noted in an interview, “you can’t effectively reform a place unless people have increased opportunities for alternative livelihoods.”¹¹⁶⁷

Development Versus Resistance

The Israeli goal of uprooting Palestinian resistance – particularly in the form of Hamas – was central to the counterterror framework that pervaded Washington’s strategic thinking. Further, the Jenin Initiative suggests that among the key objectives of the Israeli-American reform agenda was the de-politicization of Palestinians most prone to resistance due to their economic and political marginalization. Economic development served to reconcile the inconsistencies of American policy in Palestine, in an attempt to bridge the antidemocratic turn in Palestine as Washington abandoned its ‘freedom agenda’ in favor of securitization. One USSC official involved with the Jenin Initiative articulated precisely this notion in an interview: “I mean yes, ok, we didn’t like the results of the election, and that’s completely antidemocratic, but [...] maybe if we can show you economic prosperity and security, you won’t vote for Hamas next time around.”¹¹⁶⁸ For Washington, pouring economic assistance into Jenin was a tactic to co-opt those most disenfranchised by American policy since the Second Intifada.

In fact, in formulating the Jenin Initiative, the USSC and its partners once more acted on explicit directives from the Israeli Ministry of Defense. The anti-Hamas campaign in the West Bank that intensified in July 2007 had put Hamas’s extensive *da’wa* network of schools, welfare associations, and medical clinics in the crosshairs. As Sara Roy argues, the anti-Hamas campaign

¹¹⁶⁴ Deverell, “Fifteen Months in the West Bank,” 61-62.

¹¹⁶⁵ 13 April 2008 Meeting Minutes – Salam Fayyad and Jim Jones (PLO): 3.

¹¹⁶⁶ United States Congressional Research Service – Liana Sun Wylar, “Weak and Failing States: Evolving Security Threats and U.S. Policy” (Washington, DC: August 2008) 13, 21.

¹¹⁶⁷ Interview, former USSC official, January 2018.

¹¹⁶⁸ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

undermined the community-based institutions where the Islamists had “consistently played a positive, more developmental, and innovative role.”¹¹⁶⁹ As one leaked USSC report makes clear, the USSC was aware that the Palestinian intelligence services’ ability to crackdown on the *da’wa* networks was limited. The significant services Islamic charities provided was an obstacle to their outright eradication, as well as the fact that Hamas was a recognized political actor in Palestine and membership was not a crime per Palestinian law.¹¹⁷⁰

However, in 2008, Israeli security insiders sought European and American assistance to replace Hamas’s services to Palestinians.¹¹⁷¹ According to IDF Maj. Gen. Gadi Shamni, Washington could do more to assist Israeli security by providing political and economic support to undermine Hamas. Israel urged Western donors to support Palestinian civil society and social welfare organizations with the purpose of “strengthening moderate forces.”¹¹⁷²

A number of scholars have noted the growing attention of Western aid bodies to combating the threat of terror in their economic development projects since 9/11. The Bush Administration led the international community to adapt their aid agendas, integrating the purpose of fighting political extremism alongside poverty reduction.¹¹⁷³ In some cases, Western aid agencies overtly or implicitly set out to compete with the influence of Islamist organizations for their own counterterror purposes, seeing an inherent threat in the role of Islamic charitable services in many societies.¹¹⁷⁴ In Jenin, we see a novel extension of the purpose of undermining Islamist politics as Israel harnessed its political agenda of eliminating Hamas to the counterterror preoccupation of the international community. Washington-led donors explicitly adopted Israel’s political agenda as the basis of its assistance.

Jenin Revived

¹¹⁶⁹ Roy, Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza, 211; Benoît Challand, “A Nahda of Charitable Organizations? Health Service Provision and the Politics of Aid in Palestine,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40, 2 (2008): 234-236.

¹¹⁷⁰ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁷¹ 26 November 2007, USSC Dayton Briefs IDF Central Commander on Steps to Strengthen Palestinian Capabilities. [WikiLeaks]

¹¹⁷² 26 November 2007, USSC Dayton Briefs IDF Central Commander on Steps to Strengthen Palestinian Capabilities. [WikiLeaks]

¹¹⁷³ Eamonn McConnon, “Fighting Poverty to Fight Terrorism: Security in DfID’s Development Policy During the War on Terror,” *Forum for Development Studies* 41, 1 (2014): 143, 145-146; Rob Kevlihan, Karl deRouen Jr., and Glen Biglaiser, “Is US Humanitarian Aid Based Primarily on Need or Self-Interest?” *International Studies Quarterly* 58 (2014): 839-854; United States Department of State & USAID, “Joint Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism” (Washington, DC: May 2016.)

¹¹⁷⁴ Daniel P. Aldrich, “First Steps Towards Hearts and Minds? USAID’s Countering Violent Extremism Policies in Africa,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26 (2014): 523-546; David Gutelius, “Islam in Northern Mali and the War on Terror,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 25, 1 (2007): 59-67; Hills, “Trojan Horses?” 633.

The economic transformation of Jenin was the primary publicized aim of the USSC-led initiative. A PowerPoint presentation featuring a smiling camel, entitled “Getting the West Bank Over the Hump,” laid out some of Team Jenin’s internal planning. The USSC’s first task was to coordinate the myriad projects implemented by aid organizations through the Jenin Initiative. Next, the USSC identified a number of Israeli restrictions as obstacles to the local economy’s growth; the team would liaise with Israeli security issues to resolve them.

Two key issues were of particular interest to the USSC. First, the team noted that obstacles to day laborers traveling over the Green Line impeded economic growth. The USSC secondly set out to clarify Israeli security concerns regarding cargo critical for “export/import confidence” necessary to “revive Jenin markets and employment capacity.”¹¹⁷⁵ This section reviews the development side of the Jenin Initiative. It surveys the economic incentives the international community presented Palestinians against the conditionality attached to the offers, with an eye to pacifying Jenin.

By late September 2008, the USSC had counted over 250 individual infrastructure and economic projects to revitalize the Jenin governate. Many of these efforts occurred in partnership with the local Municipal Development and Lending Fund, which received an influx of funds from European sources through the November 2007 Paris Donor Conference.¹¹⁷⁶ The projects completed through the Jenin Initiative ranged vastly in scale. For example, an employment generation project that the German government sponsored rehabilitated the 215-kilometer sewage network in the old city of Jenin, at a cost of €1.57 million. The Danish international aid organization, DANIDA, and USAID were active in road rehabilitation projects in many of the governate’s villages, including Arrana and De’ir Abu Da’ef. Smaller-scale projects included agricultural initiatives by USAID, the EU, and DANIDA to promote olive oil and sheep production. Throughout the governate, USAID planned to rebuild and install greenhouses for \$100,000. In the villages of Qabatiya and Silet al-Harthiey, DANIDA and the UN Development Program supplied tractors, olive oil mills, and storage facilities.¹¹⁷⁷

Team Jenin oversaw the infusion of foreign funds into the governate, with the hope that by revamping roads, wastewater and solid waste treatment, electrical grids, while improving

¹¹⁷⁵ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁷⁶ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁷⁷ Personal papers, former USSC member.

industry and agriculture opportunities, Jenin would flourish.¹¹⁷⁸ Quartet Representative Blair tackled the problem of an insufficient electricity supply by urging the construction of a power substation and infrastructure in Israel, and connecting the West Bank power infrastructure to the upgrade.¹¹⁷⁹ Similarly, the negative effects on local health, quality of life, and economic activity caused by inadequate wastewater systems led Team Jenin to support the Palestinian Water Authority.¹¹⁸⁰

In keeping with the Berlin Conference, the infrastructure development facet of the Jenin Initiative invited unprecedented international intervention into the branches of local government. In Jenin, the USSC's interventions with the local government transgressed notions of aid, instead seeking to reshape the *baladiyya* (municipality) to meet Washington's interests. One internal USSC draft for discussion with the Israeli Ministry of Defense painted a portrait of limited professionalism and skill in the Governor and Mayor's office. The USSC offered to step in with "one or two-day workshops on key management topics: implementing change, effective management planning; office organization and delivery of programmes; ie how to get things done effective [sic]."¹¹⁸¹ These proposals supplemented existing efforts like USAID's PACE program, raising the level of international oversight to new heights.

The USSC's paternalistic assistance to the Palestinians underscores the reality that the reform and economic development initiatives were useful to foster Palestinian discipline under international scrutiny. As Mandy Turner notes, the reform agenda "provoked greater involvement in the internal workings of the PA and more visible support for the 'right type' of elite," turning the PA into a sort of trusteeship.¹¹⁸² However, the PA differed from traditional trusteeships in its vast responsibilities for providing Israeli security, and Washington's security interventions functioned to ensure Palestinians were up to the task. In Jenin, it is instructive to examine the tension between the premise of Palestinian ownership of reforms, and the Israeli security imperative that pervaded the international community's interest in the same reform.

Movement and Access Fixes

¹¹⁷⁸ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁷⁹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁸⁰ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁸¹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁸² Mandy Turner, "The Power of 'Shock and Awe': the Palestinian Authority and the Road to Reform," *International Peacekeeping* 16, 4 (2009): 573.

In its attempt to revive the Jenin economy, the USSC identified a number of specific obstacles to economic growth in Jenin caused by Israeli security measures. While there was no outstanding demand for entrance into Israel via Jalame, the USSC hoped its intensive infrastructure efforts would catalyze greater trade through the crossing. Team Jenin called for an upgrade to the crossing in order to increase movement of goods and people, fostering ties with nearby Palestinian communities in northern Israel.¹¹⁸³ An internal USSC report noted that “upgrading Jalame in order to enable it to process personally owned vehicles and to increase its pedestrian traffic capacity would significantly expand Jenin’s economic potential.”¹¹⁸⁴ The same document illustrated the USSC’s intimate understanding of the issue. The USSC’s technical experts argued that up to 10,000 pedestrians could potentially travel through Jalame daily, using four active lanes over a twelve-hour period. The USSC estimated that expanding Jalame would cost approximately \$7.4 million and take about two months.¹¹⁸⁵

The USSC brought its proposal to expand Jalame to Minister of Defense Barak, demonstrating the level of political attention to the Jenin Initiative. Speaking with Barak, the USSC stated: “We would like to work with Israel to fund and construct the necessary infrastructure [...] Of course, any such upgrades must be conducted in compliance with Israeli security standards.”¹¹⁸⁶ The USSC explained to Barak that “given the will, there are simple and effective measures which could be put in place which would improve local confidence and be a key factor in improving economic activity and the social quality of life in Jenin and the surrounding Region [sic.]”¹¹⁸⁷

In the same vein, the USSC hoped to persuade Israeli defense officials to clarify the security standards at Jalame crossing. The team sought to increase investor confidence in the city by rationalizing exports and imports of goods. The USSC advised Israel to publish its minimum requirements – “in other words, what requirements transporters can expect to have to meet at checkpoints” – in order to smooth trade in Jenin.¹¹⁸⁸ With more transparent security standards, merchants could predict delivery times for their goods and feel more confident investing in Jenin.

¹¹⁸³ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁸⁴ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁸⁵ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁸⁶ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁸⁷ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁸⁸ Personal papers, former USSC member.

Further, the USSC was optimistic that its efforts could change the Israeli position on Palestinian day laborers. The Jenin team believed increasing Palestinian employment inside the Green Line was critical to reinvigorate local economic growth. The USSC also urged Israel to allow increased transit into Jenin for shopping purposes. Using the preferred Israeli term for Palestinian citizens of Israel, the USSC called for a number of measures to increase the travel of “Israeli Arabs” to Jenin, and Jenin residents across the Green Line. The USSC suggested moving the Coordinator of Government Affairs in the Territories (COGAT) permit-issuing station closer to Jalame, and adding additional computer capacity. The USSC argued these increased resources would enable Israel to allow overnight stays in Jenin by Israeli citizens, whose buying power would be a boon to the local economy.¹¹⁸⁹

Similarly, the USSC encouraged the Israeli Ministry of Finance to remove a tax levied on Israeli businesses that employed Palestinian labor. According to the USSC, access to the Israeli labor market was critical for economic revival in Jenin. One internal USSC draft that circulated argued that Jenin could “resume its former vitality” lost since the intifada if only Israel would remove a few barriers to Palestinian employment over the Green Line. The USSC encouraged Israel to revise its existing permit and tax systems, both of which stood as strong disincentives for Israeli employers to hire Palestinian laborers.¹¹⁹⁰ In an internal draft of talking points for the Ministry of Finance, the USSC noted that “There is a law currently under review in the Knesset which would add an extra tax on organizations that employ foreign workers, including Palestinians.”¹¹⁹¹ The USSC urged its interlocutors in the Israeli cabinet to lobby against the bill. They argued that by increasing the employment of day laborers from the Jenin area inside Israel, the local economy would benefit and buttress the Jenin Initiative.

Another key development initiative focused on the creation of industrial areas throughout the West Bank, including a sprawling new facility in Jenin.¹¹⁹² Stalled with the outbreak of the Second Intifada, industrial sites advertised hundreds of thousands of potential Palestinian jobs. Under strict Israeli security control in addition to oversight by the USSC-vetted PASF, they would be immune from the closures that had wracked the West Bank economy repeatedly since

¹¹⁸⁹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁹⁰ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁹¹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹¹⁹² Kershner, “Blair Unveils Proposals to Improve Life on the West Bank.”

Oslo.¹¹⁹³ Quartet Representative Blair in particular touted the potential of industrial zones as part of his signature “Quick Impact Projects” to raise Palestinian confidence in the PA.¹¹⁹⁴ Modelled on the Qualifying Economic Zones (QIZ) that sprang up in Jordan and Egypt after their respective Washington-brokered peace agreements with Israel, Israel saw the industrial zones as advancing Israeli economic interests regionally.¹¹⁹⁵

The Shortcomings of Technical Solutions

The USSC’s proposals to improve the Jenin economy adhered to the overriding principle of sustaining Israeli control in the West Bank. Further, the USSC’s proposals served to fortify key aspects of Israel’s economic hegemony since 1967. In analyzing the Jenin Initiative’s suggestions to revitalize the governate, the pernicious impact of a technical approach that disregards the existing power imbalance and seeks only to increase efficiency is evident.

First, in its attempt to rationalize the system that determined which Palestinians received permits to travel and what constituted a security threat at the Jalame crossing, the USSC disregarded the basic impulses driving the Israeli bureaucracy in the West Bank. As Yael Berda argues, “its instability, messiness, and ad hoc development may lead to understanding the permit regime as a malfunctioning bureaucracy.”¹¹⁹⁶ Indeed, the USSC’s technical solutions focused on increasing capacity and encouraging bureaucratic efficiency through more advanced equipment and legible regulations.

However, the Israeli administration of Palestinians bears no resemblance to classical Weberian bureaucracy, in which efficiency, speed, and clear norms that operate without bias are valued.¹¹⁹⁷ The USSC ignored the priorities underpinning the Israeli permit system. Berda characterizes the permit regime as a form of “efficient inefficiency,” derived from colonial practices. The Israeli permit system’s lack of written guidelines and endless arbitrary distinctions

¹¹⁹³ Peter Lagerquist, “Privatizing the Occupation: The Political Economy of an Oslo Development Project,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, 2 (2003): 17.

¹¹⁹⁴ 13 April 2008 Meeting Minutes – Salam Fayyad and Jim Jones (PLO): 2.

¹¹⁹⁵ The QIZ model allows the Jordanian and Egyptian industrial zones to operate under the existing US-Israeli trade agreement so long as a minimum percentage of product inputs are Israeli. United States Congressional Research Service, “Qualifying Industrial Zones in Jordan and Egypt: Background and Issues for Congress” (Washington, DC: August 2011.); “The Jenin Model,” *Jerusalem Post* 1 September 2015; David Schenker, “It’s Been 20 Years Since One of the Middle East Peace Process’s Biggest Successes,” *Business Insider* 23 October 2014.

¹¹⁹⁶ Yael Berda, *Living Emergency: Israel’s Permit Regime in the Occupied West Bank* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 109.

¹¹⁹⁷ Yael Berda, “The Security Risk as a Security Risk: Notes on the Classification Practices of the Israeli Security Services,” in Abeer Baker and Anat Matar, eds., *Threat: Palestinian Political Prisoners* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 44.

created mechanisms of power over indigenous subjects.¹¹⁹⁸ In particular, officials had at their hands a vast network of potential informants and intermediaries, locals who needed the administrators to grant them a right rendered rare by the bureaucracy itself.¹¹⁹⁹

The perpetual delaying and impeding of Palestinian movement that the USSC encountered in Jalame was similarly intentional, rather than indicative of a flawed system in need of technical fixes. The labyrinthine and inexplicable permit regime served a clear purpose in the Israeli security logic. In the Palestinian case, blocking movement through the permit regime fulfilled the urgent needs of the Israeli intelligence apparatus to expand Palestinian dependence on the Israeli administration. During the Second Intifada, the total collapse of the permit regime as well as the security coordination agreement had wreaked havoc on the Shin Bet's network of informants.¹²⁰⁰ As Berda argues, the permit regime governing movement of Palestinian goods and individuals into Israel functioned as "a complex bureaucratic apparatus for identification, profiling and surveillance of the movements of the Palestinian population."¹²⁰¹

The COGAT's unpredictability and inefficiency were central to its ability to expand its surveillance capacity: those Palestinians dependent on a permit for their livelihoods were discouraged from political activity or organizing. The permit regime that the USSC compelled Israel to streamline was and remains efficient foremost in controlling and atomizing Palestinian society.¹²⁰² The constant threat of a permit being revoked because of the arbitrary classification as a "security threat" had a profound chilling effect on Palestinians' daily behaviors.¹²⁰³

In attempting to rationalize the permit regime with better technology and improved facilities, the USSC in effect facilitated the fine-tuning of Israel's control. The USSC's proposals presented mechanisms to increase the number of Palestinians dependent on the permit regime for their livelihoods as a solution to the economic situation in Jenin. This formulation accepted the permit regime as necessary, refusing to interrogate its basis in actual security threats and

¹¹⁹⁸ Yehouda Shenhav and Yael Berda, "The Colonial Foundations of the State of Exception: Juxtaposing the Israeli Occupation of the Palestinian Territories with Colonial Bureaucratic History," in Adi Ophir, Sari Hanafi, and Michal Givoni (eds.) *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (Boston: MIT Press/Zone Books, 2009), 348.

¹¹⁹⁹ Shenhav and Berda, "The Colonial Foundations of the State of Exception," 348; Nasser Hussain, *The Jurisprudence of Emergency* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 66; Ann Stoler, "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty," *Public Culture* 18, 1 (2006): 128, 139.

¹²⁰⁰ Berda, *Living Emergency*, 109.

¹²⁰¹ Berda, "The Security Risk as a Security Risk," 44

¹²⁰² Shenhav and Berda, "The Colonial Foundations of the State of Exception," 354.

¹²⁰³ Berda, *Living Emergency*, 114-115.

supporting its expansion. Instead, the USSC lobbied Israel to make more exceptions to its closure policy, privileging more individual Palestinians in the Jenin area.

Indeed, as one document that the Israeli Military Strategy Information Section passed to the USSC team demonstrates, Israel was receptive to the USSC because the benefits of the Jenin Initiative for Israel were many. In its assessment of the ongoing progress in Jenin by early August, Israel attested to providing an additional 1,000 permits for day laborers in Israel to the governate. Through the Jenin Initiative, the Ministry of Defense had also processed 1,200 overnight work permits (600 for agricultural laborers and 600 for construction workers); added 300 businessman permits for entry into Jenin; and distributed 22 “BMC” (Businessman and Merchant Entry cards). Travel through Jalame crossing improved, with extended opening hours, and 125 additional agricultural and public transportation vehicles were licensed.¹²⁰⁴

Another internal communication clarified that the COGAT was informed of donor projects, most of which did not require Israeli approval.¹²⁰⁵ This was because the solutions that the Jenin Initiative offered to improve Palestinian employment and commerce also adhered to the principle of Israeli economic hegemony. The notion that either day labor within Israel, or work at the planned industrial parks, could dramatically transform the local economy speaks to the limits of the USSC-led technical vision. Day labor in Israel has long been a political tool, a “carrot” offered to the Palestinians to manage unemployment. Since the early days of the occupation, day labor in Israel in construction and agriculture in particular has subjected Palestinian workers to inferior conditions, exploitation by the Israeli pension system, and the political whims Israeli leaders.¹²⁰⁶ Rather than work to extricate Jenin’s unemployed from subservience to the prevarications of the Israeli labor market, the USSC’s proposals envisioned more Jenin residents in precarious work as a path to transform Jenin.

The industrial zone project that the USSC trumpeted also maintained the dominance of capital amenable to Israeli control over Palestinian lives. As Linda Tabar and Tariq Dana note, the industrial zones promised only insecure, low-paying employment under terms that required normalization with the occupation.¹²⁰⁷ Palestinian industrial zones were first conceptualized by

¹²⁰⁴ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁰⁵ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁰⁶ Arie Arnon, Israel Luski, Avia Spivak, and Jimmy Weinblatt, *The Palestinian Economy: Between Imposed Integration and Voluntary Separation* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 78-81.

¹²⁰⁷ Tabar, “The ‘Urban Redesign’ of Jenin Refugee Camp,” 48. Tariq Dana, “The Palestinian Capitalists that Have Gone Too Far,” *Al-Shabaka* January 2014.

Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin's government as a response to the soaring Palestinian employment that resulted from Israeli closure of the West Bank and Gaza during the Gulf War in 1991.¹²⁰⁸ Subsequent proposals by international donors for Palestinian industrial sites privileged Israeli control. The industrial estate scheme reemerged during the early Oslo years, meeting the broader US-driven goal of creating a 'New Middle East' of free-market driven harmonization. Washington's plans centered on normalized relations between Israel and its neighbors, bolstered through overlapping Free Trade Agreements that would eventually encompass the entire region.¹²⁰⁹ Plans for multiple industrial zones to complement those established in Gaza went unfulfilled with the outbreak of the Second Intifada.¹²¹⁰

Under Fayyad's reform platform, the prospect of industrial zones as a solution to Israeli security limitations on Palestinian economic growth reappeared. As Adam Hanieh notes, the industrial zones wed Israeli, Palestinian, regional investment to produce garments and textiles for export as well as high-tech products to enrich that sector's strength in Israel.¹²¹¹ Inside the industrial zones, Palestinian labor laws, standard wages, and environmental regulations did not apply, and the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions was barred from representing workers. Palestinian employees faced vetting for security clearance by the Israeli Ministry of Defense. Sam Bahour refers to the industrial parks as "economic prison zones," and highlights their links with the broader Israeli aim of moving the Palestinian economy away from agriculture toward reliance on Israeli goodwill, all while preventing competition with Israeli firms.¹²¹²

As in the case of the fragmentation of Palestinian civil society, the embrace of market-driven solutions to Palestinian disenfranchisement also ensured acquiescence to Israeli control. The benefits these economic solutions provided to a select class of Palestinians, to the detriment of collective solidarity, only furthered the atomization of society. Hanieh demonstrates the benefits of such plans to a minority of Palestinian capitalists with close ties to the Gulf. He argues that this Palestinian capital, "precisely because of its characteristics as a sub-component

¹²⁰⁸ Arnon et al, *The Palestinian Economy*, 72.

¹²⁰⁹ Adam Hanieh, "The Internationalisation of Gulf Capital and Palestinian Class Formation," *Capital & Class* 35, 1 (2010): 88-89.

¹²¹⁰ Lagerquist, "Privatizing the Occupation," 7-9; Sam Bahour, "Economic Prison Zones," Middle East Research and Information Project 19 November 2010; Bessma Momani, "A Middle East Free Trade Area: Economic Interdependence and Peace Considered," *The World Economy* (2007): 1682-1700.

¹²¹¹ Hanieh, *Lineages of Revolt*, 92.

¹²¹² Bahour, "Economic Prison Zones"; Alaa Tartir, "Naḥū raw'iyyat tanmawiyya filastīniyya," *Majallat al dirāsāt al filastīniyya* 105, 5 (2016): 67.

of Gulf capital, is closely aligned with the interests of US power in the region.”¹²¹³ The fact that the land designated for Jenin’s original industrial park in 1998 was seized from Palestinian farmers before being appropriated by Israel for the separation wall speaks to the compatibility of the industrial zones with US-backed Israeli domination.

The Jenin Initiative’s promotion of these piecemeal economic fixes predicated on ongoing Israeli control highlight the limitations of the USSC’s technical vision. The USSC attempted to divorce individual elements of the economy from the overall political situation. Instead, the economic initiatives in Jenin promised to harness Palestinian economic precariousness to the purpose of pacifying the West Bank, a vision embedded in Fayyadism. Alaa Tartir’s field research in Balata and Jenin refugee camps demonstrates this reality was not lost on Palestine’s most marginalized. Fayyad’s premiership was the result of donor conditionalities – he had no history of leadership, no experience with the resistance factions, and had spent no time in Israeli jail.¹²¹⁴

Instead, Fayyad’s vision of institution building complemented the American-Israeli agenda for the ‘West Bank first.’ One refugee youth activist argued: “Fayyad is probably the smartest in the so-called Palestinian leadership. He knows what he is doing. He offered us, through the banks, loans and credit so that we can busy ourselves with repaying them instead of resisting the occupation. He promised us money to give up on resistance.”¹²¹⁵

The American hand in this process cannot be underestimated. The combination of coercive force in the form of security coordination and the inducements of economic stability enabled Washington to ‘manage’ the conflict, retreating from the high-stakes of negotiations that would require pressure on Israel. As one former member of the USSC related in an interview: “there’s not going to be another intifada, they know it doesn’t help, they’ve been through all that – they’ve become quite passive – better to have it the rather imperfect way it is.”¹²¹⁶

Proxy Surveillance and the Flexibility of Security Threats

In addition to these economic problems, the USSC also confronted obstacles more fundamental to the conflict’s outstanding final issues in Jenin. The superficial tools at hand for

¹²¹³ Hanieh, “The Internationalisation of Gulf Capital and Palestinian Class Formation,” 101.

¹²¹⁴ Tartir, “Securitized Development and Palestinian Authoritarianism Under Fayyadism,” 491.

¹²¹⁵ Tartir, “Securitized Development and Palestinian Authoritarianism Under Fayyadism,” 491.

¹²¹⁶ Interview, former USSC official, January 2018.

the USSC to grapple with the political complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict speaks to the limits of technical approaches. Moreover, a close reading of the USSC's recommendations for Palestinian self-policing and mass surveillance reveal that the Jenin Initiative was invested in upholding Israeli control. In its attempts to smooth coordination between the PASF and IDF in Jenin, the USSC gained first-hand knowledge of Israel's expansive deployment of the charge of "security threat" to justify surveillance of Palestinians. However, evidence of the political interests that permeated the Israeli security regime caused the USSC not to object, but to encourage its Palestinian partners to make the Israeli task more efficient.

Examples from the personal papers of USSC members who negotiated with Israeli security officials for the Jenin Initiative's success demonstrates some of the shortcomings to the technical approach. In one instance, France donated approximately \$300,000 to the Jenin municipality to expand the city's water supply. The Municipal Development Lending Fund connected a number of outlying villages to the water infrastructure. These efforts fell short because the overall water supply for the city remained insufficient, and Israel objected to the installation of another well. In an internal memo, the USSC noted in bold print that "further work is required to understand the technical issues of the Israeli objection."¹²¹⁷ Since 1948, Israel has faced concerns about inadequate water resources for its growing population; after 1967, the West Bank aquifer became a strategic asset.¹²¹⁸ Given this history, it is unlikely that Israel's refusal to allow the Jenin municipality to expand its water usage was anything other than a political issue.

In the same vein, the USSC appealed to Israeli Minister of Defense Barak seeking his support to return Palestinian land deeds confiscated by the IDF during the Second Intifada. The USSC concluded that the IDF's unwillingness to return the deeds to their Palestinian owners impeded to property transactions and lowered Palestinian "confidence" about land ownership rights.¹²¹⁹ In its will to remain apolitical, the USSC went to great lengths to evade the political logic of control that permeated Israeli policies. The paradoxes the USSC encountered in trying to reform yet make accountable a system predicated on Palestinian dispossession pervaded its work.

Resolving the Revolving Door

¹²¹⁷ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²¹⁸ Uri Davis and Antonia Maks, "Israel's Water Policies," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 9, 2 (1980): 5; Sharif Elmusa, "The Land-Water Nexus in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, 3 (1996): 69-78.

¹²¹⁹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

The attempts to apply technical solutions to fundamentally political problems surfaced with another of the USSC's key endeavors. The IDF was adamant that the PA's security forces - in Jenin in particular - constituted a 'revolving door.' Israeli officials complained that Palestinians arrested as security threats were quickly released on the basis of factional allegiances and support among the PASF for continued resistance activity. The Israeli Ministry of Defense charged that the rapid release of prisoners detained by the reformed Palestinian Authority security forces in the Jenin governate proved that they were not serious partners in security, echoing a pattern since the outbreak of the Second Intifada. Israel used this accusation to justify repeated incursions into Jenin. The incursions that occurred during daylight hours were particularly humiliating to the PASF. In one internal report, the USSC noted that Israeli incursions sometimes included a direct order to the PASF to retreat. The USSC warned that such Israeli actions undermined "the credibility of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Security Forces in the eyes of their people."¹²²⁰

Responding to the Israeli claim, the USSC's Jenin team devoted itself to an extensive study of the 'revolving door.' Already at the meeting on April 13, 2008, Gen. Jones raised the revolving door accusation to Fayyad as an issue where American intervention could help the Palestinians meet their obligations. "How can we support you on prison infrastructure and judiciary in Jenin and beyond?" Jones offered.¹²²¹ To follow up, Dayton mandated a team of USSC researchers to investigate the contention that the PA was insufficiently serious about meeting its Road Map security performance benchmarks. As one person on the team related in an interview, the idea was "basically about taking away the excuses the Israelis had."¹²²² The USSC's British Support Team and Canadian Road Warriors set out to determine the validity of the Israeli critiques. The USSC team interviewed PASF and criminal justice sector employees, analyzed local court statistics, surveyed Jenin's prisons, and consulted with Palestinian legal experts.¹²²³

The USSC team issued an internal report on 18 September 2008 that addressed the 'revolving door' accusations. Broadly, the USSC attributed the Israeli charges to a mismatch between Israeli and Palestinian conceptions of the security environment. An internal draft of the

¹²²⁰ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²²¹ 13 April 2008 Meeting Minutes – Salam Fayyad and Jim Jones (PLO): 4.

¹²²² Interview, former USSC official, January 2018.

¹²²³ Personal papers, former USSC member.

final report noted that, in keeping with myriad previous attempts to monitor the conflict, the Roadmap lacked effective metrics for assessment on the ground. The dearth of tools to monitor Palestinian counterterror efforts accounted for the conflicting assessments of Palestinian security performance. “Thus, the ‘revolving door’ perception, which may or may not be the most accurate or useful measure of progress on the ground, exists alone, lacking other measures which may contribute to a more contextual basket of measures.”¹²²⁴ This general evaluation of the technical shortcomings that gave rise to Israeli criticisms of the ‘revolving door’ in Jenin accompanied several more specific technical findings.

The first technical finding that the USSC team presented explained the insufficient capacity of the Jenin governate to hold detainees due to facility and processing equipment shortages. As one interviewee involved in the investigation noted, “I said to the Israelis, another reason why it’s the so-called ‘revolving door,’ is because you - the Israelis - destroyed a lot of the prisons, and they therefore don’t have places to hold people.”¹²²⁵ He noted that while Israel detained thousands of Palestinians, the PA could hold only a few hundred at a time after the Second Intifada. Further, the USSC pointed to a massive backlog in cases in the Palestinian court system – nearly 65,000 throughout the PA, which the USSC estimated would take nearly 15 years to process at the contemporary rate.¹²²⁶ Similarly, the USSC found that the Jenin governate was ill-equipped and under-trained to process security cases. Despite the new courthouse funded with Japanese aid that opened in June, many cases were dismissed due to weak local investigative techniques and insufficient forensics capacity.¹²²⁷

Given these conditions, the USSC recommended supporting the Palestinian justice sector to increase its capacity and improve coordination between the disjointed bodies responsible for enacting Palestinian law. In particular, the USSC investigators supported the creation of an Interagency Judicial Task Force. The Task Force would mobilize dedicated police investigators, prosecutors, and court managers to accelerate processing of the caseload backlog.¹²²⁸ The USSC proposed international mentors to supervise the process. Similarly, the USSC suggested

¹²²⁴ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²²⁵ Interview, former USSC official, January 2018.

¹²²⁶ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²²⁷ Personal papers, former USSC member; 2 May 2008 Chief Justice, Attorney General, and Justice Minister on Jenin, Justice Sector Framework. [WikiLeaks]

¹²²⁸ Personal papers, former USSC member.

integrated training courses on criminal investigations, thereafter standardized into the PA's criminal justice processes.¹²²⁹

Infinite Security

Moreover, the USSC investigation laid bare the underlying political imperatives that drove the “revolving door.” In doing so, the USSC revealed the deeply political purposes of the American attention to security sector reform. As one former USSC official revealed in an interview, Israel praised the Palestinians' increased capacity but critiqued their rapid release of detainees.

I'd say yes, *they're following your methods* – you know you're scooping up loads and loads of people in the West Bank, you're going and doing your arrests during nighttime, and it's quite clear to anyone who observes this that one of your main interests is seeing if you can recruit totes, or informants, and if you can't and if you've got nothing really against a person you just let them out.¹²³⁰

The practice of recruiting informants has been a central pillar of Israeli control over Palestinians since the inception of the occupation.¹²³¹ As Hillel Cohen and Ron Dudai note, the purpose of collecting informants in the occupied Palestinian territories was originally informed by the Israeli perception that any espousal of Palestinian nationalism constituted a security threat to Israel. In the 1970s, expressions of Palestinian identity that evinced support of the PLO were all the more menacing, and similar techniques of surveillance were applied to those Palestinians within the Green Line who held Israeli citizenship.¹²³²

However, the network of informants was upset by the onset of the First Intifada and the arrival of PA rule. In the 1990s, the Shin Bet cultivated eyes and ears among Palestinians from new sources. This practice became an intelligence collection norm in the post-Second Intifada era, relying in particular upon blackmail.¹²³³ The USSC official's comments on the Israeli

¹²²⁹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²³⁰ Interview, former USSC official, 19 January 2018.

¹²³¹ Salim Tamari, “Eyeless in Judea: Israel's Strategy of Collaborators and Forgeries,” *Middle East Report* 164 (1990.)

¹²³² Hillel Cohen and Ron Dudai, “Human Rights Dilemmas in Using Informer to Combat Terrorism: The Israeli-Palestinian Case,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17 (2005): 232. Several scholars have explored the application of regimes of surveillance to the Palestinian minority granted Israeli citizenship in 1948, suggesting the ‘security threat’ was indistinguishable from Palestinian collective organization and identity. Hillel Cohen, *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs, 1948-1967* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 229-230; Ahmed Sa'adi, *Thorough Surveillance: The Genesis of Israeli Policies of Population Management, Surveillance and Political Control towards the Palestinian Minority* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press), 2014.

¹²³³ Berda, *Living Emergency*, 84; Cohen and Dudai, “Human Rights Dilemmas in Using Informer to Combat Terrorism,” 232.

critique of the ‘revolving door’ in Jenin demonstrates the USSC’s awareness of Israeli methods of control that relied on this destructive network of informants.

The USSC team’s findings also demonstrate that they understood well the Palestinian factionalism that pervaded the collection of intelligence in the West Bank. The USSC’s recommendations fell in line with the mission’s larger practice of bolstering Fatah as a partner against terror, while projecting an apolitical stance on its partnerships with Palestinians. A draft report by the USSC investigators in Jenin clarified the political motives that that played into the conduct of the Preventative Security Organization (PSO) and General Intelligence Services (GIS) branches of the PASF. They noted that the heavily Fatah-aligned intelligence agencies had borne the brunt of the fall of Gaza to Hamas. Along with political leaders like Ahmed Qurei and Saeb Erekat, the intelligence agencies stood as anti-Hamas hardliners. One internal USSC communiqué explained that despite Israel’s perception of threats from both Hamas and other militant factions, the PSO and GIS were concerned almost exclusively with the Islamist factions.¹²³⁴

Indeed, as another member of the USSC’s investigating team related in an interview, Palestinian security sector reform was self-contradictory. While the Palestinian security forces’ capacity grew, their strength was conditional on transparency with the Shin Bet.¹²³⁵ By August 2008, the USSC noted that the Shin Bet had begun to permit the PA security forces to arrest Palestinians that were seen as sensitive targets, which Israel previously would have reserved for the IDF out of distrust of the PASF. The reason for this growing cooperation, according to the COGAT, was that the Palestinian intelligence services had proved themselves reliable in interrogating targets and sharing their information with Israel under USSC tutelage.¹²³⁶

Consequently, the surveillance of groups perceived as threats to the PSO and GIS – including through networks of informants – increased. In contrast to media reports that cast the intelligence agencies as rooting out armed criminals, the USSC officials acknowledged that they were targeting Hamas for political purposes.¹²³⁷ In early August, for example, one USSC member posited that the sudden end to operations against the Jenin head of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades paralleled the intensified crackdown against Hamas, and not coincidentally.¹²³⁸ The

¹²³⁴ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²³⁵ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

¹²³⁶ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²³⁷ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²³⁸ Personal papers, former USSC member.

results were, in keeping with broader Israeli prerogatives shared with the PSO and PGI, to eliminate the space in which Islamist groups that threatened the PA proxy's hegemony operated in the West Bank.

However, the fact that the PSO and GIS relied on their alliance with the Shin Bet to do their work also led to stultifying effects on Palestinian society. According to the Israeli Prison Service, a 'security' prisoner encompassed any "security offense or whose motive was nationalistic."¹²³⁹ In encouraging the PASF to act on Israel's maximalist definition of a 'security threat,' the USSC encouraged the PA to criminalize all resistance. By conflating political activism with security threats, the arbitrary classification system discouraged non-violent social action. It did this by "making the risks for those involved in non-violent political action equal to the punishments for violent activism."¹²⁴⁰

The recommendations the USSC formulated with regards to the Palestinian intelligence services actively supported the recruitment of informants. The USSC team reported that the PSO and GIS's mandates overlapped without much coordination between the two organizations. "It is unclear why there are two intelligence organizations focused on internal threats," the USSC noted.¹²⁴¹ While acknowledging the excessive surveillance inherent in the duplication of intelligence agencies, the USSC encouraged the practice. The report stated, "the Palestinian security agencies are, rightly, attempting to maintain an effective human intelligence capability, including a network of sources and informants."¹²⁴² The USSC recommended mechanisms for the PSO and GIS to create more efficient monitoring practices. The USSC suggested the Palestinian intelligence agencies monitor recidivism rates among Palestinians arrested and released in exchange for "agreement not to re-offend and agreement to cooperate with the authorities."¹²⁴³

In Jenin, the USSC bore witness both to the full scale of Israeli surveillance in the West Bank, and to the spaces in which the PASF were allowed to operate as a proxy in service of the Israeli security apparatus. As Berda notes, the expansive classification as 'security threat' most empowered the agencies whose influence grew with it: the Shin Bet and *mukhābarāt*.¹²⁴⁴ In the

¹²³⁹ Baker and Matar, *Threat*, vii.

¹²⁴⁰ Berda, "The Security Risk as Security Risk," 54.

¹²⁴¹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁴² Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁴³ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁴⁴ Berda, "The Security Risk as Security Risk," 55.

Palestinian case, meeting Israeli demands offered the intelligence agencies an opportunity to reassert their political primacy after the humiliation of losing Gaza. In encouraging the PA's intelligence services in Jenin to mount a more efficient campaign to collect informants, the USSC endorsed a massive project of surveillance of Palestinians that fortified the occupation.¹²⁴⁵

Democratic Reform Against Democracy

In constructing an apparatus of Palestinian self-policing, the USSC came face-to-face with the scale of Israeli repression in the West Bank, provoking some reflection among those responsible for carrying out the Jenin Initiative. The USSC team's report on the Jenin "revolving door" allegations explained that the Israeli complaints emanated from the fact that in upholding its own internal legal norms, the PA failed to function as a useful proxy. As an internal USSC memo on the 'revolving door' issue noted, the security coordination arrangement enabled Israel to pass requests for arrests and detentions to the PA. "The common mechanism for this is the provision by the Israeli security establishment to elements of the Palestinian security establishment, of "lists" of targets (which may be people or institutions) and 'actions requested,' such as arrests or closures."¹²⁴⁶ Noting the sensitive nature of the lists, the USSC confirmed that it had viewed examples of Israeli requests and appreciated the Palestinian inability to follow through in many cases. The USSC claimed that Israeli lists "commonly lack any evidence to substantiate the validity of the targets," and targets were often inaccurate, outdated, or deceased.¹²⁴⁷

Nonetheless, the USSC's recommendations functioned once more to smooth Israeli control over the Palestinian population. The USSC argued that Palestinian unwillingness to carry out arrests in many instances was the result of restraints on the PA, because the lists did not "constitute adequate cause for arrest, detention, or criminal proceedings, and the Palestinian Authority should not be held at fault for respecting the rights of its citizens."¹²⁴⁸ Rather than question the validity of the practice by which the PA fulfilled Israel's demands, the USSC instead noted that Israel could "at any moment" carry out its own security detentions in the West

¹²⁴⁵ For an account of the specific abuses this period ensured, see: Al-Haq, *Torturing Each Other: The Widespread Practices of Arbitrary Detention and Torture in the Palestinian Territory* (Ramallah: July 2008.)

¹²⁴⁶ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁴⁷ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁴⁸ Personal papers, former USSC member.

Bank. As such Israeli criticism of the ‘revolving door’ in Jenin in fact was a “function of transition of responsibilities, rather than a Palestinian phenomenon.”¹²⁴⁹ In doing so, the USSC acknowledged that the issue fundamentally lay in Israeli frustration with an in-compliant proxy.

Legislature without Legislation

However, the USSC took pains to address the legal implications of the security crackdown that it backed in Jenin. The USSC’s recommendations that sought to square Palestinian security reform’s underlying purposes – Israeli political demands garbed in the language of security – with the official principle of democratic governance were all the more implausible. As such they reveal that shortcomings of technical interventions for reform in the PA, and highlight the inconsistency of American policy toward Palestine in the context of the ‘global war on terror.’

The USSC team identified ways to specifically target resistance groups by modifying the existing Palestinian legal system. In the aftermath of the Gaza-West Bank split, the Ramallah caretaker PA relied upon military courts to prosecute the swelling number of cases it faced. In Jenin, the USSC noted that these courts were the primary venue for trying those charged by the *mukhābarāt*. The military courts were a quick fix to meet Israel’s security demands in combatting Islamist resistance groups, and their secretive proceedings ensured “the relative ease of continuing a detention and obtaining a conviction.”¹²⁵⁰ However, the USSC investigators noted that the military courts blatantly breached Palestinian law. The team argued that the courts were in “direct contradiction of the Palestinian Basic Law and, indeed, international human rights standards.”¹²⁵¹ This statement illustrates the tension between the driving force of the performance-based reform process – Israel’s security demands – and discourse of good governance and accountability through which the international community framed its commitments in Paris and Berlin.

In the place of the controversial military courts, the USSC suggested a number of solutions that upheld the Israeli focus on rooting out resistance, and the American interpretation of this purpose as counterterrorism. The USSC suggested the US government develop, with PA partners, a “tiger team” in Jenin of capable officials. The USSC suggested the Jenin municipality

¹²⁴⁹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁵⁰ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁵¹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

remove ‘terror’ cases from the judicial system, and have this appointed group of officials address them alone.¹²⁵² The tiger team would implement short-term goals with a visible impact in the development and political contexts. Another proposal included recreating the Rule of Law Complexes spearheaded by Gen. Petraeus in Iraq in 2007.¹²⁵³ There, a 55-person American team of consultants, lawyers, criminal investigators, and paralegals trained Iraqi staff to run the Iraqi judicial sector, with the support of the US Department of Justice and contractors.¹²⁵⁴ The notion that such an initiative would be appropriate in the West Bank demonstrates the American conception of Palestine as a site of the ‘war on terror.’

The USSC also suggested the international community underwrite new Palestinian laws for the PA. In particular, the USSC was concerned that the PA lacked specific laws to prevent terrorism, which USSC personnel acknowledged was an American priority widely seen as illegitimate among its Palestinian partners.¹²⁵⁵ In light of the fact that many of the Palestinian Legislative Council’s (PLC) representatives were in Israeli jails under charges of belonging to a terror group that had won control of the PA, the contradiction inherent in the USSC’s recommendation is clear. Indeed, the USSC report noted that the PLC had not convened since June 2006, when Israel arrested nearly forty of its members.¹²⁵⁶ The USSC’s report on the legal situation in Jenin addressed the issue:

The Palestinian Authority still needs to address the core Israeli concern about terrorism. Although there are basic penal tools available to the Palestinian Authority, it currently lacks antiterrorist legislation of the type which could flexibly address issues such as support to militant groups while sidestepping the nascent Palestinian investigative capability. The PA (most likely President Abbas, who is responsible for the issuance of decree laws in the absence of a Legislative Council) should issue anti-terrorism legislation based on international precedents.¹²⁵⁷

The USSC encouraged the PA to address Israeli security concerns by explicitly banning membership in groups defined by the international community as terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. By introducing Palestinian counterterrorism legislation, one internal USSC list of talking points for meeting with the PASF

¹²⁵² Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁵³ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁵⁴ Michael R. Gordon, “In Baghdad, Justice Behind the Barricades,” *New York Times* 30 July 2007.

¹²⁵⁵ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁵⁶ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁵⁷ Personal papers, former USSC member.

noted that the PA would have “a method of dealing with security cases for which Israel has provided you with insufficient evidence to gain convictions by showing association with members of a terrorist organization.”¹²⁵⁸

In the same vein, the USSC explained the ‘revolving door’ accusation as the result of the distinct ways in which the PA and Israel prioritize threats. The USSC described both the PA and Israel as “challenged by a similar list of criminal and security threats.”¹²⁵⁹ However, due to internal Palestinian political considerations, these threats were not necessarily addressed in the same order. The USSC argued that “Israel should take steps to ensure it understands and is considerate of the constraints on, and political context, of Palestinian security operations.”¹²⁶⁰ The USSC’s conclusions about the causes of the revolving door phenomenon in Jenin reveal a paradox central to Washington’s approach to the PA. On the one hand, the US capitalized on Fayyadism’s official language focused on accountability and good governance. On the other, USSC personnel admitted that good governance is an empty slogan without a legislature. The suggestion the PA adopt counterterrorism ‘legislation’ was impossible in a context in which Washington refused the validity of the same legislature. The effect of the USSC’s suggestions, then, was to push for ‘antiterrorism’ laws by other, undemocratic means.

Indeed, one internal USSC communication acknowledged that even the touted bolstering of the Ministry of the Interior to oversee security sector reform was a delusion. “There is, to be sure, a Minister of Interior,” but he was “not responsible for hiring, training, equipping, or paying the PASF.”¹²⁶¹ In reality, international donor support for the reform of specific security forces created a patronage system that actively prevented the Ministry of Interior from exercising any real power. The EU directly funded and equipped the civil police, the USSC furnished the National Security Forces and Presidential Guard, and European and American intelligence agencies backed the PSO and GIS.¹²⁶² This direct patronage occurred without oversight by the Ministry of the Interior, obviating the possibility of the accountability international donors trumpeted.

Acknowledging the Ministry of the Interior’s impotence, the USSC’s preferred solution to the issue of accountability only reinforced the existing external control that made

¹²⁵⁸ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁵⁹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁶⁰ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁶¹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁶² Personal papers, former USSC member.

representation of Palestinians impossible. The USSC attempted to empower the Strategic Planning Department it had established in the Ministry. Despite resistance from the Ministry of the Interior, international consultants hand-picked by Washington charted the Department's plans.¹²⁶³ With each step the USSC undertook to create 'accountability' through international intervention, it is evident that the term became more meaningless.

Some within the USSC at the time acknowledged the hollowness of the Jenin Initiative's "By the Palestinians, for the Palestinians" slogan. One implored Washington against sending more consultants who were retired Midwestern judges. Others noted that there were "too many experts on the ground," but simply argued the experts needed to do more to sell and differentiate themselves.¹²⁶⁴ Taken together, these internal critiques demonstrate the limits of technical assistance, which functioned to reduce PA accountability to Palestinians and instead to make the Authority's daily decisions legible to international donors.¹²⁶⁵

Moreover, many within the USSC team for Jenin were aware of the gap between the media fanfare around Tony Blair's much-publicized shawarma lunches in the city and actual improvements to Palestinian lives.¹²⁶⁶ One early August internal communication noted that there was little demand for improved travel through the Jalame checkpoint. Meanwhile, the local military court continued to illegally convict civilians for criminal charges. Another noted that Israeli incursions had increased in the past month, including just hours after what had seemed a fruitful first Israeli visit to the Jenin *muqāta'a* since the outbreak of the intifada. Further mocking the local PASF, the Israelis denied that they were there for several hours after repeated inquiries from the Jenin Area Commander.¹²⁶⁷ This humiliation of the PASF was not isolated to Jenin. The same week, in the village of Silwad near Ramallah, the PASF submitted a request to the IDF to enter Area C, which was approved. But the IDF swooped in and pre-empted the arriving Palestinian forces. Silwad residents stormed the PASF vehicles with stones, calling them "collaborators" and "Dayton's police."¹²⁶⁸

Confronting the Occupation, Duplicating Repression

¹²⁶³ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁶⁴ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁶⁵ Khalil and Del Sarto, "The Legal Fragmentation of Palestine-Israel and European Union Policies Promoting the Rule of Law," 145.

¹²⁶⁶ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁶⁷ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁶⁸ Personal papers, former USSC member.

The USSC's final suggestions regarding the Israeli and Palestinian conceptions of the 'revolving door' practice perhaps most thoroughly dispel the notion that a technical approach – as embodied by the Jenin initiative – could result in anything other than the securitization of Palestinian life. The USSC's advice to its Israeli interlocutors was highly unfeasible, and as such fell into the existing pattern by which Palestinian performance would be dutifully scrutinized while Israeli reciprocity remained unmonitored.

Given the mismatch between Palestinian legal norms and Israeli security demands, the USSC recommended that Israel review its arrest and detention practices in the West Bank. These practices should be amended to meet the standards of international law, according to the USSC's findings in Jenin. "It should be incumbent upon Israel, when making requests for security and judicial action by the Palestinian Authority Security Forces and criminal justice system, that the content of such requests should be compliant not only with Israeli legal requirements, but with Palestinian ones as well."¹²⁶⁹

In keeping with the restraints seen throughout the Second Intifada period, this framing depended on American intervention to require Israeli compliance with its obligations. In fact, as Lisa Hajjar notes, Israel has since 1967 refuted the applicability of international humanitarian law to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel rejected the classification of its regime over the Palestinians as an occupation. Instead, Israel selectively applied the Geneva Convention's "humanitarian dispositions."¹²⁷⁰ As such the USSC's suggestions amounted to the improbable recommendation that Israel reformulate its entire approach to the occupation.

Recognizing the impracticality of asking Israel to respect international humanitarian law, the USSC compromised. Instead, the USSC advised the Israeli Ministry of Defense to publicly acknowledge the restrictive legal environment in which the PA operated in arresting and detaining Palestinians identified by Israel as security threats. The USSC hoped affirmation of the PASF's efforts would help build confidence in the Palestinian commitment to the rule of law,

¹²⁶⁹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁷⁰ Lisa Hajjar, "Etats-Unis-Israël: la double guerre contre le terrorisme et la Loi humanitaire internationale," *Revue d'études palestiniennes* 103 (2007): 36.

and aide the Palestinian security forces and justice system in dealing with politically sensitive cases.¹²⁷¹

However, here once more the USSC's attempt to bridge the gap between a repressive, autocratic system of surveillance by proxy and the norms of democratic governance fell short. There was no legal basis on which the Palestinians could possibly meet Israel's maximalist conception of a security concern, which refused to distinguish between violent and non-violent activists.¹²⁷² In measuring the Palestinian security forces' performance against their success in targeting sensitive security cases, the USSC endorsed a system designed to manufacture silence in the West Bank.

The testimonies of former USSC officials involved with the Jenin Initiative drawn on in this chapter make clear that in fact, many within the mission recognized the contradictions of their work. One figure noted that the creation of a "Stalinesque" PA security apparatus met Israel's aims, conflicting with the democratic principles that legitimize the concept of security sector reform.¹²⁷³ The USSC's purported attention to governance and accountability diametrically opposed both Israeli purposes in allowing the reforms, and the reality of growing Palestinian authoritarianism under the unelected Fayyad government. Genuine local ownership would mean Hamas leadership, at odds with the interests of the PA, Israel, and the US. As one former USSC official admitted: "while we talk the talk on local ownership, we are continuing to push a democratic security system on an undemocratic polity, addressing neither the requirements of Palestinian independence, nor the politics of the Palestinian people."¹²⁷⁴

Reform for Reform's Sake: 'Security Only'

The USSC's calculus was clear in Jenin. By ensuring Israeli 'security first,' on-the-ground efforts could propel action at the political level, in this case the stalled talks in Annapolis. As one USSC report argued, ending Israeli incursions was important for the optics it provided the PA, "a high-visibility "win."¹²⁷⁵ By helping the PA accumulate 'wins' that eased daily life in

¹²⁷¹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁷² Hajjar, "États-Unis-Israël," 37.

¹²⁷³ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁷⁴ Personal papers, former USSC member; Nathan J. Brown, "Are Palestinians Building a State?" Carnegie Commentary (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2010), 8-10. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/palestinian_state1.pdf

¹²⁷⁵ Personal papers, former USSC member.

the West Bank, Washington could build support for negotiations - but also for security coordination and the PA's conformity to Israeli demands.

Conversely, the 'security-first' approach exemplified in Jenin could more accurately be described as 'security only.' As one former USSC official related, focus on the 'security line of operations' met faster, more visible success than the economic or political portfolios. As a result, the international community was "continually driven to put the security focus as the basis of the other policy elements [...] we have fallen into that classical military-think trap that because nothing else is working, and we have a "can-do" attitude, the security focus will drag the rest behind it."¹²⁷⁶

While technical assistance might smooth operations, it could do little to change the overall power imbalance. The limits of the security-first approach in pushing Israel to political concessions were clear when the USSC convened with IDF commanders responsible for the Jenin region. The Israelis praised the PASF's improved performance against security threats in Nablus and Hebron, but argued that the Palestinians were inconsistent in their counterterrorism efforts and had not done enough to dismantle *da'wa* networks. In contrast to Hamas, the PASF lacked the will to kill or be killed for their cause, the IDF explained.¹²⁷⁷

At a November 15 briefing with IDF commanders about Jenin, the USSC noticed their Israeli interlocutors' scant attention to the Initiative's security achievements. Instead, the IDF emphasized the Israeli view that the West Bank was a site of competition for influence between the West and Iran, reiterating repeatedly the threat of an "Iranian axis" linked to Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas that loomed over the West Bank.¹²⁷⁸

Another IDF official described the improved Palestinian capacity as only offering only a faint possibility of political progress. "If everything works out, then maybe – maybe – we can make some progress on the peace process," was the USSC's takeaway of the IDF perspective. Indeed, in an internal assessment, the USSC noted that the IDF had made only incremental steps toward PASF control, all of which could be reversed in minutes.¹²⁷⁹ The USSC understood these concessions as intended to reduce pressure on Abbas and the PA, and not as an indicator of any willingness to match Palestinian security performance with territorial concessions.

¹²⁷⁶ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁷⁷ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁷⁸ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁷⁹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

The USSC's technical work in Jenin cannot be divorced from its function in broader American policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As Deverell argued, the utility of the USSC's approach hinged on American pressure to force Israel to comply with its side of the bargain.¹²⁸⁰ On November 15, the IDF commanders noted that they expected a strategic pause in the political negotiations as the American and Israeli administrations changed. However, the prospect of this pause betrayed a deeper reality. As one USSC official noted, resolving the Palestinian issue was "at best the fourth priority on the Israeli national security agenda." The same official continued, "Absolute security remains the IDF goal down to the unit level, and the IDF continues to carry out regular incursions into Area A, to deny PASF freedom of movement in Areas B and C, and to refuse to give the PASF 'right of first refusal' on arrests."¹²⁸¹ With the PASF under tight US control, the USSC's work simply added a new layer of security for Israel.

In another document, the USSC noted that the PASF functioned as a transfer of authority mechanism from the Israeli occupying power: the PASF stood, in Washington's eyes, as "an extension of the Israeli security mandate."¹²⁸² Rather than create pressure for Palestinian sovereignty, a system of joint Israeli and Palestinian carceralism resulted from the PASF capacity-building. As one former USSC official recalled, the Jenin Initiative tamed the governate, a "sort of 'Wild West,'" from the PA's perspective during the intifada. However, the 'West Bank First' strategy of pacifying Jenin came at a heavy price. The PA acted on Israel's inherent suspicion of all Palestinians as potential threats, duplicating repression in the West Bank.¹²⁸³

Conclusion

By the end of November 2008, the Bush Administration was celebrating its last Thanksgiving in the White House before the arrival of President-elect Barack Obama. In October, the Israeli political scene shifted dramatically: in internal elections within Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni's Kadima party, Livni prevailed, and Olmert resigned as Prime Minister. Livni was unable to form a coalition, and early elections were called for February 2009.¹²⁸⁴ In such a

¹²⁸⁰ Deverell, "Fifteen Months in the West Bank," 63.

¹²⁸¹ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁸² Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁸³ Hill, "From the Small Zinzana to the Bigger Zinzana," 9; Hajjar, *Courting Conflict*, 186.

¹²⁸⁴ Ian Black, "Failure to Form Coalition May Let in Likud," *The Guardian* 27 October 2008; "Obama Pledges to Push Israeli-Palestinian Peace Talks," *Reuters* 22 July 2008.

climate, the ongoing Annapolis negotiations began to crumble, as Mahmoud Abbas had little reason to put faith in a historic agreement with an Israeli leadership soon to depart.¹²⁸⁵

As the Jenin Initiative concluded in the same month, the chasm between the premise of reform for a Palestinian state and the reality of an increasingly authoritarian PA – rendered more effective in its repression by reform – grew wider. Gen. Jones’s report to the Secretary of State on Israel’s security requirements was prepared for submission to the incoming Obama Administration. However, the report’s sudden disappearance under pressure from Israel further reinforced the conclusion that raising the capacity of the Palestinian security services – under tight international control – would not catalyze Israeli political concessions in final status negotiations.

Already by July 2008, USSC communications show that Jones’s report had become politically sensitive and would include a classified “non-chapter.”¹²⁸⁶ As Deputy National Security Advisor Elliot Abrams recalled, Israel feared the report because Jones’s assessment of Israel’s security needs might differ sharply from Israel’s own. Jones’s assessment would guide the Obama Administration, and would be all the more important as rumors circulated the General would be tapped as a National Security Advisor.¹²⁸⁷ As one USSC insider close to Jones’s team described in an interview, the General’s initial perspective was refreshing. For example, Jones’s starting premise was that no Israeli settlements would remain in the West Bank after a final status agreement, and consequently Israeli security arguments about defense of the settlements were nonstarters. “That’s the kind of clarity and simplicity of thought that led them to some of their more drastic conclusions.”¹²⁸⁸

The perception that Israel’s security concerns were exaggerated led to increasing political interest in Jones’s work, particularly from the US National Security Council and the Israeli negotiating team. As my interviewee related, the rather stark reality was that the Israeli diplomatic corps transparently deployed the notion of ‘security threat’ for political purposes in their dealings with Jones. Foreign Minister Livni’s team had predetermined a series political redlines, “and then the IDF got called in afterwards to find a security reason why it was

¹²⁸⁵ Abrams, *Tested by Zion*, 293.

¹²⁸⁶ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁸⁷ “Key Members of Obama-Biden National Security Team Announced,” Office of the President-Elect, 1 December 2008 http://change.gov/newsroom/entry/key_members_of_obama_biden_national_security_team_announced/

¹²⁸⁸ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

necessary and it couldn't be included.”¹²⁸⁹ The IDF was conscripted to lead a series of specialized briefings and meetings with Jones. The IDF attempted to explain, for example, why Israel had taken the entire agriculturally-rich Jordan Valley off the negotiating table without a plausible security justification. The underlying political message – clear to anyone near the Jones investigation – was that the Israeli government was not bargaining in good faith.¹²⁹⁰

In a stormy meeting 24 November 2008 in the Oval Office, Olmert beseeched the Bush Administration not to pass the Jones report – its exact contents unknown – to the Obama Administration. Secretary Rice heatedly objected, but Olmert convinced the President of the imperative not to allow his legacy of the ‘peace process’ to be a contentious document disagreed upon with Israel. The report never surfaced.¹²⁹¹

The demise of Jones’s investigation of Israel’s security needs – the result of months of on-the-ground attention to Palestinian security sector reform – makes clear the unavoidable political effects of assistance billed as technical and apolitical. Under the prevailing circumstances - in which Washington accepted as valid Israel’s unilaterally-determined security redlines - no amount of reform or professionalism could make the Palestinian security forces perform to Israeli demands. As USSC member Deverell recalled, the effectiveness of the intensive efforts in Jenin were beholden to Washington’s willingness to pressure Israel. He noted that the USSC’s ‘West Bank First’ strategy would only succeed “if the US Administration decides to engage very actively with the new Israeli government – in effect matching our ‘bottom up’ approach with a ‘top down’ strategy to help the Israelis make real changes on the ground.”¹²⁹²

However, the tools the USSC presented in the ‘West Bank First’ strategy provided meager prospects of political change. Instead, the ‘West Bank First’ strategy enforced the PA’s hegemony under the mantle of fighting terror, meeting Palestinian factional interests. At the same time, the USSC’s initiatives installed Israeli control into the center of Palestinian self-rule. As one former USSC member noted, the mission ignored Clausewitz’s adage that war is politics by other means. “In this case the security track is an aspect of Israel’s political agenda garbed in

¹²⁸⁹ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018; Amiram Oren, “Shadow Lands: The Use of Land Resources for Security Needs in Israel,” *Israel Studies* 12, 1 (2007): 151.

¹²⁹⁰ Interview, former USSC official.

¹²⁹¹ Abrams, *Tested by Zion*, 294-295.

¹²⁹² Deverell, “Fifteen Months in the West Bank,” 63

security terms.”¹²⁹³ Vital to the interests of the Israelis and Palestinians who positioned themselves as partners in the ‘war on terror,’ the USSC and the methods of control it designed endured as the Annapolis talks collapsed and the ‘peace process’ for a two-state solution faded.

Conclusion: Palestine and America’s ‘Global War on Terror’

On 27 December 2008, the Annapolis negotiations collapsed as Israel began bombarding the Gaza Strip. As bombs rained down on Gaza during Operation Cast Lead, the hybrid security-diplomatic US Security Coordinator mission was on the ground in the West Bank. It was widely reported that the mission congratulated itself on preventing a Palestinian uprising, even as the death toll in Gaza climbed to 1,400.¹²⁹⁴ A former USSC official recalled in an interview that the

¹²⁹³ Personal papers, former USSC member.

¹²⁹⁴ Robert Blechler, “Operation Cast Lead in the West Bank,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 38, 3 (2009): 64-71. In total, 900 Palestinian civilians were killed during Operation Cast Lead, and a further 300 estimated militants. There were 13 Israeli casualties: ten soldiers (three of whom were killed by friendly fire) and four civilians. Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 158-159.

USSC even drafted contingency plans to reassert control in case Hamas surrendered.¹²⁹⁵ In the coming years, the political framework for the security reform the USSC spearheaded in the West Bank faded: the Annapolis negotiations were the last substantial episode of the ‘peace process’ under American brokerage. Nonetheless, the methods of control over Palestinian life that Washington installed through the Palestinian Authority grew in strength, and remain today.

This thesis has demonstrated the distinct ways in which Washington reconfigured its engagement with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to weave Palestine into the ever-expanding ‘global war on terror’ between 2000 and 2008. The mantle of ‘counterterrorism’ employed by Washington in its interventions in the West Bank and Gaza gave new fodder to criminalize Palestinian resistance. While the US seized upon the Israeli mantra of ‘security first,’ Washington’s more insidious impact was to insert the counterterrorism focus into the heart of the PA, ensuring Palestinian self-policing against the resistance Israel billed to the US as terror.¹²⁹⁶ Many of the interventions Washington wielded in Palestine were seemingly apolitical, technical mechanisms: monitoring missions, reforms, and security training delegations. However, taken together, Washington’s daily interventions in the Palestinian Authority during the ‘global war on terror’ cast Palestinian dissent as a threat to security, enforcing Israeli political goals.

This thesis contributes to both the fields of Palestinian history and US foreign policy history, and to our understanding of the continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today. Whereas many diplomatic histories take a birds-eye view of developments between political leaders, this thesis reveals how everyday processes of ‘technical assistance’ and ‘capacity building’ on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza have undone the very goal they purport to be working toward: a Palestinian state, and a lasting peace.

This thesis shows how US interventions constrained Palestinian political articulation to meet American priorities in its ‘global war on terror.’ In Palestine, it is taken as self-evident that the strength of the US-Israeli relationship had a hand in constructing the repression that the PA exhibits today. Time and time again during my field research, Palestinians would shrug off, with a grimacing laugh, the American-funded security forces lining Ramallah’s streets, or the police in their shiny new Jeeps, ‘gifts from the American people.’ Drawing on original primary sources,

¹²⁹⁵ Interview, former USSC official, April 2017.

¹²⁹⁶ Tartir, “Criminalizing Resistance, 7-22.

this thesis fills a crucial gap in our knowledge by revealing the depth of the US role, and the exact history Washington's 'war on terror' in Palestine.

The first chapter traces the interaction between efforts to end the Second Intifada and the rise of the 'global war on terror.' It shows how the attacks of 9/11 made space for Israel to undo American pressure to uphold the Oslo Accords' bilateralism with the Palestinians, instead embracing the Israeli unilateralism that resonated with Washington's own tactics in the 'global war on terror.' Chapter two examines how this same American acceptance of Israeli political objectives packaged as security reoriented international assistance to the Palestinians. Specifically, Ariel Sharon's decision to disengage from the Gaza Strip overtook the Roadmap for Peace that envisioned a return to direct negotiations. Israeli political objectives also conditioned the call for Palestinian democratization that was at the heart of the 'freedom agenda' Washington imposed in Palestine through the Roadmap. After the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections, the US swiftly backtracked, as the third chapter reveals. Washington imposed crippling sanctions on the PA that precipitated the violent, lasting division of the West Bank from Gaza.

The fourth chapter of this thesis analyzes the reconstruction of the Palestinian Authority's security forces in the West Bank against wider shifts in US defense and diplomatic policy since 9/11. It argues that the US Security Coordinator mission is at once coherent with the tools of the 'global war on terror,' and exceptional in the ways the US came to enact Israeli policy toward the Palestinians. Washington's emissaries in the USSC directly enforced the PA security forces' status as a compliant proxy. The final chapter is a close reading of the 2008 Jenin Initiative. The Jenin Initiative is a window into how American security and economic assistance strengthened the occupation, while falling short of creating the political pressure on Israel Washington promised.

This thesis deepens our understanding of the political stagnation that exists today in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where the potential for rupture always simmers below a surface that in some ways appears stable, particularly in the West Bank. This thesis systematically exposes for the first time the conditionalities, interests, and inducements that allow the US to 'manage' the conflict through local partners, acting on Israel's political agenda.

Reform Forever

The interviews I conducted with officials affiliated with the USSC expose the dynamics that uphold the security regime the US created in the West Bank in 2007 and 2008. Using the perspective of those responsible for transforming the PA into a partner in the ‘global war on terror,’ it is impossible to escape the significance of American interventions in constructing the current political reality in Palestine.

Many of the former USSC personnel with whom I spoke expressed disappointment in the changes that occurred after President Obama came to office in 2008. With strong backing from the Bush Administration and Secretary Rice in particular, Gen. Dayton exaggerated the USSC’s political importance. “He was going around making speeches to the Palestinian security forces: ‘Your generation is going to be the security forces of an independent Palestine.’”¹²⁹⁷ Instead, Obama avoided the Palestinian issue. Under Coordinators Lt. Gen. Michael Moeller and Admiral Paul Bushong, the USSC downsized to “just a security forces training mission” during the Obama years.¹²⁹⁸

With trust rebuilt between the PA and Israeli Ministry of Defense, security coordination solidified. Direct USSC training became ‘train the trainers,’ and the USSC intends to one day withdraw to actual observer status. However, the political situation is “out of our hands,” the Coordinator claimed in an interview in Jerusalem in July 2017.¹²⁹⁹ In fact, the USSC constructed an efficient Palestinian-run policing system to supplement Israel’s, but Obama never pressured Israel to grant the Palestinians greater autonomy. As one former Coordinator recalled, those senior Israeli officers who wanted a real and lasting peace settlement implored him, “my God, why didn’t your President make us do it?”¹³⁰⁰

Over the last decade, Washington’s push for reform has embedded Israel’s political demands into Palestinian self-rule and society. The language of efficient service delivery, good governance, and accountability pervades Washington’s stated agenda of assistance to the Palestinians. However, as one former USSC official noted, the political framework for the USSC became “contradictory” after its initial phase during the Annapolis negotiations.¹³⁰¹ Palestine is “a country that does not exist,” he argued, “run by an Authority that has no real legal authority,

¹²⁹⁷ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

¹²⁹⁸ Interview, February 2018. For an account of Obama’s engagement with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, see: Josh Ruebner, “Obama’s Legacy on Israel/Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, 1 (2016): 50-64. Khalidi, *Brokers of Deceit*.

¹²⁹⁹ Interview, USSC Frederick Rudesheim, July 2017.

¹³⁰⁰ Interview, former USSC official, April 2017.

¹³⁰¹ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

secured by a military that is not allowed to exist, accountable to a Legislative Council that does not sit, working towards a domestic framework that is being imposed from the outside.”¹³⁰² Consequently, local ownership is impossible and the security forces Washington continues to reform are accountable least of all to the Palestinians.

Moreover, the sustained influx of funding for Palestinian securitization has met the interests of the PA’s most anti-democratic, authoritarian elements.¹³⁰³ As one USSC official recalled, “while we talk the talk on local ownership, we are continuing to push a democratic security system on an undemocratic polity.” Instead of good governance and accountability, the USSC’s reform agenda belies the preferences of a Palestinian elite responsive to American and Israeli patronage. “The status quo works for them, unfortunately,” one official lamented.¹³⁰⁴

Young security force recruits, meanwhile, are motivated by employment in the fragile West Bank economy that creates dependence on the PA. In my interview, the Coordinator first described “building the future state of Palestine” as the politically-correct explanation for the forces’ high level of discipline. He then acknowledged that to Palestinians “it’s a job,” and that quitting is unthinkable when the “lack of hope is palpable.”¹³⁰⁵ With powerful incentives – a low-level Palestinian employee at the Central Training Institute the USSC established in Jericho reported a salary of thousands of US dollars a month – economic precariousness has been harnessed to the cause of pacifying Palestine.¹³⁰⁶

Since 2008, the international community has spent nearly \$30 billion to ensure the PA’s staying power, despite the absence of negotiations for Palestinian statehood. The premise of ‘fighting terror’ is central to the PA’s salience to its donors. By 2014, nearly 30% of the PA’s annual budget was spent on the salaries of over 65,000 security forces, making Palestine one of the most policed places in the world.¹³⁰⁷ These realities were not lost on the USSC officials I interviewed. The US is keenly aware of the PA security chiefs’ motives: the Palestinian forces

¹³⁰² Personal papers, former USSC official.

¹³⁰³ Sayigh, “Policing the People, Building the State.”

¹³⁰⁴ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

¹³⁰⁵ Interview, Rudesheim, July 2017.

¹³⁰⁶ Interview, Palestinian former USSC subcontractor, 5 September 2018.

¹³⁰⁷ The PA has nearly 100 more brigadier-generals than the US Army. Further, it pays the salaries nearly 40,000 employees in Gaza who are forbidden from working with Hamas’s security forces. Alaa Tartir, “How US Security Aid to PA Sustains Israel’s Occupation,” Al Jazeera 2 December 2016. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/11/security-aid-pa-sustains-israel-occupation-161103120213593.html>

“wanted guns and power from us.”¹³⁰⁸ The premise of fighting terror is a useful tool to gain support from Washington to prevent dissent to their hegemony, especially from Islamists.

The internalization of the discourse of the ‘war on terror’ by American allies for their own purposes is not isolated to Palestine. Regionally, Washington incentivizes its allies to repress and exclude Islamists from public life under the mantle of counterterrorism, engendering authoritarianism through aid.¹³⁰⁹ In the Palestinian case, security officials were transparent about their ability to shape local behavior. As the Coordinator explained, it is possible to appeal to the PA security chiefs’ more “reasonable nature.” For example, if the US invests in a joint maintenance facility, Palestinians will come, despite the chiefs’ tendency to see every new allocation of resources as a potential loss to a rival.¹³¹⁰ Similarly, as one of my interviewees explained, Palestinian security men eagerly attend USSC-sponsored leadership courses. They are paid more as a result.¹³¹¹ Washington’s acquiescence to Israeli demands means that the US no longer attempts to square the reality of PA authoritarianism with assistance designated for Palestinian ‘good governance’ and ‘accountability.’ Instead, through the USSC, the US simply manages this tension. Washington will pull its funding, the Coordinator explained without irony, should the security chiefs “set up a leader in contravention of the Palestinian people.”¹³¹²

Today, Washington partners with Israel to outsource the occupation to the Palestinians themselves (at a cheaper rate, as one former USSC staffer emphasized).¹³¹³ The PA’s predicament today evokes an archetypal ‘control society,’ as self-governance masks increasingly efficient forms of control.¹³¹⁴ Notably, PA *mukhābarāt* spokesman ‘Adnan al-Damiri frames the capture of youth from the West Bank who carry out attacks on Israelis as ‘protection.’ Countering popular rebukes, al-Damiri justifies that the PA will only imprison the assailants, saving them from death at the IDF’s hands.¹³¹⁵ Under US supervision, the PA acts on Israel’s

¹³⁰⁸ Interview, former USSC official, April 2017.

¹³⁰⁹ Michele Dunne and Scott Williamson, “Egypt, Counterterrorism, and the Politics of Alienation.” Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 2014; Cris Toffolo, “Unethical Alliance? The United States, Pakistan, and the “War on Terrorism,”” in Charles P. Webel and John A. Araldi (eds.) *The Ethics and Efficacy of the Global War on Terrorism: Fighting Terror with Terror*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011: 211-226.

¹³¹⁰ Interview, USSC Rudesheim, July 2017. Lori Allen similarly discusses the cynicism with which security chiefs addressed ‘human rights.’ The international community inserted this discourse into Palestinian reform efforts to meet the sensibilities of donors. Allen, *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights*, 109-121.

¹³¹¹ Interview, Palestinian former USSC subcontractor, September 2018.

¹³¹² Interview, Rudesheim, July 2017.

¹³¹³ Interview, former USSC official, April 2017.

¹³¹⁴ Tahani Mustafa, “Damming the Palestinian Spring: Security Sector Reform and Entrenched Repression,” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 9, 2 (2015): 221.

¹³¹⁵ “A-ḍimīrī: ‘itiqāl Aḥmed Jarār maṣlaḥa filastīniyya qabila an takūn isrā’īlyya,” *Ṣawt al-Aqṣā* 29 January 2018. <https://www.alqasavoice.ps/news/details/199102>

inherent suspicion of all Palestinians as potential security threats and duplicates repression in the West Bank.¹³¹⁶

General Dayton provoked ire in 2009 when he warned of a two-year expiration of the USSC efforts without a political horizon. He was not alone in his views: in conversation, many former USSC operatives expressed skepticism at the operation's sustainability. "There was a shock clock past which this model would only work if we were seeing steady progress towards a two-state solution."¹³¹⁷ Whereas in the US the two-state solution still stands as a hollow slogan, it has all but disappeared from even the Israeli center-left opposition. A number of USSC affiliates acknowledged that the Israelis had not "held up their end of the bargain."¹³¹⁸

As the Coordinator told me last summer, Israel's unwillingness to increase Palestinian responsibility frustrates the PA security forces' strong performance. Put differently, Washington struggles to incentivize good Palestinian behavior without rewards. The USSC is perpetually concerned over incidents that speak to the "underlying discontent" among West Bank recruits. Like Israeli commentators, the USSC worries PA security forces could turn their weapons against Israeli targets, as occurred at Beit El settlement in January 2016.¹³¹⁹ In an interview, an adviser to former Secretary of State Kerry described this tension as the result of Israel's extremist governing coalitions, for whom arming the PA is anathema. Though Israeli security insiders prize security coordination, it has become politically impossible to discuss the areas of a demilitarized Palestinian state where the PA's security forces would operate to ensure Israeli security. Instead, the West Bank is divided up into dozens of classifications of security coordination. In some areas, the PASF need written coordination during certain hours, in others coordination is by phone or email, some areas are no-man's land, and in many the PASF are forbidden.¹³²⁰

The relegation of the 'peace process' to a historical afterthought is born out in the structural changes within the Israeli polity, which has seen a succession of governing coalitions each more radical in their ethnonationalism than the last. Installing the settler movement into the cabinet and the highest functions of the state, the coalitions since Netanyahu's reelection in 2009

¹³¹⁶ Hill, "From the Small Zinzana to the Bigger Zinzana," 9.

¹³¹⁷ Interview, former USSC official, April 2017.

¹³¹⁸ Interviews, former USSC officials, January 2018, February 2018.

¹³¹⁹ Interview, Rudesheim, July 2017; "Palestinian Shot Dead After Alleged Gun Attack," Al Jazeera 31 January 2016. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/palestinian-shot-dead-alleged-gun-attack-160131095324397.html>

¹³²⁰ Interview, US security official, April 2017.

have passed an array of discriminatory laws that securitize the existence of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. At the same time, these Knessets have also locked into to law the complete refutation of Palestinian political identity, most recently in July 2018 with the Nation-State Law.¹³²¹

These shifts within Israel can best be understood in light of a national discourse that elevates a sense of siege. Raffaella del Sarto attributes this sense of siege to the collapse of the peace camp, the far-right's 'Iron Wall' mentality, and politicians' incessant evocation of historic Jewish victimhood, manifested today in the threat of a nuclear Iran linked to Hezbollah and Hamas.¹³²² In this space, the Palestinians are out of sight, and any real reckoning with their claims is fraught by the siege mentality. As del Sarto writes, the rise of a hegemonic national vision only evidences the damage caused by the Second Intifada, after which most Jewish Israelis "were no longer interested in peace – or what was happening on the other side."¹³²³

Moreover, the rightward and openly Zionist shift that the Trump Administration ushered in with its election in November 2016 has only lent further credence to the notion that any Palestinian resistance constitutes terrorism.¹³²⁴ While the grand reveal of Trump's "Deal of the Century" continues to be scaled back and delayed, his term has so far seen a string of vehemently anti-Palestinian measures.¹³²⁵ From the status of Jerusalem to the fate of the Palestinian refugees, the Trump Administrations' actions are seamlessly in sync with the Israeli hard right, and set on dismantling Palestinian claims once and for all. With the Palestinians removed from the Israeli public conscience, the American-Israeli alliance can set its sights once more on Iran.¹³²⁶ PM Netanyahu has explained to the press that Trump's "Deal of the Century" is not urgent, from Israel's perspective: "It's his issue if he wants to promote it," suggesting the US can impose a position amenable to Israel on the Palestinians at any time.¹³²⁷ Further, Israel continues to

¹³²¹ Ronnie Olesker, "National Identity and Securitization in Israel," *Ethnicities* 14, 3 (2014): 374; Peter Beaumont, "EU Leads Criticism After Israel Passes Jewish 'Nation State' Law," *The Guardian* 19 July 2018.

¹³²² Mohanad Mustafa and As'ad Ghanem, "The Empowering of the Israeli Extreme Right in the 18th Knesset Elections," *Mediterranean Politics* 15, 1 (2010): 41.

¹³²³ Del Sarto, *Israel Under Siege*, 174.

¹³²⁴ Noa Landau and Aaron Rabinowitz, "US Ambassador to Israel Pictured with Controversial Image of Jerusalem Third Temple Replacing Muslim Mosque," *Haaretz* 23 May 2018; Uriel Heilman, "How Did an Orthodox Ex-Settler Become Donald Trump's Israel Adviser?" *Haaretz* 18 August 2016; Riotta, Chris, "Jared Kushner Failed to Disclose He Led a Foundation Funding Illegal Israeli Settlements in Before U.N. Vote." *Newsweek* 3 December 2017.

¹³²⁵ "Jowwlat l-Kushner wa Greenblat b-al sharq al-awsat al-usbua' al-muqbil l-bahith "Şafqat al-qarn" *Al-Quds* 12 June 2018.

¹³²⁶ Adam Entous, "Donald Trump's New World Order," *New Yorker* 18 June 2018; Osamah Khalil, "Imposing Peace: Trump and the Palestinians," *Al Shabaka* 18 December 2017 <https://al-shabaka.org/commentaries/imposing-peace-trump-palestinians/>

¹³²⁷ Noa Landau, "Netanyahu on Trump's Peace Plan: 'I Don't See Any Urgency on This Matter,'" *Haaretz* 24 August 2018.

leverage the specter of ‘terrorism’ everywhere, fitting Washington’s narrative to the extent that Trump’s Special Representative for International Negotiations, former settler Jason Greenblatt, earnestly bemoans the danger of “terrorism balloons” launched from the Gaza Strip.¹³²⁸

Despite the incongruity between the ongoing security sector reforms and any prospect of a Palestinian state, it is not clear that Washington intends to alter the USSC. In 2012, President Obama’s administration officially altered the Pentagon’s strategy away from the interagency security-development stabilization focus the Bush Administration adopted after 9/11. Instead, the Obama Administration explicitly highlighted the importance of security assistance missions in asserting US prerogatives internationally: “The US will continue to place a premium on US and allied military presence in – and support of – partner nations,” particularly in the Middle East.¹³²⁹ As Laleh Khalili points out, this shift cannot be read as a retreat from interventionism. By contrast, Washington signaled its intent to ratchet up its reliance on “invisible or covert operations conducted without the hindrance of monitoring or accountability combined with a continued and more emphatic dependence on proxies.”¹³³⁰

In 2017, the USSC had a budget of over \$57 million, buttressing the PA’s vast apparatus to stifle resistance and political activism in the West Bank.¹³³¹ The ‘global war on terror’ strategically justifies this focus. At the same time, the fact that many of the US personnel in Palestine are subcontractors – like DynCorp and US21 – reflects the profitability that has

For compelling analyses of the rise of political apathy from both the Israeli left and right that favors the status quo with the Palestinians, see: Del Sarto, *Israel Under Siege*; Katherine Netanel, *Sustaining Conflict: Apathy and Domination in Israel-Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016.)

¹³²⁸ In December 2017, Trump broke with decades of American presidential discretion and announced his intention to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Israel, after recognizing the city as the capital of Israel. The move occurred from all accounts at the behest of the Christian Zionists firmly at the center of his electoral base. (For example, Vice President Mike Pence is a staunch friend of Israel, in line with his radical evangelical faith.) In the aftermath of a UN vote condemning the US decision, the Trump Administration cut funding to UNRWA by over \$300 million cheered by pro-Israel advocates like Elliott Abrams. In June 2018, the US withdrew from the UN Human Rights Council, complaining of anti-Israeli bias. Elliott Abrams, “Trump Gets UNRWA Right,” Council on Foreign Relations 17 January 2018 <https://www.cfr.org/blog/trump-gets-unrwa-right>; “US Quits ‘Biased’ UN Human Rights Council.” BBC News 20 June 2018; Rashid Khalidi, “And Now What? The Trump Administration and the Question of Jerusalem,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47, 2 (2018): 93-102. These American decisions have evidently emboldened the far right in Israel, where calls for annexation of Area C have long circulated. In July 2018, for example, Israel passed a bill to restrict Palestinians’ ability to petition its high court, granting only Jewish residents of the ‘Judea and Samaria’ equal rights with Israeli citizens over the Green Line. “Bennett to Settler Leaders: We’ve Changed Conversation from Two-States to Annexation.” *The Times of Israel* 26 August 2018 https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/bennett-to-settler-leaders-weve-changed-conversation-from-two-states-to-annexation/; Tovah Lazaroff, “In ‘Annexation’ Push, Knesset Limits Palestinian Access to High Court,” *Jerusalem Post* 17 July 2018.

¹³²⁹ United States Department of Defense, “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense” (Washington, DC: January 2012), 4.

¹³³⁰ Khalili, *Time in the Shadows*, 248.

¹³³¹ “Inspection of Consulate General Jerusalem,” US Department of State, June 2017, <https://oig.state.gov/system/files/isp-i-17-18.pdf>

sustained the ‘global war on terror.’¹³³² As they recruit West Bank staff, private security contractors cast previous work in Iraq and Afghanistan as American expertise. “Foreign Experience in a High-Risk, Middle Eastern Locale is STRONGLY PREFERRED!” proclaimed one recent advertisement.¹³³³ According to a source close to the process, thirteen American firms bid on the USSC-directed State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement tender for a new facility in Jericho in 2017, where the American Consulate has established a sprawling campus of security structures. The \$7.5 million contract was awarded to BlueForce, a Virginia-based company whose mission is “to serve God, country, communities and customers.”¹³³⁴

President Abbas’s advanced age and the absence of a clear replacement also loom over the USSC’s work. Murmurs from the powerful Palestinian security chiefs and their supporters jockeying to replace Abbas have little prospect of negating the overwhelming impasse in which the Palestinians find themselves today.¹³³⁵ In the past decade, Abbas’s attempt to internationalize the conflict’s brokerage through first the Quartet, and then ascension to the UN and International Criminal Court, have been blocked at every turn by the US from meaningfully advancing the Palestinian.¹³³⁶ At the same time, US-Israeli defense convergence has only accelerated, not to mention Washington’s financial assistance. In September 2016, Obama signed an unprecedented \$38 billion military aid package to Israel.¹³³⁷

¹³³² Tara M. Lavalee, “Civil-Military Integration: The Politics of Outsourcing National Security.” *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 30, 3 (2010): 185. The Department of Defense formalized “Civilian-Military Integration” in 1997, but Pentagon demand for private subcontractors’ services exploded after 9/11. In 2009, over 240,000 foreign contractor personnel operated in Iraq and Afghanistan.

¹³³³ “Lead Training SME (PSF-INL/Israel),” Glassdoor, 17 February 2018. https://www.glassdoor.co.uk/job-listing/lead-training-sme-pasf-inl-israel-dyncorp-JV_KO0.33_KE34.41.htm?jl=2353957480

¹³³⁴ “About Us,” BlueForce, Inc. <https://blueforceinc.com/about/>

¹³³⁵ The usual names include Jibril Rajoub, PA Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, and Fatah leader Mohammed Aloul. More recently, Mohammed Dahlan has begun reasserting his influence after the 2011 falling-out with Abbas that saw his departure to Qatar. “Dahlān: ‘alā jama‘iyya faṣā’il al-filasṭīniyya an tatuselah b’il- waḥīda al-waṭaniyya,” *Sama News* 9 August 2018.

¹³³⁶ Under Tony Blair between 2007 and 2012, the Quartet toed Washington’s dictates and never confronted Israel’s policies in the West Bank and Gaza, instead busying itself with ‘economic peace’ fixes and souring its relationship with the Palestinian Authority through a number of corruption issues – his team’s name locally was “Tony Baba and the Forty Thieves,” famed for their lavish breakfasts at the American Colony Hotel, where they rented a floor. Jonathan Cook, “Tony Blair’s Tangled Web: The Quartet Representative and the Peace Process,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 42, 2 (2013): 43-60. Victor Kattan, “The Implications of Joining the ICC After Operation Protective Edge,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 44, 1 (2014): 61-73; “General Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly to Accord Palestine ‘Non-Member Observer’ State Status.” *General Assembly – Plenary*. 29 November 2012 <https://www.un.org/press/en/2012/ga11317.doc.htm>; Eric Cortellessa, “US May Close PLO’s DC Office over Abbas Urging ICC to Prosecute Israelis.” *The Times of Israel* 18 November 2017

¹³³⁷ In response to American stonewalling, the Palestinian cause today revolves around the movement to boycott, divest, and sanction Israel (BDS). For a comprehensive overview, see: Nathan Thrall, “BDS: How a Controversial Non-Violent Movement Has Transformed the Israeli-Palestinian Debate,” *The Guardian* 14 August 2018; Peter Baker and Julie Hirschfeld Davis, “US Finalizes Deal to Give Israel \$38 Billion in Military Aid,” *The New York Times* 13 September 2016.

When I asked the Coordinator last summer about his priorities for the future, he admitted that political ambitions are rampant among the Palestinian security chiefs. However, he argued that the security forces must remain apolitical in order to ensure a smooth and nonviolent transition of power in the future. More accurately, they must remain close to the US to uphold the patronage on which they rely, as another recent USSC affiliate clarified. “The security chiefs will have a say in who’s the next king, and their cooperation to hold things together in the streets as the inevitable chaos follows will be necessary.”¹³³⁸

Due to the security coordination’s unpopularity, its annulment is a regular PA talking point today. With each major uptick in Israeli violence against the Palestinians – such as the July 2014 war on Gaza, or the reprisals for the so-called *intifādat al-Quds* that began in October 2015 – a Palestinian state becomes more distant and the PA threatens to end the security coordination.¹³³⁹ In the wake of President Trump’s December 2017 decision to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem, the PA once more gestured to popular outrage by threatening to end the security coordination that Abbas has admitted is otherwise “sacred” to uphold the PA.¹³⁴⁰ Recent statements by Saeb Erekat and his colleagues are, however, rhetorical flourishes, according to one former USSC member. “The Palestinians have declared the Americans not a credible mediator, all the diplomatic stuff [but] underneath, the USSC continues to meet with the [PA] Minister of the Interior and the chief of police, and American money continues to flow.”¹³⁴¹ Indeed, Trump’s recent cut of over \$200 million to Palestinian economic, humanitarian, and education programs squeeze the PA, but not the PA’s security forces. Prized by Israel, the security coordination budget is sure for the time being, endangered only by staunchly anti-Palestinian voices in the US congress who likely do not grasp its significance.¹³⁴²

¹³³⁸ Interview, former USSC official, February 2018.

¹³³⁹ For an account of Israel’s summer 2014 war on Gaza, called Operation Protective Edge, see: Diana Buttu, “Blaming the Victims,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 44, 1 (2014): 91-96. For a number of analyses of the alleged stabbings and ‘lone-wolf’ attacks, often by Palestinian children armed with scissors or kitchen knives, that increased in frequency in October 2015 and were met primarily with extrajudicial execution, see: Bernard Avishai, “What Provoked Palestinian Knife Attacks in Israel,” *The New Yorker* 23 October 2015. Teju Cole, “Slow Violence, Cold Violence – Teju Cole on East Jerusalem,” *The Guardian* 17 April 2015.

¹³⁴⁰ In another instance, Erekat was quoted describing Abbas as a dictator. Jonathan Cook, “Abbas in Firing Line Over Security Coordination with Israel,” 10 July 2014.

¹³⁴¹ Interview, former USSC official, 23 February 2018. “Erekat: la ḥadīth m’ a amrīkā dūn tarāj’ a Trump,” *Ma’ān* 8 December 2017. <http://www.maannews.net/Content.aspx?id=932430>

¹³⁴² “US Cuts Aid to Palestinians by More than \$200 Million,” *Associate Press* 24 August 2018. Eric Cortellessa, “Trump Administration Releases Millions in Frozen Aid to PA Security Forces.” *The Times of Israel* 2 August 2018. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-administration-releases-millions-in-frozen-aid-to-pa-security-forces/>; Ahmad Milhem, “US Keeps Aid Flowing to PA Security Forces, for Now,” *Al Monitor* 4 October 2018 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/10/palestinian-security-services-us-aid-cuts.html>; a recent bill put forward in the Congress virtually ensures the dismantling of the security coordination by subjecting the PASF to US counterterrorism legislation, but it would

As former the former Central Commander of the West Bank who worked alongside USSC Dayton, Maj. Gen. Gadi Shamni, admitted in an interview in 2016, Israel has “elevated the occupation to an art.”¹³⁴³ Israel can shut down any Palestinian population center using a handful of soldiers and its ubiquitous yellow gates on the outskirts of municipalities within minutes. Inside Area A, the PA continues to ‘fight terror’ for its own puposes. Under Washington’s watchful eye, the PA became “intricately intermeshed” with the Shin Bet, upon whom it depends for its policing ability.¹³⁴⁴ Collapsing security coordination would mean collapsing themselves.

As one former official recalled in an interview, the central notion underpinning the USSC’s efforts to transform the PA while a ‘peace process’ existed was simple and measurable. With better Palestinian security performance, the PA would assume greater responsibility, and Israel would stand down. “I don’t know if that was ever true,” he laughed. “I just can’t imagine that they still feel that way.”¹³⁴⁵

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¹³⁴³ Caroline Landsmann, “The Art of Occupation, According to Israeli General Gadi Shamni,” Haaretz 15 October 2016.

¹³⁴⁴ Interviews, former USSC official, February 2018; Maṣṣad - The Online Security Sector Observatory, A-Sulṭa tashun ḥamilat ‘itiqālāt wās’a fī ṣufūf ḥamās 27 September 2018.

¹³⁴⁵ Interview, 11 February 2018.

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